

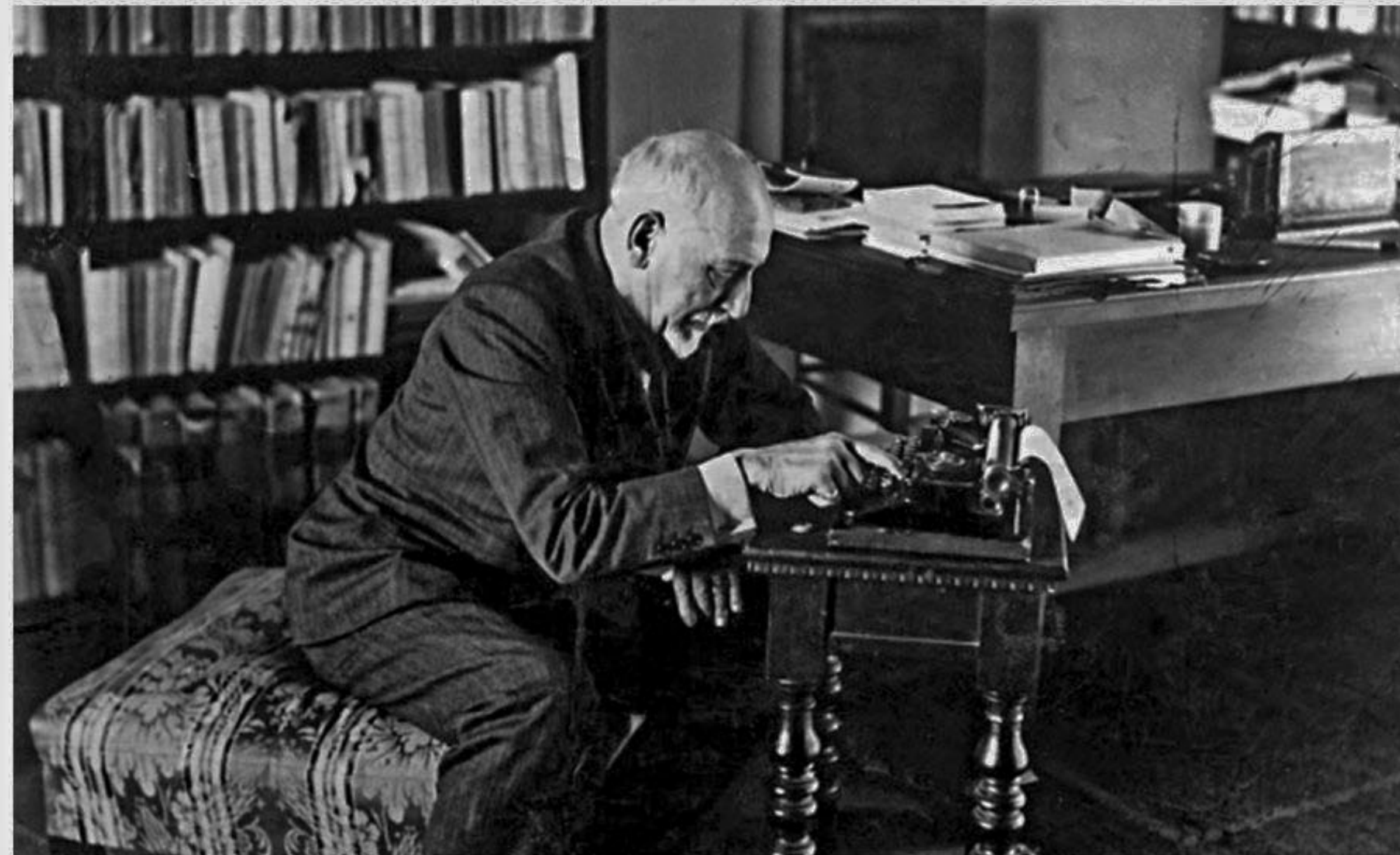
# LUIGI PIRANDELLO

Luigi Pirandello is not a very familiar name among our mainstream theater practitioners, for as far as my memory goes, none of his plays have been translated and staged in Bangladesh so far. Pirandello is an Italian playwright, novelist, poet and short story writer. He wrote his plays, poems, novels and short stories during early part of the last millennium. It was a turbulent time socially, politically and economically.

By the time Pirandello started writing his plays, Henrik Ibsen had created a great impact in the European social scenario, by writing *Ghosts* and *A Doll's House*—which are still marked to be the beginning of the portrayal of *realism* on the stage. The idea of his *realism* expanded fast all over Italy, Spain, England, France and Russia—though each country had exclusive view points and interpretations of the term nurtured by its existing social, political and economic conditions.

Two major historical events of that time influenced Pirandello's mindset—First World War (1914-1918) and Russian Revolution (1917). Added to that was the incidence of Mussolini's coming to power. Mussolini's *National Fascist Party* ruled Italy between 1922 and 1943. Though Pirandello died in 1936, three years before the beginning of the Second World War, Mussolini's Fascist dictatorial ideas and his aligning with Hitler, started to be distinctly felt in the social and political realms of Italy. Pirandello became a victim of that, not by opposing it, but by supporting Mussolini. History has it that all political ideologies need support and endorsements from so

called intelligentsia—in Italy at that time, Pirandello happened to be one such exerting intellectual, and he was readily picked up by Mussolini to validate his political ideologies. This happens to be the storyline of a bioplay by Chandan Sen, titled *Pirandello O Puppeteer*—in this case, Mussolini being the puppeteer. The play is directed by Arup Rai.



Chandan Sen has penned a few other bio-plays too and quite successfully for that matter. I saw the play in Kolkata during my recent visit there—the lone play that I managed to witness in that trip of mine! Seeing the play, I could parallel Pirandello's situation with many of our so called men of letters; who either for their survival, (!) or for gaining status in

society, supported many of our previous dictators and brought shameful disaster in their lives. *Intellectuals* of this kind still abound in our society. But one thing is true: none of them were or are as talented and commendable as Pirandello was!

Overall, I did not like Chandan Sen's play very much, for it contained more words than actions. I may sound

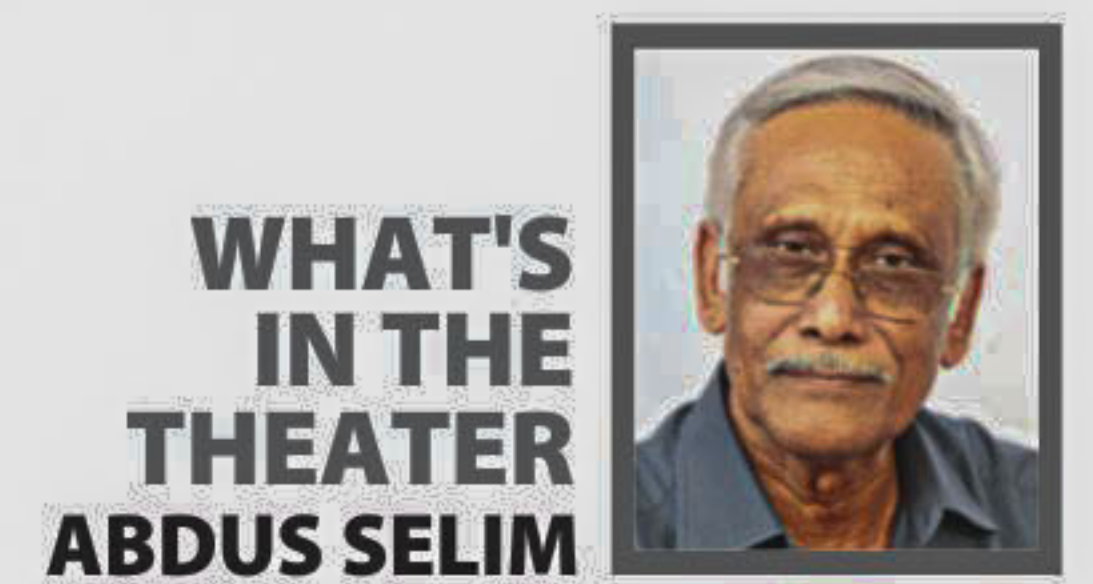
traditional, but I strongly hold that in a play, if it genuinely claims to be a play, words need to be put skillfully and aesthetically to action or how come it is a performing art! Most part of Chandan's play is mere narrative of Pirandello's life.

The other thing is its authenticity. It is a bioplay, and *bios*, be they fictions, motion pictures or plays, are difficult zones for

the writers/playwrights/directors to traverse with steady footing—for they have to tactfully mingle their imaginations with real facts after much deliberations. In the play, Chandan Sen showed that Pirandello had a very unhappy life with his parents—his father was a downright materialistic person who could do anything for his worldly gains. He even extorted dowry from his in-law by torturing his wife to finance his business. He never liked his son's writing poetry or turning his back on so called life that he preferred. Pirandello loved his mother as much as he hated his father—which the playwright used as Pirandello's Oedipus complex. I did a little research on Pirandello after seeing the play and I traced no such hint in his biography—though it is true that his father took dowry from his in-law to invest in his business.

One intriguing finding of mine is both Rabindranath and Romain Rolland (French dramatist, novelist, essayist, art historian, mystic, and also a long time good friend of Rabindranath) supported Mussolini's political views, although Rabindranath later denounced it in black and white. Luigi Pirandello too, at the far end of his life, condemned the ideologies of Mussolini's *National Fascist Party* and formally announced his resignation from it. This can be cited as a good example for our so called intellectuals to follow.

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WHAT'S  
IN THE  
THEATER  
ABDUS SELIM

## Dreams do come true!

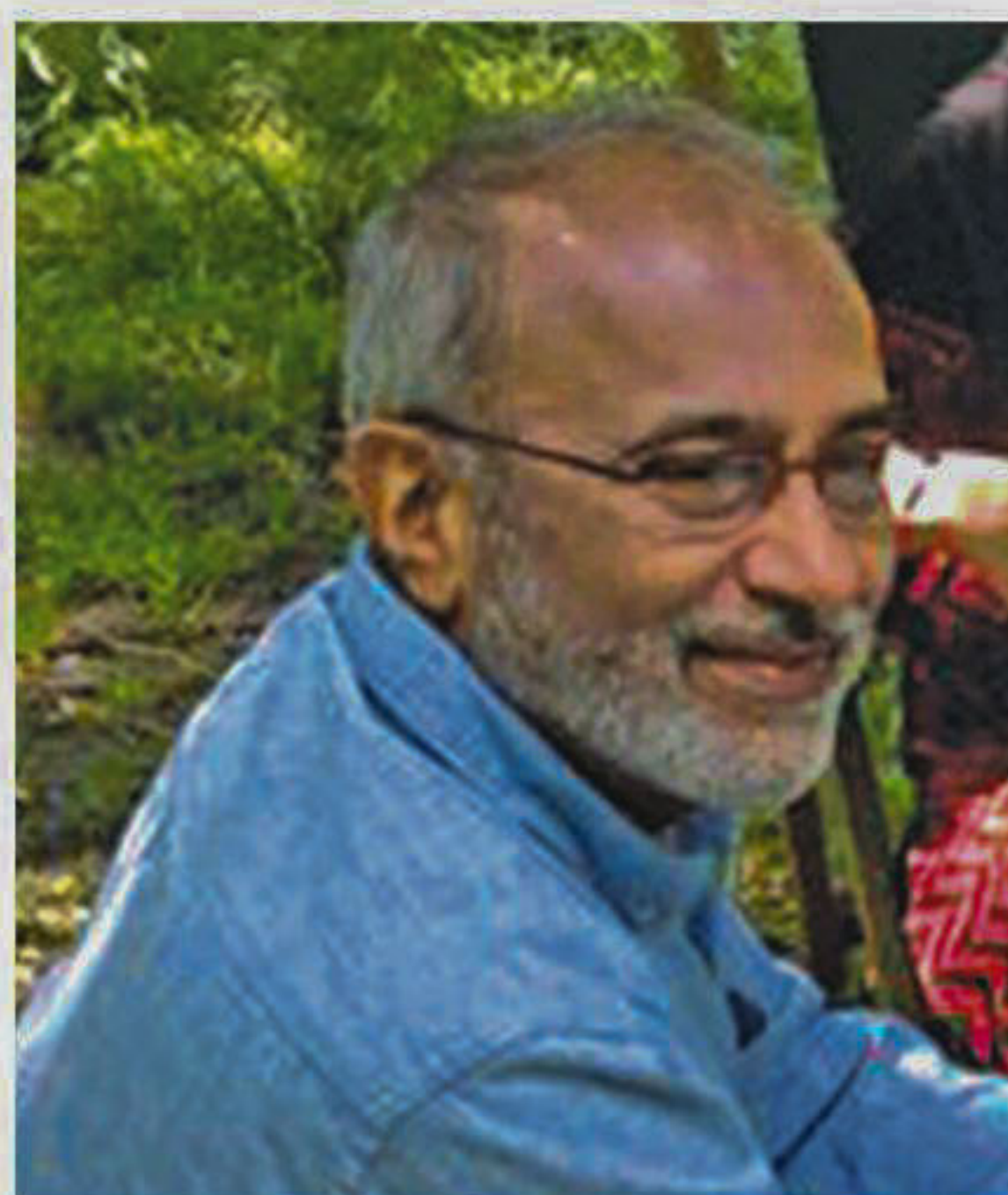


LIFE'S  
LYRICS  
NASHID KAMAL

For some, dreams come true whilst for some, they don't. Take for example, my own self. As a child, I watched a procession of cinema actresses entering our house and leaving them. It was the sixties when my Aunt Ferdausi Begum was lending her voice to the films and all the ladies in the lead roles Shabnam, Kabori, Rosy, Sultana Zaman and Shabana (to name a few) frequented our house. I always thought that someday, I shall be a film star, but it didn't happen. However, I have one close friend for whom, his childhood dreams came true. This friend is Khozaima Ziauddin!

Khozaima was born in Dhaka, went to school and college in Dhaka and studied undergraduate in Shimer College, Chicago, USA (1983). As per his family

tradition, he came back from USA and joined the family business. Ever since being in Shimer College, with concentrations in 19<sup>th</sup> century literature from Oxford. He wanted to pursue his Masters in English and maybe aim for PhD. When three of us flocked in a group, both of us, Refaat (now Justice Dr. Syed



Refaat Ahmed) and I, went for higher studies aiming to be academics, Khozaima wanted to do the same. He always told us, "One day I shall wind up all my business and just go for my Masters and become a teacher like you." It took him many years to arrive at this point, but he did so!

After his graduation, Khozaima got married and had two lovely daughters, both grownups now. He looked after his parents, his siblings and finally when the time was right, he sold his business! He actually sold the business that he had inherited and expanded, downsized everything and got ready for being a student. Unbelievably and true to his word, Khozaima went back to university. He completed with flying colours, earning a *Chancellor's Gold Medal* in 2012.

Prof Imran Rahman (then VC of ULAB), who has the discerning eyes of the expert recruiter recruited him for his University of Liberal Arts, Bangladesh (ULAB). Khozaima Ziauddin teaches English there; his sections are always filled up on the day that they are announced. He is one of the most

popular teachers. Other organizations hire him for a day or two to train the employees of various organizations (spoken English, conversational English). Khozaima loves his students and even looks after those who are in financial need. He knows his friends give *zakat* and from those funds, he helps some of the needy students at ULAB. In the middle of our friends', chit chat he gets calls from distressed students, whose mother is ill, or needs a ride or reference to the hospital or some other assistance, truly in line with the mentors that teachers are meant to be. It is so rare these days. It is such a feeling of fulfillment to watch him in this role, the students adore him and vice versa.

His determination and resolve to make his dream come true has been a source of inspiration to many. What I find most interesting and noteworthy is his resolve to become a teacher and give back to society. Many of us aspire to do so, how many of us can be over the moon?

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Nashid Kamal is a Professor of Medical Demography, Nazrul exponent and translator.