

Chronicle of Birds

Bata : Vendor and Slaughterer

Naran : Transporter

Others : Consumer

Scene – I

(The Drama will start with a group song. All the artists will clap while singing. the song will be based on the popular folk style of the area)

Chorus.....

Hello every one. Please listen with care.
We will now have a street theatre.
Please listen everybody, do pay attention.
Health is precious.
That's why we need care and caution.
Have fun , live life fully,
Eat fish, eggs and chicken curry,
We will tell about Bird Flu –
Are you aware, all of you ?
It's a disease of Birds,
Culprit is a virus.
But we promise, as you watch this play
You will learn we can drive all fear away.

Scene I

(Local youth club. Three boys are playing a game of carom.)

Bhola *(as he plays carom)* Santu, clear the red.

Dulal Santu is not good in striking at piece in the base.

Bhola Come on – try.

Santu Let me see. *(Tries – but fails)*

Dulal Hey.. Told you..Experience has value. Have been playing for a long time...

Bhola Okay, you give it a try.

Santu Dulal, Just because you are adept at left hand angle – you are boasting. Okay demonstrate.
(Dulal tries – but fails.. Bhola and Santu laughs)

Bhola More words than action!

Santu Hey senior player..

Dulal Lost my concentration. That's why.

Bhola You are more good at boasting than at action.

Santu. That's true. You never admit failure . *(Everyone laughs)*

(Another friend Ripon enters)

Ripon There is great news!

Everyone What ?

Ripon Bata is selling chicken at half price today.

Santu What ?

Bhola Do people know?
Santu Let's have a feast tonight.
Dulal I second.
Ripon Let's inform all the members of our club and get some money.
Santu Yah.. must hurry to avail of this bargain... Bhola. You go and tell every one.
Dulal Let's make an estimate. How many will join.
Santu At least ten or twelve.
Ripon We will have good fun.
Santu Let's buy four kilos – will eat to our heart's fill.
Dulal I will arrange for a sound box. Will have some music and dance.
Santu Let's go and start making arrangements for the party.

Scene – II

(Two young men dance to the tune of popular Hindi songs. A Panchayat member Haranath enters)

Haranath What's the matter, why this sudden partying?
Santu We are having a feast.
Ripon That's why we are enjoying some music.....
Haranath Why this sudden feasting ?
Santu No particular reason. Just having some fun.
Haranath Exams are knocking at the door.. and you are having feast with blaring music. Don't you have any sense ?
Dulal No, I mean.... We've got some chicken at a damn cheap rate....
Santu *(Being on guard)* Not at cheap rate, obviously at market rate...
Haranath Got at a cheap rate from the market? See, don't tell lie, tell the truth to me.
Dulal Bata said...
Haranath The Bata who sells chickens? Chicken at a cheaper rate? Ahem, do you know we all have to be cautious when buying chicken. We have been telling everyone from Panchayat about Bird Flu. I am worried as you mentioned that you bought chicken at a cheap rate. Santu, tell me the truth.
Santu What is Bird Flu?
Haranath Please tell us why you are worried?
Haranath Bird flu or Avian Influenza is a disease affecting birds. Our concern is that humans may get affected by virus of Avian Influenza by coming in contact with dead or diseased birds or consuming insufficiently cooked chicken eggs or meat. So we should be careful while buying chicken.
Santu What should we be careful about ?
Haranath Only healthy and disease-free chicken should be eaten.... You must cook the chicken well and hard boil the eggs. When you wash or cut chicken at home cover your nose and mouth with a piece of cloth... Do not touch your mouth, nose or eyes while handling raw poultry. After cutting, washing or cooking chicken, wash your hands thoroughly with soap and water... Also wash utensils, knives, choppers, even the place where you cut meat thoroughly with soap and water.... It is better to use separate utensils for cooking chicken and eggs.
Santu and Dulal *(Together)* So, if we take these precautions then there is no risk ?... . These are so simple to follow....
Haranath Yes, we can do it, but knowingly or unknowingly many are not following these precautions.... Do tell your friends too. I will talk to Bata tomorrow morning.
(Exit)

Scene – III

(Haranath is in the market place. Bata - a vendor who owns a poultry shop enters with his son.)

Haranath Hello Bata ! How are your birds?
Bata (Surprised) Sir ! Hello. How are you.
Haranath Are your birds okay ?
Bata Yes. They are fine.
Haranath Have you heard of Bird Flu – a disease which affects chickens? It is very bad if Bird Flu spreads.
Bata Really ?
Haranath Don't you know?
Bata No I have not heard anything like that.
Haranath Heard you are selling chicken at a cheap rate.?
Bata No. How can I? I too have to buy them.
Haranath Do not sell hens which have died from Bird Flu. If your hens die suddenly inform the animal husbandry staff immediately. Selling diseased chicken will lead to trouble.
Bata I am not going to get into such trouble.
Haranath Please be careful. Don't sell diseased chicken at low price for making profit. That will be a very irresponsible act as it will increase risk of spread of virus.

Haranath is about to leave when a boy calls him.

Mahesh Uncle!
Haranath Hello? Who are you?
Mahesh I am Mahesh, his (*points at Bata*) son.
Bata (*in annoyed tone*) What do you want? Don't talk when elders are talking.
Mahesh Uncle. My father is not telling the truth.
Haranath What lie has he told?
Bata Don't pay heed to Mahesh's words.
Haranath Why not? Tell me, my boy, what did Bata lie about ?
Mahesh Father's hens died.
Haranath Have died? Bata, is this true ?
Mahesh Yes, he is planning to sell them. Have kept them under the basket.
Haranath What is this, Bata?
Bata They just died ... I mean.... That's why....
Haranath Phew Bata ... to avoid this minor loss you planned to sell these diseased dead chicken to people?
Bata I've to bear the loss, you are fine giving sermon.
Haranath Your son is more sensible than you are....
Mahesh I know father should not sell these. I have learned from the advertisements in the newspapers and television. That's why I decided to tell you.
Haranath You've done the right thing, my boy. You and your father must attend the Panchayat meeting and learn everything about how to prevent Bird Flu. Bata, I will organize a check-up for your birds by the Animal Husbandry department staff today.
Bata Okay.
Haranath Do not touch those dead birds.
Bata What do I do now?
Haranath Wear gloves. Dispose of the dead birds in plastic bags. Don't just dump them anywhere. Dig a pit and bury the dead birds. Don't you know about precautions you should take and how to prevent the spread of the disease?

Mahesh We have to wear gloves in hand or at least use a polythene bag to cover our hands while handling poultry. While slaughtering we have to use gloves, apron and mask ... I have seen in television and heard in radio.....

Haranath You are right, Mahesh.... Bata, Try not to slaughter or pluck poultry at open area in the market risking customers to exposure. Instead of chopping off the heads, its better to dislocate the neck in order to slaughter your birds... that way there is less spilling of blood... after slaughtering wash choppers, knives and the very spot where slaughtered thoroughly... with soap and water.. Change your clothing and footwear before you go home.

Mahesh Do you do all these things father?
Bata Shut-up Mahesh! Why do you have to poke your nose into everything?
Haranath Why are you scolding him? He is saying the truth. Bata, this is for your own good. You handle the chickens, so you should always take the precautions.... This is true not only for you but everyone. Do not let your birds mingle with other birds in the market. Again while bringing them back home from market you should keep them separately in the same fashion without allowing them to mix freely with your home stock at least for 14 days. Do not dump droppings, feather and other poultry waste just anywhere. Bury or burn them Besides, if there is sudden death of many birds or any symptoms of this disease among them one must contact the nearest veterinary hospital or animal husbandry department. Bata, if you do not follow the proper practices you will put every one in risk – even your own son.

Mahesh Why uncle?
Haranath People may can also become sick on exposure to sick or dead birds or their droppings, mucus or saliva or by consuming insufficiently cooked poultry meat and eggs. That is why it is important to safely slaughter and prepare poultry for eating.

Mahesh What kind of sickness?
Haranath High fever above 100⁰F without remission, cough, sore throat, breathing trouble – if any one has these symptoms one should go to the hospital immediately. But don't worry my boy. If we all follow the precautions we mentioned we can prevent the virus from spreading and causing harm.

Bata From now on, I will follow these... I promise.
(Haranath and Mahesh leave)

Bata Well. So let me start doing things right way. *(He wraps his hands in polythene bag and is at work).*

Scene – IV

(Two women dressed like hen enter and sing)

Hens : (Song)
 “Cock-a-doddle-doo, Cock-a-doddle-doo
 The golden dawn make us sing
 “Cock-a-doddle-doo.....
 And when the sun sinks in the ocean of ink
 Again we sing “Cock-a-doddle-doo.....
 Our song attracts our owner to our pen
 We burst into singing then again.”

(A transporter comes in and looks around. He mumbles to himself)

Transporter (Naran) Crock..... Crock.... All the time these nasty birds are crowing and crowing. (he shouts in a loud voice) Bata ! Bata! Are you around ?
Bata Coming in a minute.

Naran Be quick. Have lots to do.

Bata Yes. But I will check and then take the birds.

Naran Why this sudden change – you were never so particular about checking the birds before?

Bata Bird Flu. Have you heard of it ? Last time the hens died I had sold them. I felt so bad when Haranath said that I may be putting people at risk. In last Panchayat meeting, we have all promised that all of us together will take steps to prevent spread of bird Flu. Besides it is not only a matter of buyers and sellers. Naran, transporters like you also must be responsible. You must also cooperate and be alert.

Naran (smiling) I am always ready to be with you. But tell me what happened to those who ate your chicken?

Bata Thank God. They are fine. There is Santu. (*Santu enters and Bata calls him.*) Santu, come here. (*Santu comes. Bata holds his hands*) We are now working together to build awareness on Bird Flu.

Santu Naran, you too have a role to play in combating Bird Flu.

Naran What do I have to do?

Santu When you enter poultry wear masks, gloves and boots to protect yourself when in contact with birds. Remove poultry droppings by washing poultry carrying cages and carts with soap and water. Remember to wash the tires. Wash hands well with soap and water after handling birds, poultry meat or eggs and removing poultry droppings.

Naran Santu, you are absolutely right. If we are not aware and alert how can we tell others?

Santu (*addressing the audience*) All of you should also know , so please listen carefully. Bird flu spreads quickly. Exposure to the virus may also affect human. So all of you must help in combating Bird Flu. Please remember, you should buy healthy chicken. Always wash your hands well with soap and water after cutting, washing and cooking poultry. Also remember to wash knives, utensils used and the place where you prepare poultry. Another request. Report sudden death of large number of boards to nearest animal husbandry office.

Bata sings. Others join

Chorus :

“If you want to ward off Bird Flu
 Observe these rules everyday and for ever
 Love to eat eggs and chicken?
 No problem, just cook well.
 Follow a few safety measures,
 Taught always by the elders.
 When in contact with chicken, just take care
 That you have washed hands well with soap and water,
 Same for the knives, pans and pots used
 To cook eggs or birds – curried or stewed.
 When cutting birds or cleaning poultry waste.
 Use masks, gloves and boots – makes you safe.
 If you know birds are struck with the Avian Influenza
 Inform the authority as your earnest duty.
 Let us all work together
 For a healthy life full of laughter.”