

Tribute
Aijaz Gul
Tariq Aziz (1936 – 2020)



Spending childhood in Sahiwal (then Montgomery) Pakistan, academic qualifications of Tariq Aziz were average. He came to Rawalpindi in 1961 as Radio Pakistan Staff Artist (anchoring programmes) at a salary of 150/- a month. And since he did not receive a raise, he resigned. His modest beginning was evident when he lived without a home in Lahore. He and his friend Mehdi Hassan (not the singer) rented a room for Rs. 17/- a month. The room did not have a fan. Their evenings were spent on the roads. He joined PTV (Pakistan Television) at the age of twenty-eight and became its first announcer in 1964 at its opening in Lahore.

According to producer and Former Director PTV Zaheer Bhatti, Tariq Aziz became an inspiration for others. His natural inborn talent with amazing vocabulary in Urdu and Punjabi poetry emerged brilliantly. He also served as producer at PTV Karachi. However, as producer, he was not happy and resigned. He was missing on being on the screen. He was then to play a much bigger role on PTV and as well

as in twenty-five films. His major film titles included *Zindagi*, *Katari*, *Insaniyat*, *Salgirah* and *Qasam Aus Waqt Ki*. He mostly appeared as a father. In real life, his father wanted him as a magistrate which he failed. However, he did become magistrate on screen. His first production *Sajan Rang Rangila* in 1975 did not play well. According to Tariq, the film opened at 3:30 and closed for good at 4:30. And when it came to the Pakistan Television quiz show *Neelam Ghar* in 1975, it played for almost four decades, largely extempore-without the script. No other Tv programme here has played for that many years. He brought confidence and exuberance to his work and never lost charisma and aura even this year at the age of eighty-four when he passed away in June.

TV producer and former director PTV Khawaja Najamul Hassan said Tariq Aziz was one of the most loving and admired TV and film personalities. A multi-faceted person: debater, student leader, announcer, actor, film producer, writer, journalist, poet and much more. He

was blessed with photographic memory and terrific voice. Actress-Singer Madam Noorjehan had earlier described him as “Siahi Chut”- blotting paper.



At PTV, he strictly followed its three glossaries in letter and spirit: “Information, Education, Entertainment “. And this pretty much went on for over fifty years. At *Neelam Ghar*, a quiz programme where participants were rewarded with prizes for correct answers, even a watercooler was presented by Tariq Aziz in style. His political affiliations with three political parties did not reflect or effect his work.

Tariq Aziz wrote two books and was even good at mimicry. He was self-possessed and never talked low about anyone in their absence. Producer Khurram Rana went back into the golden years of TV, saying his legacy was his simplicity and focus with intellect. In 1964, when TV began, the small box was not allowed to be seen in small towns. For conservative families, it was taboo. However, *Neelam Ghar* was an exception when everyone in Mohallas got together and watched his quiz show.

Actor-director Usman Peerzada recalled those days when TV was lit up with his face and voice “*Dekhti aankhon aur suntey kanoon ko Tariq Aziz ka salaam*” (salaam to fans who listen and watch). He carried vast knowledge of literature. He was an intense human being. His forte was his deep roots in his soil. “I believe,” he once remarked “the first test of a person is one’s humility”.

Did Tariq Aziz see all his dreams come true! All dreams do not come true. But he did get to know almost everything about journalism, radio, theatre, film, and TV. Explaining the use of cameras and microphones, he believed in not playing around with this equipment. It is pre-



cious. Education, knowledge, and experience makes you respect these tools. Treat them with love and care like your girlfriend.

How had he changed with the changing patterns of life and its values in the media! «One has to change», he said. You have no choice and you must leave the past or the past would push you behind in the race. However, do not run fast or you would take a fall. Do not ever forget yourself. What is key to success! Education and enormous love for books. TV has replaced books and book reading has gone down the drain. People who turn celebrities overnight without struggle come down overnight as well and that hurts. He was asked recently to recite poetry. “The night would be over, but my verses would still go on” he said- Tariq Aziz on the last day of his life, at Home in Lahore, prepared his breakfast. He was feeling low. Called the driver to take him to the hospital. On his way to the hospital, he told his driver that it was time to go now. He passed away in the car. That was Tariq Aziz.

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