

IN REMEMBRANCE

Farewell, My Friend

PRITHWI RAJ

(AUGUST 18, 1986 - DECEMBER 15, 2019)



PHOTO: COLLECTED

It is with deep shock and profound sadness that I learn of the death of my friend Prithwi Raj. I now mourn the loss of a truly prodigious musical talent and a wonderful warm-hearted human being. Gone so young, and so suddenly. What kind of eulogy can I possibly write for this man who touched my life only briefly, but in such a powerful manner? Please allow me to tell a short story.

I met Prithwi in July of 2018, largely as a result of borrowing his guitar. I was visiting Bangladesh with my wife, Tammana Khan, who grew up in Dhanmondi. We were staying in her family home, not far from where Prithwi then lived. His mother happened to be the vocal teacher of my wife before she came to live with me in Canada. A musician myself, I had travelled without my guitar, and wanted to have one to play while in Dhaka for the few short weeks I was to be there. Prithwi offered his, and when we showed up to pick up the guitar, Prithwi also came to meet me (possibly curious about this Canadian visitor). I recall that we talked easily and openly, and at length, about music, art, the world, and many other things. Easy friendship, just like that.

At that time Prithwi made me an offer (after hearing me play a little) to come

to the radio station he then worked at as a host, to do a radio interview. I agreed on the spot. I had two weeks before the interview, and in the meantime, I had the pleasure of watching and listening to some of his music videos, in which his vocal mastery was on majestic display. I

was astonished at his talent.

The day of the interview arrived, and I showed up at the radio station. I'm not given to stage fright much anymore, but whatever nerves were still rattling around in me were easily calmed down by Prithwi and his co-host. It was truly an inspiring

forty-five minutes, playing songs and answering questions. I was absolutely delighted to perform for local listeners. The mood in the studio was warm, inviting, accepting and respectful — all the things a performing artist can want. However, the radio interview wasn't the end of it. Not at all.

When the time on air was up, Prithwi decided that he had just barely enough time to take the opportunity to video record a song that I had written for my wife. The song is very dear to my heart (as she is), and I know Prithwi sensed that. We moved down the hall, set up in a different studio, and went to work. I had never recorded a real video before in my life. I kept botching the song, and was about to give up in despair. And that's where Prithwi's magic went to work. He calmed me down and gently persuaded me. He was selflessly encouraging another musician to do their best. This is a gift I will never forget.

He has touched my life with his calm, easy, warm and gentle humanity. Sing across the heavens forever, my friend. I hear you.

Written by JP Merzetti
Toronto, Canada

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