

WHITHER SHOULD THEY GO?

WHAT'S IN THE THEATER? ABDUS SELIM



Perhaps her name was Cynthia Warren, an American expatriate English language teacher at Dhaka University Institute of Modern Languages, around late seventies or early eighties of the last millennium. She was an extremely carefree friendly person, and in spite of repeated security alerts from the US Embassy (she was an US-sponsored visiting teacher) she used to hangout freely and frequently with her Bangladeshi counterparts and friends (I being one of them), and more often than not she loved to have so-called *subaltern tea* at the road-side with us. After the completion of her contract Cynthia got back to the US, and in her first letter from the States to one of her colleagues (not me) wrote with much feelings of dismay that in the US she was missing BTV the most. At that time BTV was the lone channel that we would all watch, and while in Bangladesh Cynthia, hailing from a country with multiple television channels, never felt she missed *any other channels*, for there were *no any other channels* to watch. I am sure with the choice of almost 30 television channels to watch now we are burdened with another most disgusting anxiety of the 21st century. Gone are those days when we would watch television plays like *Mukhora Romoni* *Bashikoron*, *Rokto Karobi*, *Songsotok* or *Shokal Sondhya* on BTV. There were also TV-

plays written by shaheed Munier Chowdhury strewn with crisp, witty, subtle and humorous dialogues mixed with thematic situations — a unique cocktail of sitcom and wit/word plays. Readers, I am not a conservative oldie nor am I closed-minded. I love the young generation for their faculty of creativity and I admire their

days like *Eid*, *Language Day*, *Pohela Baishakh* etc., they have an evident affinity for long-lived serials or soap operas as they are largely small-budget productions and fetch easy commercial money.

I read the reviews on television plays published in the newspapers almost regularly and I hardly find any words of

episodes, most of them produce an elasticity of ceaseless and nonsensical bubbles instead of strong, steady and meaningful storylines. Recently imitation of Indian television serials and soap operas has brought in more musical stunts than required. A thirty-minute episode is often a punch of almost fifteen-minute music and endless commercials.

As a linguist I feel dialects are a more powerful medium of expressions than standard language (*promito Bangla*) though standard language itself is a dialect — dialect of the so-called educated elite. In reality many dialectical expressions in special situations are often more fulfilling than standard language expressions (which is mostly euphemistic in nature). It is equally true for literates or illiterates. None has the right to ridicule a dialect and laugh at it.

There are many different kinds of television comedies (I feel there is a sharp distinction between stage and television plays — one is visibly realistic and the other is visibly imaginary), such as sitcoms, wit/word comedies and stand-up comedies. There is often a combination of sit and wit/word comedies, and perhaps they are the best. This is rarely found in Bangladesh. To cater the need of too many private channels what we see on television in the names of *play*, *serial* or *soap* is not what they actually mean. It is time the private channel producers/directors took them seriously or they would go on losing audience.

The writer is a theatre activist, playwright and theatre critic. He is also a Bangla Academy awardee for translation.



novelty of thinking — in fact I live with them being a teacher by profession. Old is not always gold but like T S Eliot (as referred in his *Tradition and the Individual Talent*) I also hold that ignoring or being oblivious of our past will not take us anywhere.

Yes, I am talking about the television programmes aired by our private channels. We had high expectations from them and now we see they have, in most cases, failed us — especially in the productions of television plays and talk shows. As for television plays, though most of the channels telecast full episodes on special

praise for those productions. Frankly, I gave up watching them long since when I found most of them were either sheer *bharami* (I have no befitting English synonym for the Bangla word) stuffed with different dialects of different regions of Bangladesh or stereotyped love stories sub-plotted with hackneyed middleclass jealousy, sex role stereotype psychotics, and most of all weak and failed imitation of Humayun Ahmed characters. Some producers or directors, for the hope of being unique, deliberately infuse some absurdities or imposed misconceived surrealistic elements in their serials. As for soap operas crossing 100

TRIVIA & QUIZ

NAME THE MOVIE

1

HINT: TWO MARRIED ASSASSINS ARE HIRED TO KILL EACH OTHER



NAME THE CELEB

2

HINT: THE COMEDIAN HAS WON TWO PRIMETIME EMMY AWARDS



SPOT THE DIFFERENCES

4



NAME THE TV SHOW

3

WITH THIS FAMOUS QUOTE:

"If you truly worship the dollar, then I'm your ticket to divinity."

ANSWERS OF PREVIOUS ISSUE

1. Name of the Actor: Zac Efron
2. Name of the Movie: Tenacious D in the Pick of Destiny
3. Name of the TV Show with the Famous Quote: Boston Legal
4. Spot the difference: i. Painting ii. Chair Wheel iii. Mirror Reflection

Send "ALL FOUR" answers to showbiz.tds@gmail.com

Winners will receive QUEEN SPA ROOM GIFT VOUCHER

courtesy of *Queen Bella*

ALL 4 QUESTIONS MUST BE ANSWERED CORRECTLY

FIND FIVE DIFFERENCES BETWEEN THE TWO PICTURES FROM "WILD"