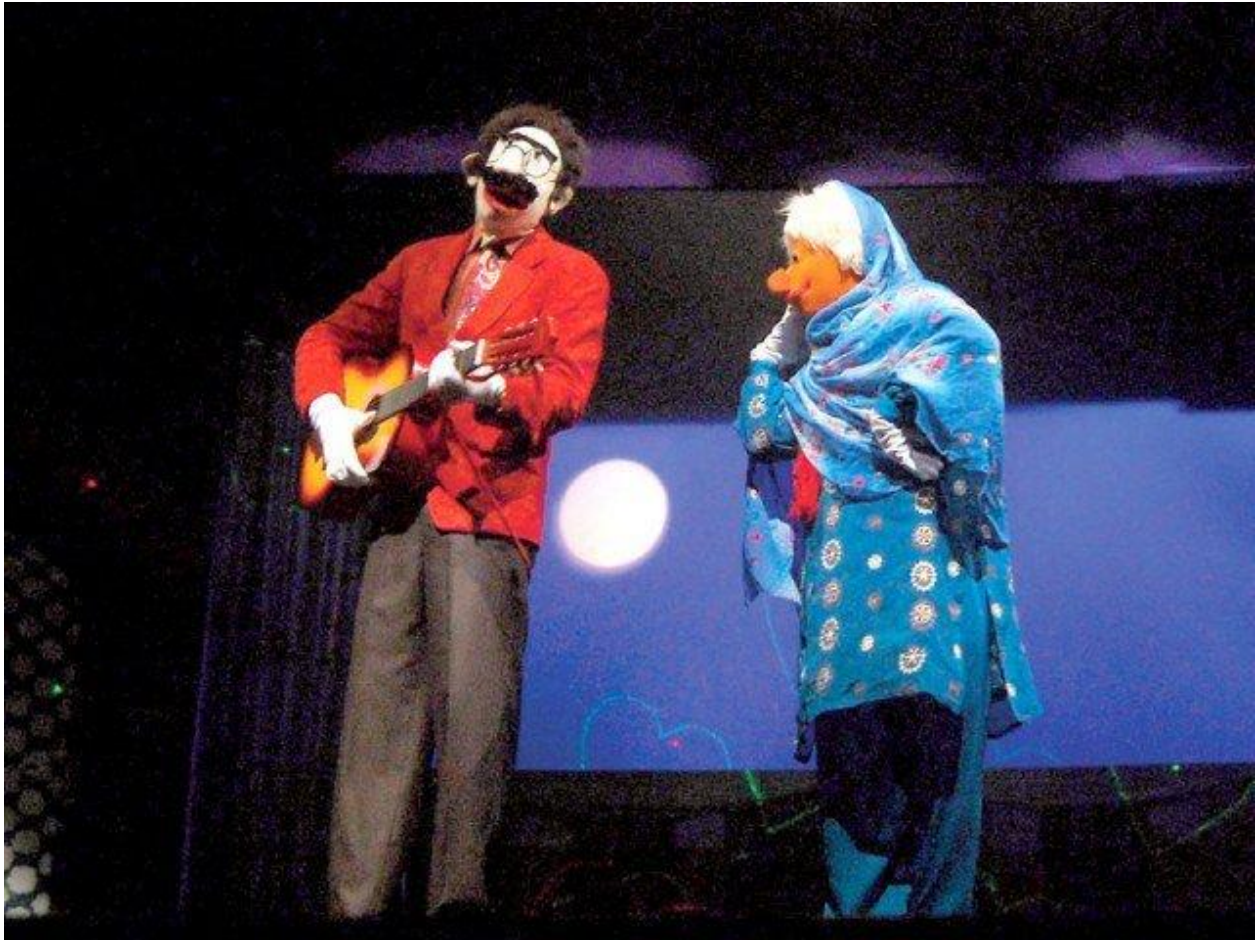


Paying tribute: After decades, Uncle Sargam remains darling of the crowd
By Sehrish Ali

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Farooq Qaiser speaks at the event (top), Uncle Sargam and Masi Museebatay act out a skit.
PHOTO: MUHAMMAD JAVAID/EXPRESS



ISLAMABAD:

Usually busy with our everyday lives, we tend to forget the ones who have tirelessly contributed with their talent to make our lives happier or even more informed. Most artists are gone forever by the time they are given the recognition they deserved in life, therefore paying a tribute to one in their lifetimes seems a far greater gesture.

The PNCA organised a befitting tribute to a man whose immense talents are only outnumbered by the number of children (and adults) he made smile — Farooq Qaiser, puppeteer, artist and columnist.

For those less familiar with Qaiser, he was the voice, and hand, behind the puppet and beloved children's character Uncle Sargam.

Qaisars work is widely admired by young and old alike because he managed to combine humour with stinging satire that hinted at the political scenario of the country. Uncle Sargam had become a household name in the country for this very reason. Being a pioneer in puppetry here, Qaisar travelled to Romania earlier in life to receive training on puppetry and became an institution, training many professional tv personalities along the way.

The evening began with a short English documentary on Qaiser's career, starting with his "Akar Bakar" show in 1971 before moving on to his partnership with Saleema Hashmi and her husband before moving on to Uncle Sargam in Kaliyan in 1976. He received his first award in 1993 and a life time achievement award in 2010.

Other famous television and radio personalities were also present at the event and showered praise on Qaiser.

Radio personality Kanwal Nasir was the first to speak and called Farooq Qaiser a "powerhouse" and a "university" through which many talented students such as Bushra Ansari, Nadya Khan, Baber Niazi and even Saeed Anwar found their niche.

Agha Nasir lauded his shows and spoke of how he had seen Qaiser evolve as an artist firsthand. "I feel honoured presenting him with this tribute, Qaiser is one of the few personalities that became a big writer and columnist in a very short span of time," he stated.

Short puppet skits were performed in between the speeches by Saeed Anwar, Anjum Habibi and Suleman Sunny. Their quick and witty jibes were reminiscent of Qaiser's own satirical styling.

Mehmooda Ghazia was the last to pay tribute, informing the crowd that Qaiser had quit a stable job as a Lok Virsa director to pursue his calling as a writer and performer, which in itself was proof of his commitment to what he did best.

Finally, the man himself was called on stage to say a few words. As he thanked the crowd, he also went to comment on his joy at finally sitting and enjoying the show instead of being the show. "I have always been the one up there acting, now I finally get a chance to sit and watch and I enjoyed myself thoroughly," he said.

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Reading material II

Uncle Sargam

Uncle Sargam

Daak Time, Kaliyan, Siyasi
Kaliyan character



Farooq Qaiser and his puppet Uncle Sargam

Uncle Sargam (Urdu: انکل سرگم) is a puppet character that first appeared in the Pakistani children's television show *Kaliyan*, aired on PTV in 1976. Uncle Sargam was created and voiced by the award-winning puppeteer and television director Farooq Qaiser. Later appearances were

in the TV show *Daak Time* in 1993. The character appeared and hosted a television talk show *Syasi Kaliyan* at Dawn News in 2010.

The character also appeared in a Pakistan National Council of the Arts-organised show in Islamabad. Uncle Sargam later appeared in a charity show function organised by the NGO Mashal at the National Library of Pakistan in Islamabad in July 2013.