

COKE STUDIO'S 'MURIR TIN'

A testament to working class (men's) struggles



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Season 2 of Coke Studio Bangla opened with an innovative, colourful, and vibrant song: *Murir Tin*. It's a phenomenal creation for so many different reasons. It challenges our educated, elite obsession with "standardised Bangla" (*promito* Bangla), which has long been considered an indicator of socio-economic-cultural capital. Any deviation from the standardised Bangla or any regional accent has often been deemed "unacceptable" and "inappropriate." As someone whose parents migrated from Rangpur to Dhaka and who grew up in the capital, I never learnt how to speak the Rangpur dialect. My father has a strong regional accent. While growing up, I was taught to believe that my dad's accent was not cool and the right way to speak was in my "standardised" Bangla that I learnt in school and from watching mostly BTB. As an adult, I now lament the loss of a part of my Rangpur heritage. *Murir Tin* blew my mind when I saw these young men writing songs and singing in their own regional dialects. They nurtured their heritage and made a conscious effort to circulate it.

Bangla music is increasingly getting more and more transnational. *Murir Tin* is a creative fusion of local tunes and American bluegrass and rap music. Bluegrass music originated from the struggles of white working-class communities living in the Appalachian region of the US during and after the Great Depression in the 1940s. Bluegrass composers and listeners come from both conservative, old, white communities and progressive, young, diverse communities. The progressive turn in bluegrass music incorporated stronger themes around

working-class concerns and criticism of powerful institutions. Whereas most of the bluegrass musicians and listeners are white, rap – which is a part of the larger hip-hop culture in the US – originated in African-American and Afro Caribbean as well as in some Latinx communities struggling with drug and gang-related violence in the 1960s and 1970s. With the advancement of globalisation, hip-hop culture has gone global and been localised to regional socio-economic-political struggles. Central to global rap music has historically been amplifying concerns of marginalised and minoritised communities.

It is not surprising that a song like *Murir Tin* that borrows inspiration and style from two prominent global working class focused musical genres would highlight class struggles. *Murir Tin* talks about old, broken, crowded local buses and deplorable public transportation in general, the unbearable traffic that kills hours after hours, roads filled with potholes and defects, fighting over getting a seat especially for female passengers, as well as the daily struggles of workers in the transportation system. As Shayam Chowdhury Arnob rightly points out, "The traffic is so stressful that humour is the only tool to cope with the stress."

Since 2018, Bangladesh has observed a series of road safety protests led mainly by students and the youth. The protests called for attention to our failing road and transportation system, crashes, and fatalities that take away thousands of precious lives every year. Therefore, the song *Murir Tin* is not just a testament to the historical clunky local buses roaming the streets in the 1980s. The public transportation system in Dhaka started with *Murir Tin* (literal



VISUAL: SALMAN SAKIB SHAHRIYAR

meaning: "a can of puffed rice") buses. After World War II, the leftover army trucks were sold in auctions at a lower price to wealthy, local business owners. The business owners covered the wooden structure of these trucks with tin and converted them into local buses. These buses were satirically called "*murir tin*" because of the rattling noise they made and the way they packed passengers to an extreme – just like a can full of puffed rice. As years passed, any bus that was old and crowded got the tag "*murir tin*" by the common public. The song *Murir Tin* moved the nation not just because it brought forward a historical tradition and nostalgia. So many people were able to personally relate to the song because it is a testament to the continuing struggles of working class people with public transportation.

Nevertheless, *Murir Tin* specifically covered working class men's experience. Almost all the characters featured in the "*Murir Tin* | Behind

the Magic" video were men – except the Harmonica player and three backing vocalists. The lyrics were also composed by men based on their personal experiences, as mentioned in several interviews. Therefore, it's not surprising that *Murir Tin* talked about women's experience only in terms of "ladies' seats" being occupied by men. A 2022 survey found that 87 percent of women faced some form of harassment, including sexual abuse, in public transport at least once, and 36 percent experienced sexual harassment regularly in public transport.

Violence against women in public transport is not just a Bangladeshi problem. The 2012 Delhi gang rape in a bus and the feminist protests around the incident brought forward how unsafe public transport and public spaces have always been for women – something that was largely invisible in

The Coke Studio Bangla's YouTube

channel describes the *murir tin* bus as a "melting pot where the cultures and the people of Bangladesh come and go. Amid a crowd of common people, there lies #RealMagic." It further says that *Murir Tin* is a unifying space for the people of Bangladesh where all share the same experience in terms of "the journeys we take, the people we meet, the situations we encounter." Is women's experience of sexual harassment in a *murir tin* shared by men? Do men encounter the situations women face in public transport?

As a middle-class woman who occasionally used local buses in Dhaka, my experience was not as joyful and vibrant as the vibe the *Murir Tin* composition shared on stage. I did not have to rely on local buses all the time because of my class privilege. However, on some occasions, when I had to take local buses, the first thing I had to consider was how to save my body from unwanted touches, which meant

trying to secure one of the very limited number of seats assigned for women, or trying to shield my body with my purse or backpack, or riding the bus with a group of friends who kept an eye on each other and protected each other if needed. Sitting in the last row and writing a song ("*pisur sidut boi ene lehir ei gaan*") would have been the last thing on my mind while riding a *murir tin*.

Both bluegrass and rap have a male-dominated historical tradition. During bluegrass festivals, male musicians used to play tunes while their wives watched them from the sidelines. The bluegrass lyrics traditionally had a "Madonna-whore" complex that idealised mothers and maternal figures and justified violence against women committing adultery and/or anything that went against the norm of being a "good woman". Later, some prominent women singers challenged the glass ceiling of bluegrass, and aspired to occupy the stage as bluegrass musicians.

Similarly, the rap industry has been historically male-dominated. Even though it brought forward class struggles, it primarily focused on men's struggles and involved hypersexualisation of and violence against women. Hypermasculinity, and often toxic masculinity, have been integral to being a male rapper. Many Black hip-hop feminists and singers have been trying to address this disparity and find a way to engage hip-hop sensibility with intersectional struggles.

I was not surprised to see that *Murir Tin* – a composition inspired by bluegrass and rap music tradition – glamorised the hypermasculine performance of male rappers or ignored women's everyday struggles in public transport. However, the larger problem lies in the fact that major music roles in the industry – songwriting and production, in particular – are mostly occupied by men. The corporatisation of the local music industry has made it extremely difficult to bring radical changes within the existing structure that has already been profitable for music producers and their sponsors.

The world must not turn away from the Rohingya plight



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DOREEN CHOWDHURY

The World Food Programme (WFP) recently decided to cut rations for the Rohingya refugees living in Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh, announcing that it would cut the monthly allotment by 17 percent from March 2023 onwards.

For the past few years, there has been a visible declining trend in aid supply for the Rohingya. Such a worrisome trend is detrimental to the well-being of the refugees living in the camps for the last five and a half years. Owing to their vulnerability, the declining funds also have worrying implications for regional security.

WFP decided to cut the rations from the current \$12 to \$10 from March onwards, citing a budget shortfall. It has also requested a \$125 million immediate fund from its donors to meet the deficit. Such a budget cut means that a Rohingya refugee living in the camps must live on just \$10 every month, which is likely to make life more difficult considering the soaring prices of commodities amid skyrocketing inflation.

However, this is not the first time WFP has reduced ration. In 2020, the organisation cut ration for Uganda's refugees. After two years, it seems the result has been devastating due to widespread malnutrition and hunger. Many refugees are now deciding to go back to their homes even though the situation there has not improved yet.

It is also not the only instance of declining funds for the Rohingya refugees. For the past few years, funds under the Joint Response Plan (JRP) have been on the decline, increasing the shortfall. In 2022, only \$553 million of the required \$881 million was received under JRP with a shortfall of 37 percent. In 2021, the shortfall was 28 percent, and in 2020 it was 40 percent.

Such a decline in aid for the Rohingya is increasing pressure on Bangladesh as it has to maintain the camp with inadequate funds. Moreover, it is also not sustainable for the host country to increase its own budgetary support for the Rohingya since the country is already facing an economic downturn fuelled by the war in Ukraine. Skyrocketing inflation, negative balance of payment and fluctuating forex reserves are already hurting the economy. Yet, Bangladesh is hosting Rohingya refugees in Bhashan Char under its Ashrayan initiative.

The impact of the aid deficit will be dangerous for the refugees. Already, 45 percent of the



Aid deficit will further exacerbate the inhumane situation the Rohingya refugees are living in right now. FILE PHOTO: REUTERS

refugees could not avail a balanced diet with \$12 per month. Before the ration cut, already 40 percent of Rohingya children have stunted growth and 40 percent of pregnant and breastfeeding women are anaemic, according to the WFP's own calculation.

UN Special Rapporteur on the right to food Michael Fakhri and Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Myanmar Tom Andrews warned about "devastating consequences" due to the ration cut: more malnutrition, more disease, fewer services, and increased insecurity in the camp.

The budget shortfall and ration cut have implications for regional security. There is a common proverb: "Necessity knows no law." To meet their individual and family needs, the Rohingya refugees are likely to seek alternative sources of income. Ultimately, their needs will compel them to be involved in criminal activities, including drugs and arms peddling, human trafficking, kidnapping and extortion, and many more. Already, many Rohingya have

been detained on charges of drugs and arms trafficking. There are several gangs operating in the Rohingya camps, involved in many crimes within and around the camp areas, according to media reports.

When Bangladesh opened its border on humanitarian grounds and hosted the Rohingya refugees in 2017, the international community pledged to provide the necessary

budgetary support and ensure quick repatriation. Five and a half years on, the international community must not forget their commitment. They must play a more active role as they had pledged to do in 2017. While quick and swift repatriation should be at the centre of the commitment, the budget shortfall must be avoided as long as the Rohingya live in temporary shelters in Cox's Bazar.

The Rohingya already live in inhumane conditions in the camps. The reduction in aid means further worsening the situation. Therefore, budgetary support should increase with time instead of declining. The US recently announced an additional \$75 million fund in Rohingya support. Apart from the US, Japan, and the EU have announced funds for the Rohingya. Such initiatives are welcome, but these are not enough to meet the budget shortfall Bangladesh is facing every year. Therefore, the international community must live up to their commitments they pledged at the onset of the crisis.

Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh

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e-Tender Notice

Memo No. 57.03.3532.304.07.001.23.5

Date: 26/02/2023

Sl. No.	Tender ID No.	Name of goods	Procurement method	Publishing date & time	Last selling date & time	Tender opening & closing date & time
1	794952	Supply and Installation of Engineering & other Accessories for Computer Lab	OTM (e-GP)	28/02/2023 08:00	15/03/2023 10:00	15/03/2023 11:00
2	794953	Supply and Installation of Engineering & other Accessories for Computer, Electrical & Electronics Lab	OTM (e-GP)	28/02/2023 08:00	15/03/2023 10:30	15/03/2023 11:30
3	794954	Supply and Installation of Engineering & other Accessories for RAC & Food Lab	OTM (e-GP)	28/02/2023 08:00	15/03/2023 11:00	15/03/2023 12:00
4	794955	Supply and Installation of Office Accessories	OTM (e-GP)	28/02/2023 08:00	15/03/2023 11:30	15/03/2023 12:30

This is an online tender where only e-Tender documents will be accepted in the National e-GP Portal and no offline or hard copies will be accepted. To submit e-Tender, registration in the National e-GP System Portal (<http://www.eprocure.gov.bd>) is mandatory. The fees for downloading the e-Tender documents from the National e-GP System Portal have to be deposited online through any registered bank branch. Further information & guidelines are available in the National e-GP System Portal & from the e-GP help desk (helpdesk@eprocure.gov.bd).

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Invitation for e-Tender Notice

1	Ministry/Division	Local Government Division.
2	Implementing agency	Department of Public Health Engineering (DPHE).
3	Project/program name	Fourth Primary Education Development Program (PEDP-4).
4	e-Tender IDs (with package number)	793401 (PEDP4-WB-1468), 793420 (PEDP4-WB-1469), 793423 (PEDP4-WB-1470), 793425 (PEDP4-WB-1471) and 793431 (PEDP4-WB-1472).
5	Description of works	PEDP4-WB-1468: Construction of 06 Nos. 2-storied RCC WASH Block at Hatibanda and others upazilas in Lalmonirhat FY 2022-23. PEDP4-WB-1469: Construction of 06 Nos. 2-storied RCC WASH Block at Hatibanda and others upazilas in Lalmonirhat FY 2022-23. PEDP4-WB-1470: Construction of 06 Nos. 2-storied RCC WASH Block at Hatibanda and others upazilas in Lalmonirhat FY 2022-23. PEDP4-WB-1471: Construction of 06 Nos. 2-storied RCC WASH Block at Hatibanda and others upazilas in Lalmonirhat FY 2022-23. PEDP4-WB-1472: Construction of 06 Nos. 2-storied RCC WASH Block at Patgram and others upazilas in Lalmonirhat FY 2022-23.
6	Name & designation of official inviting tender	Engr. Md. Abdul Alim Gazi, Executive Engineer, DPHE, Lalmonirhat District.
7	This is online tender, where only e-Tender will be accepted in the National e-GP Web Portal and no offline/hard copies will be accepted. Interested persons/firms can see details in the website: www.eprocure.gov.bd	

Engr. Md. Abdul Alim Gazi
Executive Engineer
DPHE, Lalmonirhat District

GD-365