Bangladesh," says Yousuff, "its culture, politics, philosophy, beliefs, history, heritage and meaning of life." While *Kitton Khola* was a revolutionary movement away from western traditions, Al Deen was far from being satisfied; to him it was only the start of a journey and he told his friend Nasiruddin Yousuff, that "it was only a drop in the ocean".

In *Keramot Mongol* he went into greater experimentation. This play is about how man creates his own hell through his sins. There are layers of hell, each one emerges when a previous one is done away with. Earth is a paradise and turns hellish because of man's eternal greed for power and money. The central character is Keramot who travels from one place to another and relates the horror stories created by humankind - the 1948 riots are depicted for instance, where even animals are killed along with people for the sake of revenge.

Yet there is optimism in *Keramot Mangal*, characteristic of the writer's own philosophy. "Keramot is compared to the legendary Duldul horse (Hazrat Imam Hosaain's horse)," says Professor Afsar Ahmed, a dramatist, researcher and teacher of Jahangirnagar University, "who has been pierced with arrows but goes on racing ahead much like Keramot's own journey while carrying the burden of the contradictions, violence and misery of the modern world." In Keramot says Yousuff, Al Deen also points out the artificial isolation of man from nature and the folly of humans who have little respect for other living beings.

In Hat Hodai (Seven Trades) written entirely in Noakhali dialect, Al Deen was confronted with the challenge of using an indigenous dialect and making it lyrical enough to be suitable for his play. Here a voyager Anar Bhandari travels all over the world and goes through a huge range of experiences. The elements of fairy tales, myths, puranas are all present in this play. There is also the theme of defying death. Anar Bhandari, a universal character ages and starts thinking of death, he buys his own funeral shroud and tries to live inside a grave. But in the end his passion for life overcomes him, he covers his grave with spit and marries again. There is also the character of a Moulana who becomes paralysed after a stroke. Anar Bhandari sees him and he is crying. Bhandari asks him why he should cry when he will be going to paradise, a place he has preached about so long. The moulana then admits that he does not want to leave his worldly attachments - his land and his new young wife, both symbols of fertility. A female character called Chhukuni is also brought in. Abused by her husband, Chhukuni decides to run away only to be caught by traffickers who turn her into a prostitute. In a poignant scene, Chukkuni describes how she has lost herself before exiting the stage. But the main essence of Hat Hodai is about a man's determination to taste life to the fullest and is more a story of joi de vivre.



Selim, Bachchu and Shimul - a lifelong friendship. Photo Credit: Mosaddek Millat.

According to Afsar Ahmed, *Kitton Khola*, *Keramot Mongol* and *Hat Hodai* can be seen as a trilogy which, although thematically completely different share a common form. It is at this point that Al Deen had taken the art to a spiritual level says Ahmed.

Katha Natya or the oral traditions of narrations typical of rural areas, where performances take place in the small courtyards of village homes, was also brought into Al Deen's plays. In *Ekti Marma Rupkatha*, which Al Deen staged at Jahangirnagar University with his students, he applied this ancient narrative style, to depict the lives of, the Marma. The audience was asked to sit on the floor instead of conventional seating arrangements.