

Special Supplement

Where stitch meets verse: The living soul of 'Nakshi Kanthar Math'

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Think of a woman sitting by a window in a village home somewhere in the Bengal delta. The afternoon is quiet. Her children have been fed. The kitchen has been swept. The river outside moves without hurrying, the way rivers in this part of the world always do. She picks up a needle and thread, thread she has pulled herself from the fraying border of an old sari, and she begins to stitch. She does not stitch from a pattern. She stitches from memory. She stitches from longing.

This scene is not imagined. For centuries, it was simply Tuesday, Wednesday or any other unremarkable afternoon in the lives of women across rural Bengal, where the Nakshi Kantha, the embroidered quilt, was as ordinary as cooking rice. The quilts had humble beginnings. They were made for warmth during winters and monsoons. Over time, the designs became more and more filled with meaning. The quilts became repositories of family history, woven with threads of love and memory. A woman might stitch for months on a single kantha, pressing into it everything she could not say in words. Each flower, each border, each rippling line of thread carried something — a memory, a wish, a grief too large for speech.



It is this art, patient, intimate, and almost entirely invisible to the world outside the home, that a young poet named Jasimuddin chose to immortalise in 1929. He did not merely write a poem about a quilt. He wrote a poem that was a quilt. He layered grief over joy, image over image, stitch over stitch, until the whole thing held together as one luminous and heartbreaking work. He called it **Nakshi Kanthar Math** (The Field of the Embroidered Quilt). Nearly a hundred years later, it remains one of the most celebrated poems in the Bengali language, translated into fifteen different languages and adapted for stage and screen across multiple decades and multiple countries.



On the evening of April 17, that poem came alive again on a Dhaka stage. MAYA Bengal in Motion, presented by MW Bangladesh, was held on April 17 at Aloki Convention Centre. Now in its third edition, the evening was a tribute to Polli Kobi Jasimuddin and his most celebrated work, **Nakshi Kanthar Math**. The event was jointly organised by MW Magazine Bangladesh and MAYA, a natural wellness brand

under Square Toiletries Limited, and was presided over by Anjan Chowdhury, Managing Director of Square Toiletries Ltd. The choice of date carried its own meaning. April 17 is both International Dance Day and the birth anniversary of the poet, and the organisers brought these two occasions together with evident deliberateness.

In one corner of the venue, girls bent over



frames, weaving Nakshi Kanthas. Quilts hung from the walls, their intricate threadwork catching the light. From the very first moment, it was clear this was not merely a tribute to a poet. It was a celebration of an entire vanishing world. Women moved across the stage with



clay pots balanced on their hips, going to the river for water. Men swept through scenes of paddy cutting. A palki crossed the stage in a procession, and the whole auditorium felt like a village courtyard rather than a convention hall in a capital city. It evoked the same rural spaces Jasimuddin once walked through as a young man, where he listened to folk songs and collected ballads from people who had no other way to record their lives. The sound of a flute drifted out over the audience, straight from the sonic world of the poetry itself.

The poem at the heart of the evening tells the story of Rupai and Saju, two young villagers whose love is interrupted by circumstance and distance. Rupai leaves home and flees far away after a quarrel with peasants from another village. Saju waits. As hope fades, she begins to prepare a Nakshi Kantha, stitching into it the story of her love. She does not survive the wait. When Rupai finally returns, he finds only her grave, covered in the quilt she made for him. It is from this image that the field, and the poem, take their name.

Jasimuddin captures the ache of that separation in lines that feel less like poetry and more like a cry left in the open air:

"Ajo ei gao ojhore chahiya oi gao tir pane, nirobe boshiya kon kotha jeno kohiteche kane kane" (Still this village gazes, unblinking, towards that other village, sitting in silence, whispering something, something, into the ear).

the country's cultural life. He noted that commercial pressures have gradually weakened our connection to literary heritage. "Life is not for popularity. Life is for feeling," he said.

Writer and journalist Anisul Hoque described Jasimuddin as one of the foremost figures in Bangla literature and spoke about the renewed relevance of his work in the contemporary era. "This event will help introduce the real Bangladesh to the world," he said.

Actress Azmeri Haque Badhan praised the organisers and urged them to carry this work beyond Dhaka. "These initiatives need to reach the young generation at the grassroots level," she said.

However, in 1959, **Nakshi Kanthar Math** was first adapted into a dance drama by Bulbul Lalitakala Academy. The third edition of MAYA Bengal in Motion brought it back to the stage after a long absence, not as a museum piece but as a living performance, choreographed and felt.

The broadcast partner for the event is Maasranga Television. The PR partner is Mediacom Limited, while Aegis Security Forces served as security partner and decoration partner was Eskay. Sun Communications Limited handled overall event management. The programme will be broadcast on Maasranga Television on April 29, marking International Dance Day.



Platforms like MAYA Bengal in Motion, that take the country's literary heritage seriously and present it with craft and genuine intention, are doing something that goes well beyond staging a beautiful evening. When the final notes of the flute faded and the lights came slowly back up, the audience sat still for a moment before they applauded. That stillness was not emptiness. It was the pause of people who have just been reminded of something they had not known they had forgotten, the paddy fields, the river, the woman at the window, the kantha spread across a grave in a field that now carries its name forever.

"Shei hote tar nam ti hoyeche Nakshi Kanthar Math" (Since then, the field is known as Nakshi Kanthar Math).

Photo Courtesy : Mediacom

