

TV SHOW REVIEW

NUANCED, COLOURFUL AND MEMORABLE

DEEPARGHYA DUTTA BARUA

Star vs. the Forces of Evil, crudely abbreviated as SvtFoE, is the most recent major Disney show that met its conclusion last May after airing for four seasons. As regrettably cheesy as the name sounds, the show did hold a memorable place in Disney's arsenal of mostly forgettable shows.

The show follows a formula similar to most of the popular entries found in Western animation of climbing up a slow ladder while shifting from a filler-heavy and mostly nonsequential territory to a more mature and plot-centric approach. The show does so in a weighted manner, not straying too far from its light-hearted roots unlike shows exhibiting extremely polarised developments.

As for a small synopsis, the show revolves around Star, a magical princess from the Kingdom of Mewni who gets sent to earth to hone her magical abilities. There she meets the Diaz family, with Marco Diaz becoming her partner in crime as they go on towards various mischievous adventures. The unappealing synopsis doesn't do the show any justice. Like a lot of Western animated shows, the show doesn't pick up any pace until the very end of the first season as all the episodes before that are mostly light-hearted and sometimes, cheesy filler episodes. Most of them are not bad or unenjoyable by any means, as filler episodes too can contribute to the tidbits of character development and set a pretty wholesome tone in general.

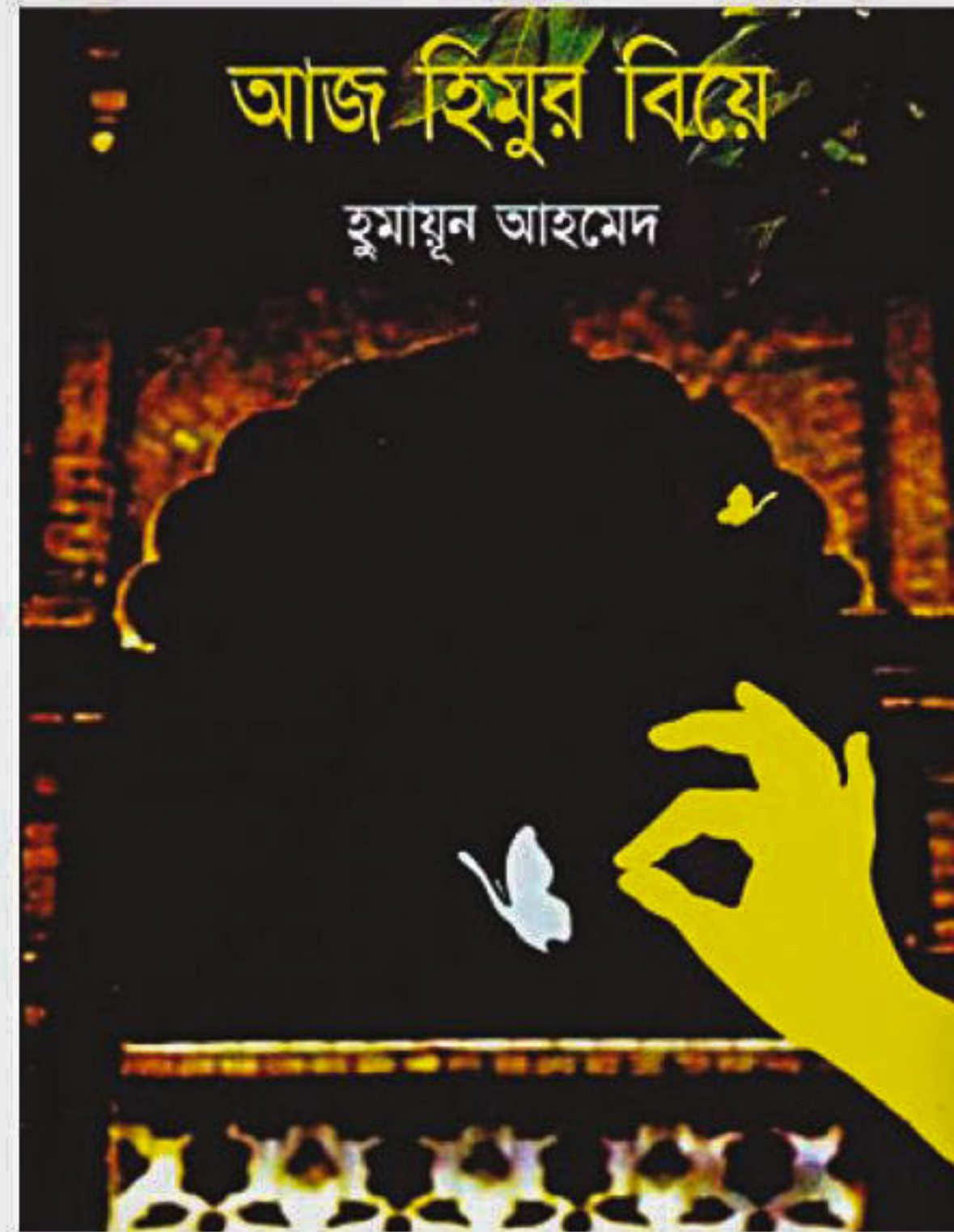
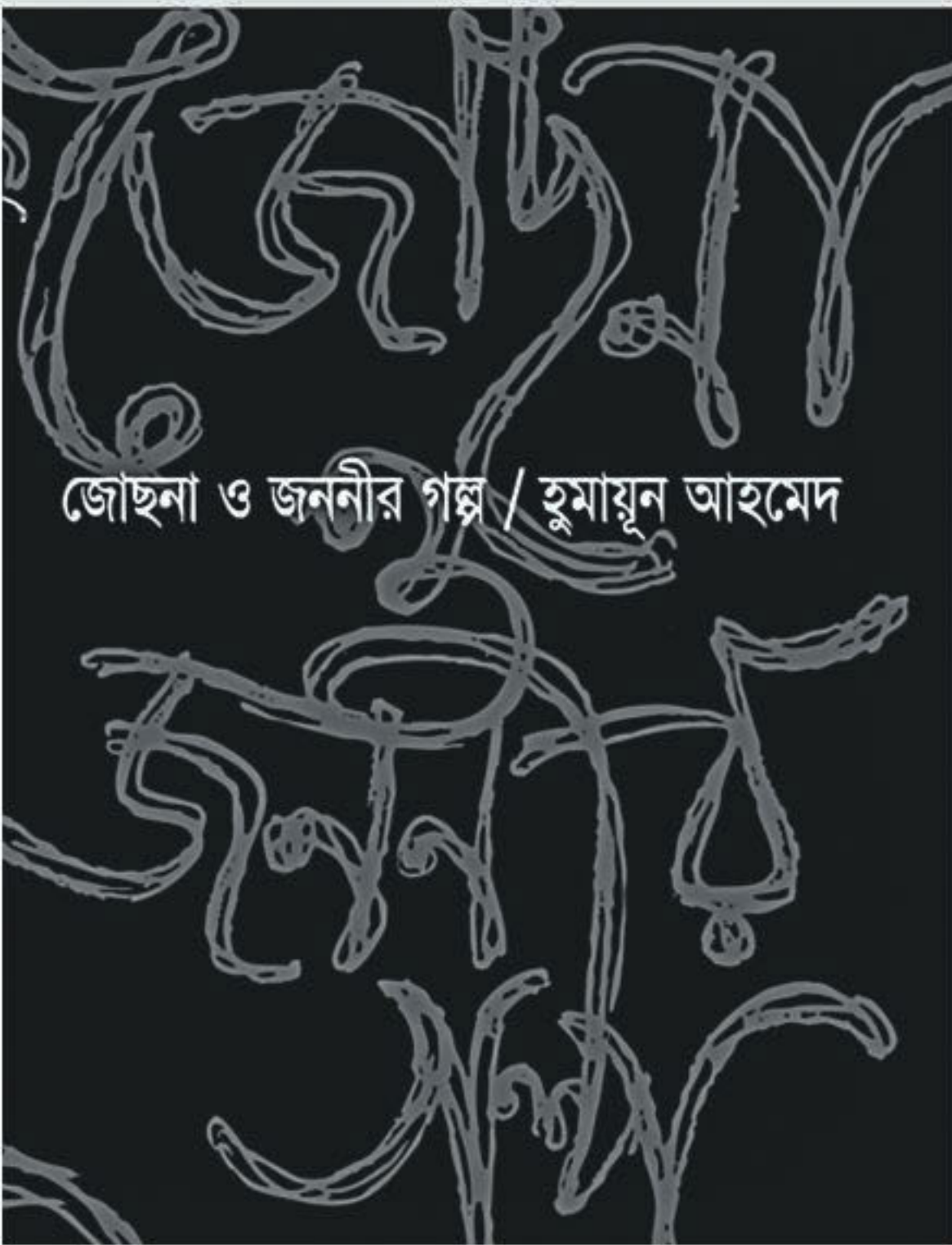
The third season of the show is its magnum opus as it is excellently executed, with the second season acting as a decent build-up. It mostly resonates themes of self-exploration, friendships, and relationships with a subtle touch of politics at the end. The show doesn't shy away from showing the flaws of the characters regardless of their roles in the plot and doesn't guarantee a happy ending or a

redemption arc for all. Ludo, for example, started as an obnoxious textbook Western animation antagonist with trite lines and ridiculous defeats engraved to his fate. Throughout the rest of the show, he gets abused, fails to find his place and slowly devolves into insanity, a polar opposite of Tom, who transforms from a hot-headed and egomaniac persona into a completely reasonable and likeable character in the later seasons. The show's protagonists are not free from malicious emotions such as jealousy or greed for power either. There really isn't a well-defined objective as each season spawns a new issue for Star to tackle and she does so by opening new doors to her powers and eventually embracing a bold sacrifice at the very end.

Now for the complaints. The show fails to balance out the fillers with its plot-centric episodes and seems to suffer from an identity crisis when its tone changes to embrace heavier themes. It's a Disney show after all, and the limitation on the number of seasons imposed on it had always been obvious given how the network has dealt with other shows. Given that it's a story-based show, it makes less sense to populate the last season with fillers and gear it more towards tightly-knit episodes. And there are certain relationships in the show that were poorly fleshed out, ending before they even started. The show also fails to escape a lot of Western animation stereotypes.

Is the show worth watching? Yes, but only when you do have a lot of time to spare. While it's true that SvtFoE is nowhere near as succinct or as brilliant as Gravity Falls, it still holds a candle to the recent state of Western animation. It's that show you know you would've held very dearly if it were a part of your childhood.

Deeparghya Dutta Barua likes to feel apprehensive whenever there are more than two people around. Help him in finding new ways of butchering his name at arg274@pm.me



MUST-READ Humayun Ahmed Novels

AYSHA ZAHEEN

Seven long years have passed since Humayun Ahmed's demise but his novels still tend to intrigue readers. Listed in this article are six novels by him that could provide an impressive gateway to Humayun Ahmed's literary achievements.

AMI EBONG AMRA

Ami Ebong Amra is a chilling tale of a mysterious man who confides in Misir Ali to having committed two cold-blooded murders. Misir Ali decides to tackle this unnerving mystery, backed by details of the man's own childhood. As Misir Ali delves further into the conundrum, he discovers the man's lies and truths.

This novel is an endeared classic, having all the elements to spark one's interest and sustain it throughout.

AAJ HIMUR BIYE

Aaj Himur Biye starts with Majeda, Himu's aunt, having unceremoniously set him up with a rather temperamental and spirited young girl. Himu decides to help out the bride-to-be-but-in-distress, getting himself into implicating situations.

Released well into the 2000s, this novel proves that our beloved writer never lost his spark well into his writing career. As always, one cannot but crave more once the novel has been read.

KOTHAO KEU NEI

This heart-rending tale follows Muna, who lives with her idealistic uncle and his family, and Baker Bhai, a bike-gang leader. With the progression of the novel, Muna takes on more dire responsibilities while Baker Bhai devotes himself to helping out other people.

This novel is raw and heart-breaking. Baker Bhai is an immortal character in Bangla literature, whose kindness and morality never fail to intrigue readers. Muna is dignified and sensible, whose misjudgements and oft-stated upright behaviours fail to tamper her charm and

poise. The novel leaves an everlasting impact on every mind.

JOCHNA O JONONIR GOLPO - MATA HAOWA - DEYAL

These three books are Humayun Ahmed's brilliant attempts to represent our history by means of fiction.

Jochna O Jononir Golpo is the first of three, released back in 2004. Based on the Liberation War of 1971, the story begins when a high school teacher visits his brother and recounts various incidents relating to the characters. One of Humayun Ahmed's bests, it is a moving and beautiful tale. This novel spans over 500 pages, yet cannot be recommended enough.

Matal Haowa is a novel written in 2010, set around the time of the mass uprising of 1969. Though dubbed as historical fiction, it speaks more of the people of that time. The story kicks off when Nadia visits her home on vacation and is arranged to be married to a handsome and respectable man. With its progression, the novel gets rather unsettling and ends on a melancholic note. The book leaves readers feeling downhearted for every major character. Due to the writer's attempt to incorporate his own experiences in the novel, it becomes even more riveting.

Deyal, published in 2013, is the last novel written by Humayun Ahmed. It centres the post-war political unrest with imaginary incorporations within real life events. The first five chapters were published separately before the release of the unfinished novel itself. While many complain about the novel being average compared to his previous works, it still provides quite an interesting picture of our well-known historic events.

Humayun Ahmed's contribution to Bangla literature is unparalleled since the birth of Bangladesh. All his books are available nation-wide, so it is never too late to get your hands on them.

Aysha likes her coffee bitter and her tea sweet. Send in prayers at zaheenaysha@gmail.com.

