

Why are Korean dramas so beloved in Bangladesh?

SARA KABIR

Korean dramas, popularly known as K-dramas, are taking the world by storm, and audiences here in Bangladesh are not immune to the allure. For years, aside from home-grown tele-fictions and movies, most Bangladeshis have adored American TV shows and Indian serials as their source of entertainment.



Save Me



Extraordinary You



Extracurricular



Its Okay Not to Be Okay

But with the boom of the Hallyu Wave, which refers to the global popularity of South Korea's cultural economy exporting pop culture, entertainment, music, TV shows and movies, and the easy access to Netflix, the young generation of Bangladesh is getting more and more invested in K-dramas. Despite the name, not every K-drama is a dramatic show, though many of them have suspenseful elements to keep viewers intrigued.

When I asked my fellow Bangladeshi K-drama fans about the reason they were drawn to the genre and why they fell in love with it in the first place, most of them said they got introduced to this form of entertainment through their friends and family and instantly fell in love with the intense and heart wrenching plots, the relatable family and friendship dynamics, the catchy songs, and most of all, the talented actors. K-dramas often have specific scenes of "fan-service", which are included specifically for the fans to swoon and squeal over, where a male actor might

be showing off his physique or the female protagonist may be beating up the bad guys, breaking gender stereotypes. These shows usually have 16 to 20 episodes, jam-packed with plot twists and shocking reveals. They are easy to binge watch in a day or two, which leaves viewers craving for more.

Personally, I love K-dramas that have unique plots, such as "Extraordinary You", in which the characters are actually part of a comic book, or "Save Me", in which the heroine is forced to become a part of a pseudo-religious cult. I also love stories which are somewhat out of the norm, containing impactful and important messages, like "It's Okay to Not Be Okay", which breaks the stereotypes behind various mental illnesses and shows how people really deal with mental health issues, or "Extracurricular", which tells the story of a student who masterminds a risky side hustle that no one knows about.

If action-based shows are not your comfort zone, you can try some slice-of-

life shows like "Record of Youth" or "Be Melodramatic." Or you might like the light-hearted romance with sprinkles of comedy in shows like "Strong Woman Do Bong Soon", "Cinderella and the Four Knights", "What's Wrong with Secretary Kim" or "School 2015." Period dramas like "Hwarang" and "Moon Lovers" are also great.

Even when the dramas are set in completely unrealistic worlds or have fantasy plots like "W-Two Worlds Apart" or "Goblin - The Great and Lonely God", the characters go through the journey in such a realistic manner that viewers cannot help but relate to them. The tension is built up so expertly that it is very emotionally resonant when the main couple finally hold hands halfway through the series. For audiences in Bangladesh, it is more relatable to see a show about family conflicts and college romances than some of the more unrealistic scenarios often shown on Western television.

With the growing number of K-drama

fans in Bangladesh, more and more Facebook groups are popping up, giving them a platform to share their love of the shows with fellow K-drama enthusiasts and take part in events and activities hosted by the groups. One of the largest Bangladeshi K-Drama groups, BD K-Family, arranges a yearly get together for its members. Other popular Facebook K-Drama groups include K-Drama Archive BD, Korean Lovers Bangladesh, and BD Korean Drama Fam-all of which create opportunities for both local and international fans to participate in discussions about their favourite shows.

Whether you are completely new to the world of K-dramas, or a total expert, it is a good time to start watching all these titles which are available to stream on Netflix (with English subtitles), with more and shows being added every day.

Sara Kabir studies English Literature in North South University. She is often found raving about her favourite books, songs and movies. Find her at @scarletfangirl on Instagram.

Films wrapped up amid pandemic, but what's next?

The pandemic has led to great obstacles for the film fraternity. The first film to get a theatrical release after cinema halls reopened was "Unoponchash Batash". However, a bunch of lined up movies are still waiting to hit theatres. Yet, none of the producers are willing to step ahead.



A still from 'Adventure of Sundarban'.



A still from 'Patal Ghor'

SHARMIN JOYA

Meanwhile, few films have wrapped up their field production work recently, and are currently in post-production. "Operation Sundarban" concluded the shoot on November 10, shares the director, Dipankar Dipon. "We are expecting to release the film on March 26, 2021, hoping that the pandemic will subside by that time," he adds. The Ashraf Shishir directorial "570", based on the first 36 hours after the brutal incidents of August 15, 1975, is a government granted film.

"We have finished shooting the major portions of the project," says Shishir. "We plan to release the film on March 17 next year." On the other hand, the Raihan Jewel directorial "Adventure of Sundarban", is currently in post-production. "We are working at a good pace to complete the film, however, we will not release it until schools reopen," asserts Raihan.

Based on Dr Muhammad Zafar Iqbal's novel, "Ratulur Raat Ratulur Din," "Adventure of Sundarban" is a children's movie, says the director. A number of theatres have also announced their permanent closures. Meanwhile, halls like Modhumita and Balaka did not open yet. The Cinema Hall Owners' Association is still



A still from 'Operation Sundarban'.

waiting for government funds for their survival.

"Patalghor", produced by filmmaker Abu Shahed Emon's company, Box Office, and co-produced by Faridur Reza Sagar's Impress Telefilm Limited, completed shooting in the first week of November.

"We are working at our suitable speed," shares Emon. The film is directed by Nur Imran Mithu, featuring Nusraat Faria, Gias Uddin Selim and Salahuddin Lavlu, among others.

"It is a contemporary film, and we expect to release it when things improve," says Emon. "People need to watch it, otherwise, there is no point in making films."

Emon is also a film consultant at Impress Telefilm Limited. He states that the shoot of Mahmud Didar's "Beauty Circus" has also concluded. As of yet, these movies are on the line for release.

On the other hand, "Nabab LL.B" will be releasing on the theatre app this month, says Annono Mamun, the director of the film.

"We intend to establish our online app market for films. We plan to release four films on the app, including Nabab LL.B," shares Mamun. The film is currently in post-production, and the making of the songs will take a few more days.



Dui Duari



Srabon Megher Din

Looking back at Humayun Ahmed's celebrated films

SHABABA IQBAL

Humayun Ahmed would have turned 72 on November 13, 2020 (yesterday). Although formally trained as a chemist, Ahmed found his true calling as a writer. He authored over 200 books, many of which were best sellers. Ahmed is often credited with revitalising Bengali literature. His unique storytelling style captures the oral tradition and rhythm at the root of Bangla, bringing to life the stories and aspirations of traditional middle class and rural families. He was also a prolific filmmaker. Honouring Ahmed, we take a look at the films written and directed by him. "Aguner Poroshmoni" looks at 1971 from the perspective of a family, as a freedom fighter, played by Asaduzzaman Noor, enters their household one day. Ahmed brilliantly blends the misery, dreams and despairs of the Liberation War of Bangladesh with humour, romance and family dynamics. "Shyamol Chhaya", another film by the director, is also based in 1971, when a horrific situation was prevailing in the nation. The film was Bangladesh's submission to the 78th Academy Awards in the 'Best Foreign Language Film' category.

"Srabon Megher Din", starring Meher Afroz



Ghetu Putra Komola

Shaon, Zahid Hasan and Mahfuz Ahmed among others, is Ahmed's second film as a writer and director. It is a tragic love story set in rural Bangladesh, featuring beautiful music. "Dui Duari", starring Meher Afroz Shaon as Taru, Riaz as Rahossa Manob and Mahfuz Ahmed as Shafiq Ahmed, is another memorable film written and directed by Ahmed.

"Amar Ache Jo!", written and directed by Ahmed, is a story about young love. It marked the film debut of Bidya Sinha Mim, in the role of Dilshad.

"Noy Number Bipod Shanket", starring Rahmat Ali, is another celebrated film written and directed by Ahmed. The film revolves around an unhappy father, whose kids live far

away from him. "Chandrokotha", written and directed by Ahmed, was widely acclaimed. Starring Asaduzzaman Noor and Champa among others, the story revolves around Zaminder Sarkar, who lives a lonely life.

The story of "Ghetu Putro Kamola", Ahmed's last film, dates back to over 150 years, when a musical trend swept through the haor area of Habiganj. Ghetu songs were known for their traditional tunes, but what set them apart was



Aguner Poroshmoni

the accompanying dance by the performers -- adolescent boys dressed as girls. Bangladesh nominated "Ghetu Putro Kamola" to compete at the 85th Academy Awards in the 'Best Foreign Language Film' category.

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