

Musician Altaf Mahmud: Life and Works

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[Abstract: Altaf Mahmood is a noteworthy name in the area of cultural and musical developments of the Bengalis. He is profoundly intertwined with the tradition of Bengali culture. Ekushey's spirit that the Bengalis have advanced with, is wholly found in Altaf Mahmud. The unforgettable musical treasure which was achieved during the time of the Language Movement in 1952, is an eternal feature of the nation. Altaf Mahmud's accomplishments as a musician are sky-high. Gaining an idea of his life and works is the main purpose of the present article. The writer offers a series of descriptions of Altaf Mahmud's knowledge of his cultural heritage and the notable status of his songs in films. The writer has made attempts to discuss his musical life, that is, his prosperity and achievement as a music director.]

Altaf Mahmood was basically an artist in the realm of music. He possessed a very good voice. Since his childhood, music became his passion. He started playing with different instruments spontaneously. From reciting the *Qur'an* to age-appropriate rhymes or words, he would surprise everyone. It is needless to say here that, Altaf Mahmood did not understand the meaning of the *Qur'an* at that time, but the style of the *Qur'an* recitation fascinated him. Even in the presence of his mother, this child had always been chased by certain emotions and excitement since his childhood. Expression of all his happiness and woes were found in his songs. He had an immense love for music.

Altaf Mahmud was born in an aristocratic family at Muladi in Barisal district. He was born on 20 December, 1930, in Patarchar village under Muladi Police Station (Asadul Haque, 2007:9). At that time, his father Nazem Ali Hawladar's own residence was a two-storied house made of tins. The tins in the house were all painted in red. However, the house was concrete and quite high. A mosque stood next to it. A pond remained in the back of the house. A long tin-house was situated next door. The road to Fakir's house was next to this house. There also remained a one-storey tin house on the other side of the yard. Its fences were also made of tin. A jackfruit tree stood in the middle of the yard. It can be said that the family whose house was decorated and painted about one hundred and fifty years ago must have been rich and aristocratic. Altaf Mahmud was born in such an environment. "Altaf Mahmud's grandfather's name is Mahmudjan Hawladar. Altaf Mahmud's father's name was Nazem Ali Hawladar. (Birth-1876, Death-1956)." (2007: 9). Nazem Ali Hawladars are four brothers- the eldest Nazem Ali Hawladar, the second one Abul Kashem, the third one Khadem Hassan and the youngest one was Dalil Uddin.

Altaf Mahmud's father married four times. His wives were Shamsun Nahar, Fatema Begum, Kadbanu and Hasan Banu respectively. Shamsun Nahar is the

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mother of two daughters: Lily Begum and Matia Begum. He had no son. Fatema Begum is the mother of one son and four daughters- Shahjahan Mahmud (birth 1934), Abu Begum, Mamtaz Begum and Hena Begum. (Motiur Rahman, 2005:29).

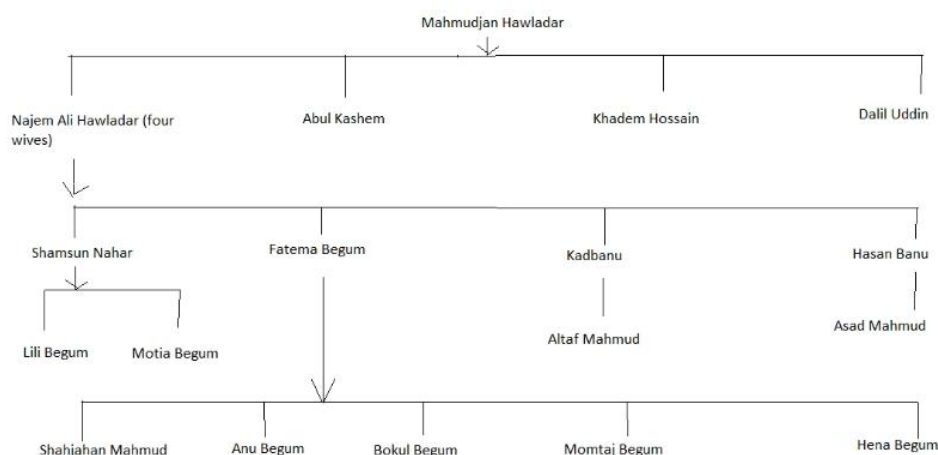
Kadbanu's only son was Altaf Mahmud (1930-1972). Hasan Banu was the mother of one child only, i.e., Asad Mahmud (birth 1954). (2007:10)

Altaf Mahmud's younger uncle, i.e., his father's younger brother's name is Abul Kashem. Abul Kashem has got five sons-Lal Mohammad (deceased), Sufia Rahman Hawladar, Sirajul Haque Montu (deceased), (he was the Minister of Textiles during the reign of President Ziaur Rahman), Siddiqur Rahman, a senior banker, and Mosharraf Hassan Mangu, a former Member of Parliament.

Altaf Mahmud's uncle, Khadem Hassan has six sons-Shah Alam (deceased), Shamsul Alam, Shafiq Alam (an expatriate), Sultan Alam (a businessman), 5. Shaifum Alam (Manu) and Shahidul Alam, an Engineer by profession (200:10).

Altaf Mahmud's uncle, Dalil Uddin has got eight sons and three daughters. They are- Rezaul Karim (a banker), Rezaul Hossain, Tajul Islam, Shakhawat Hossain (Deputy Director at Shiksha Bhaban), Shahadat Hussain (an expatriate), Neyamul Bashir, Enamul Bashir and Ejazul Haque (2007:10).

The genealogy of Altaf Mahmood has been portrayed below:



Altaf Mahmud's father Nazem Ali Hawladar was quite well off. Started his career as a clerk in the local court and later he became the secretary of the District Board" (2006: 11). It can be said without any doubt that they had no poverty at all. Nazem Ali had four wives. Altaf Mahmud's mother was the third among them. Although there were many brothers and sisters in the family, Altaf Mahmood grew up receiving care from everyone. Altaf Mahmud was restless since childhood and did not have much passion for studies. It was his instinct to hum melodious songs spontaneously. It is known that while he was a fifth-grade student, he engraved 'Jhilu the Great' on a jackfruit tree in the yard. Altaf Mahmud's nickname was Jhilu. (2007:11). That is why his house also came to be known as 'Jhilu's house'. Moreover, he used to draw pictures on the fences and roof of his house. His voice was melodious from an early age. He captured the hearts of everyone by reciting verses from the *Qur'an* in his melodious tone. But for this same reason, he was once punished, too. The incident went such- Jhilu's father kept a good teacher (Qari) to

teach the *Qur'an* to his son. Now, the teacher used to teach the student every morning how to recite verses from the *Qur'an* and, he had a very good voice. Altaf Mahmud could effortlessly imitate his teacher. However, lesson on Friday was different. On those days, it was Mahmud who would recite and his teacher listened. Then the teacher would correct the mistakes if necessary. "The teacher was surprised to hear Mahmud's recitation on a Friday. He had not taught such a sweet melody. So, he asked, "Where did you learn the Quran from in such a melodious tone?" Mahmud smiled quietly. Later he was asked the same question multiple times. Mahmud revealed that he had learnt it from a ghazal that he found it in of one of the famous movies of that time, "I recited in that tune." His teacher was shocked. Being unable to control himself, he slapped Mahmud on the cheek and left the house immediately. Later on, there was an uproar at home about the matter. Mahmud was rebuked by the elders. However, the matter did not go too far. At noon, the teacher (Qari) went to Mahmud's house once again and praised Mahmud and saved him ". (2007: 13)

There were two benches in front of Mahmud's house. He would sit on the bench on the side of the road and sing in a sweet voice for hours. Sometimes he sang songs at night. Most of the songs he sung were popular songs of different Indian films. Chand Prakash, Nowshad, Raichad Baral, Shankar Joy Kishen and Anil Biswas (son of Obri Shaw) were found to be his favourite artists.

Thus, Altaf Mahmud grew up. He began to endure insults from his father and everyone else with a smile. Many were sceptical of his future because of his mischievous nature as well as his interest in music. His father was always angry with him. But Mahmud would laugh whenever anyone said something about it and gave him advice in vain. Late Kazi Bahauddin Ahmed, who was an uncle of Mahmud, was a person with enthusiasm for music and other kinds of arts. His nickname was 'Tota'. This uncle, one day, advised on his chaotic nature and asked many questions. Mahmud replied in his usual manner, "Tota mama, am I a bad boy? I am not a bad boy, Tota mama. You will surely see that one day I will be 'Jhilu the great.'" (Hedayet Hassan Morshed, 2005: 87). Mahmud's father, Nazem Ali was always agitated to be unable to bring any change in his son's nature. He was worried about his son's future. But, he loved his son a lot. And that is why he was so worried. Nazem Ali's dream was that his son would become an engineer of the District Board in future. That's why he used to scold his son so much.

Mahmud was immensely brave since his boyhood. He used to always indulge himself in listening to music and painting pictures. In the midst of these, he involved himself in organizational activities, too. Wherever there was any cultural event, there was Altaf Mahmood. There he would stand first as an enthusiastic worker in different social welfare organizations. He also got involved in many cultural activities. At that time, he was in seventh grade. In this way, day after day, the young Jhilu remained the same Jhilu. Jhilu was the best in the areas of singing and painting at that time. Jhilu used to make school functions livelier by singing melodiously. He also used to fascinate everyone by reciting verses from the *Qur'an* at the school's annual milad mehfal. Whenever there was a need for construction or decoration of arches on the occasion of any event, young Jhilu would skillfully do it. Through these activities, Altaf Mahmud entered the world of melody and music. He also became an excellent organizer through this melody and music. During that time, different programmes were held to raise funds for various cultural and social welfare organizations. Altaf Mahmood used to take part in all these events. As he was quite enterprising in establishing a library, he also turned out to be a voracious reader. The presence of Altaf Mahmud in different places of Barisal seemed to be the main attraction of the stage. Altaf was the architect of most of the victory arches

built in Barisal on the day of the founding of Pakistan (14 August). He was the vocalist of the first song presented in the cultural program organized by 'Tarun Mahfil' for independence at 12:00 on 13 August, 1947. (Dinu Billah, 2008:61)

"In 1948, Altaf Mahmud completed his matriculation examination under Calcutta Board. Then he got himself admitted into Brajmohan College for the Intermediate programme, but did not study there for long. He studied at Calcutta Art College for some time, but did not complete the course there either. His educational career shows that he never studied photography." (Motiur Rahman, 2005:54) Altaf's musical talent was cherished in the surroundings since his childhood. However, no one else of his lineage was found in this matter. Bhatiali songs sung by boatmen in the Kirtonkhola river flowing by the side of the village, hymns sung in different churches and Hindu temples, etc. moved his mind much. Later, he unknowingly presented his thoughts and language through music to the people. He made music his life, and that is why earned so much expertise in music. The rights sought by the common people occupied Altaf's mind. Now, he decided to express those by his own words and tune.

Altaf's master of music was mainly nature. However, he repeatedly spoke with great humility about the masters from whom he had learnt music. By this, he became extraordinarily glorious as he made others great. Very few people have such a combination of great qualities.

Information about Altaf Mahmud's institutional education has not been found in any book, essay, or article. However, much has been heard about his education in music, as well as his involvement in politics. In 1948, his father became worried about his son's future as his Matriculation results were not satisfactory as expected. When he went home, he would have to face hundreds of bitter questions about it. So, instead of going home, he used to sit on a bench near Benpark on the bank of the river Kirtonkhola and spend time singing with his friends. He concealed his sadness by trying to sing songs rendered by the popular musicians, such as, Saygal, Raichand Baral, Kanakesht, Gyan Goshai, K Mallik, Kamal Jharia. From then on, he never had to look backward other than going forward. In 1945-46, he became known as an enthusiastic worker of 'Tarun Mahfil'. "In 1950, he became engaged with the 'Dhumketu Shilpi Sangha'." (Asadul Haque, 2007:14). The director of this organization was Nizamul Haque from Bogura. Niazmul Haque was a singer, music director, choreographer and dancer. "An important incident in Altaf Mahmud's life dates back to 1948. From that time, he became inclined towards mass music. His inclination could be seen in the song, "Main Bhukha Hu " and he became popular overnight by singing it in a public meeting in Barisal." (2007:17). Later, he stepped to Dhaka to learn this song. From then on, he never turned back from this path. He went to Dhaka and found out the 'Dhumketu Shilpi Sangha'. He came to Dhaka and stayed at Zulfiqar's house who was also from Barisal. Zulfiqar took Altaf to Nizamul Haque. Altaf Mahmud would often go to Nizamul Haque's house and spend time together. Altaf appeared with a suitcase, a violin and a rope wrapped around a sheet. Altaf-Nizamul Haque together started searching for new ways with their new ideas. A wonderful friendship gradually developed between them. They then got the music director Musleh Uddin as their companion.

Altaf Mahmud was an active worker in the Language Movement of 1952. Altaf and Nizamul Haque were at the forefront of people's protests. Abdul Latif, Sheikh Lutfar Rahman, Nizamul Haque, Altaf Mahmud and others were the ones who won the hearts of the people by their music, drama and dance performances in all the struggles for liberation of this country. Of course, Altaf Mahmud was the most popular one among them.

The month of February in 1952 is a milestone in the creation of Bengal. The independent sovereign Bangladesh that we have today is the result of the history that was created through the blood of language soldiers in February 1952. In 1952, Altaf Mahmud was a young man. However, he was active and popular among all in Dhaka. It was natural for him to have an active role in the Language Movement. The state language movement of 1952 and the martyrdom of Bengalis in February changed the norms and ways of cultural practices in the country. For more than a decade now, the new trend of culture has commenced a new era in the mass media. Through new music and melodies, atmosphere of melody and attraction of speech, the people of Bengal started looking towards music in a new way. Abdul Matin, Mahbub-un Alam Chowdhury, Gaziul Haque, Altaf Mahmud, Abdul Latif, Sheikh Lutfar Rahman and Nizamul Haque are notable in the language movement. Among them, the name that is ever bright and immortal is the name of Altaf Mahmud. He is the composer of the song written in memory of the martyrs of the immortal language Movement. During that time, many musicians and composers were born and earned fame. One of them was Altaf Mahmud.

The first anniversary of 'Martyr's Day' (21st February) was observed in 1953. Through the observation of this day, the people of Bengal got to know the new culture, heartwarming melodies, poems, plays and songs. Found on the first anniversary of Martyrs' Day in 1953:

*"Rastrobhashaandolonkorili re Bangali
Tora, Dhakarshohorrotebhashaili."
O Bangali-Totapakhi portee she khuwailiporan
Maaysheyjaaneputerbedon jar kolijarjaan re Bangali
O Bangali-Ingrejjugehatur niche chalaiddottoni
Ar, shadhindeshhebhaiyebhaiyeruraaymathatkhuli..
O Bangali- Ma o kaandeBaap o kaandekaandejorer bhai
Para-porshikende bole khelardoshornai..
O Bangali- gulikhawabhaiyerruhkendekendekoy
TomraBangali ma dakiyoamarobhaginimaay."* (Asadul Haq, 2007:21)

Although the composer of the song is Shamsuddin, the melody of this song has been nicely rendered by Altaf Mahmud. The notation was conducted by Abdul Latif." (2007:21)

Most of the songs written on the language movement were composed by Altaf Mahmud. Some notable songs composed by Altaf Mahmood:

1. *Mrittukejaratucchokorilo bhasha bachabar tore.
Ajikeshmoriyo tare kothay Barkat kothay Salam
Shara Bangla kaadiyamorey bhasha bachabar tore.*
Lyrics: Engineer Mosharrof Uddin Ahmed (1920-1956)
2. *Bhulbonabhulbona
Ekushey February
Bhulbona.*
Lyrics: Contemporary student-leader, later lawyer, language-soldier Gaziul Haq.
3. *Rastrobhasharandolonkorili re Bangali
Dhakarshohorrotebhashaili.* (2007:22)
Lyrics: Shamsuddin, later renewed music: Altaf Mahmud.
4. *Ghumerdesherghumbhangate
Ghumiyegele jar
Jalatesritiralorbukey
Bhorerboruntara.* (2007:23)

Lyrics: Badrul Hasan, Music: Altaf Mahmud.

The song that is remarkable and immortal, is 'Amar Bhai er rokeranganoEkushey February'.

Lyrics: Abul Gaffar Chowdhury.

Abdul Gaffar Chowdhury composed the immortal song '*Amar Bhaiyer Rakte Rangano*' (Painted in my brother's blood). Renowned folk music artist Abdul Latif composed this song first. Later, the tune that Altaf Mahmud later made, is now an effective and immortal one.

It took place in 1995-56. Altaf Mahmood started directing the music of different films in Karachi. Debu Bhattacharjee assisted him in this regard. He also taught loud music in Karachi. Altaf Mahmud gradually began to enter the wider realms of music in those days.

Before returning to Dhaka in 1984, he was able to reach the position of Assistant Music Director besides giving voice in film songs. Some of his records are obtained before he started giving voice to the film songs. They are according to the information given by Hedayet Hossain Morshed, the first record of Megaphone. (Matiur Rahman, 2005:78).

- a. *Paalernouka paal uraiya jay. O tor nodirdheudolaiya Moynamotirgaaye.*
- b. *Kanya arjaona oi naghatite.*
- c. *Jal chhariya de re jaila Kachhi tuila de, haatemendijhokmokkaanejhumkarphool.*
- d. *Padmavati nityajeto*
Jol bhorte ghaate
Kolshikaakesnaankorite
Sufi jikhonpote.

Apart from these, he also recorded 30 mini call songs, which were the official campaign music for rural development in the country. By that time, Altaf Mahmood was fully established in the film world. He was able to show his outstanding talent in film music composition, singing and music direction.

In films, he first gave voice to A.J. Kardar's film, '*Jago Hua Savera*'. Lyrics - '*Hum Har Nadika Rajya*'. The first song was sung by Altaf Mahmud which got much popularity. During his stay in Karachi, he also gave his voice in the film, '*Nila Parbat*'. (Asadul Haque, 2007:30)

Later, he entered the realm of East Pakistani films. In addition to singing, he worked as Debu Bhattacharya's Assistant Music Director. Much later became a renowned music director.

Altaf Mahmud made his debut as a music director in the film '*Tanha*'. Below is the list of Urdu/Bangla films in which Altaf Mahmood worked as a composer or Assistant Music Director:

1. *Tanha* (1964) an Urdu Film, Director Baby Islam
2. *Bahana* (1965) an Urdu Film, Director Jahir Rayhan
3. *Kaise Kahu* (1965) an Urdu Film, Director Jahir Rayhan
4. *Kar Bou* (1966) an Urdu Film, Director Chashi Nazrul Islam
5. *Rohim Badshah O Rupban*, a Bangla Film, Director Safdar Ali Bhuiyan
6. *Sun of Pakistan* (1966) an Urdu Film, Director Fazlul Haque
7. *Mayur Pankhi* (1967), a Bangla Film, Director Sadek Khan
8. *Anowara* (1967) a Bangla Film, Director Jahir Rayhan
9. *Alibaba* (1967), a Bangla Film, Director Chashi Nazrul Islam
10. *BoroBou* (1968), a Bangla Film, Director Rahim Newaz
11. *Akasher Rang Neel* (unreleased)
12. *Shoptodinga* (1968) a Bangla Film, Director Darashiko
13. *BederMeye* (1969) a Bangla Film, Director Nurul Haque Bacchu
14. *Mishor Kumari* (1969) an Urdu Film, Director Chashi Nazrul Islam
15. *Shonali Akash* (a 1969 Film but released in 1976)

16. *Taka Ana Pai* (1970) a Bangla Film, Director Babul Chowdhury
17. *Data Harishchandra* (1971) a Bangla Film, Director Babul Chowdhury, unreleased.
18. *Chowdhury Bari* (1971) a Bangla Film, Director Nazmul Huda
19. *ShopothNilam* (1971) a Bangla Film, Director Jibon Chowdhury
20. *KokhonoAsheni* (1961) a Bangla Film, Director Jahir Rayahn
21. Devya Bhattacharya composed the music for the Urdu film *Banjara* and Altaf Mahmood acted as an assistant. Noor Jahan's song '*Na Jaane Kaisa Safar Hai Mera*' became popular in this film. In this film, Altaf Mahmood also gave voice to a song. The first line of the song is '*Pat Ghungkholi Khol*'.

After returning to the-then East Pakistan in 1958, Altaf Mahmood started living in Dhaka. In 1959, he went to Karachi for a few days to record music for the film *Tanha*.

Altaf Mahmood's first film as a Music Director was *Tanha*. In this film, he gave his voice in the song - '*O Rahi Nadaan*'. Films which were released between 1964 and 1971 in which Altaf Mahmood rendered his compositions are listed respectively:

1. Julekha (1967) (Lyricist Amzad Hossain, Composer Subol Das, Vocalist Altaf Mahmud)
 - a. *JagatBashi re, phaandeporiyabogakande re*
 - b. *Amar piritipakhi re, dilo je phaaki re*
 - c. *O amimoilam go, darunbuirarjalaymoilam* (this song was sung dually by Altaf Mahmud and Lina Hamid)
2. Kuchboron Kanya (1968) (Lyricist Abdul Latif, Directed by Nurul Haq Bacchu, Composer Altaf Mahmud)
 - a. *Ogobhindshe nagor, bolo tomarkothaybarighor* (sung dually by Abdul Latif and Shahana Begum)
 - b. *Kuchboron Kanya go, tor rupdekhiya doob diyechi prem doriyay* (vocalist Altaf Mahmud)
 - c. *Kuchboron kanya re tor megh boron kesh, oi nakanyarruperchhotaypagolhoilodesh*(vocalist Altaf Mahmud)
 - d. *Pirit ratan piritjatan, piritgolarhaar, duniyapirite bazar* (sung dually by Altaf Mahmud and Lina Hamid)
3. Shuyorani Duyorani (1968) (Lyricist Abdul Latif, Composer Altaf Mahmud)
 - a. *Shudhai tore rakhalbondhu, boishanodirdhare* (voice Abdur Rouf)
4. BederMeye (Lyricist Jashim Uddin, Composer Altaf Mahmud)
 - a. *O dhaanbhaniyedhekitepaardiya* (combined song by Shahnaz Rahmatullah and music)
5. Dui bhai (1968) (Lyricist Amzad Hossain, Director Nurul Haq Bacchu, Composer Altaf Mahmud)
 - a. *Vabito marpathshalatevortiholovai*
 - b. *Tumi dojonebolteparo keno dujonkevalobashla*
 - c. *Aral kore paliyegeletomarpichhudaakbona*
6. Nayan Tara (1967) (Kazi Jahir, Composer Altaf Mahmud)
 - a. *Machhrangapakhitaay ay ay*
 - b. *Kotha chilotumithakbeamaarpashe*
7. Sokina (1968) (Directed by Karigar)
 - a. *Mon karechaytumi bolo na*
 - b. *Choy chhoragorurgarirchakaamar bon bonghure*
8. Apon Dulal (1966) (Chashi Nazrul Islam, Composer Altaf Mahmud)
 - a. *Dhar debona-na, nabodhuadhoradebona*
 - b. *Heiyahei shaman shaman*
 - c. *O bondhu re, prem doriyareto je dheo age najanitam*

9. Aparajeyo (1967) (Directed by Safak/M.A.Hamid, composer Altaf Mahmud)
 - a. *Oi batasheshunechi Choiterhahakar*
 - b. *Tomra gun gunguniya, jay ki kichugaanshuniya*
 - c. *Keno je lojjaasheakhiropatabhore*
10. Behula (1966) (Jahir Rayhan, Composer Altaf Mahmud)
 - a. *O Behulashundori, o Behulanachuni (voice Shahana/Rahmatullah)*
 - b. *Hayreitolerkolshi, tore loiyajabo Jamunay*
 - c. *Nacemondhinadhina-praaneabajebina (voice Dilip Biswas)*
 - d. *Mori hayrehaaydukkheporan jay*
 - e. *Prabhu nanana, ajditiyakathtritiyoporshumongolbar*
11. Agunniyakhela (1967) (Amzad Hossain and Nurul Haq Bacchu, composer Altaf Mahmud)
 - a. *Ki je mistilagche toke aaj*
 - b. *Kalorupoporupamidekhechi noyon mele*
12. Sangsar (1998) (Cine Workshop Group, Music Altaf Mahmud)
 - a. *Eshodekhimukhomukhiboshi go dujone*
 - b. *Sokhinodirkuledekho hele-dule*
 - c. *Ay ghum ay, ghumerdesherkhokonamar*
13. Kar Bou (1966) (Chashi Nazrul Islam, Composer Altaf Mahmud)
 - a. *Eipronoyranganoprovate*
 - b. *Nam tar betevai tare-narena*
 - c. *Eshobondhuajratreshudhushopnodekhe jai*
14. Abujh Mon (1972) (Lyricist Md. Maniruzzaman, Directed by Kazi Jahir, Composer Altaf Mahmud)
 - a. *Shudhugaangeyeporichay*
 - b. *Keno choronamarthemey jay*
15. Molua (Lyricist Lokman Hossain Fokir, Composer Altaf Mahmud)
 - a. *Ya Rahimu, Ya Rahman*
16. Ka Kha Ga Gha (1970) (Lyricist Majharul Anwar, Composer Altaf Mahmud)
 - a. *Shaluk Shaluk Jhiler Jole Vromor Baul Dole*
 - b. *Amar jhumkolotar baju bondeykejoralo*
17. Akabaka (1970) (Lyricist Gazi MajharulAnowar, Directed by Babul Chowdhury, Composer Altaf Mahmud)
 - a. *Muktoshey noy manikshey noy bolcheamarmon*
18. Protishodh (Lyricist Gazi MajharulAnowar, Composer Altaf Mahmud)
 - a. *Sha diyeshuru hoy Ba-tesheshe*
19. Documentary Film: Altaf Mahmud gave voice to a song of a Bengali version of -Wealth in Port. Lyrics and Music was set by Nijamul Haq.

After the natural calamity in 1970, the people of the-then East Pakistan started protesting against the injustice and imbalance of the Pakistani rulers. Most of the songs of that time were composed to touch the hearts of the starving, oppressed, crying mothers-sisters-brothers-brides-children. Altaf's voice and tone were influential during the tumultuous seventies. The song composed by Altaf Mahmud before the General Elections in 1970 is his brilliant signature. The song:

Eijhonia mora rukhbo

Eibonna mora rukhbo

Mayeder bon der shishu der osrumuchhbei. (Asadul Haq, 2007 : 44)

The post-election period was more tumultuous. Altaf Mahmud composed many songs to make awake the mass people. He composed many songs, sang, and gave direction to many song-productions. Right after these, 1971 came up. Keeping aside his violin, tabla and harmonium, Altaf Mahmud started acting with rifle one day. He took part actively in the Liberation War spontaneously. In March, 1971, he participated in the Shaheed Minar ceremony, and this is when his march towards the Liberation War began. Altaf Mahmud participated in all kinds of protests. He welcomed the various programs of the Shaheed Minar imitated by different organizations. After the night of March 25, 1971, the whole of Dhaka was darkened by the smoke of the ammunitions of the invading forces. The streets and lanes of Dhaka were covered with blood. Young and old people were running away from the town to save their lives. Rajarbagh Police Camp was set to fire. It became impossible for people around to stay in their houses due to the scorching fire. As a result, people ran for safety amidst bullet-rains. The jackfruit tree in Altaf Mahmud's rented house also caught fire. In this situation, too, Altaf Mahmud tried to stay there. It is heard that he brought several gallons of petrol in the bathroom to fight against the invading forces. The intention was to fill bottles with petrol and set those on fire for killing the invading army. But that did not happen. That bathroom also caught fire. On the morning of the 28th, the family members took shelter in the house next door. When the curfew was relaxed for a few hours on March 26, Altaf Mahmud took refuge in a Buddhist monastery at Kamalapur. There were also reports that the Pakistani invaders were attacking mosques, temples, and churches in those days. After leaving the Buddhist monastery, Altaf Mahmud took refuge in a relative's house. And, after staying there for 18 days, he returned to his Outer Circular Road house. When he returned home, he was upset and worried. He spent all his time thinking of the plight of the country- his relatives and the people. Inability to do anything in this situation of the country made him worried more.

In the last week of August, he decided to leave Dhaka sometime in the first week of September. He would go to West Bengal, India. But, he couldn't go anywhere. Before that, he was captured by the invaders. A few days ago, two guerrillas of the platoon left a truck full of weapons and hid it at Altaf Mahmud's house. The truck was kept hidden under the jackfruit tree in his house. Later, a guerrilla of the platoon was caught. After being beaten by Punjabi police and army, he revealed about the hidden truck. He disclosed information about the house to the Punjabi police. Immediately after it, the Pak Army entered Mahmud's house in search of him. At one point, Altaf Mahmud stood up bravely and shouted fearlessly, "I am Altaf Mahmud". He then encountered severe torture. But, the news of when and how he died or where his body was kept could never be recovered. He is alive through his immortal works- his music. He has no death. He is immortal; he is indestructible.

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[সার-সংক্ষেপ: আলতাফ মাহমুদ বাঙালির চেতনা তথা গান ও সাংস্কৃতিক বিকাশের ধারায় উল্লেখযোগ্য নাম। বাঙালি সংস্কৃতির ঐতিহ্যের সাথে তিনি ওতপ্রোতভাবে জড়িত আছেন। একুশের চেতনাকে ধারণ করে যে বাঙালি অগ্রসর, তার পুরোটা জুড়েই আলতাফ মাহমুদের অবস্থান। অর্থাৎ বায়ান্নোর ভাষা আন্দোলন যে অবিস্মরণীয় সঙ্গীতরূপ অর্জন করে জাতির স্থায়ী আসন সৃষ্টি হয়েছে, তার সুরছন্দটি তো আলতাফ মাহমুদের মূলস্পর্শই। সঙ্গীতজ্ঞ হিসেবে তাঁর কৃতিত্ব গগনম্পর্শী। তাঁর জীবন ও কর্ম সম্পর্কে ধারণালাভ বর্তমান প্রবন্ধের মূল উদ্দেশ্য। সাংস্কৃতিক ঐতিহ্যের পুরোটা আলতাফ মাহমুদকে জানা এবং চলচ্চিত্রে তাঁর গানগুলো যে বিশেষ মর্যাদায় অধিষ্ঠিত তার একটি ধারাবাহিক বিবরণ তুলে ধরা হয়েছে প্রবন্ধটিতে। তাঁর সঙ্গীত জীবন তথা চলচ্চিত্রে সঙ্গীত পরিচালক হিসেবে কৃতিত্ব এবং সমৃদ্ধতা নিয়ে এখানে আলোচনা করার প্রয়াস রয়েছে।]