

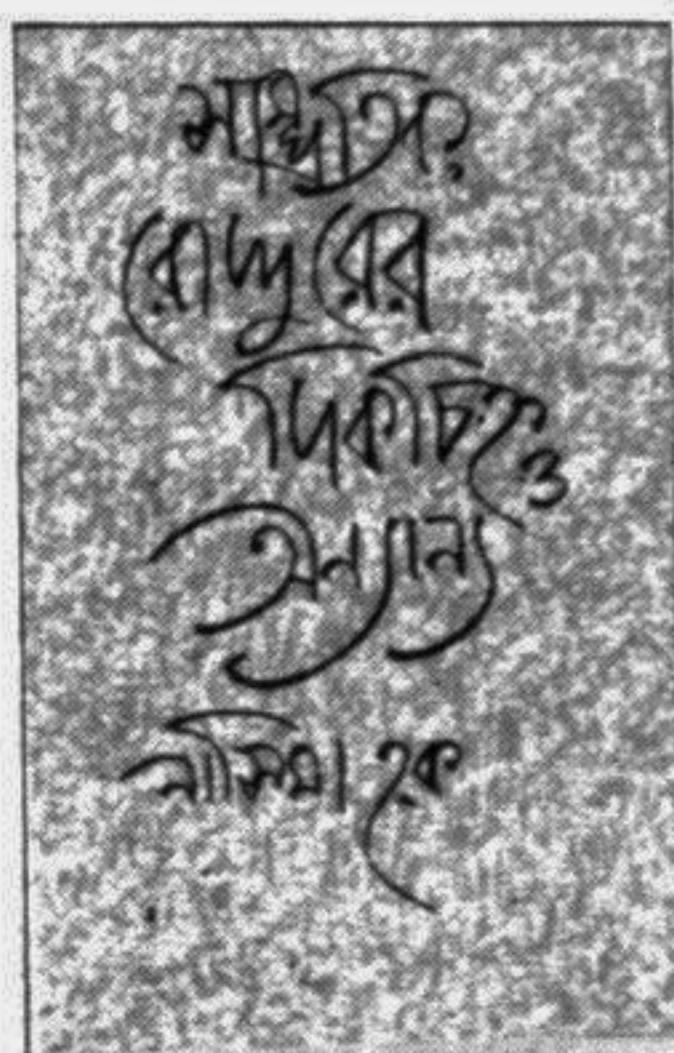
A Rich Collection of Columns

BOOK REVIEW

Shamprotik Roddurer Dikchinha O Annanya
by Nasima Haq

Published by: Rupantar Prokashana
Cover design: Quayyum Chowdhury
Pp 94 Price: Tk 50/=

Reviewed by: Waheedul Haque



Altaf Mahmud, Dolores Ibaruri, Anna Akhmatova and Boris

Pasternak. That is a formidable range by any standard and Nasima deals with her heroes not by rehashing what her readings had led her to know but with a perception all her own. And those great achievers are, in the bargain, seen from a point relevant to the present-day realities of Bangladesh.

Seven of the pieces are book reviews. Here again Nasima astounds with her range and feeling. From Joan Baez to Zubaida Mirza and from Pablo Neruda to Mushtari Shaif. However, the last of such pieces is a very much unfortunate entry in that it does not really dwell on any book but slips into simplistic sloganeering using

nothing less than Tagore's Jogajog as a peg to hang a bundle of tears shed over the condition of our women. And this small piece of about 800 words epitomises the main weakness of the book, — misprints and oversights about slipshod language.

There are some very apt and insightful commentaries on the achievements of our recent history — numbering ten. These have a historic value for some of these are on personalities and movements so far unchronicled. The best and most valuable of such would be the outpouring of her feelings on the 'Chhayanaut' — the organisation that spearheaded not only a cultural movement that challenged foreign domination and military dictatorship but also engendered in the natives of what is now Bangladesh a quest for their true identity.

Production lapses are too many to be ignored. And the writer should have done well to do a thorough re-reading and editing before the published columns were sent to the press to come out as a book. In spite of such defects, Nasima Haq's volume of columns does add to the riches of our literature and as such deserves a good circulation.

A Commonsense Approach to Diagnose the Diseases of Children

BOOK REVIEW

Paediatric Diagnostic Approach
by Dr Manzoor Hussain

Published by Mrs Shermin Manzoor
Pp 280 Price Tk 250/=

Reviewed by Dr. Zafar Ullah Sikder

Published literatures in the field of child life and health in Bangladesh are few and far between. Publication of this book is a timely addition to fill up the gap. The author deserves appreciation and the book a wide

circulation. "Paediatric Diagnostic Approach" by Prof. Manzoor Hussain; published by Mrs Shermin Manzoor from 166 Green Road, Dhaka; first edition 1993; pp 276+10; price Tk 250.

Paediatric Diagnostic Approach

Seeking an Abode of Peace

BOOK REVIEW

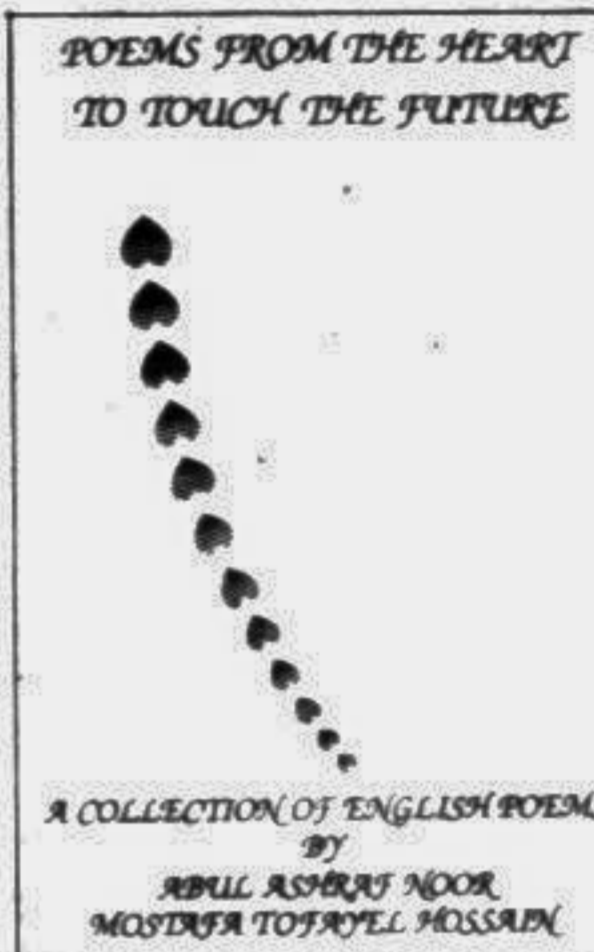
Poems from the Heart to Touch the Future

by Abul Ashraf Noor and Mostafa Tofayel Hossain

Published by: Romela Noor and Sultana Dilruba Rubi

Pp 80 Price: Tk 30/=

Reviewed by: Sakawat Hossain Chowdhury



THE book titled 'Poems from the Heart to Touch the Future' is a joint collaboration of Abul Ashraf Noor and Mostafa Tofayel Hossain. The poets put in their sincere efforts to explore the grim realities of life. They tried to unfold many commonplace matters of heart which have their roots in the core of the society. The poems are unique in style and form. Nature has been beautifully depicted in their poems as a happy abode of peace and serenity. The poems also speak about our spiritual degeneration due to lack of love and fellow feeling towards the neglected humanity. Our society is replete with many vices, corruption and unhealthy competitions. Here man is an enemy of man vying with each other for gaining his own ends. The poems have their appeal to all human hearts. If we extend our love and sympathy to all our fellow brothers, the society can be purged of all evils and odds. If a human mind can understand the language of heart he can very well understand human agonies and miseries. His poems also uphold human values for the progress and prosperity of a society. The poems of both the poets have two traits in common.

(1) Degeneration of human values. (2) Crisis of soul.

Poet Abul Ashraf Noor in his poems, beautifully portrayed the difficult circumstances of a man and a woman in a society where they fight ceaselessly for existence. In some poems the poet said that if all human beings are imbued with the true spirits of love, they can conquer all enmity and hostility. Love filters all dirt from a mind and makes a room in our heart for those who are uncared, uneducated and unsophisticated. His poems carry a message of love, friendship and fraternity. His style is ornate and discursive and some of his verses lack the symmetry of ideas and thoughts. The poet in some of his poems tried to break away from traditional line of thinking and belief. In a poem he says,

"Down with tradition!
I want more common people
To trade human spirit and
Soul for total peace".
The poet idolized an imagined woman in some of his poems. She appeared to inspire the poet in his creation.
"Let every moment find you a different woman
With grace and beauty."
Nature to both the poets is a symbol of bliss and happiness. She pays us all the time through her creations and vegetations. Our debt to nature is never to be repaid. We are indebted to her for all the gifts and blessings. Poet Mostafa Tofayel Hossain writes,
"Nature does not shower rain drops
On those who cannot keep eyes
Outward to open skies."
The poet's lucid depiction of simple events of our day to day life has made his poems narrative in form. He described the petty things of common life which often cause chaos and conflict in the society. He as used satire in some poems.
"A faithful dog chases and chases me
It follows me indoor and outdoor".
In the poem 'The March Onward to a Civic World' the poet has traced the history of physical and spiritual evolution of man from the primitive age down to the modern civilization.
Both the poets have depicted simple and common events of life and expressed optimism in their poems. They did not maintain any unity of stanzic formation but a reader will notice the rhythmic and rhetorical expressions of these verses. Abul Ashraf Noor wrote 24 poems and Mostafa Tofayel Hossain wrote 16 poems under different titles. They deserve our appreciations for the efforts they have made in writing English poems being non-English writers. These poems will no doubt arouse our conscience and good sense in all times to come.

How to Sell Celluloid Tales to Africans

by Gerry Ellis

Although African films have slowly appeared on the world cinema map, questions of their distinctive style return to the problem of defining their audience. Few Africans are interested in films made by fellow Africans. Many are exported to Europe, which also funds African films. Distribution, too, is controlled by European and North American companies which prefer to screen Hollywood films. African film-makers want to create autonomous, alternative distribution networks.



SCENE FROM SAMBA TRAORE

Screened at Berlin Festival

graduate from a French film school, Paulin Vieyra, could not film in his own country. Instead he made *Afrique sur Seine* (1955), a film about Africans in Paris.

This dislocation of Francophone cinema was reinforced by the control of distribution of two French companies, Comaco and Secma. In 1960 the two owned 180 movie theatres in 14 countries, run by paid employees or rented to individuals at 75 per cent of the box office receipts.

Of an average 350 films screened a year, roughly 150 were American, 100 French and 90 Arab, Indian or other. Turnover, by 1972, grossed \$24

million. When they bought African films, they tended to distribute them in Europe, either as ethnographic or as art-house films.

In 1969 the first meeting of the Federation Panafricaine des Cineastes (FEPACI) was held in Algiers. It called for domestic control of distribution, quotas to restrict the number of foreign imports and create more space for African films and tax on box office receipts to be ploughed back into domestic film production.

Ousmane Sembene's career illustrates the problems. His script for *La Noire de...* (1966), which equated post-colonial use of cheap African labour with a

new form of slavery, was the only one rejected by the CAI, although it bought the distribution rights after he had produced it independently. His third feature, *Emittat* (1971) faced distribution problems in several African countries because of its anti-France content.

Xala (1974), openly critical of the government leaders, was cut before shown and he again encountered problems from the Senegalese government over *Ceddo* (1976), a film critical of Islamic and Catholic imperialism in 17th Century Africa.

Only in Egypt has local production been enough to dominate and control the domestic market. Cinema developed as

an industry in the 1930s. Output has been sustained at 40 to 50 films a year since.

In the Francophone countries, the terms of aid have led to what Sembene describes as *megotage*, cobbling together the end of rolls, the *megots*, or cigarette butts, left over from European production. Because the aid is tied to post-production in Paris, African governments do not see the need to establish local editing or processing facilities.

Nigeria's Ola Balogun is one of the few directors to have succeeded in building a domestic market for his films. He has made ten feature films in the last decade. He studied French, then in 1963 went to film school in Paris. Although his first film was didactic and political, he later turned to a more popular cinema based on Yoruba theatre.

He says: "There is tremendous pressure on African film-makers to always be changing the world in each film they make, but if the audience does not feel entertained, it is not going to pay to watch the film."

"I'm a storyteller in as simple a manner as possible... I speak to the housewife just as I speak to the philosophy professor. What interests me is exposing the problems confronting my people. I consider the cinema a means of political action. Nevertheless, I don't want to make poster films."

Cisse, who received a scholarship from his native Mali to study film in the Soviet Union, says he is influenced by Soviet cinema and Italian social realism. "Soviet films especially concentrate on social questions, often on an everyday approach without grandiose scenarios and costly special effects."

He believes that if film has the potential to be a universal language, "the challenge for Islamic films is to gain appreciation beyond Third World film festivals, the Western university and the museum circuit."

—GEMINI NEWS

RAPE IN WAR

Continued from page 10
what has been done to his property. Torturers often rape in, or in front of, the woman's home, and therefore this becomes an act against her husband/father, nation, not against her body. (The act of rape in itself implies that men do not consider women to have their own will, body, or desire.)
If the humiliation of the women of the enemy is yet another symbol of the conqueror's victory, then the humiliation should be as horrendous as theatrical as possible: setting her hair on fire, cutting off parts of her body, tying her in ropes and chains, with lots of blood. War conquest and victory are male and only male deeds, and it must always be proven again and again.

If the raped woman is of the same nationality as her aggressor, it still remains the act of conquering — a victory of his manhood.
The second characteristic of war rape is that it is a mass rape. Boys do it together and in mutual solidarity. Each one of the boys should be like the others. When they do in groups there is an immediate witness of their obedience to the moral code of war. If shooting and raping is the soldier's credo in life, then death and rape together form the paradigm essential in understanding the place women have in wartime, and beyond.
So we come to the third characteristic, killing of the

woman they've just raped. As we have already seen, by killing a woman, a soldier does not make her a hero. Moreover, the murder does not gain him extra points or future glory. Raping is usually enough. But still he kills her. And he does it either because she was disgusting, because 'shooting's fun' or because there was no reason not to. The decision about whether to let a woman die or not becomes his personal whim.

According to this code of war ethics, a woman is not a respected enemy, she's there to be consumed, controlled and despised. But for 20 years now the work of feminists around the world has proven that men do not have to declare war against women to have reason to rape and kill them; that is exactly what men have done since the beginning of time. In wartime, men's self-declared power and right to rape and kill women merely increase.

Those men who walk by Knez Mihajlova street, to whom the murder and sexual humiliation of women are instruments of power, are not in this text. For those of us who take women seriously, raped women are never guilty, and to each one of them this essay is dedicated. — Third World Network Features/Peace News

LEPA MLADJENOVIC a Belgrade feminist activist, wrote this article for the London-based 'Peace News'.

Picasso Loves

Continued from page 10
a bull's head, born of the fatal love affair between Queen Pasiphace and the bull of Crete which devoured raw flesh. It is the impalpable image of desire. Painting is not blissful adoration, but destruction. "For me", Picasso confided, "painting a picture means entering upon a dramatic act in the course of which reality is broken up".

This disintegration could be clearly seen right from Cubism which, systematizing volumes following Cezanne's wishes, and

A recent exhibition, called "Picasso and things", held at the Grand Palais, in Paris, grouped together paintings, drawings and sculpture which, for want of a better term, are called still lifes. This genre, which Picasso practised from the beginning right to the end of his creative work, figures among the profusion of styles of a continuously changing artist.

then breaking up the shapes on the flat surface, rejects imitation and establishes the work of art as an object. "A fruit dish in a painting has nothing in common with a fruit dish in life". In its predilection for things, Cubism is an art for still lifes and the simple things of a Bohemian studio: guitars, bottles, glasses, playing cards, etc. Just like Apollinaire, Picasso and Braque, the founders of the Cubist movement, seeking a "new aesthetics of urban life,

integrated new materials in their paintings, such as newspaper cuttings, scraps of posters or wallpaper and labels. In 1912, with "Still life with a cane-seated chair", Picasso made his first collage, created not as a *trompe l'oeil* (to deceive the eye), but as a "trompe l'esprit" (to take in the mind).

"A piece of newspaper never served to represent a newspaper. It was used to define a bottle, a violin or a face". Right to the end, Picasso remained faith-

ful to this transfer, collecting bits of string, matches, pieces of scrap metal in order to assemble them together and transform them with lively wit.
The "Démotelles d'Avignon" A slat of wood nailed with a little, flattened tin pot is a vase. Big nails represent rays of light. Cake tins open up like flowers in a bouquet. Two tiles placed vertically at right angles form a bottle. Bicycle handlebars rise in the air as a goat's horns. Iron shavings painted green turn

into an apple. Metal sheets and cardboard, which are cut out, gilded and assembled, produce guitars, mandolines and violins.

Things become transformed, and, inside the picture itself, the outline of objects follows the figure of a woman, as in the "Jug with apples" (1920), with its completely feminine roundness and curves. The "Still life on a pedestal table" (1931), with its joyful, coloured sensuality, is, through the intermediary of objects, a portrait of the fair and gentle Marie-Therese.

Still life are no different from other productions, recounting Picasso's life and history. The years of the Spanish war and then the World War see skulls and carcasses and the buccanums of triumphant death piling up hauntingly. A bronze skull from 1943, seems to have been dug up from an endless charnel-house, still painful in the empty silence.

If, in those years of barbarity, death skulls often came and knocked against the black window-panes of terror, they had appeared many times in earlier still lifes. Picasso continued the tradition of "vanity paintings", which are ones in which a skull reminded one that "all is vanity" and that death is unavoidable. Thus, in 1907, in a style evocative of the "démotelles d'Avignon" on which he was working, he painted "Still life with a death skull", which, in his way, seemed to be a homage to Cezanne, "the one and only master", who had passed away the year before.
— L'Actualite en France

In Her Image

African film-maker Afi Naa Lamiley Viana comes up with a new version of the story of Adam and Eve. Lucy Johnson of IPS reports from London.

In a lush, green jungle in Africa, in a tangle of entwining creepers, the act of creation is underway — a being moulded from the earth in the likeness of God — a black woman.

In a new cinematic celebration of the earth's fertility and abundance, black woman was made by God to bear fruit and give birth to man — a vision created by female African film-maker, Afi Naa Lamiley Viana, who is retelling the Adam and Eve story for the screen with subversive intent.

The lyrical, poetic tone of the film's jubilant opening scene of creation and the shock effect that follows — is intended to challenge the orthodox notion of God's maleness, she says.

The notion of God-as-Man is so deeply entrenched in the psyche of millions that, Afi says, the shock approach is the only way to shake people into questioning it.
In her film *Messing Up God's Glory*, she argues that this challenging of deeply-rooted beliefs is the first step to loosening the bonds that have held women captive for so long.

"The whole point of female oppression is that men fear our spirituality and physicality and that's why they rape us and batter us never-endingly," says Afi.

The film was broadcast on British television in March to coincide with International Women's Day, dedicated this year to the millions of women who suffer violence at the hands of men.

Afi believes that if women knew only a thousandth of their own enormous power they would no longer have to kowtow to men. She says religion's basic concept of God-as-Man,

has been used by men to legitimise the physical and psychological abuse of women throughout the ages.

Theologians agree that the idea of a monotheistic-male God religion first arrived with Judaism over two thousand years ago. Some of them argue that previous to that, women were the pagan object of veneration.

"In early Europe the focus of pre-historic religion was on women, many of the early votive offerings that have been dug up were of fat little female fertility figures," says anthropology lecturer Graham Roos of Guildhall University in London.

There is also the tradition of the shaman or wise woman who was turned to at times of sickness or evil. You can still see this paganism on the fringes of society with clairvoyants and people who claim psychic powers," he says.

Embittered men — say feminists — jealous of women's supreme power, came up with Judaism and its allied religions, Christianity and Islam, to steal power from the pagan goddess, and give credence to a new political status quo headed by men.

Some feminists go further still and argue that the birth of Christianity was also inspired by men's inherent sense of inferiority in being barred from the physical act of creation.

"Men can't create babies so they created religion. Look at the Adam and Eve story, there's no better example of men desiring to give birth so much that they wrote it into religion," says Irish comedienne Jean Rathbone.

Religious followers then paid homage to patriarchal figures,

bowing to God the father. And woman, in the case of Christianity, was relegated to the role of a virgin bride, impregnated by an overly male but magically fertile Holy Spirit.

This male ascent to the power-investing, top-notch position of association with the supreme Godhead has enabled man to curb their fear of women by using religion to pin women down, and in some cases physically brutalise them, say feminists.

"Religion is used to restrict women to the home, but also to constrict them physically... St Paul was the worst misogynist of all, when he said that celibacy meant holiness. This hatred of sex is really directed at woman — she is the temptress, there to drag men down," says Rathbone.

It is man's sneaking awareness of his own sexual weakness, then, that creates his desire to shackle women by veiling them or balancing them in stiletto-heel shoes, argues Rathbone.

All believes the most vicious, on-going manifestation of this sexual power-battle is the practice of female circumcision that affects over 80 million women in Africa alone.

In many instances, the operation is viewed as an Islamic rite of passage. But African women like Afi are increasingly demanding the religious grounds be revealed. There is no evidence in the Koran that this declaration was passed on from Allah. It is man-made, a thing of repression," says Enyo Afele, who works at Forward, a women's health foundation that campaigns for the abolition of female circumcision.

Afi's film includes a scene where a young African village girl is being prepared for the ritual. The black female god tries to intervene but finds her power has been sapped away. She sobs: "These tears that I shed are not for myself. I am weeping for my people, a people whose compassion lies at the bottom of an abyss where they can only find dignity through destruction."