



# SHOUTS OF APPLAUSE

## WHAT'S IN THE THEATER ABDUS SELIM



I am not talking about any common shouts of applause that we often come across in any political meet or in any mesmerizing performance by a performing maestro—it's the youth I am talking about—and specifically, about the inbuilt potential they have to overcome any impediments of any kind. This reminds me of *World Festival of Youth* held in then, East Berlin in 1973. It was a very significant year for Bangladesh, as the Fest took place only after two years of its independence. I remember a big delegation of youth from Bangladesh participated the Festival and upon their return, a song—which was made very popular during early sixties by a very famous American singer of the time, Joan Baez—was even translated into Bangla. The first line of the song sings "We shall overcome, we shall over come, we shall overcome someday . . .". Youths of the sixties all over the world, including that of then East Pakistan, comprised a huge fan of this legendary singer, who is still alive and most of all, supported the cause of our '71 Independence War, by raising fund through charity events.

That conviction to overcome the deterrents of social equities, and to walk the path of friendship and progress by the world youths has entered its 46<sup>th</sup> year, and it is time perhaps we, Bangladeshi youths in particular, evaluated our accomplishments. Recent day newspapers are filled with disturbingly pessimistic news, providing saddening statistics about unemployment, drug addiction, criminal and fraudulent practices and so on and so forth. There are youth success stories too, but comparatively, those happen to be painfully insignificant.

What is wrong with our youth then? My plain observation is, lack of proper national planning and guidance. When I say *lack of planning and guidance*, I mean pragmatic preparation and implementation of the state mechanism to achieve the goal. Youth is the essential constituent of developmental force. But, they are mostly deluded into spoon-fed and exam-oriented education that ultimately indulge them craving for jobs that start with either fat salaries or absolute power, or scope for earning money by any means and being rich overnight. In this pursuit, their parents, teachers and the society at large; actively encourage them. As such, the youths are in no way to blame, for

their gurus mostly misguide them.

More often than not, our local newspapers carry news of success stories of our youths living abroad—either immigrant Bangladeshis or diaspora. Personally, I have some reservations about being so elated about their achievements. Yes, they belong to Bangladeshi clan, no doubt, but they no longer bear in them the sense of belonging to the country, or they would return to their motherland to do something that could make us all proud. Their achievements do not add to our national pride in its true sense. I acknowledge, there are numerous constraints in Bangladesh, but the youth potential can break the barrier too, and there are examples of that as well—if not plenty.

My brooding about our youths animated me anew, from my recent witnessing an event sorted out in concert with *Crown Cement* and *Prothom Alo* (corporate social philanthropy!), titled *Tarunner Joitshob* at *Central Women's University*. We, along with our young female students, listened to the narratives of triumphs of six accomplished ladies, in between standup annotations by Messers Munir Hasan and Ghulam Sumdany Don. Overall, it appeared to be a stunningly inspiring experience for the young female learners of the university. But, why is our youth-success so handful? It is not merely the absence of their initiatives—the reality lies somewhere else. Recent statistics reveal that a huge number of foreigners, mostly from India and Sri Lanka, have occupied our local job markets (the fact was discussed in the event too). The reason, I think as an educationist, is our quality/competence crises. Reports on talent competitiveness also say (*The Daily Star*, January 25, 2019), Bangladesh stands at the bottom ten, rating 118<sup>th</sup> among 125 countries in global index. We often receive complaints from employers that they do not get qualified and competent candidates for mid and high level pink, blue and white collar employments or entrepreneurship, and the hard fact is, they are not generally provided with right kind of education for such jobs.

So, it is our education system to blame, not the young learners (of all genders) and I strongly hold, no inspiration of any sort would work as a nostrum for them if our teaching/learning ambiance is not overhauled.

Yamamoto has portrayed aptly and ably in a Japanese play, *One Hundred Sacks of Rice* that appropriate education is a strong developmental investment—and perhaps that is the sole reason why Japan is so technically advanced and rich.

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## LIFE'S LYRICS NASHID KAMAL

# Music for therapy

Samia Mahbub Ahmad, a beautiful lady sang with us on the same stage in the *Nazrul Mela* held in Washington DC in September 2018. I had listened to her twice before, once in the Omni auditorium and another time in the *Indira Gandhi Cultural Centre (IGCC)*, on both counts in Dhaka.

Samia is primarily based in Bethesda, Maryland (USA) and divides her times between India and Bethesda, living four months in each place. She maintains her strict regime, practising three hours daily, performing in the US, India and Bangladesh, and also teaching three to four lessons per week. She obtained her MA (1994) and PhD degrees in Sociology from the University of Maryland, in 2005.

However, for the last twenty years; Samia, a disciple of Sri Tapan Baidya and Padmasri Vidushi Sumitra Guha, has been a professional performing and teaching artist of Hindustani classical music, in the Kirana Gharana. She has traveled the world, won numerous awards and performed for high profile individuals, including Archbishop Desmond Tutu, former President and First Lady Jimmy and Rosalynn Carter.

How is it, having studied Sociology, she is following a career in music? Samia answers back, "I see important parallels between my dual passions for music and sociology. For me, both are about connecting to people across boundaries."

She continues to say, "The universal language of music upholds a spirit of unity, in spite of differences in languages, ethnicity, race, culture or religion. Music celebrates commonalities in the midst of differences."

As for her future plans, Samia hopes to widen her practice of music to forge a partnership with health practitioners, who incorporate music to provide therapy to people faced with mental, physical and emotional challenges, to help them cope and relax.

It takes me back to a discussion with my Guruji Pandit Jasraj in 2016. He said, "The ragas have been designed that way, to bring peace. For example, rag *Darbari* is sung at night, it is supposed to bring sleep". Pandit Jasraj has done some research into this area. I hope Samia is able to do so too. The things that we learn can benefit others.

My message to Samia, "Don't worry about saving these songs! And if one of our instruments breaks, it doesn't matter..."

We have fallen into the place

Where everything is music (Jalauddin Rumi)"

I think Samia's philosophy says that too, when one knows the difference between Rag *Hambir* and *Kedar*, what is there more to yearn for but sing *Ajo kade kanone koyelia* (Poet Kazi Nazrul Islam's song sung by Samia at the Omni hall, Dhaka).

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