

# The Unsung Centenarians

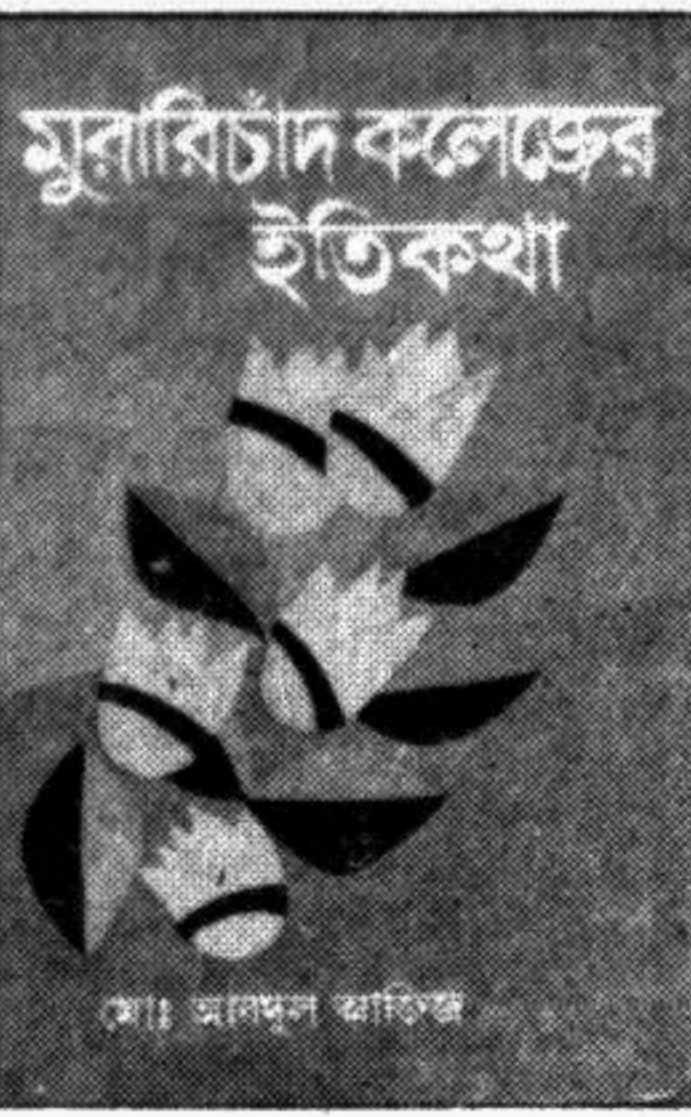
ONLY the other day the centenary celebrations of the Braja Mohun College of Barisal commenced and I do hope after the dusts raised by some politically minded glitches had settled down I would sail down to that lovely town and still find the reverberations of the jubilation. The founder of that college, Aswini Kumar Dutta, is among the greatest both as a man and as an educator of all that pioneered the cause of education and character — easily to be classed with David Hare and Ram Mohun, Ashutosh and Mohammad Mohsin, Abdul Latif and Rabindranath. Much has been written about this giant of a man although far less than he deserved — patently one of the evil spin offs of the Congress-ruled partition of Bengal.

There are other centenarians among our colleges. No one has visibly shown any interest about celebrating their jubilee. All of them have been so long going unsung — partly because none of them had such an illustrious founder as the poor school teacher Aswini Kumar. I am very grateful to see that Professor Muhammad Abdul Aziz had done something very ably to redeem the debt of

## BOOK REVIEW

**MURARICHAND COLLEGER ITIKATHA.**  
By Mohammad Abdul Aziz.  
Distributed by Jatiya Sahitya Prokashoni.  
Pages 91. Price Tk 80.

Reviewed by Waheedul Haque



gratitude to his alma mater — which is the youngest of the centenarians coming after Dhaka College (1841), Chittagong College (1869), Rajshahi

College (1873), Jagannath College (1883), Narail Victoria College (1886) and Braja Mohun College (1889). Professor Aziz has done himself proud by distinguishing his college, the Murarichand College, founded in 1891, with the publication of a well-researched history of the institution. Going through the pages of the very neatly produced (computer composition on extra-white offset paper) book one felt how badly each of our old and glorious institutions needed such an enterprising chronicler as Professor Aziz. Some educators of eminence had tried their hand in some autobiographical writing mostly in a very casual manner — Abul Fazal's *Rekhachitra* being an honourable and glorious exception to that — but those never amounted to any history of any

institution — educational or otherwise. It is perhaps a two-way traffic — the educators and students contributing to their institutions' glory and what not and the institutions making worthy human beings of them in return. The educators make an institution what it is and the educator himself or herself is a product of such an institution.

Modelling on Professor Aziz's wonderful enterprise many people would have written about the public libraries — at least four of which are a century and about two score years old. History of some clubs and associations and of the immortals among teachers and social workers and men and women of great benevolence could also be ours, for the good of us all, if only competent people fell like Prof Aziz.

While all praise for Professor Aziz's travels, I personally feel there should have been — if not through the whole gamut of it — at least a few chapters of personal reminiscences shot with both dank and shiny nostalgic vignettes — combining to give us all a feel of the ambience that was the M C College of old.

# Going Deep into the Subconscious

by Fayza Haq

GOUTAM Chakraborty held a solo exhibition of his 55 water colours at the Shilpakala Academy: In the miniature paintings the minute drawings had minute details which were carefully worked on.

Our country is rich in the tradition of the miniature as the kings and princes of the middle ages patronised the stylised nature and portraits. These usually were of two-dimension and easy to comprehend. Goutam, on the other hand, has gone in for the semi-abstract and the surrealistic. Through his water colours he has presented the different and unusual portraiture. He has tried to go deep in the subconscious and has portrayed his subjects with different hues, textures, dots and a style that takes great pains over the details. He has certainly great potentials.

Goutam has dealt with humans and animals, with the humans dominating. In the appearance of the human beings, we saw the reflection of the souls. Some of the artist's paintings were without heads and here the artists enjoyed portraying the eternal woman rather than any particular delectable one. There is great vitality and rhythm in the delineation of these women. Grace, youth and sensuality entered the depiction of

strength. The manner in which he represented the animals recalled magic, mystery and fairy tales.

The artist had brought in nature too, although not in any dynamic way. Women were shown lying on leaves or were transformed into leaves. The

bring out the reality.

"Faces" had two faces combined in one. The speckled effect was for the visual function. "If I had used a solid colour it would not have the same effect. I wanted to bring in the contrast between sound and silence," the artist elaborated.

tion in "Cat -1" in which the animal had been depicted with soft grey strokes. The face of the cat was orange and before it was piled scraps of food.

With yellow, orange, green and blue, the artist depicted his "Elephant-1". He had brought in the huge legs of the elephant, the tusks, eye and ears in scraps and bits. It took



Beckoning youth — 1

Bygone youth

# Of Changes in the Form of Local Government

## BOOK REVIEW

**Village Government in Bangladesh**  
by Md Giasuddin Molla  
Publisher: Ashraf Price: Tk 60.00

Reviewed by Lutfor Rahman Belayet

### VILLAGE GOVERNMENT IN BANGLADESH

People's participation at grassroots level

MD GYASUDDIN MOLLA

incharge of small development projects of their locality. The Permanent Settlement Act of 1793 created a new class of Zamindars to look after the village affairs as well as to act as the intermediaries between the rulers and the ruled. There had been subsequent steps like the Chowkidari Panchayat Act of 1880, the Bengal Local Self Government Act of 1885, Village Self Government Act of 1919 to modify the structure and functions of local government. During the Pakistan period Ayub Khan introduced 'Basic Democracy' system in 1958. After independence, Bangladesh Government introduced the system dividing the local government into six levels — (1) Union Council (2) Union Committee (3) Town

Committee (4) Thana Council (5) District Council and (6) Municipal Committee. Ziaur Rahman formed Gram Sarkar (village government) in 1980. Every village had a chief to look into the local problems and to inspire the rural people to contribute to development projects. But Ershad Government in 1982 abolished the Gram Sarkar system and introduced Upazila system. The present government of Begum Khaleda Zia has dissolved the Upazila system and as usual formed committees to examine the structure of various local government level organizations. The committee has again come out with new systems to be implemented soon with credit.

The book is a research study of Dr Giasuddin and it contains 44 tables of different data and aspects of leadership pattern related with age, education system, occupation, status, size of family, annual income, property, political relationship, relationship with local people and union parishad members, Govt officials, success and failure of the Gram Sarkars etc. Most of them were farmers and 22% had education from SSC to graduation levels. Young and educated people were coming out to replace the old and illiterates. Fiftythree per cent Gram Sarkars had political linkage. Most of the Sarkars were not getting cooperation from et-

ther union parishad members or government officials, and lack of financial support incapacitated them for any development work. Fortyfour per cent general people and 22% Gram Sarkar members opined that Gram Sarkars performed no functions at all. Rather 33% villagers and 16.67 Gram Sarkars opined that they created strife among villagers. Middle class people dominated the Gram Sarkar group. Above all, Gram Sarkar system miserably failed to perform the development functions to which it was forced into and it died with the demise of its founder Ziaur Rahman.

In spite of being financed by the University Grant Commission, Dr Giasuddin has surveyed only three villages — not even one village from each division — out of nearly one lakh villages of Bangladesh. It is hardly possible to come to a conclusion depending on the statistics of only three villages out of so many. Survey on some more villages in different parts of the country could make the study more perfect.

Printing of the book is as usual but the types seem to suffer from lack in ink. The cover is too simple to attract the attention of the common readers. It gives a look more of a little magazine than a well meaning book.

However, despite the few demerits, one must admit that the book will be very useful for any researcher on the forms of local government and may discourage the rulers to label everything of their predecessor harmful and, do something new just to establish authority. The relevant data and generalisation may be interesting to both the academics and policy planners.



Those faces in procession

women. The beauty of the face was of little consequence when compared to the beauty of the body. In the scattered hair of the women are found the mystery and the magic of dark nights. The artist's depiction of women may have been symbolic of his mother whom he lost as a child and whom he has always lamented. The anguish of the soul was seen in the disarrayed hair spread out like tentacles.

The artist's world of animals was limited to cats, horses and elephants but was full of meaning. The cat represented softness, while the horse symbolised speed and the elephant stood for

transformation stood for care and concern in the mind of the artist.

There was a lot of sad grey pervading his work and this brought in the gloominess that he felt at his mother's death. Later, when hope and desire overcame this sorrow, we found a host of greens and oranges. Goutam's work was a combination of passion and feeling. He had depicted life, combining imagination with inner feelings.

The artist's work was sometimes described and at times symbolised. He tried to depict the universal rather than the particular. He delved into mysteries and fantasies to

The streaks of red at the back symbolised subconscious pain. "Those Faces in a Procession-2" had distorted figures. There were the effects of masks to go with tortured bodies. The hair was shown in thick limpid coils. "I don't want to tell a story, I want to hold up emotion," the painter explained.

Social and political thoughts were underlying "Those faces in Processions — 3". The bodies were like Egyptian mummies while the faces were like green mask. The yellow ochre in the main body was flecked with a lighter tone. The artist had not blended his water colour to get his forms.

"Horse -2" represented force and the subject was depicted in a simplified stylised manner. The red triangle at the back highlighted the speed of the animal. "I was inspired by poetry as you hardly see horses today in everyday life in Dhaka," the artist commented. The hair of the figure in "Ecstasy Upon Nature" was like the tentacles of an octopus. The face was an elongated one. There was a lot of blue and brown to offset the red. The speckled effect prevailed. One found a neat composi-

you some time to put it all together.

"Adolescence" showed a young woman with her hair spread out. The eyes were cat-like, while the skin complexion was a vivid orange. The artist attempted to depict the embarrassing stage of being neither a child nor an adult.

In "Woman-1" there was the full figure of a woman but with her face missing. Octopus tentacles-like heavy coils of hair surrounded the figure. Green flecks again dominated the scene.

The artist had done the portrait of Tagore, Yeats and Mother Teresa too, and they were interesting in their unique presentation with semi-abstract and realistic effect.

About his work the artist said, the "I like to communicate anything and everything, what I like, think and like. However, I like to concentrate in some place over my subject." Goutam has participated in the 4th and 5th Asian Art Biennial, Bangladesh, and has studied in Santiniketan and Asutosh College, Calcutta, before he got his B.F.A degree from the Institute of Fine Arts at Dhaka.

# Exiled Poet Feels Winds of Change in South Africa

by Vincent Magombe

South African poet and academic Dennis Brutus feels optimistic about his country's future. A committed anti-apartheid activist, Brutus spearheaded the campaign which led to the exclusion of South Africa from world sport. His books were banned in his native country and he put in jail. Gemini News Service discussed the future of literature in South Africa with Brutus, recently back from a teaching assignment in the country he was forced to leave in 1966.



DENNIS BRUTUS

"Many apartheid laws have been removed, except the most important: Mandela and Tutu can't vote!"

the racist regime from international sport. "Many apartheid laws have been removed, except the most important: Mandela and Bishop Tutu can't vote!" Then he adds: "But we can say that

there is a great deal of change, especially in the area of culture and literature."

As early as 1961, Dennis Brutus' work was banned in South Africa. From then on, it was crime to possess or quote

from his works.

The publication in Nigeria in 1962 of his first collection of anti-racist poems, entitled *Sirens, Knuckles, Boots*, led him to jail. In 1963, he was arrested and sent to Robben Island.

He made an encouraging discovery on his recent visit. "Only two of my books are still banned: *A Simple Lust* and *Southern Hope*."

"Many of my fellow citizens can now read my other unpublished works without the fear of recrimination from the authorities. That is a step forward."

Not long ago, it was inconceivable for large audiences of white and black people to harmoniously congregate in one musical hall, cinema or theatre to celebrate South Africa's literary and cultural diversity.

During his visit Professor Brutus was able to witness a new South Africa in the making. Now, blacks like himself could be seen mingling in greater numbers with white artists and audiences at such prestigious events as the National Arts Festival, held annually in Grahamstown.

Dennis Brutus also found that "young people from the ghettos were expressing themselves more freely. But, he cautions, often, this is not very skillful."

He applauds the Congress of

South African Writers (COSAW), which has been active in promoting young and new writers through its writing workshops and special publishing programmes.

"These young artists from the ghettos hold the greatest promise for South Africa's future," argues Brutus. "That is if we believe that politics was often expressed through literature in the past, and that writers will continue articulating opposition and mobilising resistance in our future struggles."

While in South Africa he came across a lively debate about politics and literature. "Many were arguing that politics should be excluded from literature. But this is because of the mistaken belief that the political struggle in South Africa is over."

He believes that writers and artists must organise themselves, like they have never done before, in effectively functional groups and organisations. "Only then will they achieve greater success in their unceasing efforts to influence societal transformation."

No one could be better suited to suggest so, Dennis Brutus was the founder-President of the US-based African Literature Association (ALA), and it co-ordinator of the Union of Writers of the African People (UWAP). He is also involved in the establishment of the British-based African Literature Forum (ALF). Brutus thinks that his most important work, while in South Africa, may have been his participation in the informal discussions on the creation of what is to be called the African Literature Group (ALG).

He now hopes to secure links between the ALG, when it is finally established, and the sister organisations: ALA, UWAP, and ALF, as well as the Pan African Writers Association (PAWA) based in Ghana. "In not so long a time," suggests Brutus, "these links should be via the latest computer network."

Brutus strongly criticised those literary groups in South Africa which continue to operate on the basis of racial segregation. Time was running out for such groups, he says. The moment had come for a new non-racial literature for a new non-racial South Africa.

"Fortunately, the relaxing of the censorship laws meant that more and more whites were now beginning to attack

racism as well." Efforts, he said, had to be combined. This would lead to the demise of apartheid ideology in the literary and educational structures.

"There must be an end to the exclusively white or exclusively non-white practices in all that we do."

This was only part of the message, from a man who had been in exile for 30 years and who had devoted much of his life to the struggle against apartheid.

Would his fellow South Africans listen to him? He hoped so. He, like many of them, could see the coming light. But, needless to say, the movement forward was like spitting into the stormiest of winds.

VINCENT MAGOMBE is a Ugandan playwright, poet and journalist, based in London.

# Is there a Third World Literature?

Continued from page 10 aged to drop the topic he was thinking about. It was written in the report that the Police Inspector of Kapasia thana caught a rural dacoit red-handed. That was great indeed, whispered Mr B raising two rounds of glow in his semi-brownish, interior-moving eyes. But that was not the end of the story. Mr B read further that the Inspector handcuffed the dacoit and kept the dacoit seated on the back of the motor cycle which the Inspector himself was driving, picking up the style of an Amitabh Bacchan. Yes, the Inspector was driving and the dacoit, handcuffed and seated behind on the vehicle, was in fact taking a ride. The Inspector was moving towards the village the dacoit lives in, for he wanted to seize the whole gang and thereby open up a glorious chapter in the history of police raids and operations; he felt the inner, incessantly pricking and pecking and nabbing urge to exemplify what really the bravery and heroism of the police mean. But, the Aristotelean 'peripetia' — reversal of expectation — was lurking in the womb of

# The Journey of Mr B

Continued from page 9

leads to a false understanding of world history and the way literature relates to it. Western academics tend to define culture in terms of books and films, ignoring the "material conditions of life which include the instance of culture itself."

Ahmad argues that literature from the developing world only becomes visible internationally after it has been "selected, translated, published, reviewed, explicated and allotted a place in the burgeoning archive of 'Third World Literature' — a process controlled by the First World."

This category of Third World literature has spawned a whole industry of scholarly and critical studies, mostly in the West, and often by "Third

World" migrant writers and intellectuals residing in the West. The book looks in detail at the work of Edward Said and Salman Rushdie.

It may be due to the efforts of these migrant writers that the Nobel Prize list has expanded its geographical area beyond Europe and the US. In the past ten years alone, six writers from the developing world have won the honour.

Although this may show the trend examined by Ahmad, it is also a sign of the vitality of literature in the so-called Third World.

DAYA KISHAN THUSSU teaches a course on Third World Development at Britain's Open University. He is Associate Editor of Gemini News Service.

of violence," muttered Mr B, once again spreading metallic sparkles in his small eyes. "You don't need guns and powders to abate violence which is so pervasive in Bangladesh; you only need tickling. Tickle the terrorists, if you can," shouted Mr B in a mood of brimming jubilation. Such words were so loudly reported that Mr B's wife, who had then been sleeping (Oh, it was morning's sleep, her most favourite thing!), woke up with a start and discovered that it was Mr B's daring design. Mr B's wife got terribly angry and was spuming forth in her characteristic idiom of squabbles and wrangles. But, was Mr B frightened, as he used to be? Not at all, for he got the magic solution, namely tickling. He would now tickle his wife. Mr B thought and he tickled. But his wife, O my God, did not laugh, not to mention that he had to lose her physical equilibrium. Yes, she did not laugh, and Mr B? He had to face the music! The wife and the music!

Now, that was the question: why didn't she laugh, despite the fact that Mr B applied the tickling tactic following its grammar as perfectly as possible? Is she then like that intellectual who never laughs in fear that he would lose seriousness and cease to become an intellectual involved in teaching grammar and linguistics?