

**Humayun Ahmed** (1948-2012) Prose writer, playwright, film maker, lyricist, teacher and essayist. Humayun Ahmed was born in Mohanganj at his maternal grandfather's home in the district of Netrokona. His paternal home is in the village Kutubpur of Netrokona district. His father's name is Faizur Rahman Ahmed and mother Ayesha Akhter Khatun (currently she is known as Ayesha Faiz). Humayun's father Faizur Rahman used to work in the Police Department. In 1971, he was deployed as the SDPO of Pirojpur sub-division and on the same year he was killed by the Pakistani Military. Therefore, it is natural that Humayun Ahmed was inspired by the spirit of Liberation War. Moreover, during the war time, the Pakistan Army caught him and kept in detention for a while. At that time, they tortured him physically.

Humayun Ahmed spent his childhood in an environment of literary and cultural events. His father was keen to art and literature. He used to write and publish articles in the contemporary journals and magazines. His book titled 'Dwip Neva Jaar Ghare' was published while he lived in Bogra. He inspired the children for literary pursuit side by side with their study. Humayun's younger brother Muhammad Zafar Iqbal is a professor of Shahjalal Science and Technology University and a popular writer. He basically writes science fiction and stories for children and youths. Humayun's youngest brother Ahsan Habib is a writer of satire, and the editor of a cartoon magazine titled *Unmad* (Mad). Their mother Ayesha Faiz also used to write. She wrote a memoirs titled *Jeeban Jerakam* and it was published in 2008. In childhood, Humayun Ahmed's name was Shamsur Rahman. In an article, he wrote that their father would like to change the names of his children. So, he himself changed Humayun's previous name as Humayun Ahmed. Humayun was the eldest among six brothers and sisters.

Humayun spent his early life in various district of Bangladesh, such as Sylhet, Panchagarh, Rangamati, Chittagong, Bogra, Comilla and Pirojpur, as his father worked in those places. His first schooling started in Kishorimohan Pathshala in Sylhet district town. In 1965, he passed the School Certificate Examination in science group as a student of Bogra Zilla School and stood second in the combined merit list under Rajshahi Education Board. He passed Intermediate from Dhaka College in 1967. In 1970, he obtained BSC (honors) degree in Chemistry from the University of Dhaka and MSC degree in 1972 from the same university with first class. During university student life, Humayun Ahmed lived in Mohsin Hall. Later, he did research on Polymer Chemistry from North Dakota State University in the United States and got Ph D in 1982.

Humayun Ahmed started his career as a lecturer at Bangladesh Agricultural University, Mymensingh in 1973. In 1974, he joined Dhaka University as a lecturer in the department of Chemistry. In the mid-nineties, he retired from teaching career and devoted himself full time in literary pursuit. At the same time, he started writing and producing drama serial and making film. In addition, he composed songs for his drama and films.

Humayun Ahmed was an exceptional writer in Bangla prose literature. He created a new trend with wide range of publication, diversified topics, exceptional characters, lucid style and dialogue, which is considered as his own writing technique. In his writings, witty expressions and humors touch the readers easily. He made a different world beyond

the traditional trend of Bangladeshi novel and short story. He earned huge popularity as a successful writer because of his spontaneous access to all forms of art and literature. He is unique for his multi-dimensional creation.

Humayun Ahmed came into the limelight of Bangla literature with his first novel *Nondito Naroke*, a short novel written and published in 1972. *Nondito Naroke* captured huge attention of the readers in Bangladesh. His second novel *Shankhonil Karagar* published in 1973 was another success. Subsequently, he established himself in the literary world by writing story, novel, science fiction, children's book, play, essay, autobiography and memoirs etc. The total number of his writings are more than three hundred. His last novel titled *Deyal* (unpublished - background is the brutal killing of Bangabondhu and the contemporary political events). *Jotsna O Jananir Galpo*, written on the background of Bangladesh War of Liberation is his famous novel. His two noted historical novels are *Modhyanha* and *Badshah Namdar*. Humayun Ahmed is recognized as the pioneer of science fiction in Bangladesh. He is spontaneous in writing autobiography and memoirs. His memoirs are lucid and amazing to the readers.

Humayun's multi-dimensional writings can be classified in different category. Such as: books on liberation war, place-time and thematic books, science fiction, books on supernatural/mysterious/ghost related themes, children's book, satire, autobiography, books on Himu, books on Misir Ali, Shubhro series etc. His remarkable books on the liberation war are: *Shymal Chhaya* (1974), *Aguner Paroshmoni* (1986), *Anil Bagchir Akdin* (1992), *1971* (1993), *Jotsna O Jananir Galpo* (2004).

The major books on place-time and themes are: *Shankhonil Karagar* (1973), *Ananda Bedonar Kabyo* (1984), *Jakhon Giyeche Dube Panchomir Chand* (1984), *Amaar Achhe Jol* (1985), *Phera* (1986), *Nakshatrer Raat* (1987), *Priyotameshu* (1988), *Bashor* (1988), *Shajghar* (1989), *Elebele* (first part-1990), *Elebele* (second part-1990), *Chhayashongi* (1990), *Ei Shob Dinraatri* (1990), *Bohubrihi* (1990), *Ayomoy* (1990), *Gouripur Junction* (1990), *Srabon Megher Din* (1990), *Ashabori* (1991), *Amanush* (1991), *Chander Aloy Koekjon Jubak* (1991), *Dui Duari* (1991), *Nripati* (1991), *Nee* (1992), *Kothao Keu Nei* (1992), *Mandrasaptok* (1993), *Kobi* (1996), *Mohapurush* (1996), *Amader Shada Bari* (1996), *Megh Bolechhe Jabo* (1997), *Dure Kothai* (1997), *Brishti Bilash* (2000), *Mrinmoyee* (2001), *Humayun Ahmeder Haate Panchti Neel Padmo* (2001), *Brishti O Meghmala* (2001), *Aaaj Chitrar Biye* (2003), *Epitaph* (2004), *Leelaboti* (2005), *Tin Purush* (2005), *Modhyanha-1* (2007), *Modhyanha-2* (2008), *Brikshakatha* (2009), *Badshah Namdar* (2011), *Megher Upar Bari* (2012) etc.

His noted science fictions are: *Tomader Janyo Bhalobasha* (1973), *Tara Tinjon* (1984), *Ireena* (1988), *Kuhak* (1991), *Fiha Shomikaran* (1992), *Shunyo* (1994), *Ema* (1998), *Ananto Nakshatro Bithi* (1998), *Omega Point* (2000), *Dwitiyo Manob* (2002) etc. He wrote a book on quantum chemistry in Bengali entitled *Quantum Rashayan*.

Humayun's books on ghost and mysterious plots are: *Botol Bhoot* (1989), *Bhoot Bhootong Bhootou* (1991), *Bhoy* (1991), *Eki Kando* (1993), *Cherager Daityo Ebong Bablu* (1997), *Bokabhoo* (1997), *Kana Dainy* (2000), *Bhoot Shamogro* (2002), *Mojar*

*Bhoot* (2005), *Bhayongkar Bhooture* (2008), *Otiprakrito* (2008), *Nirbachito Bhooter Galpo* (2009), *Bhootmantra* (2010) etc.

Prominent books written for the children and adolescents: *Nuhash Ebong Aladiner Ashcharjo Cherag* (1992), *Chhotoder Shera Galpo* (1995), *Porir Meye Meghaboti* (1997), *Tomader Janyo Roopkatha* (1998), *Kalo Jadukar* (1998), *Kaak O Kathgolam* (2002), *Chhotoder Janyo Ek Bag Humayun* (2003), *Boka Rajar Sonar Singhason* (2003), *Neel Manush* (2002), *Kukurani* (2006), *Holud Pori* (2009), *Boner Raja* (2010) etc.

Humayun's autobiographical books: *Hotel Graver Inn* (1989), *Aamaar Chhelebel* (1991), *Kichhu Shaushob* (2007), *Kathpencil* (2009), *Fountain Pen* (2011), *New Yorker Neelakashe Jhakjhake Roud* (2012).

Himu series: *Moyurakkhi* (1990), *Dorjar Opashe* (1993), *Himu* (1993), *Parapar* (1993), *Ebong Himu* (1995), *Himur Haate Koyekti Neel Padmo* (1996), *Himur Dwitiya Prahori* (1997), *Himur Rupali Raatri* (1998), *Akjon Himu Koyekti Jhinjhin Poka* (1999), *Tomader Ei Nogore* (2000), *Se Ashe Dhiree* (2002), *Chole Jai Bashonter Din* (2002), *Himu Mama* (2004), *Aangul Kata Joglu* (2005), *Holud Himu Kalo Rab* (2006), *Aaj Himur Biye* (2007), *Hime Rimande* (2008), *Himur Ekanto Shakkhatkar O Anyanya* (2008), *Himur Madhya Dupur* (2009), *Himur Babar Kathamala* (2009), *Himur Neel Jochhna* (2010), *Himu Ebong Ekti Russian Pori* (2011), *Himur Achhe Jol* (2011), *Himu Ebong Harvard Ph D Boltu Bhai* (2012) etc.

Misir Ali series: *Devi* (1985), *Anyabhubon* (1987), *Bipad* (1991), *Misir Alir Amimangshito Rahashyo* (1994), *Tandrabilash* (1997), *Ami-i Misir Ali* (2000), *Baghboni Misir Ali* (2001), *Nishithini* (2004), *Nishad* (2004), *Brihonnala* (2004), *Kohen Kobi Kalidas* (2005), *Misir Alir Chashma* (2008) etc.

Shubhro series: *Daruchini Dwip* (1991), *Rupali Dwip* (1994), *Shubhro* (1998), *Ei Shubhro! Ei* (2003), *Shubhro Gache Bone* (2010) etc.

The important compilations of Humayun Ahmed's books are: *Muktijuddher Upanyas* (1989), *Science Fiction Samagro* (2009), *Kishor Samagro* (1993), *Shreshtho Galpo* (1998), *Shubhro* (2000), *70 Dashaker Nirbachito Panchti Upanyas* (2002), *Bhoot Samagro* (2002), *Shreshtho Premer Upanyas* (2004), *Himu Samagro* (2006), *Misir Ali Samagro* (2008), *Madhyanha Akhondo* (2008), *Shei Shomoy:1901-1971* (2011), *Himu Misir Ali Jugolboni* (2011), *Aami* (2011) etc.

In the decade of 1980's, Humayun Ahmed created a new sensation in the history of television play and drama serial in Bangladesh. The title of his first television drama was *Prothom Prohor* (First Moment - 1983, directed by Nawazesh Ali Khan). His first drama serial *Ei Shob Din Ratri* (Tale of our Daily lives) achieved great popularity from the TV audience in Bangladesh. Other popular drama serials by Humayun Ahmed are: comedy series *Bohubrihi*, social-historical drama series *Ayomoy*, the drama series on urban life *Kothao Keu Nei* (There is no one anywhere), drama series on family and social life *Aaj*

*Robibar* (Today is Sunday), drama series on the crises of modern life *Nakshatrer Raat* (The night of the Stars), and many other single play and drama serials.

Humayun Ahmed was a successful filmmaker as well. He explored the film industry both as an author and director. His first film is *Aguner Parashmoni* (1995) and last film *Ghetuputra Kamola* (2012). His remarkable film *Shyamal Chhaya* was based on the Liberation War of Bangladesh in 1971. It was submitted by Bangladesh for the ‘Oscar’ nomination in the category of ‘Best Foreign Language Film’. Humayun’s other films are: *Shrabon Megher Din* (2000), *Dui Duari* (2001), *Chandrokatha* (2003), *Noi Nombor Bipad Shanket* (2007) and *Amar Achhe Jol* (2008). The 85th ‘Oscar Bangladesh Committee’ has nominated the film *Ghetuputra Kamola* for the 85th ‘Oscar Academy Award’ competition. Humayun Ahmed brought a positive trend in the film world of Bangladesh and he attracted the middle class people to the cinema halls. A number of films were produced based on his novels. Such as: *Duratto* (2006) directed by Morshedul Islam, *Abdaar* directed by Shubhash Datta, *Nondito Naroke* directed by Belal Ahmed, *Nirantor* directed by Abu Sayeed, *Shajghar* (2007) directed by Shah Alam Kiron and *Daruchini Dwip* directed by Taukir Ahmed.

Humayun depicted the lives of Bengali middle class people, and revealed the stories of their sorrows and happiness, smiles and cries in his touchy and lucid language. He presented joys and sorrows, gain and deception, feeling and emotion, frustration and deprivation of common lives. In his writings, Humayun unveiled the psychological crises of the individuals along with their sociological surroundings. He was skilled in portraying the ordinary lives of the individuals as well as the multi-faceted stories of their family lives, various angles of human relationship, the crises of modern life and the complex relationship of individuals in the family. His novels based on the historical episodes and characters are also accomplished and well-written.

In the stories and novels based on the Liberation War, Humayun Ahmed expressed his personal sorrows and in-depth pain of his family, which have been merged with the sorrows and struggle of the whole nation. His science fictions appear to be similar to the reality. In many stories, he blended reality with supernatural episodes. His children’s books are charming and entertaining. The ghost stories are thrilling as well.

The distinction of Humayun Ahmed’s writings is portraying the characters. The characters of his story, novel and drama appear to be the acquaintance of our surroundings. He also portrayed a few stereotypical characters, who behave in a different way. Some of them are whimsical, some are psychoanalyst. Some characters are symbolic – they are crazy and eccentric. Humayun’s chanting imagination made them close to the readers. These characters are Himu, Misir Ali, Shubhro and Baker Bhai. They are symbolized with deep moral values and humane quality, which made them popular hero. Himu is the symbol of a jobless whimsical character. He wears yellow panjabi, move around in bare foot; he is peculiar and non-judgmental, but honest, conscientious and seems to possess strong intuitive power. He never lies and does not harm to anybody. Rather, he is helpful to others. Himu is insightful about the positiveness of human being and believes that

ultimately virtue will sustain despite of all the darkness. In fact, this is the inner philosophy of the author.

On the other hand, Misir Ali is a rational psychologist . He puts emphasis on logic rather than emotion. His observance on the surrounding events is logical and he likes to unveil the mysteries with his scientific analysis and logic. Misir Ali is a truth searching good man. In fact, both Himu and Misir Ali are the two sides of the author's entity. Another character Shubhro also represents the morality of human being. Baker Bhai, an idealistic character of Humayun's drama serial *Kothao keu Nei* became very much popular, who was wrongly convicted, and executed in the drama. This created a great sensation among the TV audience. Before the last episode was on air, people across the country brought out processions protesting his death sentence. It proves how a character of the drama could be so realistic and true to life. It happened only with Humayun Ahmed. In other words, this public demonstration is the symbolic protest of the moralist people beyond social decadence. In most dramas, Humayun depicted the prevailing crimes, injustice and devaluation of the society. His inner philosophy and attitude towards life is revealed through the characters he portrayed. Being the son of a Freedom Fighter, he intensely hated the 'Rajakars', who opposed the Liberation War. As an author, he could not express it directly, so he followed a dramatic technique to transmit this message through the mouth of a parrot as if, 'Tui Rajakar'. It is indeed an extra-ordinary expression of disgust in only two words.

Basically, Humayun Ahmed was a man of scientific knowledge. On the other hand, he had a deep passion and empathy towards folk life and folk culture. He has revealed this empathy in the plot, imagery and character of his story, fiction and drama. The context of social life of Netrokona and greater Mymensingh district have been reflected in his writings in different ways. In many of his dramas, the main character is a zamindar, a representative of the feudal society. The dialect of Mymensingh district has got special emphasis in the drama. Moreover, he was influenced by spirituality, and the characters like Baul, Fakir and Saint are frequently present in his writings.

The amazing way of narrating story, diversity of topics, compactness of description, dramatic stunt, sketching of unusual character and using lucid language are the main characteristics of Humayun Ahmed. He is unique in making literary language and dialogue, which easily attract the readers.

Music is one of the major attributes of Humayun Ahmed's multi-dimensional creative works. He wrote lyrics only for his own plays and films. Though small in quantity, however, his songs were also very popular. Some of the songs are compiled in Album. His noted songs are: *Morile Kandishna Amaar Dai, Ami Aaj Bhejabo Chokh Shomudrer Joley, Chandni Pashar Ratey Jano Amaar Maron Hoy, Amar Achhee Jol, Mone baro Asha Chhilo* etc. His last song is: *Thikana Amaar Note Book-e Achhe/Note Book Nei Kachhe*. He wrote this song one month before his death while he was under treatment in the United States of America. The song was written for a telefilm based on his script titled *Jodi Bhalo Naa Lagee Tou Diona Mon*. Humayun Ahmed was successful in using the folk songs of Bangladesh in his plays and films. He easily applied the songs of

Rabindranath Tagore, Hason Raja, Lalon Shah and other folk singers in the plays and films. The contemporary folk singers Quddus Bayati and Bari Siddiquee also have appeared in the plays of Humayun Ahmed.

In recognition of creative works, Humayun Ahmed received a number of Awards and Honors. The noted Awards are: **Lekhok Shibir Prize** (1973), **Bangla Academy Award** (1981), **Michael Madhusudan Medal** (1987), **Humayun Qadir Memorial Prize** (1990), **National Film Award** [Best Story – 1993, Best Film – 1994, Best Dialogue – 1994], **Ekushey Padok** (1994), **ShellTech Award** (2007). He was also awarded outside Bangladesh. The Japanese Television NHK produced a 15 minutes documentary on Humayun Ahmed titled *Who is who in Asia*.

The best contribution of Humayun Ahmed is to creating a huge number of readers and inspiring the young generation to read books. Every year the number of his writings increased and simultaneously, the number of readers increased. Most readers of Humayun Ahmed are young group – students of school, college, university and mass people. There was a time, when the readers of Bangladesh were eager to read the books written by the authors of West Bengal. Humayun's magical literary influence made them homebound as well as country bound. The main objective of art and literature is entertainment. He accomplished this task with great success. In the nineteenth century, Saratchandra Chattopadhyay was the most popular author of contemporary Bengali Literature. Humayun's popularity exceeded him. He was also recognized as a powerful author by the readers and literary critics of West Bengal.

Humayun Ahmed has a great contribution in the progress of publication sector in Bangladesh. He was the pioneer in making a big change in this sector. He is recognized as a great contributor in making the book market stable and creating the flow of capital in the publication business. His creative writings made a powerful platform for many publishing houses in Bangla Bazaar. Humayun's writings got the distinction of the best seller in the Book Fair of Bangla Academy, held every year on the occasion of Ekushey February. He became the main attraction of the Book Fair of Bangla Academy.

Humayun Ahmed was never associated with any kind of narrow grouping or politics in the literary zone. However, he was not detached of the problems of the country and the nation. During any kind of critical moment of the country, he raised his thoughtful voice and expressed witty opinion. He was aware of his social responsibility, and materialized it by establishing a school in his paternal land Netrokona. He had many dreams regarding the school, which unfortunately he could not fulfill in his lifetime.

Humayun was a naturalist and used to spend time in natural environment far from the madding crowd. Out of his passion for nature, he founded 'Nuhash Polli' (after the name of his first son Nuhash) in the village Pirujali in Gazipur district and another house in Saint Martins Island, which he named as 'Shomudra Bilash'. He decorated Nuhash Polli with eye-catching trees, ponds and sculptures; established a garden with two hundred species of medicinal herbs, which is named as 'Rashed Humayun Oushodhi Udyan' after his child, who had premature death.

In 1973, Humayun Ahmed started his family life with Gultekin Khan, the grand daughter of Principal Ibrahim Khan. Their three daughters are – Nova Ahmed, Sheela Ahmed and Bipasha Ahmed, and the son Nuhash Ahmed. In 2003, Humayun divorced Gultekin and in 2005, he married Meher Afroz Shaon, a TV serial actor. This couple has two sons – Nishad Humayun and Ninit Humayun.

In September 2011, Humayun Ahmed suddenly fell sick of colorectal cancer. On 13 September, he went to the USA for better treatment, and was treated in Memorial Sloan Catering Cancer Center in New York. In June 2012, he went through a successful surgery. However, his condition was deteriorated by post surgery complication, and he was admitted to the hospital once again. On 19 July, the legendary author Humayun Ahmed died in Bellevue Hospital in New York. He was buried in Nuhashpolli, Gazipur.

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