



STAR WEEKEND MAGAZINE

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"Our Inclusive National Past"

It's surprising to note the ideological grip that the Pakistani ruling class has on the mind of Rubaiyat Hossain. The garrison state has always proclaimed that it is the bastion of Islam in South Asia and defending Pakistan is equal to defending Islam. The Punjabi dominated Civil-Military rulers considered Bangalis as crypto-Hindus. Rubaiyat says that we have distanced ourselves from the history of Islam by distancing ourselves from Pakistan. She also has this strange idea that Bangladeshi Islam was first brewed in Pakistani soil by Persian Sufi philosophers and then brought here.

However I fully endorse her statement that we are suffering from a collective amnesia about our past and by neglecting our intellectual and spiritual heritage. I would advise Rubaiyat to look at the extremely rich Hindu-Buddhist and Muslim cultural heritage in her own motherland before turning to Pakistani brand of Islam. There is nothing wrong with our Bengali Islam. It has absorbed plenty of non-Muslim elements, which is very natural. No amount of correct Arabic lessons would make us Muslims like Pakistanis who are regularly murdering fellow Muslims in hundreds with satanic hatred. This is not Sufi Islam but primitive tribalism.

We shall be able to appreciate the sublime beauty of Urdu ghazals if we cultivate ideals of liberal-humanism and rise above the bigotry of medievalist ideas. Rubaiyat is mistaken if she thinks that Pakistan is the home of Urdu and Muslim culture in South Asia. Urdu was born and flourished in Uttar Pradesh the home of South Asian Muslim culture and civilisation and also in Deccan or Hyderabad.

The confusion about our national identity Rubaiyat speaks of arose due to the division of Bengal. If she accepts that all Bangla speaking people irrespective of religion constitute one indivisible Bengali nation and Bengal is their historical homeland then confusion evaporates. But will Rubaiyat admit that?

*Ibne Azad
Mirpur, Dhaka*

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SUBMISSION GUIDELINE:

Letters to the Editor, Dhaka Diary and Write to Mita, with the writer's name and address, should be within 200 words. All articles should be within 1,200 words. A cover letter is not necessary, but every write-up should include the writer's name, phone number and email address (if any). While SWM welcomes unsolicited articles and photographs, it cannot accept the responsibility of their loss or damage. SWM does not return unsolicited articles and photos. Response time for unsolicited write-ups range from three weeks to two months. All articles submitted are subject to editing for reasons of space and clarity.

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It is recommended that those submitting work for the first time to the SWM take a look at a sample copy beforehand. Our website is: <http://www.thedailystar.net/magazine>