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it under the name, *Unoshottorer Chhora*. We started to receive positive feedbacks, and people were appreciating our work. Seeing all the love and support, Shahadat suggested doing something different, and my story as a cartoonist took its next step. I used to draw cartoon for an English weekly newspaper, called *Express* that had Zahir Raihan as the editor, and in another newspaper named *Kalyan Forum*. Zainul Abedin sir supported me a lot and used to help me get work. With his and Shahadat's support, I delved into the world of a cartoonist. Later, I got the opportunity to study abroad, and learned wood art there. I practised it for a while. After the war, I came back to Bangladesh, and decided to not do cartoons anymore. I had been doing political cartoons all throughout the 1960s, and I didn't want to continue it. Shahadat came to me, and

wanted my help in making cartoon strips. Eventually, he managed to convince me, and I decided to create a character of a child in the shades of Sesame Street. I was inspired by the cartoon character, *Charlie Brown* and came up with the idea to create *Tokai*. A few weeks after *Tokai* came out, we started getting letters from people, talking about how they loved it.

**Durjoy Rahman:** I have to ask Rafiqun Nabi sir something, why did you use the name, Ronobi?

**Rafiqun Nabi:** Back when I was protesting against the Pakistanis, and made posters and cartoons, I needed a pseudonym. That's why I started using the name *Ronobi*.

**Afzal Hossain:** I remember, back in the 70s, comics would be published in the daily paper, where Rafiqun Nabi sir would

illustrate the art and Shahadat bhai would write the script. It was very difficult as he wasn't a comic artist; he was a painter. Drawing according to a script is easy for a comic artist, but it must have been very difficult for Rafiqun Nabi sir.

**Rafi Hossain:** We are aware that our industry, as a whole is going through a transitional phase. In this crisis, can we expect a ray of hope?

**Afzal Hossain:** Of course, we can. If we observe around us, we can find a lot of praiseworthy projects, and we must learn to appreciate good work. Nowadays, when we attend an art exhibition, we only find those with an understanding of art, attending it. But, we have a duty and responsibility to make everyone understand and appreciate art. I have been to many exhibitions, and I have noticed that people with no understanding of art, usually don't spend enough time in front of a picture.

**Durjoy Rahman:** I think Afzal bhai has a point. Those who have no idea about art must be encouraged by those who do. It is our duty to make them aware of it. The lack of encouragement is creating a crisis. In our country, people cannot take constructive criticism well. Whereas, in the other countries, the criticism makes them determined to do something better. But, in our country, we are killing a sprout of talent with our harsh words, and make them step aside before their work can be evaluated.

**Rafi Hossain:** We have a crisis in our film industry. Is it possible to solve this?

**Afzal Hossain:** Of course, it can be solved. It's not that we are only making bad films; a lot of good films are also being made. I think that we should all give credit where credit is due.

**Rafi Hossain:** Let's end our discussion here. It was a real pleasure talking to all of you.

Transcribed by **Ridwan Intisaar Mahbub**  
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a team to work with lifestyle and culture. I consider myself very fortunate to have been a part of that team.

**Rafi Hossain:** Rafiqun Nabi sir, can you tell us how you established the character, Tokai?

**Rafiqun Nabi:** Before going straight to how *Tokai* was established. I want to talk about my journey. I grew up in a politically turbulent environment, and initially, began drawing cartoons based on politics, processions and riots. Back then, it was difficult to draw cartoons, so after the independence I thought maybe cartoon will not be valued by the mass. I took part in the democratic political movement of 1969, and during that time, Shahadat and I decided to gather political poems from various sources. We collected poems from poets, like Shamsur Rahman, Al Mahmud and so on. We also collected poems from scholars who never wrote poems before, and created a small magazine issue. We had few pages blank right at the end, so I contributed my writings in it. Working on off-set was very new to us, so we used carbon drawings to have some picture in it, and published

