

## RECOMMENDATIONS

**Victory Day Celebration at Muktiyuddho Jadugar**

**December 10-17**  
Photography exhibition titled *Amar Dekha Bijo* by Japanese photographer Nawaki Usui is going on. The show will continue until December 17.

**December 16**  
Cultural programme performed by child artists at 10:00 am.

**December 17**  
Cultural programme by the students of Arani School at 10:00 am.

**December 20-31**  
The inauguration of the exhibition titled 'Muktijuddhey Shanskriti karmi' at 5:00 pm. The display will remain open till 31 December.

**At Rabindra Sarobar**

**December 19**  
Sammalito Shangkshritik Jote will organise a day long programme at the Rabindra Sarobar Stage (the amphitheatre by the Dhanmondi Lake) starting from 3:45 pm. The programme includes reminiscence of the Liberation War, group songs, group dance, group recitation by groups like Abriti Angan, Swarabritto and Srote solo recitation. A solo musical session by Subir Nandi, Khayrul anam Shakil, Ajit Roy and others, and Baul songs, Street drama by Aboyo Natya Dal and Nagorik Natya Ensemble and Jatra will also take place.

**ITI Theatre Festival**

**December 16**  
*Protisaran* by Natyakendra at the Mahila Samity Mancha.

**8th Short and Independent Film Festival Dhaka, 2003**

Bangladesh Short Film Forum will hold the 8th Short and Independent Film Festival Dhaka, 2003 from December 18. The nine-day long festival will be inaugurated at the Shawkat Osman Auditorium of the Public Library. Films will be screened and seminars will be held on this occasion also at the National Museum and the Goethe Institut. Dedicated to the memories of Tareq Shahriar, the recently deceased President of the Forum, and filmmakers who Sheikh Niyamat Ali and Salauddin who also died very recently, the festival will feature sessions on these personalities. The festival will screen short films, documentaries, experimental films and animation films.

**Remembrance****"Etched in my mind..."**

An exclusive dialogue with Shaheen Samad

ELITA KARIM

AS I enter her Dhanmondi residence a pleasant aroma of cooked lunch greets me. As Shaheen Samad smiles, she silently gestures for me to sit while she prepares herself for the interview. All along, my mind can't help wandering to the inner contours within, where I slowly build and paint a picture of 1971. There I see young Shaheen along with a number of other young boys and girls, moving from place to place, fighting injustice with their love for their motherland and an instinctive crave for their language. I can see them using music as their only weapon and winning the hearts all around.

**Are you doing anything special this year?**

Special? Well, I have a few programmes lined up for this month. I also have a few shows to be aired on Channel-1 and ATN Bangla, for the 16th of December.

**You don't seem very excited about them!**

Well, I just wish I could do something different. This is a feeling I get around this time almost every year. Maybe something little more than mere discussions, you know what I mean?

**Today you are an eminent cultural personality. Did you see yourself on this very platform years back?**

To tell you the truth, I had never planned anything as such. Music was within me. Cultural activities were always lingering around my

**Reminiscence****An outspoken actress who once dared to take a stand**

Kabori Sarwar speaks her mind

FAYZA HAQ

ASKED to talk about her role during the Liberation Movement, more than three decades back, Kabori says, "We didn't have that much of awareness even by early sixties as we were wrapped in our own work on our profession. I'd begun at the age of 13 but in my 20s I was aware of the pre-liberation call by Sheikh Mujibur Rahman to have *hartals*, his six-point demands for the Bengalis, his protest meetings and processions. We went from the film industry to put flowers at the Shaheed Minar around 1968. At that time, due to general *hartals*, we too stopped acting. Once when I was returning from Chittagong, for the first time, I saw him face to face on an airplane. He was already the hero of the issues for Bengalis in the then Pakistan. I was spellbound by the experience. Later, we in the film industry in Dhaka, knew that we were going through a crucial time." Kabori says that her colleagues told her that since she belonged to the minority group, she was bound to face some upheaval; she was warned that she might have to flee the country and take shelter in neighbouring India. She was not a practicing Hindu but and she stood out as such in a Muslim majority society.

Kabori continues that her family decided to go to Chittagong and on 25<sup>th</sup> March 1970 the family had gone to the Cantonment when they got stuck there. There was firing all around but they couldn't make out what exactly were the terrible canon and bullet firing noises were about. In the morning, Kabori and her family decided to go to the village, as she found herself to stand out as a prominent personality with a well-known face. The massacre and pillage had begun in full swing then. The professors of nearby Sir Ashutosh College, where she had studied herself, came to give her courage. They were then told that the villages too would be attacked, burnt and the Hindus or those supporting Hindus would be killed. They were taking refuge in Kalurghat. By then, the *Razakars* had begun agitation in full swing and were forced to take a decision to cross the border into India. There were some intellectuals too who persuaded Kabori's party to join a caravan to this end at midnight. "The local Muslims sheltered us in their homes at night to prevent us being attacked by 'dacoits' and other miscreants, and among these Samaritans was Sumiti Hazari, a lawyer," recounts Kabori about her harrowing experience.

"After travelling for two days and nights," Kabori narrates, "we came to Narayanhat, about 20 kilometers from the border, which was full of refugees. Here young Captain Quader, put us in their only available jeep to go to Subrom, a

place on the Indian border." The next day she learnt that the man who had helped them, Captain Quader, had been killed by the Pak army for aiding them. Getting into a bus, next, we hurried on to Agartala. There we stayed in a tiny/hotel type shack where Anil Bhattacharya, a correspondent from the West Bengal daily newspaper *Jugantor*, picked us up and sheltered us in his house. Taking refuge at his home were politicians and intellectuals who had fled from the then East Pakistan. There Dr Day saw to our food and shelter. We were told to go to our Bangladesh Mission at Kolkata, to meet with Hussain Ali, who was in charge of the mission in 1971."



Kabori Sarwar

Later on, in Kolkata, Kabori and her family stayed with the actor Dipankar Dey, who was then a medical representative. They remained in India for nine months and returned only after the Liberation. During this time, she gave a moving speech in front of the Bangladesh Mission. At that time, being interviewed by *Akash Bani*, Kabori, appealed to the world in general to help stop the genocide in which innocent women and children were being mercilessly killed, raped and left to die. Saying all this, emotion took the better of her, and crying with despair, she fainted with emotion and weariness. When she gave her well-known

political speech, a commemoration of Tagore was being held at that place.

At that time, Kabori adds, her parents were in Bangladesh and she naturally feared for them as for all whose lives were in jeopardy. This was broadcast to the entire world and as a consequence her parents in Bangladesh were driven out of the village where they had taken shelter in May 1971. While in Kolkata, on Theatre Road, pressed by the *Mukti Joddhas*, artists and politicians from the then East Pakistan and sheltering in Kolkata, Kabori had requested the Indian government and the local people there to let the refugees from the erstwhile East Pakistan stay on in India for some time. During her nine month's sojourn in India, Kabori took part in the famous film actor I.S. Johar's film *Joy Bangladesh*; she contributed a percentage of her earnings to the *Mukti Joddha* Fund. Famous Indian cinema personalities, like Nargis, Sunil Dutt and Sham Banegal, Rishikesh Mukherjee, along with Ali Yar Jang, who was the then governor of Maharashtra, helped them by collecting funds and donating blood.

Dwelling on whether it was difficult for her to carve out a career for herself in the 60s and 70s, Kabori says, "Culturally, in my time, it was not so difficult for a teenager, who could sing and dance, to enter this profession; my mother was against it but my father was all for it. Subash Datt and Dr Kamal, a cultural activist, were in search for a young woman for *Shutorang* and my father was excited that one of his nine children should be in the cine world. I've made about over 100, working between 1964 and 1982. *Devdas*, directed by Chashi Nazrul, being my last film. My directors, Subash Datt, Khan Ataur Rahman, Abdullah Al Mamun, Kazi Zahir and Ritwik Ghatak were most understanding and inspiring. I got the 1<sup>st</sup> Journalists' Award in 1972 (*Lalon Fakir*) and the National Award and 23 other prizes."

Kabori wants to put her 30 years experience in acting into film directing, given the financial backing. She is strongly against the lewd films that flood the cinema hall. At present Kabori is doing a series in ATN; earlier she had made a short film at the Shishu Academy, *Ekattorer Michhil* based on the Liberation War; she also made a TV film on Tagore, *Rashmoni* which appeared on BTV. She runs an NGO for handicapped children and adults, called "Green Valley Shelter". Incidentally, she is the mother of five sons, two of them now working in USA.

**Memory lane****The man who dreamt of a joyous future**

HARUN UR RASHID

REMEMBER Chhokku Mia? The character of an impish youth with an accent of the Old Dhaka area? In that catchy dialect he used to give comical and belittling descriptions of how the invading Pakistani forces were being defeated and made fool across the country during the Liberation War. Do you remember? You sure do. For, Chhokku Mia is an unforgettable character, perhaps the most famous one who immensely inspired the freedom fighters during the war through his *Charam Patra* aired from Swadhin Bangla Betar Kendra. He is MR Akhter Mukul.

*Charam Patra*, meaning an 'ultimatum', was one of the items with which Swadhin Bangla Betar Kendra started its historic journey on 25 May 1971. The first episode of the programme presented an overall sketch of the ongoing war. The programme finally ran 170 episodes in the next seven months broadcasting the last one on December 16, the day Bangladesh achieved victory in the nine-month-long Liberation War.

Composed and performed by MR Akhter Mukul alone, *Charam Patra* was a series of ultimatums pronounced against the barbaric Pakistani armed forces by the character Chhokku Mia.

Asked why he chose the name, Mukul says that the name Chhokku was



a common addressing term among the Old Dhakaites. Also, the name has an air of jovial mischief about it. Mukul, however, modelled his character on a real-life person named Asadullah living in Bakshi Bazar of Old Dhaka.

Chhokku's deliveries were so full of dialectical and humiliating slangs that it acquired an irresistibly funny effect. The ridicules, aimed at the Pakistani forces and their collaborators, would, in turn, give immense amusement to the brave Bangali freedom fighters. Moreover, it served the purpose of a news bulletin as it often contained information from all parts of the country.

The character of Chhokku Mia, the persona of its creator, is very optimistic just like the creator Mukul himself. And he passed on this optimism through his oration among the fighters.

What would Chhokku Mia say about the present situation of Bangladesh? Mukul says in confidence, "I believe this bad time is a temporary one. This will pass over one day, for it will not be possible to keep the history away from the young generation for long." The youth will of course mark the anomalies and question their ancestors. They will seek the truth themselves and build the nation according to their dream', the creator of Chhokku Mia concludes.

family. As for me, I began my lessons with Ustad Ram Gopal at Rangpur. Then I moved on to *Dhrupad* with Shakil Mahmud. Eventually, I moved to Dhaka with my family and got into *Chayyanaut*. I got my *talim* from Ustad Phul Mohammed and Ustad Fazlul Haque. It was a family back then, with Sanjida Khatun, Wahidul Haque, Sohrab Hossain and many others who taught me what I

Levin. But in reality, it was much more than that. I can still remember the night when I left home to join this mobile group, moving from place to place and sharing the feelings of the distressed. Can you imagine the amount of spirit and courage I possessed back then, which led me to leave my family and join the group of wanderers?

the dawn of independence,' She stops for a while, and stirs the leaves of her memories. "Almost immediately, I became one of the group and began to involve myself in all their activities. We were served food on banana leaves, and *daal* was poured from a big bucket, which would be passed around to all. On June 20 '71, we reached

were leaving for the war. They didn't know if they would ever come back to the country and be with their families and friends. Their strong words and love for Bangladesh inspired me and gave me the strength to continue with my journey to freedom. The truck had become home then, for all of us.

I could feel goose bumps all over my body. I can't help but wonder about those soldiers and also the life that these wanderers led for months on a truck.

**What did you do after independence?**

I completed my studies and moved to England in 1974. I practiced my music and cultural activities there as well. I taught Nazrul songs to the children and had a community full of active Bangladeshis participating in all kinds of cultural activities.

**Would you repeat what you did way back, getting on top of a truck and moving from place to place?**

No, I wouldn't. Times have changed. Back then, the feeling was different. We were all fighting for a cause, for one country and one language. Nothing seemed impossible then.

When soldiers with weapons in hand marched ahead to face the enemy, *Muktishangram* wasn't far behind. The group with the help of their musical compositions like *Manush haw, Bangla Ma'r Damaal Santan* gave strength and courage to all, and still do, even today.

**Film****Capturing Poetic Moments**

Kawsar Chowdhury makes documentary on poems about independence

CULTURAL CORRESPONDENT

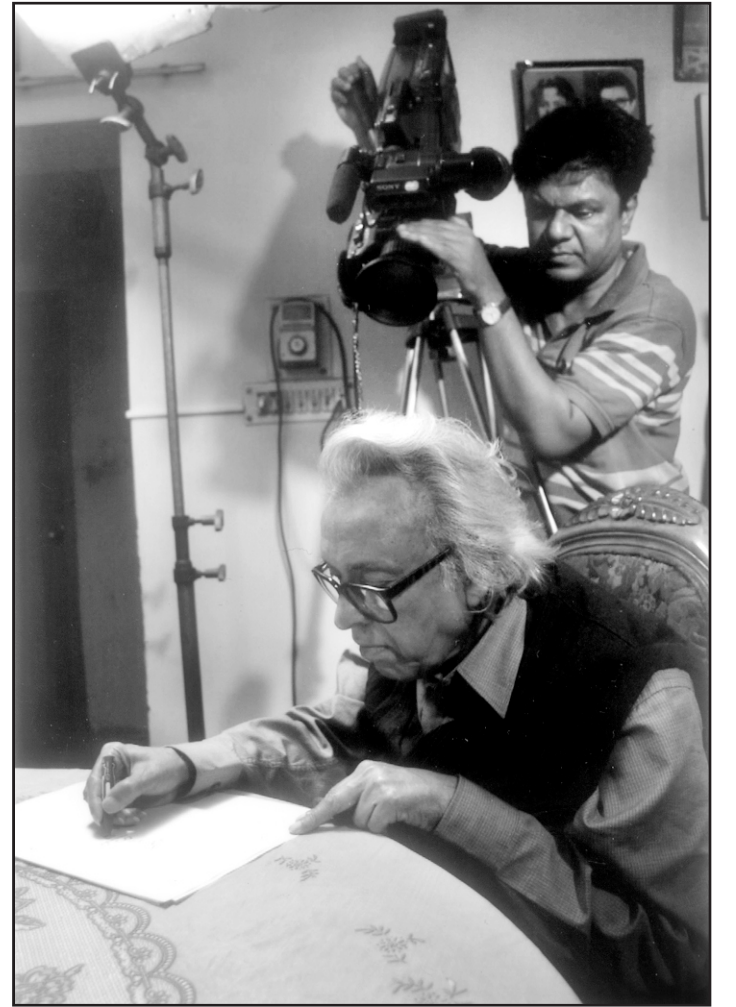
VICTORY Day this year will remain important as long as the history of documentation of the Liberation War is concerned. Documentary filmmaker Kawsar Chowdhury contributes further enrichment to this treasure. He has made a film on the making of two remarkable poems on the country's independence-- *Swadhinota Tumi* and *Tomake Paowar Janaye Hey Swadhinota* by the celebrated poet Shamsur Rahman.

It is now known to many that Shamsur Rahman composed the 'twin' poems at a single sitting by the bank of a pond at his village home in Narsingdi. Kawsar's film recreates the whole process of the poems' making.

Poet Shamsur Rahman narrates the journey from Dhaka to Narsingdi by a bus with his mother in the early April of 1971. On the way the young poet witnessed the most horrifying sights caused by the brutal execution of the Pakistani Army. Dead bodies littered the way, people were fleeing to the unknown shelters from the brutality. Wherever the Pak Army could be seen on the way, Rahman's mother ducked down her son's head so that he could not be noticed.

When Rahman reached his ancestral home, he felt like being embraced by his forefathers. On April 7, he was sitting on the bank of a pond when suddenly lines happened to form in his head. He got himself some paper and scribbled the fantastic pieces of poetry that would become two of the most beautiful expressions of independence.

Kawsar's documentary contains recitation of the poems by



Kawsar Chowdhury in action shooting a sequence for his latest documentary film *Tomake Paowar Jonnye* on two poems of Shamsur Rahman. The film will be premiered today on Channel-1.

Shamsur Rahman himself. What is very unique about the recitation is that with the rhythm of the recitation artist Mashook Helal captures the subjects and feelings of the poems in sketch. The sketches are focused on the screen like a visual collage of the poems.

Kawsar Chowdhury has recently made a name both in home and abroad for his docu-

mentary *Shei Raater Kotha Bolte Eshchhi* that shows the heinous massacre of the people of Bangladesh by Pakistani armed forces on March 25 night. With this documentary he has surely reminded the nation of its legacy of hard struggle and unparalleled sacrifice of the brave fighters in the Liberation War.

*Tomake Paowar Jonnye* has its premiere today on Channel-1.

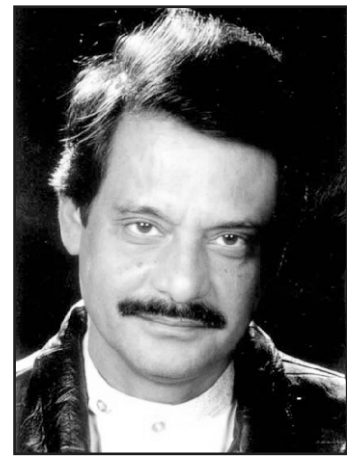
**Waltzing through..****Swadhin Bangla Betar Kendra artistes remembering the days of victory**

SHILPI MOHOLANOBISH

YET another year of victory has gone by. The freedom of our country was achieved at the cost of more than a million lives. As we fought the Pakistanis with arms, our musicians, drama activists and other cultural artists inspired the freedom fighters to push ahead. The artistes of *Swadhin Bangla Betar Kendra* played an important role in this. Some of them reminisce about those days of our Liberation War.

**Rafiqul Alam**

Many events took place at the time of Liberation War, all of them being remarkable. When I joined the Swadhin Bangla Betar Kendra, I had just passed the Intermediate exam and was not yet prominent. I came from the Mafassil area. One of the officials of the Kendra asked me to sing. I sang the song *Shat Koti Aj Prohori Prodidip* written and

**Kolyani Ghosh**

All of our three bothers and sisters were involved with the Swadhin Bangla Betar Kendra, Probal Chowdhury, Uma Khan and myself. War was going on in the country. We took music as a weapon of the war. I had already started to perform in stage programmes; and on one such occasion I took part in a Martyrs Day special song *Amar Bhayer Rokte Rangano*. Suddenly I noticed the famous actor Pahari Sannyal sitting amongst the audi-



ence and tears were falling from his eyes. I was overwhelmed as well. I can never forget this incident in my life.

**Bulbul Moholanobish:**

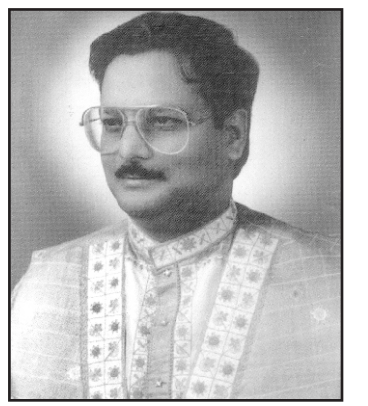
As the day of independence approaches every year, the excitement of the artistes of Swadhin Bangla Betar Kendra rise. The treasured memories are never to be forgotten. Not even a year had



passed after my marriage, when the war had started and as a conscious citizen my husband went to war. We had to flee to India with my family. There are countless memories, which I can still recall, but among them one still makes me shiver. While rehearsing songs written by Shahidul Islam and tuned by Shujeyo Shyam titled *Bijoy Nishan Urchhe Oi* with Ajit Ray in the lead vocals, I suddenly looked at the window and froze. I thought it was nothing more than my imagination. But I could not take away my eyes from there. Ajit Ray scolded me for being inattentive. I saw my husband standing behind the window. I could feel the warmth of victory that day. The tunes of victory overwhelmed me with joy and pride.

**Arup Ratan Chowdhury**

When I went to Swadhin Bangla Betar Kendra, many eminent singers were already performing.



Haralal Ray a noted folk singer of our country asked me to sing for a particular programme.. I was pleasantly surprised, as many great artistes were performing at that time. At first, I was hesitant to sing Shahidul Islam's song titled *Jualchhey Praner Desh*. The tuning was beautifully done and so was the recording. Nasrin Ahmed Nilu and I sang this duet. The song was broadcast everyday from Swadhin Bangla Betar Kendra till Independence. Hearing this song my family members learnt that I was still alive. It is one of the memorable events of my life.