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Pathfinder

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by
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Once I had an interesting discussion about favorite songs with Atiqul Huq Chowdhury, famous TV personality. He was an iconic figure to me and my family^ members and will remain so. I said to him without hesitation that I can't remember even two-three lines of my most favorite songs. There are some songs, which I listen repeatedly— say about hundred or more times. But I am unable to recite some stanza.

Which are your favorite songs? Who are the person or persons you like to listen more? These were Atiq Bhai's next questions. Without hesitation, I named Abbasuddin. But can you single out a song or more of him?

I couldn't remember and this is my memory problem with music and poetry. Many of my friends from school life sometimes praise me for recollecting many past happenings. But this never happened for music. Why, I have no idea. But there is something good about it. When I hear Abbasuddin's song, even if I hear it in almost every day during my forceful stay- time in traffic-jam road in Dhaka, it seems that for the first time I am listening him; that gives me enormous joy. He is like as if a beginner in the world of music.

I am from Barisal. My village is Goila (the village of middle-age **renowned** poet Kabi Bijoy Gupta, **writer** of Manasa Mangal Kabya). In my childhood Altaf Mahmud more than once visited Goila to attend political meeting **not** as speaker, but just as a singer. During 1950's big political meeting was **unthinkable without** Him. He was not a political leader, not even a serious worker, but had to attend different meetings all over Barisal area spending his own pocket **money**. **People** loved him and his songs.

During British period this was true for Abbasuddin.

Why? Let me quote from a book, written by Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman. He said in his famous book 'The Unfinished Memoirs', 'Abbasuddin Saheb. Sohrab Hossain and Bedar Uddin Saheb sang songs. The event followed up till one night. At night Abbasuddin Saheb and we stayed at Rafique Saheb's house. All Brothers of Rafique Saheb are also good singers. Hasnat and Barkat also sang well. They are like my young brother. We together detained at jail too. Next day, we started by boat to catch up train. Songs were being continued all the way. One dimension of the life was unfulfilled if we did not listen Bhatiwali song of

Abbasuddin Saheb by his own voice staying at river. When he was singing gently with low voice, it appeared river wave also listening his songs. His disciple Sohrab Hossain and Bedar Uddin also keep continuing some of his fame. I was became fan of Abbasuddin Saheb. He said to me, 'Mujib, a conspiracy is going against Bangla language. If Bangla will not be the state language, then Bengali culture, civilization all thing will lost. Today the songs you love, this also lost its beauty and dignity. Whatever it will be, Bangla should be the state language. I promised and I was trying to keep my words.'

This spell Abbasuddin's love for our mother tongue Bangla and its rich cultural heritage.

Abbasuddin took active part in the upheaval that continued the then British India. Many political meeting was complete without his songs. He carried his torch of firmness and truth and sang his hair-raising songs to boost the morale of the teeming millions. He opted for Pakistan and came to Dhaka in July 1947 where he settled with his family. The Dhaka Radio Station celebrated the birth of Pakistan on the 14th August 1947 with a recitation from the holy Quran, and the next item on the ether of the independent nation was that of Abbasuddin. Interestingly, when in 1964 Pakistan 25 December Pakistan Television Dhaka started- Abbasuddin daughter Ferdousi Rahman was the first singer. A rare happenings indeed!

During the late 30s and early 40s, the great statesman **A.K.** Fazlul Haque rose to eminence. He initiated Abbasuddin to sing for his huge audience during his political meets. Abbasuddin was now at the peak of his popularity. But his artistic soul still remained dissatisfied. He wanted to record the songs of the rural sons of the soil from whom he rose and bring into limelight the treasures of folk **literature** and music. All this was till then unknown to the Bhadrolok community of Bengal. In this he was helped by poet Jasimuddin who was waiting for a right voice for the listeners to hear what he had stored in his rich collection and in his own inimitable composition. This folk duo- Abbasuddin and Jasimuddin- opened up a new horizon of music. *Nadir kul nai kinar nairey, O tui jare aghat hunley rey money, Prana shakhire oi shon kadambatalay, Amar bar kala karlam rey*, to mention only a few, filled the musical air of rural and urban Bengal with an ecstasy and freshness never before heard of in the annals of musical history of Bengal.

Bhawaiya songs, the cradle of which is Cooch Behar, his native rest, was engrained in his musical vein. Bhawaiya, Khirol, Chatka and other varieties of folk songs are written in North Bengal dialect and sung in a long drawn melancholy tone, voice breaking down, at points. These varieties **omusic** are North Bengal's own. especially of Cooch Behar and greater Rangpur district.