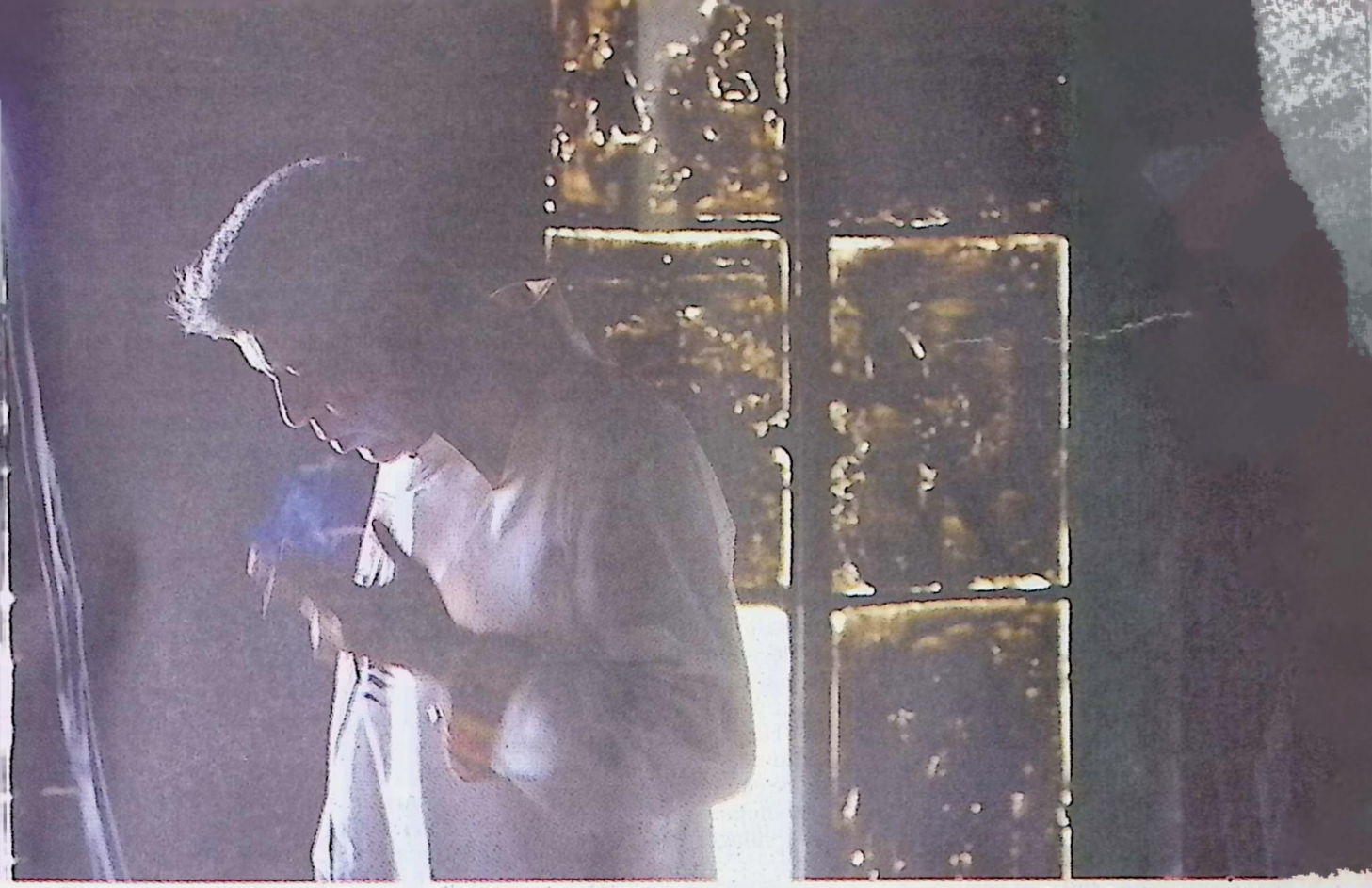


Constantly searching for new ideas.

Photo Credit: Nasir Ali Mamun.

Al Deen's plays were also strong political messages protesting autocratic regimes. "*Horgoj*, *Joyboti Konnyar Mon*, *Ekti Marma Rupkatha*, *Chaka*, *Prachya* and *Bono Pangshul*, all allude to a series of failures of the civil movement against military rule," says Yousuff. In Chaka, a day labourer who drives a cart meant for carrying mustard, has to deliver an unidentified dead body to his village. This begins his search for the right village. But no one claims the body and after a futile search, by which time the corpse is badly decomposed, the labourer decides to bury the body near a riverbank. It is a criticism of civil society that refuses to take responsibility for the evils that take place within it and sometimes at a tragic cost. *Joyboti Konnyar Mon*, says Yousuff, delves into women's psychology. In *Horgoj* a cyclone-devastated village is trying to bury the dead but the villagers only find body parts and try in vain to make up a whole body to bury; an allusion to our own moral failures.

An ardent nature lover, Al Deen was fascinated by the theme of man's harmony with nature, which he thought had to be preserved to save humanity. His deep respect and empathy for indigenous people materialised in his great epic *Bono Pangshul* about the ancient tree-worshipping Mandai community that was being annihilated by the Bangali settlers. The three-hour play staged by Dhaka Theatre showed the oppression of majority Bangalis on minority people, a fact that repeats itself in every nation's history. It also reveals the beauty and wisdom of the Mandai (Burman) people who know how to respect even the smallest of living things. The play is considered one of the best tragedies in Bangla literature.

The dehumanisation of civilisation is the overpowering theme in Al Deen's *Nimojjon*, a 119 episode play that narrates the story of all the genocides committed in the world from as early as the ancient Maya civilisations to the present times. Al Deen laments the disintegration of the universal society where the state becomes an oppressor and unthinkable crimes take place against humanity.

Trying to grasp the depth and range of Al Deen's work is like sorting through the gems in a massive treasure trove. There is so much of his work that still needs to be explored and experimented with. Yet it can be safely said that he established the fact that the history of Bangla theatre is at least a thousand years. With this knowledge he tried to bring the vitality, colour and richness of Bangla theatre from all over the country to the contemporary stage. He left the world before it could truly understand him; it can only appreciate his legacy and keep wondering what the encore would have been like. ■