

# DR. SAIF-UD-DOWLA KHAN

*Dr. Saif-Ud-Dowla Khan, a representative of the 'Bangladeshi Association Glasgow (BAG)' has been part of this platform for a while now. With the aim to establish the roots of Bangladeshi culture and language, 'Bhasha Festival' was held on February 9, 2019. This event was part of UNESCO's International Year of Indigenous Languages 2019. In this exclusive interview with Rafi Hossain, Dr. Saif shared insights about the festival.*

*Can you tell us about the 'Bhasha Festival' that you have been working on?*

We hosted the Bhasha Festival for the first time last year on the 9th of February. We held it then because it is the month of the International Mother Language Day. I can't say for sure that we will be able to host it in February every year, but we will try to do so. We have a small association, called The Bangladeshi Association Glasgow, which we have had since around 1971. But, we officially started to diverge in 2014. We tried to do things to promote other cultures as well, aside from our Bangladeshi culture. In 2014, when the Commonwealth Games were held in Glasgow, we did a celebratory event for it. We have tried to do events for other communities as well. After a few years, we started planning the Bhasha Festival, and we realised that if we want it to be successful in Glasgow, we have to incorporate other languages as well. We first approached the Glasgow City Council with our idea in October of 2017, and they introduced us to the group working in the Glasgow City Museum. We were able to work with many language-centric groups in the city. Personally, I found it very surprising that people had agreed to work with us on this project.

*Your association was invited to perform at the 'National Theater of Scotland', am I correct?*

In 2016, the National Theater of Scotland held a festival to celebrate their 10th anniversary. We were invited there as the representatives of Glasgow. The theme was Home and Away, and they wanted to explore the idea of how the definition of home was changing in light of people migrating to other countries. None of us had done theater before, but the National Theater of Scotland was always associated with ordinary people doing dramas, and they had been doing theater plays with normal civilians for a long time. That's why we could go and work with them. We performed on the first day of the festival, where we were the main act. We did a play based on the experiences of three members of our association during the liberation war of Bangladesh.

*Is the 'Bhasha Festival' going to be based on literary works only?*

Not at all. We are going to include a number of things. We understand that if we only talk about language, not many people will be interested. That's why we are also incorporating literature, music, acting and many more in the mix. Last year's festival had a lot of infotainment, and we even had a poet and actor from Zimbabwe, who came and interacted with the audience by telling stories. By doing a variety of things, we try to keep people interested. We had a Palestinian poet come and recite poems. We even had a Gaelic singer come, compose and recite a poem dedicated to the martyrs of the Bangladeshi Language Movement, along with performing many Gaelic songs at last year's festival. An Iranian economist living in Canada also gave a lecture regarding how language impacted economics. We had many people from different cultures come and sing or recite poems in their own languages. We were very proud of our programme, and hope to continue doing it in the future.

*Thank you for helping take Bangladeshi culture to other countries and in making people flourish in the modern world by promoting many different cultures.*

Thank you for your kind words. I would also like to thank you for this experience.

Ridwan Intisaar Mahbub

