

Memories with THE LEGEND



ELITA KARIM

THE first time I had met Ayub Bachchu was years ago at a recording in a studio called Art of Noise in Shegun Bagicha. The studio belonged to yet another music legend Foad Nasser Babu from the band Feedback. The studio was a popular amongst rock and pop musicians back in the day and finding Ayub Bachchu there hanging out with his old-time friend Babu was a treat for many of the younger singers and musicians waiting their turn to record. I remember being in a dilemma of sorts, because I had an early morning midterm exam at North South University where I was studying and it was already around 12:30 am. The recording simply had to be completed as well. Somehow Ayub Bachchu got to know about this (it was one of his recordings for a reality TV show) and he found me sitting in one corner of the big studio balcony, pouring over my notes, studying and waiting for my turn to record. "You are Elita, the one with the exam tomorrow?" he asked. "Yes sir!" I said, getting up. "Maa-re-maa!" he exclaimed, an expression used by *chatganyas* to vent out anger or annoyance. In his case, it was frustration because the recording was taking a lot of time and he clearly wanted me and the other younger vocalists to feel comfortable. "Why don't you go home tonight?" he said. "Come back to the studio tomorrow after your exams. I will hold your spot—won't be a problem." And that's exactly what I did.

My friends tell me that I am technologically challenged, which is probably true. But it's fascinating how the brain sometimes performs like an old beat-up computer does. The brain takes you back to the first piece of memory ever produced with the legend after it goes through the initial shock of loss and helplessness. And as you process the fact that Ayub Bachchu is actually gone for good, a pool of images stored within the many folders all rush in—one memory overlapping the other, eventually putting your body on standstill mode, unable to function or think. The news of Ayub Bachchu's death seems to have done the same to most Bangalis, in Bangladesh and abroad. While many choose to mourn quietly, most are sharing old pictures, videos or remakes of his famous numbers, paying tributes to the great maestro online.

Bachchu *bhai* on the other hand, was an enthusiast when it came to technology. He would be all gleeful like a child upon discovering new gadgets and technology. One day when I arrived at his practice pad and studio, AB's Kitchen, located in the popularly termed Kazi Office er Goli, near the Ramna police station, I found a bunch of young people fussing over two brand new cell phone sets—bringing in cables, connecting them to desktops and laptops and so much more. "Elli!" he exclaimed as I stared, clearly overwhelmed with all that was happening. "Check out my new sets! Once I am done transferring my contacts and information, you can hold one and see if you want one for yourself. I will get you a good price for sure!"

Clearly, Ayub Bachchu loved to perform on stage. Not only was he passionate about singing and playing the guitar for his fans at shows, he also loved to talk and carry on *addas* at his studio with visitors, sharing anecdotes for hours on end. In 2012 after he suffered his first cardiac arrest, Bachchu *bhai* consciously tried to bring about some lifestyle changes, only so he could carry on with his live performances. Not only did he compromise on many of the food items that he was passionate about, he also tried to sleep at decent hours, trying to give his body the

rest it needed. Instead of *kacchi biriyani* and *parata rolls* his studio was now filled with fresh fruits, delicious vegetable dishes and healthier options for snacks. Around this time, I would make frequent trips to AB's Kitchen, for a number of shows that I was supposed to sing with Ayub Bachchu and LRB. During breaks or after practice, Bachchu *bhai* had made a rule of sorts for everyone to have *jambura* seasoned with a little chili powder and salt, instead of the *pakodas* and the greasy snacks we would otherwise have. "Elli *buchchish!*" he would exclaim. "You need Vitamin C and lots of water in your body. This will help you sing and perform better." Clearly, he was repeating what his doctors would tell him, but who could argue?

Ayub Bachchu was an *obhimani* person. Like all artistes, he wanted his creations to be appreciated and respected. However, he

Yesterday, as thousands paid their last respect to the legend at the Shahid Minar, even big names like Asaduzzaman Nur, Minister of Cultural Affairs in Bangladesh and also a powerhouse theatre and TV actor, could not stop their tears from flowing.

In the last few months, Ayub Bachchu seemed restless and always lost in thought. "Elli!" I remember him telling me. "No matter what you do, don't leave your day job. It's important if you want to continue with your music. Don't ever make that mistake!" Last year, the national copyright office in Bangladesh went digital and recognised Ayub Bachchu and myself as the first male and female musician and singer respectively to have their profiles recorded online. At the event where both of us were presented with honours at the Prime Minister's Office, I remember Bachchu *bhai* talking to me about positive changes in the



Ayub Bachchu

PHOTO: SHAHREAR KABIR HEEMEL

was also very possessive—about his identity, his country, his songs, band, his studio and the people he loved and sacrificed for. He would work hard to produce better than his rivals, but would always acknowledge the good work done by them as well. According to the media and many of his fans, Ayub Bachchu's biggest rival has always been James, yet another living legend in Bangladesh. Stories would float around about how both musicians were always trying to outdo each other, would hardly ever talk to each other even at shows and public gatherings.

Despite all that, two nights ago, at a show which was broadcast live on television, James started off his performance by paying a tribute to the great Ayub Bachchu. "I wanted to cancel the show tonight," he said. "But both Bachchu *bhai* and I would agree that the show must go on." While playing the heartfelt instrumental tribute on his guitar, James let his tears fall freely, while expressing his love for Ayub Bachchu.

industry. "Do you think this will change anything for musicians in Bangladesh?" I could understand that he was thinking about proper laws to be implemented by the government so that creators would be paid their royalties accordingly.

At an age and stage where he should have been relaxing and enjoying his life, like all musical legends do all over the world, Ayub Bachchu was busy with live shows, sometimes too many for his own good. Besides the fact that he liked doing shows, was it also because, unlike the other countries with proper laws and royalty system, it is difficult in Bangladesh for a musician to survive otherwise.

But that is another story for another day. Meanwhile, thank you Bachchu *bhai* for being an inspiration for generations, for breaking barriers in the industry, for creating changes in the society, for teaching people how to love and also for uniting Bangladeshis from all walks of life.

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Ayub Bachchu playing on stage.

PHOTO: STAR

Heart to Heart

HUMOROUSLY YOURS



NAVEED MAHBUB

SHUT the ffff...front door!"

The thin fused me corrects myself in the nick of time. After all, I have a six-year-old right in front of me. They are blotting papers, more so, when it comes

to audio-visual equivalent of the Apple of Eden.

"Take a deep breath." I echo the advice of the wife, herself with her own formidable arsenal of adrenaline and expletives, but with a difference that she can fight a war of attrition like General Ike while I am General Patton—blowing steam at the wrong time, at the wrong place, at the wrong people, with the wrong choice of words and most damagingly, while using the wrong points of references. The wife wins the battle and most certainly the war. I lose both.

Anyway, the six-year-old utters the dreaded four-letter word soon after. Where she learned it from, or where she heard it, is a mystery. Mobile device usage is limited to an hour a day and also, with supervision and later, with us parents checking the browser history on the sly. Unless of course, she's a step ahead, knowing there's a way to clear history since "the beginning of time".

But I am the usual suspect. And the boss (wife) reprimands me to take the six-year-old into task. This is not only a sentence and a summary execution, but also a sadistic pleasure to see the attempt of a good cop, aka me, in his desperate attempt to being a bad cop, which, to her (the wife's) chagrin and disgust, is always her, when it comes to dealing with the kids. For a guy, no matter how macho or alpha male or a Leo he is, when it comes to his daughter, he is a chicken with his 5 feet 10 inches and 200 lbs all wrapped around the little finger of a tiny six-year-old.

Nevertheless, orders must be followed, lest I am guilty of an additional count of insubordination.

"Come here!" I tell the six-year-old sternly and with a forced, raised voice (the only time the voice is reluctant to elevate to a higher pitch).

She comes closer, sheepishly, but more so, in disbelief at a voice that has never turned stern towards her, as far as the "beginning of time".

"I said you come here! Did you say that word?"

"Yes Baba... I am sorry!"

I grab her... I take her in my arms.

"That's my baby! I'm so proud of you!"

The kid's going to learn to cuss one day anyway, might as well learn from daddy. At least, it is strong bonding.

But of course, I over compensate with other deeds that don't befit my DNA. I

DO adhere to the wife's advice of choosing what to be angry about. As we fume over every irritating aspect of life (and trust me, there is no shortage in this country), we eat away on the pie chart that is our emotion. They add up, till all 360 degrees of the otherwise fresh circle that we start off with in the morning, are fully consumed. We are left with none—which could've been used to play with our kids, to chat with our loved ones, to close our eyes to while listening to Beethoven's Fifth Symphony. And we have just so many colourful ways to express our colourful words and thoughts, while reacting to those we don't even know, thanks to the internet, social media, interaction...just to name a few.

No wonder the beating heart gets such a beating. As if deep fried junk food, formalin, pollution, lack of exercise, unnecessary stress even from an unknown jerk's ridiculous Facebook post (there you go, my pulse just jumped from using the unnecessary adjective "ridiculous") is not enough.

Anger management expert Alamsur Rahman tells me that he told someone to increase the salary of that person's driver from BDT 20,000 per month to BDT 100,000 per month. After all, the latter has so much control over his boss's emotions.

So true. My friend's wife, a Harvard PhD psychologist, once told me: "You can't control how one acts, but you surely can control how YOU react." Then a Berkley MBA tells me with a grin: "Fight with those with whom your make-up sessions are worth looking forward to..." It so happens, she is my wife.

But I have been surprisingly and, well ok, relatively calm ever since Harvard and Berkeley joined forces. The cacophony of my kids is so much more soothing now, the traffic of Dhaka is something I look at as a time to catch up on my phone calls or even take power naps, the muck ups of every "best in class" service provider in town is something I chill over as part of the package...

Why let things stress your arteries. Is it really worth it? We owe it to ourselves to know how to react. We owe it to others. Who knows what stress we caused you AB, aka, Ayub Bachchu. But we lost you only too soon—your heart stopped too early, the same heart that got millions to pound to your magic strumming of six strings. Who will now play the blues with you throwing us into the blues? There was so much to be done, to be heard, to be seen, to be composed, to be sung, to be loved, to be jammed, to be toured, to be released, to be hummed, to be strummed...

R.I.P....no, wait, that doesn't suit you. J.I.P.—Jam In Peace, my friend. Sock, no wait, rock it up to the heavens...

Naveed Mahbub is an engineer at Ford & Qualcomm USA and CEO of IBM & Nokia Siemens Networks Bangladesh turned comedian (by choice), the host of ATN Bangla's *The Naveed Mahbub Show* and the founder of *Naveed's Comedy Club*. Email: Info@NaveedMahbub.com

ON THIS DAY IN HISTORY

OCTOBER 20, 1935
'THE LONG MARCH' ENDED

The Long March, a retreat undertaken by the armed faction of the Chinese Communist Party a year prior, ended at Yan'an, in Shaanxi, China. The event brought Mao Zedong to prominence.

CROSSWORD BY THOMAS JOSEPH

ACROSS

- 1 Some jabs
- 6 Fire proof?
- 11 Outdo
- 12 Blockade
- 13 Drain cover
- 14 Intent look
- 15 Granola bit
- 16 "Falconer" author John
- 18 "That's revolting!"
- 19 Church no-no
- 20 UFO pilots
- 21 Abound
- 23 Musial and Getz
- 25 Friend of Harry and Hermione
- 27 Attack command
- 28 Fly like a hawk
- 30 Use a pestle

DOWN

- 1 Bank site button
- 2 Incense
- 3 Boxing category
- 4 Chiding sound
- 5 Blueprint data
- 6 Agrees
- 7 Locale
- 8 1978 Warren Beatty film
- 9 Wading birds
- 10 Prophets
- 17 Towel word
- 22 Cattle call
- 24 Objective
- 26 "Wish I could help"
- 28 Comfort
- 29 Place for a pint
- 31 Medium meeting
- 32 Stable group
- 33 "Aladdin" villain
- 35 Weather aid
- 38 Funeral stand
- 42 Bulldog backer

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11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28 29 30 31 32 33 34 35 36 37 38 39 40 41 42 43 44 45 46

9-28

YESTERDAY'S ANSWER

C L E F L E H A R
R I A L S E D A T E
O K R A T A I L E D
W E N T B U S T
B A S A L T S I G N
A L E R T M I L L S
R O W F A C E T S
T E N T P O L E
R A C I S T F R E E
A D U L T S O M I T
P E E L S E A R S

BEETLE BAILEY BY MORT WALKER

SOMEONE FELL OFF THE CLIFF YESTERDAY

IT KEEPS HAPPENING

AVOID CLIFF!

4-14

BABY BLUES BY KIRKMAN & SCOTT

THIS IS NICE.

IT'S LIKE A BIG BATH-TUB.

YEAH...

...EXCEPT THAT I HARDLY EVER PEE IN THE BATH-TUB.

EEEEEEEEEEEEK!!!