



A JOURNEY *of* PATHOS

Tell us about your journey in the entertainment industry?

I embarked upon the industry somewhat sloppily. When I acted in *Sukher Chharpotro* which was a direction of my father Mohammad Barkatullah, I was just an amateur with no significant commitment to this vocation. I had no expectation or ambition of picking up a stature in this industry. But my fortune had clearly some other plans, hence I have been working here till date. The curve of my journey in this industry is quite collateral, I would say. Notwithstanding the fact that I had to miss out on ample opportunities of reaching a certain status quo as an actor due to my family responsibilities. I still consider myself extremely grateful for what I am today. **Among your recent works, the audience has greatly appreciated your performance in 'Babui Pakhir Basa' of Sokal Ahmed and 'Basic Ali' series of Gautam Kouri. Tell us your experience of working in these dramas.**

Rakib bhai, the scriptwriter of *Babui Pakhir Basa* is one of the gifted playwrights of our industry. He is what you call an exceptionally innovative scriptwriter. His prolific writing is the central attraction of this drama. I just went with the amazing storyline and portrayed my character. As for *Basic Ali*, it is a drama inspired from the *Basic Ali* cartoon series. I have worked in all the seasons of it chronologically. When the director purveyed me this character, he himself was wavering as to how my

impression of appearing as a middle-aged, whacky, mother figure on the screen would be. I honestly took delight in playing the mother, it imbued me with a sense of satisfaction as an actor. My character in this drama is not of a quintessential mother. This mother is very amusing and loopy who drives everyone up the wall.

How would you assess our young directors?

The young directors are more innovative and they have the pluck of indulging in experimental projects. Many of them have come out of the threshold of the traditional form of drama which I appreciate. But at the same time, the entire circle of our Bangla drama and cinema is yet very uncultivated and bereft of quality. There are still some directors out there who expect us to act without any script, some put three or four characters together and manufacture an entire drama; and the frequently appearing advertisements outface the viewers. These are problematic. This is an epoch of unrestrained media where everyone is entitled to several alternatives and thus we are falling behind.

You are still one of the remarkable names in the dance fraternity of Bangladesh. Why are you somehow hacked off with dance?

I have secluded myself up here in the acting industry and got far detached from dance. The onus is on time, leeway and somewhat my immensely hectic schedule as well. Also, in my opinion, in our country, dance is treated in a condescending manner where no sponsor

is up for investing in the onward movement of dance; whereas plenty of investors are geared up for putting money into television dramas and commercial cinemas. On Eid shows, some untrained celebrity faces would dance and the skilled, well versed dancers would always remain behind the curtains. In the cultural exchange programmes worldwide and in every nook of the world dance is regarded as the most identical and indigenous form of art. We need more patronization and intentness to revamp the situation of dance in our country.

We have got glimpses of Bijori Barkatullah as host of some talk shows. Have you recently taken a break from hosting as well?

I made my debut as a host with *Jaa Kichu Prothom* which was aired on *Desh TV*. Then I hosted *Mukh O Mukhorota*. The best thing about those shows was that the organizers never interfered with my entitlement to expression. I used to do the shows according to my own perceptions. Freedom is a requisite for me while hosting a show. Dancing to the tune of organizers is not my cup of tea. People had warmly accepted me as the host because I was honest with whatever I was doing and my shows reflected that integrity. I got many other offers afterwards but none of them could match my preconditions.

You appeared in Amitabh Reza's 'Aynabaji'. How was the experience?

Amitabh is a friend and close associate of mine. It was a very small appearance, a

guest appearance to be precise. I used to get an abundance of proposals of acting in cinema at the early stage of my career. At that time, the set of circumstances in FDC was adverse and antagonistic to the reforms of our culture. I did not want to go lost in that direful crowd. When the situation gradually improved, and artistic, story-based films brought about a new wind of change in the cinema industry, I did not get any offers, at least not the kind of films I wanted to be part of.

Tell us about your inspiration.

My parents have been my constant inspiration throughout my life. My mother was my first dance mentor and critic. Baba, who is a man of letters and who has spent half of his life reading world classics and listening to Rabindranath and Nazrul has always left his remarks on me; hence I also grew the habit of reading. And my daughter Urbana, without whom I would have shattered for a thousand times, is also my inspiration. My whole family is very supportive. I am blessed to have had them by my side in every step of my life.

Do you have any message for the readers?

We are getting fascinated by the degenerate culture these days. How do such perverted tastes get a space and cast their vulgarity over us, I wonder. My request to the readers would be to please prop up our indigenous culture and do not let yourself go with the ongoing flow of corrupt culture.

By Sharbani Datta