

# Shykh Seraj: Dreams of tomorrow

**I**n 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**

## When Kalboishakh Calls

**T**HE 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

**T**UNESBD.net, a music forum  
based in Bangladesh, intent on  
promoting and supporting the  
underground bands, announces a  
contest during their annual Ifar 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  
1<sup>st</sup> to the 31<sup>st</sup> of October.

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

**By Emil**



**T**HEY care about their looks,  
they get good grades,  
they have great friends  
but why are so many girls  
cutting themselves? What  
started as a short-lived  
experimentation has become a  
growing habit. And lately, this gory habit  
is showing no sign of abating. When I asked  
some girls the reason why they are cutting  
themselves, I got a pool of responses.  
A girl I know who is a very good student has  
started cutting herself for the past four  
months with anything sharp just to turn her  
ulterior emotional pain into something  
undeniably physical. The reason you may ask?  
Well, most of the time the self-mutilators have  
some sort of family problems, relationship  
problems or are just suffering from a lack of  
self-confidence.

## 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 opinionated that its just a

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**