



Adnan M S Fakir

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### A young man with a camera rediscovers the unwritten past of the country

BY ANANTA YUSUF

A thirst to discover the past compelled Adnan to go on an exploration of the country with his camera. He wanted to find the unwritten myths and legends of Bangladesh and the ancient architecture where such untold stories have been hidden for centuries. Thus "Finding Bangladesh", a documentary series seeking to bring back the tales of the past, was born. His main goal was "to know what some say are unimportant histories, but we deemed to be magnificent and fantastic."

In 2006, Adnan worked in The Rising Stars a

weekly supplement for young people of The Daily Star. At that time Adnan and his colleagues had done a survey covering both English and Bengali medium schools with around 500 respondents. The survey comprised of 10 simple questions on the '71 Liberation War of Bangladesh. Interestingly over 30 percent got the Independence Day and Victory Day mixed up. At that point he realised, "if we don't even have the history of '71 clear in our heads, the histories, mythologies and legends of our lands are in the furthest corners of our minds, and are disappearing."

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Adnan's debut documentary Finding Bangladesh-1 won Celebrating Life 2008 as the Best Debut Documentary of the year. Now the whole team is working hard to come up with the second series, Finding Bangladesh 2: Tales of the South. "We have had 68 days of shooting in 17 locations covering 11 stories. We even had to go back to re-shooting some locations for better shots. Meanwhile, the audio team concurrently worked on the scores and songs while the narrators practiced shrieks, snorts, singing Merry Christmas, and folk songs to keep their vocal chords in top notch condition."



He says that that's when Finding Bangladesh's facebook page reads the prime motto, which is to broadcast the "rich heritage that we should be proud of the terrific mysteries of man and monster, majestic monuments and wonders that only add to our accomplishments as an ancient civilization and of course shapes our identity."

About his work he says that the first step consists of intense research – digging into tattered old books hoping to find stories of historical sites that still exist. This usually takes 3-6 months – then start the scouting trips: Hectic, blood rushing, going-crazy-on-bus-stops trips with the target of hunting down locations that were last highlighted in books as old as the 1850s. He says, "From there, we move on to scripting and story-boarding the film, engineering required props (like the electric powered "Loo-on-Wheels" we made for the upcoming film), before finally moving on to filming."

The second season will show the southern part of the country and it contains subjects ranging from a mossy mansion called Krittipasha Rajbari to The Legend of *Makara*, stories of a Shiva temple in Jessore. Interestingly, they shoot the story on the Legend of *Makara*, engraved in two almost identical Shiv temples, in a story telling narrative. From the documentary narrations it seems this was the first temple they found intricately decorated and solely based on creatures from mythology. The elephant head with the teeth of a crocodile is named as Makara. Adnan says, "Locals address it as the *mokkor* and claim it to be a sea monster still lurking in the waters of our part of the world – our very own monster you may say – and some even have claimed that their forefathers had seen it." Adnan believes that the second part is coming up with many more interesting stories like this, he adds, "I hope the audience will enjoy it".