

Shykh Seraj: Dreams of tomorrow

In a small, compact and quite cluttered room with one wall covered with TVs and the opposite with various pictures and awards, Shykh Seraj sat at his table quite unruffled at the fact that a very young and inexperienced me had come to interview him. The fact that he was the Director and the Head of News of Channel I (which celebrated its 9th anniversary on October 1), this very renowned TV host of Hridoye Mati O Manush made me feel even more inexperienced in comparison. It all eased up though after we started talking.

Rising Star: Sir, Hridoye Mati O Manush has come a long way. What were the initial struggles in starting such an endeavor?

Shykh Seraj: The first initial struggle I faced was back in 1980, when there was but one TV channel and the entirety of the shows on TV were dramas and magazine serials. When I first put forward this idea of a TV show on agriculture and farming and the troubles of farmers people were mostly surprised and gave the idea no importance. I still did the thing though and initially people viewed Mati O Manush as it was called then as a show that was aired just for formalities.

RS: How did you finally start to popularize the show?

SS: Well, I still had to face a lot of problems running the show, the foremost of which was the fact that the farmers were very reluctant to talk in front of a camera. They would shy away and the initial mistrust of a city person coming to talk to them restricted the people who would talk to me. Then there was the fact that the farmers who would talk were very self conscious of what they said. They were too worried about what to say and to say it in proper Bangla instead of the local lingo that they usually ended up making up very restricted comments. Sometimes I had to say it for them and the impact of the whole conversation was lost. And even I sometimes had trouble conversing, my city lingo greatly differing from the village lingo. I had to change my way of speaking to them as well.

Later on when I did get them to talk it was never in front of a camera, their initial mistrust and shyness was too much to come over. I compromised by recording the farmers in their everyday task, for example while catching fish or planting the fields. Later on, with the camera put away and with a microphone nearby I talked to them and got them talking about their farming and their lives and problems. Recording those conversations I put them together with the previous

taped scenes and was able to overcome the problem. And the shyness and mistrust I remedied by actually joining the people in their tasks. Sometimes it would be walking up a muddy field or knee deep in a fishing pond, but these gestures familiarized me with the farmers and they opened up.

After getting the ball rolling I focused on success stories to capture the attention of the people and most importantly the farmers' awareness.

RS: In terms of agriculture, how do you think the countries lagging behind?

SS: The biggest problem is that the state has no real policies concerning agriculture. It's quite astounding to know that when 10



crore out of the 14 crore population are in the villages and are farmers that the state bases its policies on the cities instead with no real thought about the real population.

The policies are deficient in terms of agriculture and the farmers are the ones suffering. We need in-depth policies to remedy this and the people in power need to realize that writing policies without real research while sitting in cities won't work.

RS: What do you think could be the remedy?

SS: First of, the government should realize that the farming is one of the foremost issues in this country and that it should come forward and help out more. By subsidizing the farmers and encouraging them

toward newer farming methods the government should be more proactive. The farming in our country is still primitive. It's barely mechanized and in terms of world standards we fall behind quite a lot. And the middlemen, the ones who buy the crops at harvest time, they should be eliminated. The farmer barely makes a profit out of it.

RS: You said that we should diversify our farming methods, how and why do you propose that?

SS: The logic is simple. Back in 1971 the population was around 7 crore and the country had a lot more cultivatable land. Now, the population has doubled and the land has decreased in terms of cultivatable land. But we still manage to feed everybody. However that can change. We need better methods to stay afloat and to compete in the world market. With better farming methods and government help the country could flourish.

The farming in our country still follows the traditional styles. The farmers are reluctant to experiment and diversify into new areas mostly because they don't have the capital to do so. And there is no one there to advise them about different and new methods of farming. Once they do have the know-how and the money to spread out they will try new things.

RS: How do you think the youth can participate in this?

SS: The farmers of today don't have energy or the knowledge to actually diversify. They are too set in their ways. The youth can help by actually learning and knowing about farming. Education, especially about agriculture is very important. If the youth do know about the right way of farming and the new methods, they can advise and experiment with their forefathers' experience to help them. The average farmer isn't well educated but the youth is and they can provide the knowledge. That way the participation of the youth would be more effective.

RS: Lastly, what are your plans for your show?

SS: The show is merely a platform to create awareness about the situation of the farmers. To an extent I've succeeded in that and more and more people are taking an interest. All I want is to create a platform for the farmers, one that is free of political influence and middlemen so that the real farmers can come to the front lines. The show has created some of it and hopefully in the future I'll be able to do it.

Interview by Tareq Adnan

way of attracting attention. One of them added, "I think self-injurers believe they need to spice up the cover of the book so that someone might read it."

Well, after listening to so many views of this issue I could just come to one conclusion. It is that the cutters are just trying to fill in the blanks and margins, they are trying to communicate more about themselves without realizing that it is not the correct way of doing it. It never was and it never will be... Sometimes, these cutters are very sensitive and very often very creative people. A recent study of mine has proved that many of them are perfectionists and demand too high of themselves. I believe that the only way to get out of this habit is to be proud of oneself and accept oneself as one is. All of us might not be the best looking but we could have a far more adorable personality and attitude to replace that.

At the end of the day, if one learns to love oneself, everyone else also automatically does... So, instead of sulking, and cutting, be happy and positive and talk more about your problems to your friends and family members. Kick the cutting habit out the door and turn over a new leaf. And always remember the key is to put the emotion into words- not to distract yourself from them with pain.

P.S.- The idea of this article was to provide a remedy, not to go on and on about what caused it... the important part is getting over it, not to go hunting for its source.

Note: The writer forgot to give a byline, and is requested to contact RS by e-mail

When Kalboishakh Calls

THE hymns carried on
The chanting of the hearts
Echoing from the small white brick
mosque Praising, blessing the lands,
Vibrant like Siren's distant calls
While the angels of voice, spread across
like eagles.

The winds swept through the lands
Abrupt, hasty and impulsive, with
gripping valor
Shaking the trees, shivering every soul,
Carrying Shiva's icy songs,
While they shadowed the earth and
painted it grey;
The foreboding had finally come.

The azure hands of the rivers crept onto
the shores
Embedded with sapphire stones they
sparkled
With the winds they advanced and
withdrew,
Translucent, lucid and tantalizing
As though searching for their escape



From their entrusted misery of
embodiment.

The children ran out, mesmerized,
Among the leaves dancing with the wind,
While they let their souls bathe,
replenish,
The mothers looked out in hope and
despair;
The chanting went on from the mosque
Echoing like waves crashing against the
wind.

The sky at last shed its tears
Like arrows directed from a battalion
The waves of droplets came crashing down
Aided by the wind they carved into the
earth;
The crops starting singing their own
songs
While the roofs of the homes clattered.

*Kalboishakh had finally come.
By Adnan M.S. Fakir*

TunesBD The Lyricist's Quest

TUNESBD.net, a music forum based in Bangladesh, intent on promoting and supporting the underground bands, announces a contest during their annual Iftar party. The name of the contest is "The Lyricist's Quest", and accordingly, participants are to submit their lyrics on the TunesBD forum. You have to register to their forum in order to be able to participate. You can submit a maximum of three song lyrics.

The winner(s) of this contest will have the pleasure of hearing their songs performed by Artcell, Powersurge and Radioactive. There is no first, second or third place. The band chooses the lyrics, as much as they want, if they wish to. What's in it for you? Credited on their albums for your song(s).

Participants are asked to visit the TunesBD website for more details, rules and regulations. The contest is from the 1st to the 31st of October.

Thanks to Fahmim, Shuvo, Sami, Saadh, and TunesBD for organizing the contest, and the Iftar Bash for their members on last Thursday. Thanks also to Ranjan Bhai, lyrics writer of Arbovirus, Aurtheroheen and Artcell, for help with the contest.

By Emil



Cutting for no good

One cutter told me that whenever she walked into a room she felt as if everyone was scrutinizing her. She giggled as she called it her "social anxiety issue". She even confessed to have cut herself with pocketknives, blades and even scissors.

Another friend of mine who is also a cutter says, "I couldn't handle emotions and it was like a form of release. I didn't want to die. I just wanted release from the pain."

Most non-cutters opinioned that its just a