

'OBAK BHALOBASHA' 30 years later

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ELITA KARIM

Warfaze, one of the most celebrated bands in Bangladesh, turned 40 years old on June 6. With albums, compositions, awards, and several hits to their name, the band has contributed much to the music industry in Bangladesh. They have also played a vital role through their melodies and lyrics— in keeping the Bengali language alive, thriving, and evolving, over several generations and in countries all over the world, where Bengalis live and communicate accordingly.

The latest release of the famous song, *Obak Bhalobasha* on the Coke Studio Bangla version proved to many that certain compositions are here to stay forever and can be reborn generations later.

As the new version of the song crosses the eight million mark, one can't help going back to the original version of the song, which was released in a self-titled album 30 years ago. The album was definitely a big hit, especially the song *Obak Bhalobasha*. The unique elements that defined the composition—

the beginning of the guitar solo, going on for minutes, sounds of waves crashing against the rocks at sea, calls of seagulls flying above, and then finally sliding into the words of a beautiful saga— had the younger ones asking for more.

Fast forward to almost three decades later, the release of the new version of *Obak Bhalobasha* now has a younger set of followers and music lovers. The song featured the current band members of Warfaze— Sheikh Monirul Alam Tipu (drums), Ibrahim Ahmed Kamal (lead guitar), Palash Noor (vocals), Samir Hafiz (lead guitar), Naim Haque Roger (bass guitar) and Shams Mansoor Ghani (keyboard).

The very talented Babna Karim, a former member of the band and also the original creator of the song, was flown in from the US to perform with the band. The song also featured a host of gifted musicians who played and vocalised alongside the band.

"It was Arnob who got in touch with me last November regarding Coke Studio Bangla Season 3," says Tipu.

Tipu adds that initially, the band was



considering working on *Ekti Chele*, yet another Warfaze hit. "Palash, the band's current vocalist, does a fantastic rendition of the song," says Tipu, adding, "And we all thought that the song would be perfect. However, the Coke Studio team wanted *Obak Bhalobasha* instead."

The entire production was nothing less than a team effort, says Tipu, with Arnob, Samir, and himself working on the production of the new version.

Babna Karim, the lyricist and composer of *Obak Bhalobasha*, remembers writing the song on February 29, 1992, a couple of years before it was released. "I first created the melody and the lyrics followed later," he says.

After the release of the self-titled album in 1994, the band found out about the Coca-Cola Band Music Award and was adamant about participating in the competition with the submission of their newly released song *Obak Bhalobasha*. However, they were falling

short of approximately Tk 3,500.

"The requirements were as follows: the song was to be submitted on five chrome cassettes, along with the lyrics and the structure of the song," says Tipu. "Neither I nor Babna had the funds to do this, so I went to Kabir bhai from Rainbow Music Store.

He immediately handed me the money and recorded the chrome cassettes himself."

As one can guess, the team won the competition and walked off with a cash prize of Tk 50,000. This, undoubtedly, motivated them to flourish and achieve more in the industry.

Three decades later, it was as if fate reunited Coca-Cola and Warfaze for this new rendition of *Obak Bhalobasha* in the third season of Coke Studio Bangla.

"I simply loved everything about it!" says Babna, referring to the production and the set. "Also the blending between two different scales was done perfectly," he adds, noting the striking difference between the original and the new version

of the song. "This was done because Palash and I sing on different keys."

The key shift that Babna Karim speaks of is the transition to an E minor from a C minor— while performing the new version live on set. Shifting of keys within a composition is sometimes done to add an artistic layer to a performance, where the tempo also goes through exciting changes. This is also done to make adjustments between two or more vocalists performing the composition.

"In the rendition, we moved from C minor to E minor—a total of four shifts!" Palash exclaims.

"Both Warfaze and Arnob had long discussions about how this transition would take place. Eventually, a point was reached where the transition for the instruments and vocals would be smooth. I definitely learned a thing or two that day!" says Palash.

Obak Bhalobasha has been relevant for several generations and has created conversations through the power of love and music. It is now time for the younger musicians to come forward and create new dimensions; this will only be possible if the legends make way and welcome new ideas to the circle.

The author is a singer and journalist.



PHOTOS: BAYEZID BIN WAHEED/ RAW EXPOSURE

COUNTRYWIDE

Traditional duli still in demand

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Lalmonirhat

Duli, a traditional rice storage bin or a small silo, made of bamboo, is still being used by farmers in different rural areas of the northern region.

Usually, use and sale of traditional duli increase in many folds during the paddy harvesting period as most of the farmers in Rangpur region prefers it for storing rice all the year round.

As a result, local bamboo craftsmen pass busy times in making and selling duli during the rice harvesting season.

Currently, the bamboo-made rice storage bin is available in almost all the Haats (weekly markets) in Rangpur region's five districts—Lalmonirhat, Kurigram, Rangpur, Nilphamari and Gaibandha.

Locals said duli still has a high demand among farmers in rural areas.

A number of farmers said gradually traditional agricultural practices as well as the tools and accessories, used by farmers, are being replaced by modern machinery and gadgets.

But duli, a traditional paddy storage bin or a miniature silo, is still being used by farmers in rural areas for storing harvested rice at their homes.

Depending on the amount of paddy harvested in a single season, each farmer usually sets-up one or two duli at their

homestead to store rice for consumption of their family members all through the year, they added.

Farmer Nagendra Nath Das of Thetrai village in Kurigram's Ulipur upazila said the demand for duli is at its peak during the paddy harvest season.

Moreover, most of the craftsmen remain busy during that period, trying to keep up with orders made by duli traders. "Duli is considered as one of our traditional accessories for storing rice," he said.

Craftsman Anil Chandra Das of Nayarhat village in Lalmonirhat Sadar upazila said duli is available in three regular sizes—small, medium and large.

The small one holds about 10 to 12 maunds of rice, the medium one about 20 to 22 maunds, and the large one holds as much as 25 to 30 maunds.

If made with inferior quality and thin bamboo slices, a duli lasts around three to four years, but a duli made with high quality thick bamboo slivers can last up to seven to eight years.

Each small size duli is being sold for Tk 1,000 to 1,200, medium size at Tk 1,800 to Tk 2,000 and the large one at Tk 2,500 to Tk 2,700.

It takes about two to three days to make a duli, while profit from each duli is around Tk 500 to Tk 800, he said.



Craftsmen seen busy in selling bamboo-made traditional duli at Nayarhat Bazar in Lalmonirhat Sadar upazila. PHOTO: STAR

Will Tigers cash in on lucky break?

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his only boundary in the innings, killing off a match which got unnecessary tense owing to some questionable batting.

In the end, Mahmudullah remained 16 not out off 13 balls following a steady 36 off 38 from Liton Das and a bold 20-ball 40 from Towhid Hridoy as Bangladesh got over the line with two wickets in hand in a nervy 125-run chase.

The low-scoring thriller had multiple twists and turns, with Bangladesh faltering in a chase that should've been much more straight-forward, accepted their captain.

"We gave our 120 percent. Last 10-15 days we have been making plans and all the fielders are doing their job. I think they bowled really well, but on a wicket like this we should have won this easily," said skipper Najmul Hossain Shanto after the match.

Sri Lanka had started the match brilliantly, plundering 53 runs in the Powerplay, thanks to Pathum Nissanka's 28-ball 47. But after Mustafizur Rahman, who eventually finished with 3-17, got the batter caught with his trademark cutter, it was all Bangladesh.

The bowlers conceded just 71 runs from the seventh to 20th over at a run-rate touch

above five runs per over with leg-spinner Rishad Hossain claiming three wickets, being in with a chance to claim a hat-trick at one point, and injury returnee Taskin Ahmed taking 2-25.

The bowlers had set up the match wonderfully for the Tigers but the batters nearly threw it away multiple times, owing to a mixture of some brilliant bowling from Sri Lanka and sub-par batting.

Even Bangladesh's final runs in the chase came off an overthrow, after Mahmudullah was nearly run out going for a single, which would've seen the Tigers needing two runs with

just one wicket in hand in the last over.

Bangladesh's win over Sri Lanka may not have been entirely convincing but it has already put the Tigers in a favourable position in the race to Super 8s.

After the defeat to Bangladesh, Sri Lanka are staring down the barrel, as they now need to win against associates Nepal and the Netherlands by big margins and pray for a few upsets if they are to finish as one of the two top teams in Group D.

Sri Lanka's misery has opened the doors for Bangladesh as a couple of wins over the associates

should be sufficient for them to progress. However, if this World Cup has shown anything, it's that the margin between the elites and the full members has shrunk and many associates have the ammunition to pull off surprises.

Nevertheless, in a campaign where not much was expected of them, Bangladesh now have a clear cut path to the next phase following their South Africa fixture as their final two group games will be played in the Caribbean pitches, which are closer to pitches back home.

The Tigers now can dare to dream.

123 illegal

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by department personnel and the drone unit.

"A total of 252 people were inspected, and 92 of them were arrested for various offences.

"We also arrested a 62-year-old local man under Section 56(1)(d) of the Immigration Act 1959/63 for harbouring illegal immigrants," he said.

Those detained included 30 men from China, four men from India, four men from Indonesia, 53 men from Bangladesh, and one man from Pakistan.

"Those arrested are aged from 20 to 40," he said, adding that the settlement was located about 500 metres from a construction site where the illegal immigrants were working.

Cop shoots

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embassy. When our driver slowed down, a policeman, who was sitting next to the body began firing at us indiscriminately. So, we left the area immediately."

Police recovered four to five bullet casings from the spot.

On information, additional police personnel, including a SWAT team, were deployed in the diplomatic zone.

It encourages corruption

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"There is an understanding, but the initiatives are not enough to overcome the crisis," he said.

The SANEM executive director said there is also a lack of initiatives for achieving the targets on institutional reforms.

The projections on foreign currency reserves, revenue collection, and investment, are also not realistic, he observed.

The research organisation said that the government has set some unrealistic targets for inflation and economic growth.

The government seeks to bring down inflation to 6.5 percent, which averaged

more than 9 percent in the last two years.

It also aims to achieve the target for 6.75 percent gross domestic product (GDP) growth for FY25, which is much higher than the provisional estimate of 5.82 percent for the current fiscal year.

In order to achieve the targeted GDP growth, the government's goal is to increase the private investment-to-GDP ratio to 27.3 percent in FY25 from 23.5 in the current fiscal year.

"Significant challenges remain in alleviating poverty, reducing inequality, and creating employment. Bringing inflation to a

tolerable level will be another big challenge," said Sayema Haque Bidisha, research director of SANEM.

It is not possible to bring down inflation to the targeted level, said Bidisha, a professor of economics at Dhaka University.

She said higher foreign and domestic debts will have a direct impact on inflation.

"The authorities should have taken measures to stop Hundi [transaction of money through illegal channels]. No steps have been taken in this regard. There is no initiative to encourage farmers to produce agricultural products as an alternative to imports," she said.

Swiatek wins 3rd straight French Open title

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in the Open era to lift the Coupe Suzanne Lenglen four times— after Justine Henin, Chris Evert and Steffi Graf.

"It's amazing to be here. I love this place. I wait every year to come back," said Swiatek, who clicked into gear after saving a match point against Naomi Osaka in the second round.

"I was almost out of the tournament," she said. "I

also needed to believe this one is going to be possible, it's been a really emotional tournament."

Swiatek becomes only the third woman to win the tournament three years running. Henin, in 2005-07, was the last to do so. Monica Seles also achieved the feat as a teenager at the start of the 1990s.

At 23, her four Roland Garros titles is the same

number Rafael Nadal, the record 14-time champion, had at the same age.

For the 28-year-old Paolini it was a sorry conclusion, at least in singles, to an otherwise brilliant fortnight in the French capital.

The world number 15 had won a total of four matches in 16 Grand Slam appearances before advancing to the fourth round of the Australian Open in January.

While she fell short of emulating compatriot Francesca Schiavone, who won the 2010 French Open, Paolini could yet finish on a winning note with her and doubles partner Sara Errani through to Sunday's final.

"I have to say congratulations to you, Iga," said Paolini. "I think to play you here is the toughest challenge in this sport."