



ECHOES BY
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The Joy of Listening to Radio

I
My listening ability developed better than my reading ability due to circumstances in life. I spent my initial childhood (1974-1979) in Aberystwyth in Wales, UK, in a beautiful sea-side university town, where my father was studying. At school, we all developed a habit of reading books. Roald Dahl was our JK Rowling. I had limited exposure to television, but BBC Radio would play in the background. My parents were fans of BBC Radio.

The first twist came when we returned to Bangladesh in 1979. I was nine. My grandpa (Dada) taught me Bangla from scratch. I entered mainstream education in 1980. It took me ages to read properly. By the time, I was prepared to read, a second twist came.

After my SSC in 1985, my parents gifted me a National Panasonic music system. The cassette player and the radio was my portal to an imaginary world. Just like social media is today's portal to a virtual world. Audio attracted me much more than the world of ink and paper. Thus began my journey with audio, through music and radio.

II
We didn't have mobile phones or the internet. Many of us didn't even have landphones. The night meant you were on your own. After studies, reading books, listening to music or following the radio was what you could do. I was never a voracious reader. The only option left was the audible world.

If devices are the portal for the night today, for me it was my music player. I spent endless nights listening to music or the radio. FM radio wasn't available in 1985. We relied on medium wave and short wave. Our choices weren't much, but we were content with what we had.

The radio channel was Bangladesh Betar (then Radio Bangladesh) and its different stations. World Music played between 2.30 and 3 PM on weekdays. There would be a special *Yesterday Once More* on Tuesdays that featured music from the 1960s and 1970s, my signature decades when it comes to music.

At night there was then and still is now, *Nishuti*. This was an assorted mixture. There was a 30-minute drama. There was a Bangla cinema songs programme



that exposed me to our master composer Alauddin Ali Shaheb and others. *Nishuti* played till almost 3 AM.

Short wave was my passport to the outside world. BBC World Service, Voice of America, All India Radio, Radio Ceylon, Radio Luxembourg, Australian Broadcasting; the list goes on. I can't express in words how much these programmes "informed, educated and entertained" me.

III
My love for radio resurfaced during my youth when I was studying at Cambridge. BBC Radio 2, Radio 3, Radio 4, Radio 5,

and World Service all had something for every mood and every occasion. It was in my Cambridge days I realised how beautiful BBC Radio was.

Technology was changing. Radio was ripe for a transformation. The Guardian, UK launched the world's first podcast in 2004. That changed radio forever. Soon, NPR (National Public Radio) of the USA started providing texts with their programmes. You could now download a podcast and listen later. Who could have dreamed this in 1985?

I've never been a TV person. I'm not a voracious reader. Why do I love radio so much? I can close my eyes and concentrate. I can escape into an imaginary world. I can let my thoughts travel like they never have before. Ritwik Ghatak, the filmmaker from Dhaka, once said, "Practice the art of thinking." Radio is probably the thinking person's medium.

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Cartoon People: Inspiring a generation of artists

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When I first came to know of Cartoon People back in 2017, I didn't think much of them. They seemed nothing more than a group of youngsters trying to make a name for themselves on social media. Back then, webcomics like *Cyanide and Happiness* and *Loading Artist* were quite popular on Facebook and Instagram, and as far as I was concerned, Cartoon People was trying to emulate a similar appeal.

As years rolled by, I realised how my initial idea regarding them couldn't have been any more wrong. Over the years, I got the opportunity to learn more about their plans and vision, and also had the chance to work alongside a few of the group's members.

And from what I can tell, they're definitely onto something big.

Cartoon People are celebrating their fourth anniversary this year, and I thought of taking this opportunity to look at how far they've come, and how some of their own artists are set to make it big on a global basis.

For those of you who are unfamiliar with the group, Cartoon People is a community of Bangladeshi cartoonists and visual storytellers that was founded in 2016



by cartoonist Syed Rashad Imam Tanmoy. The group specialises in comics, caricatures, and of course, cartoons.

Since its inception, Cartoon People has wholeheartedly worked to inspire like minded enthusiasts. Apart from holding regular workshops and sketchbook sessions for its members, as well as for the general public, the group has also gone on to organise events related to their line of work. In

the process of doing so, they have worked with different local and international organisations such as a2i, United Nations, World Bank, and so on. They've gone from being a small community of cartoon and comic enthusiasts, to taking on bigger roles to develop the art form, as well as take on other social projects.

Perhaps the most inspiring part of Cartoon People's journey till now is how

it showcased talent. Many cartoonists and artists from this community are now doing quite well for themselves. Some of my personal favourites from Cartoon People include *The Bathroom Artist* by Walker Bin Zaman, *Gorib Anju* by Tamim Anju, *Tiborai er Cartoon* by Chandrika Nurani Irabotee, *Peu Draws* by Debadrita Peu, *Tube Light* by Tuba Anjum, and *Shesh Raater Shopno* by Ayman Aswaf.

The thing about these artists is the variation in their work, and their ability to say so much through their stories and characters. From entertaining us with humorous and satirical comic strips, to making us think and question global and societal issues through illustrations and political cartoons, they have left no stone unturned to establish themselves as important figures in our local art scene. There's no doubt that these youngsters are inspiring a whole generation who're currently following their every single work.

In their four-year journey, Cartoon People have indeed come a long way, and they aren't going to stop. The group is eager to publish their own line of comics, as well as create some visually stunning animation along the way. And with all the things they've done and achieved so far, who knows how far they'll go?