

THROUGH THE EYES

A 'RENAISSANCE' MAN

Professor Imran Rahman is the dean of School of Business, University of Liberal Arts of Bangladesh (ULAB), and was the vice chancellor of (ULAB) for six years, until 2017. Additionally, he is one of the directors at Sonali Investments Limited, and also is a member of the band, 'Renaissance'. In an exclusive interview, he shares stories about his life and career.

A cultural beginning

My mother, Malka Parveen Banu was once a renowned singer and the second Muslim female artiste of *Radio Pakistan* in Dhaka. I started playing the guitar on my own, along with my friend, Faisal Siddiqui Bogi. *Renaissance* was first started in 1985, and although I was associated with the band during that time, I went abroad for higher studies. I used to always have a guitar at my disposal and used to perform in different domestic events. When I returned in 1991, I go and visit shows where *Renaissance* would play. Sometimes, I would even sing a few songs with them. However, I officially joined the band in 1997, as a percussionist. After Bogi left the band, I became the guitarist and vocalist.

A masterful individual

By profession, I am a university teacher. Most people who know me professionally, actually do not know that I sing as well. Once, at an important seminar, I was seated next to the chairman of UGC. After the seminar, a music performance was to take place, where *Renaissance* would be playing. So, I joined the rest of the members on stage and the chairman was baffled. He knew me as a vice chancellor, so it was quite surprising to see me perform. If I am being honest, not many people can digest the fact that I am a rock musician, along with a finance-ed professor. The concept is quite strange to most people.

Tracing inspiration

I grew up listening to songs of Rabindranath Tagore, Kazi Nazrul Islam, Hemanta Mukherjee and Atul Prasad Sen on the radio. When I was introduced to western music, *The Beatles* were the first major band I listened to. I also listened to the songs of Stevie Wonder. I fell in love with jazz; rock jazz to be specific. Jazz is a little difficult to get used to, and I like the fact that improvisation is key to jazz music, as notes are never written down. When we are playing for *Renaissance*, we do not play the same song in the same way twice. There are some jazz influences in our way of performing, I believe.

Leisure pursuits

My hobbies include travelling and meeting new people, especially young individuals. I love to help them or mentor them, given the chance. I also am very interested in technology. I cannot write songs, but I love listening to them. I do not really listen to music in my leisure time; instead I listen to them while exercising. I love reading books and online news and articles. I am very interested in current affairs. Gathering new knowledge and information is kind of like a hobby of mine.

Thoughts about the newer generation

I play the radio when I am travelling by car and listen to the new artists of the younger generation. It is true that I do like their work, but I do not know the names of these artists. Radio stations rarely mention the songs' and artists' names before or after a song plays. This is quite inconvenient. I cannot listen to the song again if I want to. This has to be changed. However, I love the works of Hridoy Khan, Arnob, Habib, Armin, Musa, Imran Ahmed, *Nemesis*, *Shunno*. They are all brilliant.

Past vs. present

Albums get pirated almost immediately after they are released, so the producers who release them face severe losses. Thus, the concept of an album has been forgotten. People can now simply download songs and make their own 'albums'. In our time, buying an album would be the highlight of our day. When I lived in London, we used to browse record stores and ask them to play some songs. We used to sit in the booth for hours, listening to music. When I had the opportunity to buy a record, I would take proper care of it. The musicians of today are very creative and are skilled at playing instruments. However, they must strengthen their foundation and learn to read, as well as write music. I would like to advise them to keep on creating music and hope that they will gain recognition worldwide soon.

Insight to life

I am a social person, and involved with many organisations aside from my teaching profession. I attend their programmes and encourage others to do the same. A lot of my time is spent there. I want to release a CD of my cover songs for my friends and family, as I only have one recorded song. I mostly sing English songs; and the market for that is quite restricted here. So, I only get to play at live events. I would also like to try music composition.

By Amina Hossian

