



A performance of Bura-Buri Shong.

COURTESY: SAYMON ZAKARIA

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 6

(young) wants the husband to sleep with her. So a conflict arises. The wives start to draw the husband to their side and the elderly husband faints. The grandson of the elderly fetches a doctor and the doctor examines the fainted old man in a very funny manner. The doctor is unable to identify any health problems but he calls in his own wife to solve the problem of the two

wives. This comedy performance actually portrays the harmful effects of polygamy. Using masks, the performers intend to provide the villagers with an artistic and entertaining form of education against polygamy.

Astokgaan

Another performance on the occasion of Baishakh and Chaitra Sangkranti is *astokgaan*. It is a kind of ritualistic performance in the districts of Jessore, Khulna, Narail, Magura, Jhenaidah, Kushtia, etc. It is

an ambulant performance. A group of performers take on the costumes of Radha-Krishna. They perform different *leela* of Radha and Krishna through dancing and singing by visiting rural families. After the performance, they receive corn and money from the families. The performance begins with an orchestra of traditional music instruments. Amidst the orchestra, the performers – Radha, Krishna and their eight co-artists – get in the performance spot and make a

moving circle. They move by dancing following the rhythm of the orchestra. After the orchestra is over the performers stand face to face and do the Bandana (worshipping song). After singing the first stanza of the worshipping song, performers put their hands above the head and move their hands around in the air. Then at the beginning of the third stanza of the worshipping song the performers again sit face to face and sing the next stanza of the Bandana. The performers sing praises to the goddess Saraswati as well as parents and teachers. After the song, the main part of the *astokgaan* starts with the narration of the principal singer who does the acting of the character of Krishna.

When urban inhabitants celebrate the Bangla New Year, rural inhabitants celebrate the last day of the previous year by organising Charak Festival as part of Shiva-Parvati rituals. Various mythical characters gather in the Charak festival. The villagers wearing diverse masks play the roles of mythical characters. Some of them have their bodies painted and ornamented to become specific characters. Thus the rural people generate a mixed reflection of reality and myths in the ritualistic performances. The diversity of Bangla New Year celebrations reflects the traditional festivals, rituals and culture of fairs as well as the multidimensional creativity and artistic skills of Bangladeshi people.



A glimpse of Astokgaan in Narail.

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