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## The glorious journey of Mustafa Kamal Syed

*A tribute to the legend*

14

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Mustafa Kamal Syed (R) shares a light moment with renowned artist Mustafa Monwar and musical legend Pandit Ravi Shankar.

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Sharmin Joya

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Prominent television personality and former Deputy Director General and Chief of Programmes of NTV, Mustafa Kamal Syed, breathed his last on May 31 at the capital's Square Hospital. He was admitted at the ICU of the hospital after being diagnosed with COVID-19. His wife, renowned singer Zeenat Rehana, was also infected with the virus. However, she later tested negatively, informs their daughter Rehnuma Kamal Ahmed, a news presenter at BTV.

Mustafa Kamal Syed graduated from the University of Dhaka. He went on to attend the TV Producers Training and Certificate Course in the Central TV Institute in Rawalpindi, Pakistan, in 1966, Television Training Course in Federal Republic of Germany in 1969, Broadcasting Management Course held in Japan in 1979, and Media Management Training Course held in Australia in 1981. His academic experience and creative knowledge helped shape him into an iconic media personality.



Mustafa Kamal Syed (L) working with Afzal Hossain (2-L) and Suborna Mustafa (3-L) at BTV Studios.





He joined the then Pakistan TV's Dhaka wing, known as Dacca Television, as a producer in 1967, before it was officially named Bangladesh Television in 1971. He was one of the most experienced television officials in the country. The golden era of the television industry was built in the hands of masterminds like Abdullah Al Mamun, Khaleda Fahmi, Atiqul Haque Chowdhury, Mustafa Kamal Syed, Nawazish Ali Khan, Mustafizur Rahman and Barkatulla. They played a great role in lifting up the content of the small screens from plays and musical programmes to magazine shows. Mustafa Kamal Syed announced the historic 1970 national election result.

Some of the landmark productions in the history of television industry, including the tele-fiction *Kul Nai Kinar Nai* (1985) and a number of musical programmes were produced by the legend. He is also known for works like *Niloy Na Jani* and *Sneho*. He was also an established voice caster for National Radio and Television and a director of TV and radio plays. Throughout his splendid journey in television, he served in various roles. His brilliance in every position amazed everyone who directly worked with him. He was Programme Executive, Programme Manager, General Manager, Director International Relations and Deputy Director General (Programme) at different times in his career.

Mustafa Kamal Syed was honoured with the National Award for the Best Music Producer for Television in 1975. He retired from Bangladesh Television on 14 January 2004 and joined the private satellite channel NTV (International Television Channel Limited) as Chief of Programmes.

He left behind numerous well-wishers in the industry. Amongst them, renowned personalities and artistes shared their fond memories with him.

### **"He was a man of principles"- Asaduzzaman Noor**

I have known him since the early days of BTV. I started my acting career on television post the Liberation War. We have worked in many productions together. He was punctual, health conscious and strict about his ethical beliefs. He was a man of principles.

He preferred working behind the camera. I tried to bring him in my programme at Desh TV on many occasions, but he never agreed. Most of my landmark projects are from BTV, and he inspired me to keep pushing myself out of my comfort zone to play various roles. He had a keen eye for talent, and could discover hidden potential in just about anyone. Losing an iconic personality like him due to the deadly virus is extremely heartbreaking. I convey my deep condolences to his family and friends.



Young Mustafa Kamal Syed announcing the historic 1970 national election result.

### **"I had the privilege of acting with him on radio" - Suborna Mustafa**

It was mid 70s when I started working at BTV. Afzal Hossain and I collaborated on multiple productions with Kamal *bhai*. He was at the station during my debut in *Boraf Gola Nodi*, by Abdullah Al Mamun. It was an adaptation of the timeless novel by Zahir Raihan. He would always come to see if I am comfortable. He was one of a kind -- a perfect gentleman and always punctual. He played an integral role in airing cricket on television. I still remember how much effort he had put to convince the ministry for the permission to telecast cricket with Bengali commentary.

I had the privilege of acting with him on radio. In fact, when our radio station was moved to Agargaon, the first recorded play, written by Momtajuddin Ahmed, featured Mustafa Kamal Syed and me.

There are a few people that I consider to be true stalwarts of television, including Abdullah Al Mamun, Atiqul Haque Chowdhury and Mustafa Kamal Syed. They played vital roles in building the television

industry from the ground up. I am upset that I could not pay my last respects to him because of the virus.



(From left) Runa Laila, Alamgir and Mustafa Kamal Syed.

### **"*Kul Nai Kinar Nai* was a landmark for our television industry" - Afzal Hossain**

Mustafa Kamal Syed was one of the greatest personalities ever in the television industry. He was immensely tasteful and creative. He always maintained discipline, and was an honest person, who always had a smile on his face. He could understand the pulse of the audience.

*Kul Nai Kinar Nai* was a landmark for our television industry. Written by Momtajuddin Ahmed, it was one of the finest productions ever made. The national television of Japan, NHK, bought the tele-fiction, and aired the dubbed version several times. It was also televised from CCTV in China. The legendary duo of Mustafa Kamal Syed and Momtajuddin Ahmed have produced some excellent shows together and I feel privileged to have worked in most of them.

### **"Kamal was an iconic media personality"- Nawazish Ali Khan**

Mustafa Kamal Syed was one of the pioneers of the television industry. I joined Karachi Television from its first day. He joined Dacca Television, which is now Bangladesh Television, in 1967. We would exchange ideas, and even had disagreements that we overcame with good reasoning. I never saw him engaging in any unethical matters, like nepotism or personal interests in his professional life. Kamal's creative ability mingled with his administrative skills made him an iconic media personality.





Renowned actor Shabana Azmi with Mustafa Kamal Syed.

### **"He was the most honest person in television"- Shykh Seraj**

From mid 70s until 1996, I have worked in Bangladesh Television. We worked together at that time, and have many memories together. Until his last breath, I was aware of his condition, and I was one of those taking decisions about him in his last moments. He was one of the pillars, and the most honest person in television.

He prioritised quality over quantity. He had an extremely powerful voice, and he had done so many voiceovers and radio plays. His last voiceover was done for Channel i, a translation of the Azan in Bengali. In the 80s, one day Kamal asked me after watching an episode of *Mati O Manush* (aired on BTV at that time) if I could make such kind of episodes with short durations. From that time, the trend of presenting social messages and creating health awareness sketches between programmes began. We shared a strong bond. I will miss him.

### **"He was an idol to the young generation"- Redoan Rony**

I met him after my first production, *Shunchhen Ekti Radio Jockeyr Golpo*, back in 2007. He called me and said that he was very happy with my work. We used to have hours of conversation in his office. He would point out the flaws in my work in a beautiful and eloquent manner. He used to preview every piece of content that would run in the channel, so that the quality does not get compromised. He was really good at constructive criticism. He was an idol to the young generation. He loved to guide others and was open to new ideas.

## "I have lost a mentor because of this pandemic"- Masuma Rahman Nabila

I started my career in 2006, and I met Mustafa Kamal Syed in 2008. NTV held a strong position amongst the television channels because of him. I was a newcomer, and it was a big deal for me to get the opportunity of working at such a prestigious channel. At that time, there were only a few private channels. He would always encourage me and taught me to handle criticism. I will always remember his words. I have lost a mentor because of this pandemic. I pray for his departed soul to rest in peace.



Tariq Anam Khan (2-L) on the sets with Mustafa Kamal Syed (3-L) and Abdullah Al Mamun (4-L).

## "Land Phoner Dingulote Prem was made because of him" - Ashfaque Nipun

I met him in 2007 when one of my fictions was aired on NTV. After that, we met again in 2013, and he still remembered me and asked me why I did not make more projects. I went to his office with the plot of *Land Phoner Dingulote Prem*. He immediately told me to go ahead with it. I later became busy with other works and forgot about it. As Eid Ul Azha arrived that year, Kamal *bhai* contacted me and asked if I had made this project for any other channel. When he learned that I didn't make it yet, he told me to finalise it so that the channel can include it in their Eid schedule. *Land Phoner Dingulote Prem* was made because of him. I believe that this tele-fiction, featuring Tahsan Khan and Rafiath Rashid Mithila, was the turning point in my career. He always appreciated the young generation of artistes. His demise is an irrecoverable loss for the industry.

## "Mustafa Kamal Syed made me who I am today"- Shafayat Mansoor Rana

*Shunchhen Ekti Radio Jockeyr Golpo* was the first script I wrote. It was directed by Redoan Rony. I went to NTV for some work, and there I met Mustafa Kamal Syed. When I was introduced to him, he stared

at me for about a minute, and to my surprise he hugged me. He told me that after long time he saw a witty story, which he absolutely loved. He also said that he has been looking for me. At that time, I was planning to start directing, and I shared the thought with him. He told me to come up with a story and start making a production. I told him that I do not have any previous experience of shooting. However, he had such confidence in me that he gave me a slot on the third day of Eid for my first directorial, *Uchhomaddhomik Poribar*. Mustafa Kamal Syed made me who I am today.



Mustafa Kamal Syed (L) with Momtajuddin Ahmed and Ferdousi Majumdar.

Photos: Courtesy of [www.mysyed.com](http://www.mysyed.com)

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