

Dhaka Day by Day

Of Mysticism and Medieval Poetry

by Fayza Haq

There was "Ishkedara" to be heard on the background. The scent of roses, marigold and tuberose filled the air. Dignitaries from Middle Eastern countries and Europe, and local intellectuals sat around with expectations. Meanwhile, the life and works of the Turkish poet, Yunus Emre, was being read and discussed at the National Museum.

Yunus Emre had lived and written nearly 700 years ago. This was pointed out by Arshad-us-Zaman, a former ambassador. Scholars and researchers are precise about analysing his life, Mr. Zaman said. He pointed out these scholars had established that he lived in the second half of the 13th century, and the early section of the 14th century. He was a contemporary of the well-known poet Jelaluddin Rumi. It was added.

Mr Zaman stressed on how Emre, in some of his works, had expressed deep grief at the death of Rumi. He talked about how Yunus Emre lived in Anatolia, in the heart of Turkey, among simple village folks, and could be considered a type of wandering minstrel.

The ex-ambassador spoke of how the poet's work clearly indicated that he had a high level

of knowledge of Islamic mysticism, literature and the Holy Quran. It was reminded that he had mastered Arabic, and Persian to such perfection that he could recite the Holy Quran in Turkish and translate poems of Rumi and Sadi of Shiraz. During his life time, Emre had become a legendary figure and a folk saint. It was stressed.

"Pure Turkish language and literature owes a great debt of gratitude to Emre. He is the first known poet to use Turkish language only. His is the language of the ordinary folk. It does not have any frills", Mr. Zaman pointed out. He added that his poetry does not have the elaborate structure of Persian, the language used by the contemporary poet Rumi, and indeed by most Muslim poets of the time.

He added that it may be noted in passing that — even the poet Iqbal of Pakistan wrote some of his best poems in Persian, although his mother tongue was Urdu. It was stressed at the seminar that Yunus Emre was a trail blazer, and his poems circulated throughout Anatolia for seven centuries. It was pointed out that this was the time of the Seldjuk dynasty, and was followed for the next six centuries by the Ottomans. Even the intellectuals who had gathered at the auditorium were interested in this information. It was stressed with vehemence that the Turkish language and literature remained deeply influenced by Persian until the advent of the Turkish Republic in 1923. Emre's work, naturally, has tremendous importance on the present Turkish national language, even though he lived in the medieval times.

It was said by Mr. Zaman that along the road of progress of the Turkish nation, that Turkish language has had many vicissitudes. Thus today's Turkish language bears very little resemblance to the language used by literary figures

who dominated the Ottoman period." What is remarkable, he added, is that the language used in Anatolia even today has striking resemblance with the language of Emre. "It was said that Emre's popularity grew with passing time, and that there are at least a dozen Anatolian towns who claim to have his tomb.

Emre's permanence and power comes from his subject of timeless significance and the theme is love. He uses direct language, it was pointed out at the talk. "The language that comes from his heart. In a language that is both simple and beautiful, Yunus Emre's poetry is replete with yearning for a union with his creator. Here he is in the best Sufi tradition of Islamic poetry and particularly of the Mevlana. Only the language is earthy Anatolian," is was said.

The fact that Emre was deeply attached to God and his Prophet Mohammed was remarked upon. There are allusions to Allah and Mohammed, it was stated. These were declared as "masterpieces of directness and simplicity. His faith was in the best humanist tradition." It was added that Emre's poems are full of supremacy of love for the true faith:

"For Heaven's sake,
What is faith or creed without love?
The heart is where God's truth rests."

Human life according to Emre, it was said on the occasion, encompasses only "a segment albeit, an important part, of the long journey from the beginning, to time without end. The purpose of coming into the world is for man to know himself and God."

It was pointed out that Emre refuses to stay within the narrow confines of formalised religion. The poet speaks out:

"Yunus Emre says to you
Pharisee makes the holy pilgrimage
If he need be a hundred times

But if you ask me
The visit to heart is best of all."

It was made clear at the seminar that we have every reason to discover and laud Yunus Emre in Bangladesh. It was said that the "directness of his language and his ceaseless yearning to unite with his friend, the Lord finds an echo in our language and literature. It is remarkable that what comes of Anatolia finds its counterpart in the lilting poems of Lalou."

In Bengali literature in general, and particularly in Bangladesh, folk poetry and music occupy a very large space, it was said. In Yunus Emre's poems, one finds "more than a hint of Baul, which inspired the Bengali poet Tagore." It was stressed that in "Lalou, in Hasan Raja, and in our times in Nazrul, the yearning to meet the creator of this universe" is a constant theme.

Speaking at the function on the poet were also the State Minister, Professor Jahanaara Begum, and Jamiruddin Sircar, chairman of UNESCO National Commission for Bangladesh.

Such a seminar that traces our local poetry and shows its important literary linkage with other friendly countries — with a common heritage — is of considerable consequence.



Non-government teachers submit memo to PM Dec 20

By Staff Correspondent

Bangladesh Shikshak Oikya Parishad (BSOP) announced elaborate programme Monday for realising its 15 point charter of demands including enhancement of salary of the non-government teachers and employees by 100 per cent.

The programmes announced at a press conference included submission of memorandum to the Prime Minister or the Education Minister December 20, token strike in all the secondary and lower secondary schools January 19, meeting of the teachers, guardians and managing committees in all the schools January 21, rallies and processions at the upazila level January 26, rallies and processions at the district level January 30 and a grand national rally in Dhaka February 9.

BSOP leaders in the press conference held at the National Press Club also threatened to go for an indefinite strike if their demands were not realised by that time. The decision may come at the national conference scheduled for February 9.

RDRS completes phase-II project in Ctg

Rangpur Dinajpur Rural Service(RDRS) has completed its phase-II post-cyclone rehabilitation project in three upazilas of Chittagong and Cox's Bazar districts at a cost of US Dollar 625 thousand, reports UNB.

The upazilas are Anwara, Moheshkhali and Chokoria.



Namaj-e-janaza of former Prime Minister Ataur Rahman Khan was held at the Baitul Mukarram Mosque in the city on Tuesday.

Italy assures help for agri rehabilitation

A comprehensive agriculture rehabilitation programme with the financial cooperation of Italy has been planned by the government which is scheduled to be implemented simultaneously in Mirserai, Sitakunda and Sandwip upazilas under Chittagong district soon, reports BSS.

This was disclosed at a meeting of the visiting Italian delegation with the Agriculture and Irrigation, Water Development and Flood Control Minister A Majid-ul-Huq in Bangladesh Secretariat on Tuesday.

The members of the delegation include the director, Asia region, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Italy, Sergio Scarantino, coordinator.

Ministry of Foreign Affairs Dr Aldo Scignano and a senior official of the Italian government Dr Fullrio Novero.

After the devastating tornado of April this year an Italian Study team visited the affected areas of Chittagong and examined the technical feasibility of agriculture rehabilitation in those areas with the collaboration of the government of Italy.

The Agriculture Minister while attending the FAO conference in Rome recently finalised the modalities for the implementation of the programme with his Italian counterpart.

The programme has been designed for implementation in three stages within 18 months. The programme will benefit the poor and midlevel farmers mainly during their crisis period.

The Agriculture Minister thanked the government of Italy for extending help and cooperation in agriculture development of Bangladesh.

What's on today

- Jatiyatabadi Ainjibi Forum**
A discussion meeting on "The significance of December 6 in our national life" under the auspices of the Jatiyatabadi Ainjibi Forum, Bangladesh will be held from 4:30 pm to 9:00 pm at Rose Bank Club, House No.6, Road No.4, Dhanmandi Residential Area today.
- Protest rally on Tinbigha transfer**
Jatiya Ganatantrik Party will hold a protest rally on Tinbigha transfer in front of Golap-Shah Majar at 3 pm today (Wednesday).
- The rally has been organised to demand transfer of the Tinbigha corridor to Bangladesh by the Dec 16, as agreed earlier by India.
- A press release said the Party President Shaiful Alam Pradhan will lead a protest procession after the rally.
- Press conference of Finance Minister**
Finance Minister M Saifur Rahman has convened a press conference today (Wednesday) at 12:30 pm at the Hotel Sheraton to exchange views with the journalists on the existing economic situation of the country.
- Lions Club of Dhaka Oriental**
The regular weekly meeting of the Lions Club of Dhaka Oriental will be held today (Wednesday) at 6:30 pm at the Sung Garden Chinese Restaurant at Bijoynagar.
- Rotary Club of Dhaka Mid-town**
The regular weekly meeting of the Rotary Club of Dhaka Mid-town will be held today (Wednesday) at 5:30 pm at the Dhaka Sheraton Hotel.
- Rotary Club of Dhaka North West**
The regular weekly meeting of the Rotary Club of Dhaka North West will be held today (Wednesday) at 5:30 pm at the Hotel Sonargaon.
- Rotary Club of Dhaka Buriganga**
The regular weekly meeting of the Rotary Club of Dhaka Buriganga will be held today (Wednesday) at 5:30 pm at the Hotel Sonargaon.
- The guest speaker for this week is Prof T E C Barns, Consultant World Bank/WHO in Bangladesh. He will speak on the development of health delivery service.
- Death anniversary of Ostad Mir Quasem**
The seventh death anniversary of Ostad Mir Quasem Khan will be observed today (Wednesday) through Quran Khwant, doing out food for the distressed and discussion meeting at his residence.
- The programmes will be organised by the Ostad Mir Quasem Khan Smriti Sangsad.

... and tomorrow

- Seminar on computer courses**
The Computer Education and Training Centre (CETC) of International University of Business Agriculture and Technology (IUBAT) announces a half day Curriculum Development Seminar on Computer Courses tomorrow (Thursday) from 2:30 to 6:30 pm at the Auditorium of the Academy for Planning and Development, Babupura, Nilkhet, Dhaka.
- The main objective of the seminar is to evolve a user oriented, academically sound and feasible curriculum for long, medium and short computer courses.
- The seminar is targeted towards computer educators, trainers, experts, vendors, users and information technology media. Participation is through registration for which no fee is to be paid. Further details can be obtained by writing to GPO Box No 2857 Dhaka-1000 or contacting Dr M Alimullah Miyan over telephone nos 861115, 891209.

Weather

Dry weather to prevail

Weather is likely to remain mainly dry across the country during the next 24 hours till 6 pm Wednesday.

Met office says night temperature may remain nearly unchanged over the country.

Today's maximum temperature in Dhaka was 29.3 degree Celsius and the minimum 18.5 degrees. Country's lowest temperature 13.4 degrees was recorded at Rajshahi.

Percentage of humidity was 77 in the morning and 55 in the evening.

Sun sets tomorrow (Wednesday) at 5.13 pm and rises on Thursday at 6.12 am.

New political party floated

By Staff Correspondent

A new political party named "Desh Prem Party" was floated on Tuesday with aims and objectives of launching a white revolution in the country.

Marshal Shah Alam (51) who was a candidate of February 27 election at a press conference at the National Press Club announced launching of his party as its convenor.

Joint convenors of the party are: Kazi Iqbal Faruk and Kamruzzaman Kabir.

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MEENA BAZAR !! MEENA BAZAR !!

The Gulshan Ladies Community Club will organise a MEENA BAZAR in aid of Free Medical Dispensary, Immunisation Center, Family Planning Clinic, Primary School for boys and girls, and Adult Literacy Center on Friday, December 13th, 1991 at the Gulshan North Park, Road No. 83, Gulshan.

Entry Cards will be available at the gate.

UZ system root cause of corruption: Golem Hafiz

Law and Justice Minister Mirza Golem Hafiz Tuesday said a complete service rule would be prepared to ensure the professional interests of the extra-mohrars of the country, reports BSS.

He was addressing as the chief guest the annual conference of Bangladesh Extra Mohrar Association held at Dhaka Zila Krira Samity auditorium.

State Minister for Relief and Rehabilitation Lutfur Rahman Khan and State Minister for Law and Justice Aminul Haq addressed the conference as the special guests.

He termed the upazila system created by the autocratic regime the root cause of corruption. He said local government bodies would be strengthened through holding

HERE and THERE

- Project Five-O, Bangladesh formed**
A 20 member committee of "Project-Five-O Bangladesh," a non-government voluntary organisation comprising four international affiliated organisations in Bangladesh, namely Bangladesh Federation of University Women, Bangladesh Federation of Business and Professional Women, Soroptimist International Club of Dhaka and Zonta International of Dhaka was formed recently in Dhaka.
- Prof Roushanara Rahman was elected Chairman of the organisation while Dr Halida Khondoker, Farida Huq and Nargis Khan were elected Vice Chairman, Secretary and Treasurer respectively.
- Nagarik Adhikar Parishad**
MA Mohaimin, President of Bangladesh Nagarik Adhikar Parishad, condoned the death of veteran politician Ataur Rahman Khan and former Chief Justice Amin Ahmed.
- He termed their death as irreparable loss for the nation and expressed sympathy for the bereaved families.
- BAI**
The passing out ceremony of 45th batch of Bangladesh Agricultural Institute (BAI) was inaugurated on Tuesday.
- The editor of Dainik Sangbad Ahmedul Kabir inaugurated the function which was attended by Director of Bangladesh Agricultural Teachers' Institute Dr Mohammad H Mandal and BADC Chairman Dr Mirza A Jalil.
- CAB**
Consumers Association of Bangladesh (CAB) on Tuesday urged the authorities to create more awareness against the dishonest businessmen and take legal action against them.
- The call was made at a day-long workshop at the Shishumeila KG School premises at Mahakhali with Altaf Hossain Faruk in the chair.
- Among other Rafiqur Rahman, Sarwar Jahan, Atiqur Rahman, Dr Rafiqul Islam and Kamaluddin Bhuiyan attended the workshop.



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