



# SEVEN YEARS OF CELEBRATING LIFE

When Celebrating Life was started, I had no idea time would fly by so quickly, I find it hard to believe that Celebrating Life is in its 7th year. When I look back, I still feel like it started last year. It still baffles me as to how we organized a festival/contest of this magnitude. It was a grand event from the get go and whenever it ended, I'd look back and try to figure out where the time went.

In terms of photography in Bangladesh, we remain unmatched in terms of financial rewards and recognition. Another thing to consider is the fact that despite being a newspaper, we make time for this contest, while other organizations who deal directly with photography contests do so in a considerably less grand scale. Another thing in our favour is that we treat all photographers equally which cannot be said for other organizations. This is a

proud moment for us and we hope we can make this even better by increasing the financial rewards and making the contest even grander.

As for the lyrics segment, we notice that there is a steady flow of songs out of Bangladesh but most never lingered on. On top of that, the lyricists of our nation remain out of the spotlight entirely, something Celebrating Life is changing with each passing year in terms of recognition. I say this because judging from the state of our country's mainstream music industry, the songs being released are almost never up to the mark, yet they gain recognition. On the other hand, the ones that are truly good in terms of composition, flow and theme, do not. This is where Celebrating Life comes in.

Celebrating Life is made up of three

segments, photography, lyrics and film, the third is the only one that saddens me every year. For the last seven years, we always hoped to get more films, but that almost never happens. I remember a time when the youth wanted to be in front of a camera but now it's the exact opposite, everyone wants to be behind the camera. But somehow, we still receive less and less films every year. This could be our fault too, which is why we plan to redesign Celebrating Life entirely for next year to ensure that more people are reached through it by changing the theme next year with more critical thought and research to ensure wider participation and better quality.

The last segment of Celebrating Life is called the Lifetime Achievement Awards. These awards are handed to the unsung heroes of our nation; the ones that make

the magic happen behind the curtain. You may have noticed that the 16 we awarded previously have only one or two celebrities. The others who were given the awards were the unknown people who were breakouts in their field but remained out of the spotlight. These are people I cannot thank, but feel pride for, for without them, our country would still be struggling in the darkness.

As a closing note, I would like to congratulate everyone who participated in Celebrating Life, along with the winners and lifetime achievement awardees. Something I would add to the contestants who didn't win; please don't lose hope and use this experience to do better. That is the key to success.

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*Rafi Hossain*



**SARA ZAKER**

The Oedipus tragedy is known to all. Oedipus was a club footed prince, later to become the king. When Oedipus was born, the soothsayer proclaimed that Oedipus was destined to kill his father. To avoid this tragic turn of events, Oedipus was sent off to the woods and was ordered to be killed by the gunman accompanying him. The gunman took pity and left the infant in the forest for nature to take responsibilities.

What the soothsayer said had to come true. By the turn of events Oedipus kills the King, his father and marries the Queen (Jocasta). And as the truth is revealed to him, Oedipus cannot bear the ugly truth that brings unbearable shame on him and he blinds himself and leaves the country for good.



But what happens to Jocasta? Jocasta is not the central character and her tragedy is not showcased and therefore we are never told.

Saleque Khan had told me, he wants to make a play where the story unravels the tragedy of Jocasta. A member of Nagorik Natya Sampradaya, the group to which we both belong went through several sessions with Pantha Shahriar the playwright, who was also to be his Assistant director.

Pantha came up with the tragedy of Jocasta in a totally different setting than the Greek tragedy of Oedipus.

Tropa Majumdar does the role of the mother to whom the truth unfurls that she has married her son.

Some of the plays are inked in our memory after having watched them several times or having read them repeatedly. This play, in which we see Jocasta's tragedy, is a gripping piece of dramatic performance.



And Pantha Shahriar has done a wonderful job of writing and directing the play, which is called "Ondhokarey Methane".

Our friend Saleque who had returned to Dhaka after completing his Ph.D. from New York University in Drama, is a true theatre person. He lived in the realm of theatre. Now He is back in New York. I thought his life of discipline was the contribution of his training in theatre: first in National School of Drama and later in New York University.

Not only Jocasta's story which has been so well communicated to the director/playwright, which makes it another A+ show on the Dhaka stage, the concept itself is a great one, in my view.

When this play was first discussed in our rehearsal room, there were skeptics. It was sacrosanct to even touch Oedipus, leave alone leave his tragedy aside and tell the story of Jocasta and what could be her



state of mind when the truth unravels that she has married her very own son. These people had almost challenged Saleque for his twisted (distorted) thoughts. But Saleque quietly worked along with his assistant director and brought to stage a wonderful play where we see some superb acting by Tropa. Not to mention Panthya who also did a fine job.

Dear readers this is not a review of the play, though it is clear that it has nudged me in a very positive way.

Those of us in the ARTs, we have to nurture our love for performance and bringing new dimensions to time tested plays is always a marvel. Because the original is in the mass memory and the impact of witnessing the twist is Magical!!

Thumbs Up!!

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