

THE prestigious Rabindra Sadan of Calcutta hosted on June 7 a most touching congregation of remembrance through songs and reminiscences. Stalwarts of culture and literature, music and the other arts joined together to pay homage to the memory of one of the greatest exponents of Tagore Songs, Sailaja Ranjan Majumdar, who had died on the 24th of the previous month at the age of 92.

The Possessed Ones

by Waheedul Haque

It was good that rather than this or that cultural group, the Rabindra Sadan authorities took it upon themselves to organise the memorial awarding, by the way, a kind of state recognition to the life and works of the great teacher although there was hardly any need for that. Sailaja Ranjan had long before been awarded a doctorate *honoris causa* by the Rabindra-Bharati University and later on the Dshikotama by the Visva-Bharati which is rated above anything that the governments can give by way of honour.

It has been observed by no less an authority than Dhurjati Prasad that Rabindranath's musical works stood well in comparison with those of even Tansen and Baiju, Sadarang and Adarang, nay his were richer than that of all of the rest rolled into one. There are other observations of equal authority that, because of the nature of Tagore's compositions, unless these were preserved in a definitive manner, as has been done through the 'Swarabitan' series, all his music would have come to nought. Those, however eminent may be some of them as performers, that trifle with the notations encompassed by that great series, do so at the certain risk of undermining that great music.

Sailaja Ranjan was one of the greatest scorers of Tagore music, ranking with Dinendranata and Anadi Kumar and surpassing all others — and went past his peers in this by dint of working for six decades without a furlough to bring about a general recognition of

the position laid down in the foregoing paragraph. This he did, most of all, by teaching for more than six hours a day, seven days a week for sixty years. He was ever on the campaign trail even in his writings and in his discharge of duty as the head of the Santiniketan Sangeet Bhavan for the first two decades of its hallowed existence — or as the trainer of the first gramophone discs of Tagore music or the mentor of such trail-blazers as Kanika Bandyopadhyaya, Suchitra Mitra, Subinoy Roy, Rajeshwari Vasudeva (Dutta), Arobindo Biswas and, most importantly of that great musical researcher — Prafulla Kumer Das. Although as a celebrity he fell more and more with the rise of the electronic and print media and their able manipulators, and although his campaign and cause seemed to become more and more controversial and contentious with ever new zealots joining issue with him — he and his work come out clearly as a way-ahead winner. Behind this strange phenomenal result lies the one reason — he taught at least two whole generations and more of Tagore specialists and initiated them into the mysteries of the soul of Bengal as caught in the Tagorean airs — and these pupils were carrying on with his insight in spite of bludgeoning attacks on Tagore music over radio and television, discs and cassettes.

The outlook is at least for a century the Bengali musician will be inseparable from his harmonium. As long as this naturalised western instrument is there Bengalees will be hard put to it to forget about three great men who were up against it — Rabindranath, his follower and ardent admirer Jawaharlal Nehru and the great preserver of his musical works, Sailaja

Ranjan. Nehru threw the instrument out of the radio network upholding action by the Bokhani brothers, who had banned the instrument acting on an express instruction to do so by Tagore himself. But people have forgotten all about that and will remember Sailaja Ranjan as the main adversary of harmonium as an accompanying instrument for songs by Tagore.

The Rabindra Sadan memorial session was a kind of celebration of Sailaja Ranjan's rejection of the harmonium. The instrument was not allowed on the stage and couldn't be resorted to even in the rehearsals. The great singers of the day sang their homage to Sailaja Ranjan to the tune of a bevy of Esrajs and the drone of the Tambour.

Hardly had the shock of the passing of the great Tagorean teacher subsided, across the border in Dhaka died Sadhan Sarkar. It would be difficult to find another whose name fits his performance as a glove does the hand. His life, stopping at 63, was a 'Sadhana' of as much years — and, as his name implied some achievement at the end of that process of dedication, application and self-denial, — so did his life beatify itself with uncompromising abidance by the demands of art and conscience, by the inner compulsions of one given over wholly to the weal of the people and social justice. Unknown to the rest of East or West Bengal, Sadhan Sarkar had, by the time he was thirty, had become a social and artistic institution in Khulna, — an activist who discharged his mission through music.

A stupendous monument to his genius both as a creator of unforgettable beautiful tunes and an organiser of the Sondipon — a cultural set-up that in fact was more a movement than an organisation. It

flourished at about the same time as the Chhayanaud did in Dhaka and although the latter left its mark far more indelibly on the emergence of the new state and in the overall resistance to the Pakistani cultural offensive, Sondipon did turn out things excelling on the creative plain — songs and lyrics and stories and literature in general — a kind of true cultural resurgence. There were firm pillars to the institution like Nazim Mahmud and Mustafizur Rahman, Hasan Azizul Huq and, if I remember the name correctly, Rashid Shams. But Sadhan stood and functioned as a hub does to the wheel.

He was one man endowed supremely to mint money and yet who chose not to sell his soul and take a lot of pride in his impecunious struggle to survive and survive eminently, to some purpose.

All that remains of his works — Sondipon is long gone

— is a book of songs tuned by him with lyrics penned by Nazim Mahmud. Sadhan Sarkar had many a one to model his life upon. — It is the tragedy of the times that perhaps no one will choose his or her life on Sadhan's. Self-denial and relentless struggle chosen deliberately as the mainstay of life is now a foolish thing to do. Those were the things of our robust and rewarding past and we now live in a time of unabated perpetual decline the best signs of which are selfishness and cruelty to others.

Sailaja is Parvati and the man who adored her was Shiva. Dr Sailaja Ranjan Majumdar, true to his name, resembled the lord Shiva in that he, throughout his long life, drank in the poison of other people's jealousy and remained as unflappable as was Shiva. Sadhan Sarkar was equally untrammelled by the pangs of poverty and other demeaning things. Their measures as men of gift and contribution may differ but both of them were as if possessed ones — possessed of a view and meaning of life that do not come easy to generations of man.



A scene from "Nadir Naam Madhumati," a film based on the War of Liberation and against the backdrop of a Bangladesh village in 1971, is being made by Tanveer Mokammel. Sara Zaker (in the scene) plays a leading role with Aly Zaker, Towkir Ahmed, Asaad, Abul Khair, Momtazuddin Ahmed, Keramat Maula, Ramendu Majumder and others. Shot in 16mm, colour, the movie is cinematographed by Anwar Hossain.

"Antigone" of Theatre Group

Mamun Haq

IT is great news for us to hear that Theatre is launching a new production named 'Antigone' of Jean Anouilh. The classical Greek tragedy of Sophokles is being presented to us in its modern form.

Antigone, the main figure of this play is the architect of a new age. This female character 'Antigone' is the voice of the oppressed minority trying hard to cross the limitations of State-authority and power. Sophokles presents to us two opposite forces unwilling to go for any compromise — one force being led by Antigone, and the other force by Creon the mouthpiece of the written laws of the State being Creon, and on the other end we have Antigone who represents the

unwritten laws of individuals. It is the story of Antigone's constant struggle against the power of the new ruler Creon. Antigone must die because she dares to wage war against the forces of the omnipotent State-apparatus. The German Philosopher Hegel has described the drama of Sophokles as the objective conflict between two legitimate forces — the State and the Family. Creon represents the State and Antigone represents the smallest unit of the society, which is the family. The drama of Sophokles can also be interpreted as a struggle between social order and the individual standing for his rights. In the drama written by Sophokles, Antigone is determined to bury the dead-body of her brother

Polynetes. But she is not allowed to do so under the written orders of Creon, the brutal despotic ruler. Later she dies, and after this incident her beloved Haïmon (son of Creon) commits suicide. Even Eurydike, Creon's wife commits suicide after hearing about her son's death. So Antigone attains victory over Creon even after her death.

This drama of Sophokles has been given a 20th century flavour by Jean Anouilh. We are all eagerly waiting to watch the stage performance of Theatre's Bengali translation of Jean Anouilh's play which is also named Antigone.

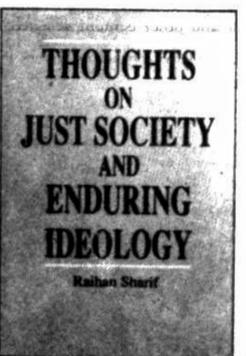
Mamun Haq is German teacher at the University of Dhaka.



Laisa Ahmed Lisa, a leading Tagore song vocalist, rendered a number at the Rajshahi University function in observance of the poet's birth anniversary recently.

A Focus on the Ideology-torn Global Situation

BOOKS are, it is said by serious-minded people, to be mirrors of a society. They reflect its evolution, growth and onward progress on the tracks of aims and aspirations charted out by its thinking minds throughout its history. They tell the story of the nation and the people of the nation. And stories relate to the stresses and strains, movements and disasters, sufferings and miseries, problems and endeavours etc. In the midst of the geographical and natural constraints and also political and social deficiencies and mishaps. Stresses, problems, struggles and sufferings are mainly economic and social in the poverty-loaded population-burdened developing countries. Books tell stories, coloured by those complexities as well. But above all, all these deal with people's living conditions, collectively and individually under the evolved cultural patterns nationally and inter-



nationally. Cultural and moral values are either implicit or explicit in different blendings. Nations or peoples preoccupied with poverty and colonialism-exploited legacy of multicoloured complex problems threatening the security of survival, again, confront

most difficult situations, as pitiable other peoples confronting survival problems because of severe prolonged natural disasters present yet another awful kind of pattern and challenge. Social thinkers over the globe think and write about the past, present and future prospects of humanity in a broad perspective of evolution and changes so that

mankind as a whole can also see its own pattern of progress and pitfalls, commission and omission of the earthly code of conduct in general within or without a framework of 'truth' and 'justice' as indispensable guidelines for humanity's fulfilment of the 'mission' of liv-

ing on earth. Some piercing and appealing books may logically and objectively present the results of presence or absence of those guidelines and pointedly lead to new roads of knowledge of using the faculties and faiths of 'whole' men and 'women' rather than partially trained or oriented men and women for the optimum feasible happiness of mankind.

BOOK REVIEW

This sort of intellectual endeavour is rare in modern days of minute specialization and

Prof. Raihan Sharif's volume: *Thoughts on Just Society and Enduring Ideology* is also a new beacon-light in the present ideology-torn global situation for mankind. Along with identified earlier problems of greed-based science of economics and destructive forces of science and technology, Prof. Raihan Sharif adds the more important focus required. That is the mission and quality of man and woman as trustee of the Creator on earth and accountability to the Creator. This latter aspect has also been stressed by Schumacher and Jackson Davis but only to a relatively small extent. They have not examined the relationships of comprehensive ideologies within which other needs of training of man and woman can make them fully ready and responsible for the desired role with 'perfect body and perfect soul', as emphasized by Dr Alan Bloom (in his *Closing of the American Mind*). Moral and social philosophy is, in this framework, required to be both comprehensive and com-

plete in the sense of integration of all 'disciplines' of required knowledge (for body and soul) for educating boys and girls (hence men and women) to work for self, family, society, nation and humanity at large.

Prof. Sharif, therefore, first explores the 'historical records' and evidences of the ancient Egyptian Case of civilization upto the pre-Islamic period of human, social and ethical-spiritual situation and how contrasting revolutionary change could demonstrate the model of composite ideology with body-and-soul training of manpower for the all-round requirement of roles in all directions. The difficulties of using such a model in the Egyptian Case have also been traced and historical evolution of adjustments and harmonization is dealt with. After the isolation of the soul from knowledge for application in achieving the industrial civilization and exceeding the limits of growth and perverting the concept of happiness and social values, family values and individual's enlightened selftraining, western civilization fell out of tracks of 'truth' and 'justice'. Hence western thinkers themselves drew attention to the

'gaps' created by man for negative and destructive roles. So is the logical need to fill in the void. And for a consistent search of institutions and behavioral remodelling required re-examination of the so called science of economics and evolve what is now known as Islamic economics as a healthy masterkey to remodelling new social economies. When social and economic forces guided by relevant spiritual and ethical behaviour can lay the foundations of real socioeconomic balance of a System operational in society, then a composite ideology of enduring character can be expected to be functioning without a risk of 'crumbling as Communism has lately faced. Nor can a System then assume the character of

greed-and-avarice type capitalism. As Jeremy Rifkin thinks, the new interpretation of man's 'dominion over nature' is in terms of proper regard to God's creation including natural resources; it is the concept of 'stewardship' and the first requisite of a steward is 'faithfulness because he handles that which belongs to another'. And Prof. Sharif thinks: "The economic analysis related to Islamic economy can, in the present context, bring out the distinguishing landmarks of actions and behaviour on the part of individuals, groups, peoples, nations and Muslim Umma that represent the 'wholeness' now sought by Western scholars in terms of all relationships within a given society and on earth." (p.210)

Behind the Splendour that is the Foreign Office

WHEN President Ronald Reagan wanted his F-111 bombers to use British bases to bomb Libya in 1986, Foreign Secretary Sir Geoffrey Howe told Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher she could not give Reagan a blank cheque for such action from British soil. He was brushed aside.

So were other ministers two days later. Thatcher was determined to stand by Reagan 100 per cent. When she could wait no longer she contacted at 7 am not Howe but Sir Charles Powell, her foreign affairs adviser in 10 Downing Street.

She told him, says a new book, to give the US the go-ahead. As on many occasions in that period, the Foreign and Commonwealth Office across the road had been bypassed.

Love her or hate her, Margaret Thatcher's name will be writ large in the history of British diplomacy.

At the height of her power as prime minister, foreign policy was made not at the Foreign and Commonwealth Office but inside Number Ten. The key advice came not from the mandarins in the Office but from the mandarin at Thatcher's beck-and-call — Powell.

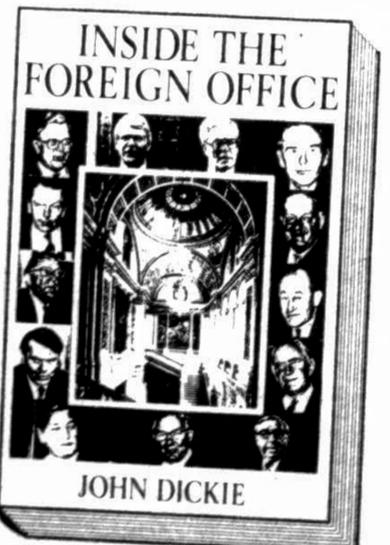
Everywhere Thatcher went Powell went too. Every photo shot of the prime minister leaving her house showed Powell following her into the car. In Moscow, Washington, Beijing, Brussels he was always at her side. Often the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary was not.

Thatcher, says author John Dickie, in his illuminating book, *Inside the Foreign Office* (Chapmans, UK price £20), made more than 170 visits to 54 countries in her 11 years as prime minister.

Not bad for a politician who before her election in 1979 had paid scant attention to foreign matters and rarely spoke about them. According to Dickie, she was for a period spending 80 per cent of her time on foreign affairs.

No Whitehall department is held in such awe as the Foreign and Commonwealth Office. The Grand Staircase leads to a Foreign Secretary's room that is 21 feet high. Outside it, diplomatic mandarins pad about in a hushed ambience of Victorian splendour. A new book, reports Gemini News Service, examines the nature and changing times of the most secretive of British departments of state.

Derek Ingram writes from London



John Dickie followed the twisting fortunes of 13 foreign secretaries during the 30 years he was diplomatic correspondent of the London Daily Mail. He gives us a revealing account of the tensions that Thatcher caused as she built her own rival, mini-Foreign Office at Number Ten. In the end it was one of the causes of her downfall.

Sir Geoffrey Howe, Foreign Secretary for six years and for long subservient, was first sacked from the job and then resigned from the cabinet with a historic speech in Parliament that led within weeks to her removal as Conservative party leader.

Dickie's book is about the institution of the Foreign Office — what he calls "the most secretive Department of the Government." He is critical of its conservatism, of its failure to recruit members of the ethnic communities — in 1990, for example, only one non-white candidate out of a total of 1,524 applications got an appointment — and its failure to recruit women.

Britain has 170 missions around the world, yet only eight women have so far been appointed in charge of one. No woman has ever been sent as ambassador east of Suez and only one woman has ever been in charge of an embassy in Latin America. Within the Office no woman has reached the level of the six deputy under-secretaries of state.

Dickie quotes a letter to the London Times from Mrs Mollie Ashworth, who wrote in 1989: "When I first joined the Foreign Office the lavatory doors were marked 'Gentlemen' and 'Women'. One assumed no 'lady' would demean herself by earning a living — and that was less than 30 years ago."

The Foreign Office has long been the butt of media criticism in Britain with one of the main charges that of elitism. It has always shunned outside investigation, but in 1989 it did call in a firm of consultants.

Their report, Dickie reveals, showed that in a questionnaire filled in anonymously by more

than 1,000 members of the Diplomatic Service more than half said they would leave the Service if a comparable job were available. People felt their lives were "driven by decisions made in the dark by strangers."

Morale among the staff of what has long been seen as the most prestigious of Whitehall institutions was for the first time shown to be poor.

The way in which Thatcher took over foreign policy plainly did not help. The way rapid communication has led to personal diplomacy at the top may not have helped either.

In 1919 diplomat Sir Harold Nicolson warned of the fatal habit of personal contact between the statesmen of the world. He wrote that "there is nothing more damaging to precision in international relations than friendliness between contracting parties."

Today Foreign Secretary Douglas Hurd flies something like 130,000 miles a year. Says Dickie: "It is a basic question of finding time to think. Unless a Foreign Secretary stays still long enough to analyse where the trends of current situations are leading, his grasp of foreign policy is liable to become a mere synthesis of snatched impressions in between airports."

"It is ludicrous that anyone in charge of foreign policy should be logging the mileage of a commercial traveller. His job is not to peddle 'Great Britain Ltd.' round the world. Flying the flag is for others."

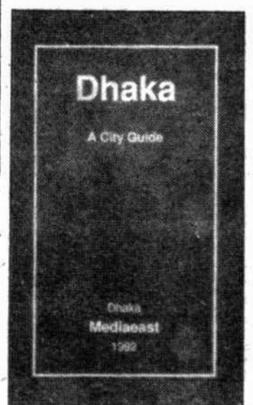
Dickie's answer is for the Foreign Secretary to cut travel abroad by half and let the Diplomatic Service revert "to its traditional functions of having ambassadors playing a significant role in the conduct of foreign affairs."

It makes sense, but even if foreign secretaries stay at home there is not much chance of prime ministers and presidents doing so in these days of unending summitry.

Author Dickie, the book jacket tells us, is a keen rhabdophiliac — collector of divining rods to you and me. On his travels he has picked up 87 examples. What better equipment for divining the next 30 years of British foreign policy?

DEREK INGRAM is Editor of Gemini News Service

All about Dhaka



DHAKA, A CITY GUIDE
Edited by M Khatoon & S Nahar
Published by Mediaeast, Dhaka, 1992
Price Tk 150 US \$4

Reviewed by: Dipak Kumar Karmaker

DHAKA is our capital city. But how much are we aware of its historical background, geographical features and other important aspects? However, it is not in the least a matter of pride not to know the exact location of Lalbagh Fort or the population of Dhaka. But where can we find a source that provides such informations?

In this regard 'Dhaka, A City Guide' brought out by the Mediaeast publication, edited by M Khatoon and S Nahar, is a laudable effort. It meticulously gives significant features of Dhaka city which all of us should regard as valuable. But what is more important is that it is really a guide for tourists from abroad visiting Dhaka.

It contains a collection of pictures of different places of Dhaka. These pictures make things more interesting and easy for the readers. The book has a few maps of Dhaka which are specially valuable for foreigners.

The book has given a description of the physical feature of Dhaka. It provides a detailed historical background of Dhaka. It tries to establish the definite provenance of Dhaka working out the labyrinth of doubtful references in history.

We find descriptions of churches, temples, mosques and shrines in Dhaka along with a little historical background. Similarly, there are informations about the relics of the past, monuments, memorials, parks and gardens including museum.

Nor is it lacking in throwing light on the Bengali culture which can enlighten the foreigners deeply about our nation. We find descriptions

about the fairs, and festivals observed by various religious sects.

The book includes telephone number and address of both government and non-government organisations, airlines, hospital, police station, banks and those which are of great use in the everyday life.

This exhaustive study about Dhaka, we hope, will be highly useful both to our people as well as to the foreigners. In foreign countries, such guides are quite available. But in our country, we hardly come across such guidebooks. So, it can be concluded that there is a genuine lack of such guidebooks in our country. Hence, in this respect, Mediaeast's 'Dhaka, A City Guide' may bear great fruit and novelty.