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MASTERING THE MIKE: Evolution of emceeing in Dhaka



The nation's bustling capital city has been experiencing the rise of a new phenomenon encompassing individuals who have a niche in public speaking. The role of master of ceremonies is evolving from a light-hearted pastime to a respectable vocation thanks to influencers and celebrities. Emceeing appeals to a lot of young Dhakaites because they have a strong desire to establish a personal connection with audiences; with hopes of reaching bigger stages, the journey frequently starts small.

Rafayat Rakib, a YouTuber and entrepreneur, shared his motivation for becoming an emcee.

"I was terrified of public speaking, but I believed that overcoming this fear was crucial for creating my brand. So, I decided to be an emcee," Rakib shared.

Naziba Basher, an artiste and journalist, reflected on her start in emceeing.

Naziba Basher also manages her time accordingly, "Emceeing is not as easy as it may seem. The energy and mental clarity required are immense, so when I take up any work, I ensure I'm in a healthy mental space." Emceeing has significantly impacted Basher's life, saying, "It has made me more open, outspoken, and taught me to engage and connect with people from different walks of life and ages."

"I don't think I was ever really separately inspired in this regard. I was a debater in school and was told I spoke eloquently. When I joined my office at the age of 18, I was suggested to host a TV show which my office was a

part of, and that kickstarted my emceeing career. Over 10 years on, I am still doing it and enjoy it every time!"

Both Basher and Rakib believe that an essential element of a successful emceeing performance is preparation.

Basher described her process — "Once the proposal and

quick thinking, cultural understanding, and language competence are just a few of the necessary abilities. Emcees need to be adaptable, able to interact with a variety of audiences, and capable of handling unanticipated circumstances. Each occasion is akin to a fresh test.



budget are fixed, I ask for the programme flow and script. I make the script my own, so ensuring comfort with it is paramount. I inject my words and my jokes and make the audience mine. I try to remember what stays in my heart and do mouth and voice exercises just before getting on stage."

On preparing for events, Rakib said, "I study the event thoroughly, focusing on the interests of the people. I turn off my phone, seclude myself, and talk to myself for a confidence boost. And in the words of Shah Rukh Khan, I check my zipper first before getting on stage!"

Emceeing in Dhaka demands a unique blend of skills. A compelling stage presence,

Basher shared her perspective on the unique skills required, "Debating taught me public speaking, a skill without which being an emcee is impossible. It brought self-confidence and the power to captivate listeners. A dash of humour and intellect can go a long way."

Rakib emphasised the importance of adaptability, "Being a fast thinker and adaptive to situations are crucial. Possessing valuable qualities to add value to others' lives is essential for a successful career."

However, he viewed emceeing not primarily as a monetary pursuit, saying, "I don't do it for money but to share my wisdom and experiences. I offer my insights and industry

experiences free of charge."

Regarding emceeing as a standalone career, Naziba Basher opined, "While emceeing can pay well, it's not always a standalone career. Like actors, emcees also have to pick and choose events that align with

their standards and mindset."

An emcee's journey is fraught with obstacles, from technical issues to managing diverse audiences. These challenges test an emcee's versatility and resilience. Basher shares, "In live shows, scripts

can change within minutes, which can be rattling. Also, collaborating with a co-host requires styles to merge, which takes preparation."

Regarding difficult audiences, Basher mentioned, "Handling teenagers is always a challenge. With them, I try to become one of them. Children are honest and upfront; if they don't like you, they make it apparent."

Rafayat Rakib described one of his challenges, "Keeping up with the ever-changing content stream is tough. Being ready to face sudden changes in events and schedules head-on is crucial."

While dealing with difficult audiences, Rakib focused on the value he brings, "I stick to my predetermined plan and remain professional, avoiding any hostility."

For millennial emcees in Dhaka, balancing emceeing with other responsibilities is common. Rakib balances his role as an emcee with his career by speaking about familiar topics, "Public speaking about my life experiences and work feels natural to me."

His personal brand has grown through his emcee work, "People look up to me as a mentor, which helps grow my brand and career."

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Emceeing has significantly impacted Basher's life, saying, "It has made me more open, outspoken, and taught me to engage and connect more with people from different walks of life and ages."