

# TELEVISION OF EXISTENCE

**TELEVISION  
OF A LIFETIME**



**FARIDUR REZA SAGOR**  
[Continued from last issue]

Nowadays there is a thing called immediate broadcast in television channels. Important things mean live telecast. Apart from that there are also discussion programs and public reaction program as well. As news is more popular in television channels so such immediate programs are quite popular among the audience.

Although satellite channels are more partial towards immediate programs, Bangladesh television is still concerned with producing various programs showcasing everyday news.

At that time, news was not as attractive towards the audience as it is now. Still the producers wanted to bring some kind of reflection of the news into the program. At that time the schedule for the television programs used to be printed in newspapers.

There was no television guide which was why the prediction of weekly dramas was taken each week. Basically the head of drama would listen from the producer about which dramas will be showcased, which is why there was variation in dramas each week.

There was news in the newspaper which stated that a lot of travellers who were coming from one of the picnic spots were faced with a difficulty for 24 hours when one of the bridges collapsed. They couldn't contact with anyone.

Producer Kazi Kayum, after reading the story called out to his playwright and together they made a story and it was showcased as that week's drama. They

even declared that the following drama was created on the basis of one of the incidents in the newspaper.

Based on newspapers, various dramas were created like these. The whole recognition and credit goes to the brilliant producer Kazi Kayum.

Kazi Kayum was given the responsibility of arranging the National Film Festival Award. At that time the film festival was



not as glamorous as it is today. Still, Kazi Kayum wanted to make the program attractive to the audience, so with his hard work and sincere team he wanted to come up with ideas. At that time the hit duo in movies was Zafar Iqbal and Bobita. There was much news about the chemistry between these two celebrities. Kazi Kayum apparently brought this news forward in

television. He focused on how the couple entered in the film awards, where they sat, and how Bobita felt when Zafar Iqbal was singing in the program- he showcased all this through his program to entertain the audience.

He also thought about how to get the gold cup for 'Notun Kuri' without having to receive the tender. Kazi Kayum, using of his knowledge and with Mustafa Kamal



Syed and others, were able to convince the ministry to give the permission for buying the golden cup for Notun Kuri. The ministry always wanted things to be bought through tenders, but will the big artist participate in the program then? Especially the way renowned artists like Nitun Kundu, Mustafa Monowar, and Kazi Kayum were able to design the gold

cup with such enthusiasm, would that have been possible through the tender?

Kazi Kayum with his strong will and justifiable statement was able to convince the ministry to buy the gold cup without the tender.

When the cameras in the television studio were broken, Kazi Kayum surprised the audience by showcasing the program through news booths. There was a time when 15-20 students from Udayon College came to participate in a serial. The Principal of Udayon School was Begum Momtaz Hossain. She has written many dramas for children. Not only did the drama "Bhai bon" was made with the story she wrote, but her biggest success came with the drama "Shokal Shondha". The students who came from Begum Momtaz Hossain's School could not stay long in the studio and on top of that the camera was broken. The crew members of the television were really confused at that time as to what they could do. The producer of the program was Sakhina Sarowar. At that time, if any of the producers were facing any difficulties, then other producers would help them out. Kazi Kayum came to help her. He was doing a recording in the 3rd studio. In this recording, one of the hosts of the show was Principal Abdul Matin. In the program, the participants were normal couples. In the next stage the participants varied from mama-bhagne, chacha-bhatija, shala-dulabhai.

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## ODE TO THE SERPENT GODDESS

**NAUSHAD ALI HUSEIN**  
*relives a mythic river journey*

For his father's refusal to worship the serpent goddess Manasa, Chand Soudagor's seventh and only surviving son, Lokhindar, lies bitten by a poisonous snake. His wife, Behula, refuses to accept his death. In this tiny village between a river and endless fields of paddy and sugarcane, everyone gathers to watch Lokhindar brought back to life. A little girl films on her pink smart phone.

Lokhindar is played by Mohammad Monirul Islam, the 'guru' of the troupe and, in real-time, proprietor of a steel cabinet workshop. The burly thirty-year-old's gentle, effeminate charisma makes him instantly likable. He is also an Ojha—he says he learned the language of the snakes in a dream, and claims to have healed thousands of snakebite patients by sucking out the poison.

Manasa devotees all over Bangladesh have unique practices. In Tangail and Ghatail, snake-healers like Moni perform the ritual dance drama Behular Lachari, a retelling of the myth of Manasa. In the



age-old folk tale, Behula wins Lord Shiva's ear with a fantastic dance. Shiva then negotiates a deal with Manasa. Lokhindar's father finally offers a puja to Manasa, snidely, with his left hand, but it's enough to bring back his son.

Shaone Dala, a reenactment of Behula's epic journey by raft to save

Lokhindar, takes place on the last day of Srabon. In a tour organized by Shadhona Cultural Circle and Jatrik, a cultural tourism company where I work, we follow Moni's boat. The songs blare over loudspeakers. Drums, trumpets, and electric keyboard drown out the dhol and harmonium. The cast are

dressed in bright red and orange, velvet vests and crowns with silver ornamentation. The female characters are played by men, but it's hard to tell, behind layers of make-up.

The cult of Manasa, dominated by well-developed female characters, has prevailed in rural Bengal and surrounding regions through centuries of cultural transformation and political upheaval.

Syed Jamil Ahmed, professor at Dhaka University's Department of Theatre and Performance Studies, argues that these regional rural traditions exist in a symbiotic relationship with the canonical classical traditions. "Rural communities engage in little traditions because they yield meaning and value to communal life."

Patronage and economic security would allow rural artistes time to nurture and refine their art, which in turn could contribute to producing world class master artistes.

Shadhona and Jatrik are hosting a competition of ten jatra troupes, including Moni's, in Bhupapur, Tangail on Sept 18 and 19.