

Folk Drama & Pot Song
ori
Small Scale Water Resource Management
in
Bangladesh



RUPANTAR

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Local Government Engineering Department

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F **Bengal**
 Folk Drama & Pot Song

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Management
in Bangladesh**

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Bengal
Folk Drama & Pot Song
on
Small Scale Water Resource
Management
in Bangladesh

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Local Government Engineering Department

FORWARD

The participation of local stakeholders is critical if sustainable use of water resources is to be achieved in Bangladesh. The Local Government Engineering Department (LGED) addresses this particular issue in the implementation of the Small Scale Water Resources Development Sector Project (SSWRDSP). Through the SSWRDSP subprojects with an impacted area of 1,000 ha or less, are selected at the union level. Priority is given to areas with a higher proportion of small, marginal, and landless farmers. Implementation of subprojects in these areas involves construction or rehabilitation of embankments, excavation or re-excavation of drainage canals and provision of hydraulic structures and irrigation canals. The investment in infrastructure improves water management and creates opportunity to increase crop production in three crop seasons and fish production in floodplains and permanent water bodies. Under the first SSWRDSP, from 1995 to 2002, 280 subprojects were completed in the western part of Bangladesh. Under the second SSWRDSP, which will extend from 2002 through 2009, a further 300 more subprojects are planned throughout the country except for the three hill districts.

The methodology for implementing these small-scale projects requires that various local stakeholders be brought together through the formation of a water management association, which is registered under the legal framework of the Cooperatives Act and referred to as Water Management Cooperative Association (WMCA). Any individual who is directly or indirectly benefited by the water management investment in the subproject area can become a member of the WMCA.

Local people identify and propose the subproject through their representatives i.e., Union Parishad chairman and members. Participatory rural appraisal method is applied to ensure full coverage of all water resources management stakeholders. WMCA voice the stakeholders' needs in subproject design and construction and take operation and maintenance (O&M) responsibility of the water control system and infrastructures. Subproject is accorded at Upazilla development coordination committee and district level implementation committee comprising member of the local government institutions and development agencies.

The participation of local stakeholders in the development and subsequent operation of local water control systems has resulted in better performance of the water control infrastructure and has reduced undesirable impacts. Increases have been observed in land use intensity, agricultural and fisheries production, employment opportunities, and income for marginal and small farm families, fishers, landless and destitute women. This has supported improved livelihoods for the poor in that increased crop and fisheries production generates employment. In addition, employment opportunities were generated for local landless people through labor contracting societies engaged to construct earthwork structures. Destitute women were engaged to take care of trees planted to preserve embankments.

SSWRDSP organizes campaigns in rural area to create awareness, generate local enthusiasm and interests in the local water resource systems to build consensus about the use of water resources and ensures interactive involvement of all categories of local stakeholders directly and actively in the subproject identification, implementation and O&M. Among the different methods of campaigns, folk media is a traditional form of communication across Bangladesh. Folk media stimulate discussion about local issues. LGED has engaged Rupantar, a local NGO, to carryout campaigns through 'pot songs and folk drama' in recognizing water use issues in SSWRDSP area. We appreciate Rupantar who, with their long experience and sincere effort, reaches very many people with the message that helps local stakeholders to decide that which is in their best interest in planning water resources management and use.

Md. Nurul Islam
Project Director
SSWRDSP, LGED

INTRODUCTORY NOTE

The fundamental principal of Rupantar is based on the hypothesis that culture and sustainable development are closely connected. This connection is an emerging concept in the development world. The culture of a society manifests itself in many distinct ways through creative expression (history, songs, dance, music, literature, architecture, art etc.) and community practices (traditional healing methods, traditional natural resources management, various social and religious ceremonies etc). Although the identity of a society is largely determined by its culture, yet is difficult for any society to have a static sense of the culture. Both society and culture are changing simultaneously.

The connection between culture and development works at least in three ways. First, cultural diversity can be used as a national asset for developing the tourism industry. Therefore, it is essential to restore and preserve heritage, various traditions, folk songs, dances and dramas and theatre etc. Secondly, culture can be used as a means for building awareness among people. In this respect, theater, folk songs and other indigenous forms of entertainment can be used to raise awareness and inform people of new ideas. Thirdly, the prevailing social customs, norms and beliefs can have a negative impact or may deter economic and social development. Some aspects of this popular culture are anti-gender-equality, anti-progress etc. For sustainable developmental intervention, it is necessary to counter these negative forces.

Rupantar attempts to address culture-development connection in all the three ways. In facilitating social transformation, it undertakes initiatives for advocacy and raising awareness, disseminating information at the grassroots levels, etc, by using culture. It promotes theaters, popular publications and traditional folk songs to communicate developmental and other social issues for the development of the people and the communities.

Rupantar works on various developmental issues including environment and has been working with Water Resources Management and Cooperative with LGED's Small-Scale Water Resources Development Sector Project with the utilization of its specialized folk drama, Pot song and popular publication. At the present moment Rupantar has developed three Pot songs and one folk drama on issues pertaining to the LGED's water management project. We have incorporated the Pot songs and the summary of the folk drama in this publication being translated in English.

Md. Nurul Islam, Project Director of Small-Scale Water Resources Development Sector Project of LGED and Dr. Tofail Ahmed, consultant of this project have taken keen interest in developing the thematic areas and guiding the Rupantar artists in composing, organizing and performing the event. I like to take this opportunity to express my sincere thanks and gratitude to both of them. I would also like to thank from my core of heart to all the consultants, engineers and staff of this project for assisting us in our endeavor. Nevertheless, I would also like to express my sincere thanks to my colloquies Rafiqul Islam Khokan and Dr. K. Z. Islam for undertaking the painstaking works for editing this publication.

Swapan Guha
Chief Executive
Rupantar

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ABOUT FOLK DRAMA & POT SONG

Folk Drama

One of the folk cultural forms of ancient Bengal is the presentation of folk drama in varieties of forms. Rupantar has incorporated folk drama in Alternative Living Theatre form, a third generation theatre to carry forward a process of transformation that changes audiences into activists.

Rupantar Method of Folk Drama needs no decorative light, heavy make-up, costly props and stages. Script is prepared through participatory method with the performers. It is possible to perform this type of drama for large number of audience at a very low cost. It is one of the strongest media that help audience enjoy the drama interestingly. This form of drama is for education and activation of people on important socio-political issues in attractive style and rhythmic form that allows everyone understand the theme. The Alternative Living Theatre collects the issues (subject) from real rural and urban lives and tries to show the ways to overcome the problems for better future.

The dramas relate to the life pattern and social oppressions of the people as exist in the society and thus touch the head and heart of the audience as it reflects their own life situations. The audience become aware about the solutions or ways in overcoming the problems and encouraged to act accordingly.

Pot Song

From the ancient time, the media on which information has been communicated to the people in the rural Bengal is the folk song. The rhythms of the songs are so close to people's heart that even today the satellite media are using such music. There are songs found in some locality those are very popular in those particular areas. The pot song has been accepted by millions of the audience. This form of folk song has been collected from southern parts of the country. This form of pot song is a historical event of some area practiced by the rural performers. Rupantar has made some improvements of the Pot song and use them as media and means for mass awareness. This living medium has the direct effect on the people towards motivating them on specific messages in a rhythmic nature.

Moreover, the Pot songs performed by Rupantar in BTV, ATN Bangla, ETV and Channel I and in many national and international seminars have been appreciated by the intelligentsia and development activists. Rupantar has developed the capacity to perform folk songs on as many as 50 development issues.

Rupantar has so far developed 20 Pot songs on specific issues like women rights, gender and development, water resource management, conservation of mangrove forest, civic awareness, strengthening local government, cooperatives etc. which had been performed all over the country for last four years.

History of Pot Song

There are variations of understanding and opinion amongst the folk culture researchers on the origin of the term *POT*. But the majorities are of the opinion that the term is derived from the *Sanskrit* word “*pot*” or “relating to *pot*”. In general, *Pot* picture means any picture painted on paper or cloth. Many other have the view that the word is a derivative of *Tamil* word “*Padam*” meaning picture.

If we review the history of Pot or dig its ancient origin, we may say that human communication started with pictures. The art of painting in this sub-continent is quite old. The ancient Indian poetic publications provide many instances of the use of pictures and also pot.

It is now difficult to get any direct historical document or archeological relics anywhere in Bangladesh. But in many of the museums of the country some pot are being preserved. Various types of pot have been transferred to England and Ireland during the period between 1700 and 1940 through various documents, publications and *Punthi*. Seven or eight attractive Pots are available in All Souls College of Oxford, John Raylands Library of Manchester and Chester Batty Library of Ireland. The pot painting available in Chester Batty Library is the oldest. This Pot is prepared on the basis of *Puran* and *Bhagabat* and is 170 feet in length and 2" in breadth. The pot is painted on fine Moslin cloth with local dyes. The Pot preserved in All Souls College is thought to be of 16th century while the one preserved in John Rylands Library is painted in 1780. The subjects are all from Hindu *Puran*.

At one time Pot was popular in all parts of Indian sub-continent. Pot is still being used in Gujrat. The Pot painters and Pot singers used to move from village to village and earn their livelihood by singing pot song.

There is no doubt that the Pot painters and singers were very much active during 12th and 13th century to 1950 in Bangladesh, even some of them were existing even after the independence of Bangladesh in 1971. The last evidence of Pot performance is found in the Sundarbans region.

The ancient Pot song and paintings focused on gods and goddesses. Later alongside the gods and goddesses there appeared the Islamic *Peer* and *Gazi* in the Pot. However, if we analyze the ancient *Pot*, we would find five specific characteristics in these *Pot* songs and paintings. These characteristics are- 1) Religious mythology, 2) Nature, 3) History, 4) Livelihood & 5) Jokes and cartoons on various social issues.

POT SONG ON WATER RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

Song & music by : Elias Fakir
Concept : Eng. Md. Nurul Islam
Dr. Tofail Ahmed
Planing & Designing by : Rafiqul Islam Khokan
Painting by : S A Rahman & Shreebash Mondal
Direction by : Swapan Guha



*Oh, Brother & Sister of Bangladesh,
Come together to develop water resources.*

While addressing all the audiences,
We want to say something on water resources
Water is life without which none can live for a day
Water is life, known to all; Water is for human sustenance
But we are not using it properly.
Water is blessing, but we misuse it.
'Water is inexhaustible'- is not correct
And the ignorant only say so



Water is scarce wise men know

Three fourth of the earth is water

But we don't know of how much is useable.

97% of total water is saline and that makes the sea.

There is 3% drinking water all over the world for the entire human, animals and others.

Two-third of drinking water is on the two ends of the earth's poles and some portion of other one-third part is in ground

Six billion people are using only this small amount of water.

Human life can not live without water, the same is true for environment.



We are polluting water of our rivers, canals and ponds for our own selfish purposes.

Water is polluted by industrial waste

‘River water is good, even turbid’ - this proverb is no more valid.

We are polluting the water of canals by making hanging latrine and throwing carcasses.

Pesticides poison the water of our paddy land and fishes are dying by the effect of fertilizers.

Instead of taking care of our pond water and we are polluting every source of water.

We are always polluting water resources without thinking of our future.



The scarcity of drinking water has been faced worldwide, equalizing the cost of water and oil.

You will fall sick by drinking water of canals and ponds and there is arsenic in tube-wells.

The war for oil will be abandoned and war for water will start in future.

Now a days you are getting water at Taka ten a liter but in future it will be as costly as gold.

We may get pure drinking water from the nature if we drink water from fountain and rain.



We need sound water management to survive on the earth.
If proper water management system is made, our standing crops would not get damaged by natural disaster.
This is not possible by government alone, united efforts of people can do it.
We should organize local community and ask for government assistance.
Through embankment, sluice gate and canals- LGED is trying to preserve water.
Use and develop water according to National Water Policy.



It is easy to manage small-scale projects economically and socially.
This type of project is effective to protect natural disaster.
Living under the embankment gives protection from flood & water surges
Non-members of the society will also enjoy facilities
The stagnant rainwater will get drained and if needed water can be brought
into the agricultural land.
The society will be the owner of all canals, embankment and will be
benefited out of the income of trees and fishes.



If we accept this project, there will be no worries for water.
Crops in dry season and fish in the rainy season will alleviate poverty in our life.
So, let us work together in unity for the development of our country.
LGED is working in all the areas for the prosperity of the nation.
Rupantar dreams of a society with peace and prosperity, equality and harmony.

POT SONG ON WATER MANAGEMENT AND COOPERATIVE

Song & music by : Elias Fakir
Concept : Eng. Md. Nurul Islam
Dr. Tofail Ahmed
Planing & Designing by : Rafiqul Islam Khokan
Painting by : S A Rahman & Shreebash Mondal
Direction by : Swapan Guha



*Oh, brother & sister it is not possible
To live without unity
So, dear brothers and sisters
Come and get into cooperative*

Oh! the learned audience do think about-
Under development caused due to disunity
Most people of our country are poor
They suffer from ignorance and disunity.
To eradicate poverty there is only one way
And that is proper use of human and natural resource.
The poor people lose their rights
On the natural resource as they are not united.



LGED developed project for the poor people
To establish their rights on natural resources,
Through water resources management project
LGED wants development of the nation.
Through this project poor people
Will establish their rights on natural resources.
Justified use of water resources
Will be the main issue of poverty alleviation.
And there will be crisis and problem for water.



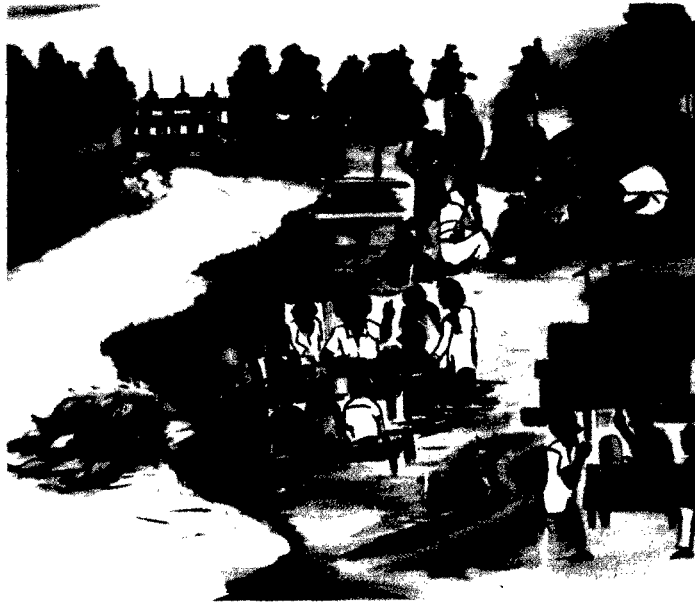
The primary condition for all is
To organize co-operative society.
People's participation in every activity
Will ensure ownership of the society.
This society will be the center of power and
Social and economical development of people.
Relations between man to man will enhance
And communal and group feelings will go away
LGED thought of implementing
The project through organizing co-operative society
For greater interest & development of people.



So let's be united and work together
It is said that even a mad understands of his own betterment
The Quran says, 'God helps those
Who helps themselves'.
LGED offers the opportunity
To develop and use natural resources by all.
We will ignore all social discrimination and eradicate poverty
Through working together with better planning.
And take care of the resources to conserve these.



Male and female will be equal in the society
And women will participate in all activities.
Male and female will get equal pay for equal work
And women should be encouraged to get work.
Women will be trained on income generation
Like seasonal vegetation and poultry farming.
There should not be any malnutrition amongst us
Our children will be healthy and worthy
All the development will bound to fail
If male and female do not work together
Working together of the male and female
Will gradually bring up social prosperity.
There should be no division and shyness while we work together



One must be aware of environment
And must not pollute water.
Polluted water will spread diseases,
Natural fish resources will get lost.
Take care of plants and water, failing which
Development will be disastrous.
Sustainable development calls for
Social investment as a vital input.
The capital of this society will initiate development activities
And people will get rid of the exploitation by the *Mahajan* (money lorders)
Let us stop wasting money through beetle leaves and smoking,
And save this money for the resource building for the family.
So, female will leave chewing *Pan-jarda* and male leaves smoking
And save waste of money.



We wish to remind another very vital issue that is
The society will be the owner of all assets.
All that the government will do for water resources development.
The entire assets will be ours.
Take care of embankment, sluice gates and canals.
Maintain them at your own initiatives.
Preserve your assets and resources for future
LGED will provide training and knowledge for it.
Otherwise the entire asset will be destroyed
And all development efforts will go in vain.
Work together with fellow feelings, uphold humanity,
Modesty and keep up the human values above everything.
Unity is strength is known to all
It is possible to do many things with unity
LGED wants to remove poverty from the nation
This project is one big step.
On behalf of Rupantar, We request you all
To develop happy society forgetting all differences irrespective of caste and
creed.
Let all the hearts be filled with humanity
And Rupantar is always there beside you.
And a day will surely be there when we all will sing together the song
Of unity, peace and prosperity.

POT SONG ON CONSERVATION OF ENVIRONMENT

Song & music by : Elias Fakir
Concept : Eng. Md. Nurul Islam
Dr. Tofail Ahmed
Planning & Designing by : Rafiqul Islam Khokan
Painting by : S A Rahman & Shreebash Mondal
Direction by : Swapan Guha



*Everybody talk a lot when Environment Day comes
But no one acts on what she says on the issue when her won turn comes
And it is true, whole truth
Nothing but the truth.*

We all are busy to observe the environment day
Talking a lot in meeting and procession
But we are doing nothing on this issue.
Think, once our country was green and beautiful
To day we are facing environmental disaster
We are losing land, forest and rivers
And also losing life



There was water in our river like milk
Land was covered with crops, flowers and fruits
In spring the beautification of the motherland
And the songs of the bees and birds and
Songs of cuckoos filled the mind in pleasure.
In summer doves sang in the branches of mango trees
And helped us going asleep with sweet dreams
The calling birds called the newly wedded lady to crush mustard
And every house was busy to do good to her family
The calling bird 'Bou Katha Kao' reminded her of her parents
And fellows left behind and her eyes got filled with tears,
And her husband consoled her with love and lust.



Now our environmental balance is lost
We are losing forest;
Birds do not sing like the past;
There are no more plenty of fishes in the rivers and ponds.
It is happening only for our ignorance about environment.
We created sound pollution, air pollution and water pollution
Affecting our environment, nature and life.
We won't come back to normal if it goes so far as irreparable;
And proper action is not taken in time to save the world and life.



Are you earning money by destroying the nature?
Remember that this nature will not forgive you.
Inactivate and destroy the industrial wastes.
Black smoke of car harming the eyes and the babies
And the poison is also getting mixed with food and breath.

The money, the houses, the cars as you are making up;
who is to enjoy these in the polluted world you made?
Now it is time for you to think of what to do next
To save you, your future generation and the universe at large



We have still time to be careful !
Don't harm water, land and forest resources
Don't you see, if there is no water, the nature will go to dogs,
And if land becomes poisonous everything will be destroyed,
And this may happen in very short period.
It is needed to have more plantations.
If your neighbor destroy the trees, You will be effected.
If someone pollutes the rivers and canals, You will be effected.
Every body of the world will suffer,
Spend all savings on treatment will not bring remedy
If you have money you can buy car and houses
But you cannot buy the desired environment.
So the learned persons always advice to save the environment
Because, if you kill your geese to get all the eggs
Then you will loose both geese and eggs.
Rupantar requests the audience with cordial appeal
Do not pollute your environment.
Save your environment to give peace for the generations to come.
So, nurse and care your natural resources
And help conserve the environment
And bring peace and happiness for your sons and daughters
And your grandsons and grand daughters will become prosperous.

DRAMA: PANIR SHATHE SHUBASHATI
(Harmonious life with water)

CONCEPT : Eng. Md. Nurul Islam
and
Dr. Tofail Ahmed
DESIGN : Swapan Guha
PLANNING : Rafiqul Islam Khokan
DIRECTION : Khadija Khatoon

Summary of the Drama

Bangladesh is a country of water and life pattern of people in relation to social, economical as well communication is linked to water since time immemorial. Water is the main natural resource of the country. People depend on water for their livelihood activities like agriculture, transportation, fish-culture and most other activities. Water has an important role in the social, economical, political and even cultural aspects of the people of this soil.

Bangladesh has a total of 147000 sq. km land area, about 80% of which are rural. The majority of the poor class people of the country live in these rural areas who spent most of their time for earning for the livelihood.

The majority of the rural people are principally dependent on agriculture and fish resources. So they are to depend on fertile land and surface water for their food production. The country people are lucky that both the resources are available in abundance. But due to lack of proper management of the resources and inability to encounter disaster, the production of both agricultural products and fish are hampered and at the same time the source of income for the people are getting uncertain.

The majority of the villages of the country have the same picture. Nilganj is such a village. A small canal runs through the village. The canal has water for most of the time of the year but is usually dry during summer. This canal is deeply related to the happiness and sorrows of the people of the village. The flowing water has great impact on the social, economical and cultural activities of the people. As result the area is devoid of agricultural crops during the dry season. During this period, the people do not have any work to do and the poor people of the village run to the city for their livelihood. The family life gets disrupted. The professional person gets involved in anti-social activities.

The shortage of water puts the entire villagers into various problems. Poverty induces quarrels among the husbands and wives. The social harmony of the villagers gets disrupted. Some get involved in activities like theft due to unemployment. Some thieves are caught and the local people's representatives get into trouble for arbitration. How do

they do it, when they find that honest fishermen did so only for arranging food for the family members? However, at one stage the social workers and the people's representatives took decision of re-excavation of the silted canal and reconstruction of embankment.

The villagers become united and take steps for the excavation of the canal and its embankment in consultation with the local people's representatives. But they had no opportunity to arrange for the money required for the purpose. They could learn that the Local Government Engineering Department (LGED) has undertaken a project on sustainable agriculture and fish production. The LGED project has the objective of local people driven in small-scale water management project. The project will not only ensure the agricultural and fish production but will also ensure reducing disaster vulnerability and will provide employment of hard core poor. The project will be provided to the People's Organization formed of both male and female of the local area.

The villagers submitted specific proposal for the re-excavation of the canal, its embankment and water management to LGED through the local Union Parishad. With the combined efforts of the villagers, Union Parishad and LGED the canal got re-excavated, the embankment is made along with sluice gate. In doing this work the divided people of Nilganj once gain got united. The poor people who had been suffering from extreme poverty got employment and work for a better livelihood.

After the end of the project the people irrespective of male and female becomes active and energetic with new spirit of hopes for a better future. The children started going to schools. The social harmony is restored. Nilganj is no longer a village of sorrows and apathy.

The people become united and take initiative for proper utilization of water as per LGED Plan and get the benefits.



Folk Drama performer of Rupantar

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