

A Drama of Debates

by Raffat Binte Rashid



men, for the dead. This was a very dramatized performance where a real Supreme Court Advocate Jainul Abedin was the judge, the teams for and against the felon brought in witnesses, dressed in lungi, and sat talking in village dialect. Lecturer Asif Nazul said that "law and debate are integrated together."

"Let GATT be suspended," was another important session in the festival, where the participants presented a mock UN General Assembly debate. This session was participated by teachers and students who represented countries like Bangladesh, Canada, China, France, India, Japan, Nepal, Sri Lanka, USA and the Chief Negotiator was Wahiduddin Mahmud.

Bangladesh represented by student Md. Anisur Rahman said that they signed the agreement under the pressure of the aid donors. GATT will develop the already developed countries. To this India, represented by Harun-ur Rashid, agreed and said that first the country should be organised then people should think regionally and at last internationally. Rafat Alam, a DU student representing China said that they denounced the patent right and copy right and didn't

sign for GATT. France represented by Md. Zahiduddin, Canada by Dr. S I Khan, Japan by Keshob Chandra and USA by Prof. Abu Ahmed were all for GATT.

On the concluding day an interesting debate between students and TV artists was held. The artists have turned love into a product. TV artists Tawkir, Ahmed, Bijuri, Barkutullah and Jhuna Khan defended themselves on the topic.

"Debate with the promise to build up a just society," was the slogan of this festival organised by Dhaka University Debating Society (DUDS) and Bangladesh Debate Federation (BDF). The main intention of this festival was to bring together all debaters and include debating in regular syllabus at least subsidiary. DUDS president Hassan Ahmed Chowdhury Kiron. "Debaters are more intelligent than other artists and famous debaters of yester years are now well placed in the society like Kaiser Bhai and Mahfuz Bhai," said Kiron.

This year Bangladesh has been elected the counsellor of the World Debating Forum and we are preparing to take part in the forthcoming World

Debate Competition in Princeton, USA. We have even asked our Prime Minister to help us solve our financial problems," he said with a hope.

DUDS was established in 1921 but revived and took active shape in 1986 when Niamat Elahi was the president. Kiron took charge in 1991. In 1990 DUDS arranged the SAARC debate where twelve teams from six countries took part. DUDS became the champions among the non English speaking countries in Australia, where 164 teams participated from 58 countries.

This festival which was affiliated by BDF spent about taka one and half lakh to make this event a success. Teams from outside the metropolis also took part, school, college, university debating clubs all participated, even financially. "We planned a year ago and even our parents helped us with the funds," Kiron said. "In every country before an election the candidates are locked in debates which always prove the better candidate and similar strategy is followed in our medical college VP election. We have proposed DUCSU to take up this initiative as well," explained Kiron.

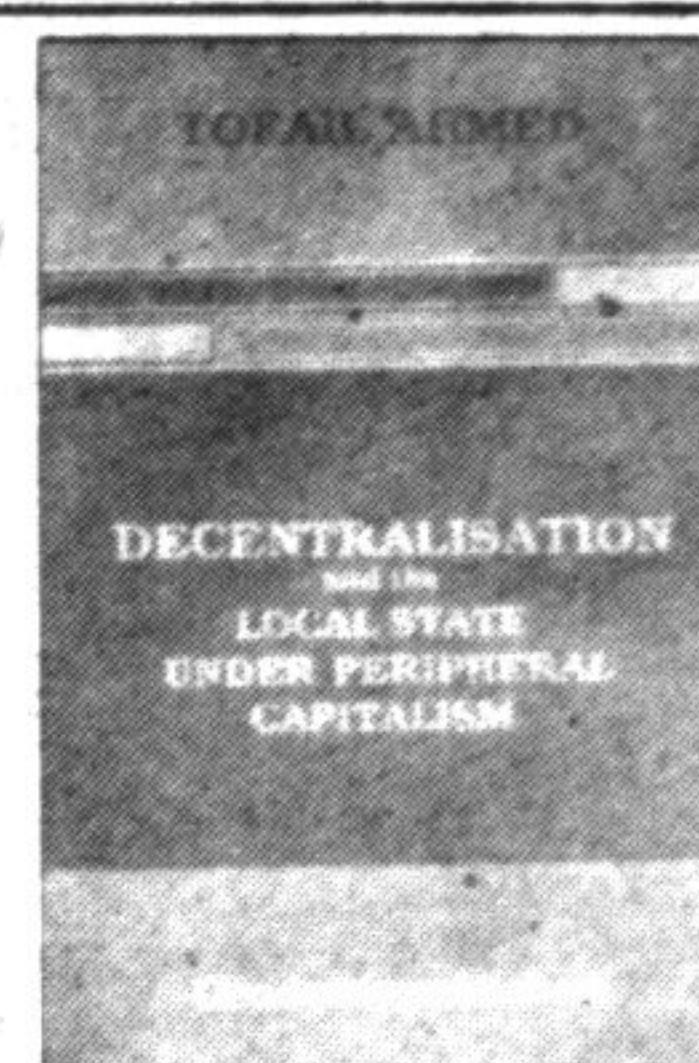
The Pro Vice Chancellor of DU Professor Wakiul Ahmed hoped that debating would be included in academic curriculum in future.

Debate not only helps people to communicate better but solve social problems as well. DUDS and BDF should be thanked and appreciated for arranging this excellent and unusual exchange of ideas with all debaters and orators past and present of the country.

Analysing the Political Economy of Local Government

BOOK REVIEW

Decentralisation and the Local State under Peripheral Capitalism: A Study in the Political Economy of Local Government in Bangladesh by Tofail Ahmed.
Academic Publishers, Dhaka, 1993. Pp 300. Price Tk 350.00



DECENTRALISATION and the Local State under Peripheral Capitalism is an in-depth analysis of the political economy of local government in Bangladesh. Tofail Ahmed's basic argument is that the role of decentralisation as a tool of development can be adequately understood only in the context of a Marxist analysis of the state. He illustrates this by looking at the history of local government in Bangladesh from colonial times to the present day, focusing in particular on the decentralisation reforms introduced by the Ershad government between 1982 and 1990. He demonstrates how local government has never resulted in any meaningful change in the balance of political and economic power because it has never been more than an extension of the national state. Despite much rhetoric about democratisation, participation and development, successive central governments have used local government to maintain and legitimise their own power base and those of the interest groups they represent. Ahmed concludes that the only hope of change would be through a political alliance dominated by peasants and workers.

The book is a useful contribution to the already vast literature on decentralisation for two reasons. Firstly, it provides a detailed account of the nature and impact of the recent local government reforms in Bangladesh, based on case studies in two upazilas (the basic local government areas in the Ershad reforms), one in

Chittagong and one in Comilla. And secondly, it demonstrates the need to look at decentralisation and local government from a political economy perspective, rather than adopting either a purely administrative or a naively populist approach. Such a contribution is particularly relevant at the present point in time, when decentralisation is yet again being advocated as a strategy for development — this time by international agencies, including both the World Bank, which sees it as complementary to its economic structural adjustment programmes, and those agencies such as UNDP (compare UNDP, 1993) which are becoming increasingly critical of IMF and World Bank policies and advocate 'decentralisation' and popular participation as alternative strategies. In both cases, decentralisation is seen as a means of reducing the role of central governments and fostering more democratic and participatory political and economic institutions. And in both cases, little if any attempt is made to take note of the sobering lessons of experience with decentralisation and local government reform in the 1970s and 1980s. In this context, Ahmed's case study of Bangladesh is highly relevant, since it highlights one of the

major lessons learned, and one which is particularly pertinent in any attempt to introduce decentralisation for democratic or participatory reasons. Experience in Bangladesh and elsewhere suggests that decentralisation reforms — like structural adjustment reforms — are likely to be manipulated by those currently holding political and economic power in such a way that the reforms strengthen rather than weaken their own position.

Given the relevance of the book to current policy issues, it is perhaps unfortunate that

the first part of the book, which consists of a detailed review of alternative theoretical approaches to the study of decentralisation and the state, may discourage some potential readers. The study is based on a Ph D thesis and it might have been better to reduce the theoretical component when publishing it in book form, especially since considerable use is made of Marxist terminology, which non-Marxists tend to find off-putting. From a theoretical point of view, it is also unfortunate that the thesis was written at a time when the full implications of the collapse of Marxist governments in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe and the corresponding increase in the influence of free-market capitalist ideology on a global scale could not have been foreseen. These events have two major implications which are not reflected in the book. Firstly, the fact that Marxism is now widely discredited makes it even more important to point out valid lessons based on Marxist analysis — but to do so in a manner, and language, which will not alienate non-Marxists. And secondly, in order to understand current decentralisation policies, it is necessary to analyse the nature and role not only of the national and local state but also of the international state, as reflected in organisations such as the IMF, World Bank and the various United Nations agencies.

Reviewed by
Diana Conyers in Zimbabwe

Seeking Social Justice via the Lens

RUPAM Chakraborty, who recently had his photography exhibition at the National Museum, was originally a student of Commerce, but has today taken to photography as he was fascinated by the work of photographers, and the manner in which they could express their feelings through their work, eventually bringing about social and political reforms. Today Rupam works in the daily "Purbokone". In his work, he has to get close to the subject, and capturing the action gives him a sense of tremendous excitement. This he finds rewarding, when his work is finally in print. At times he wishes to delineate



Daughter of the Soil



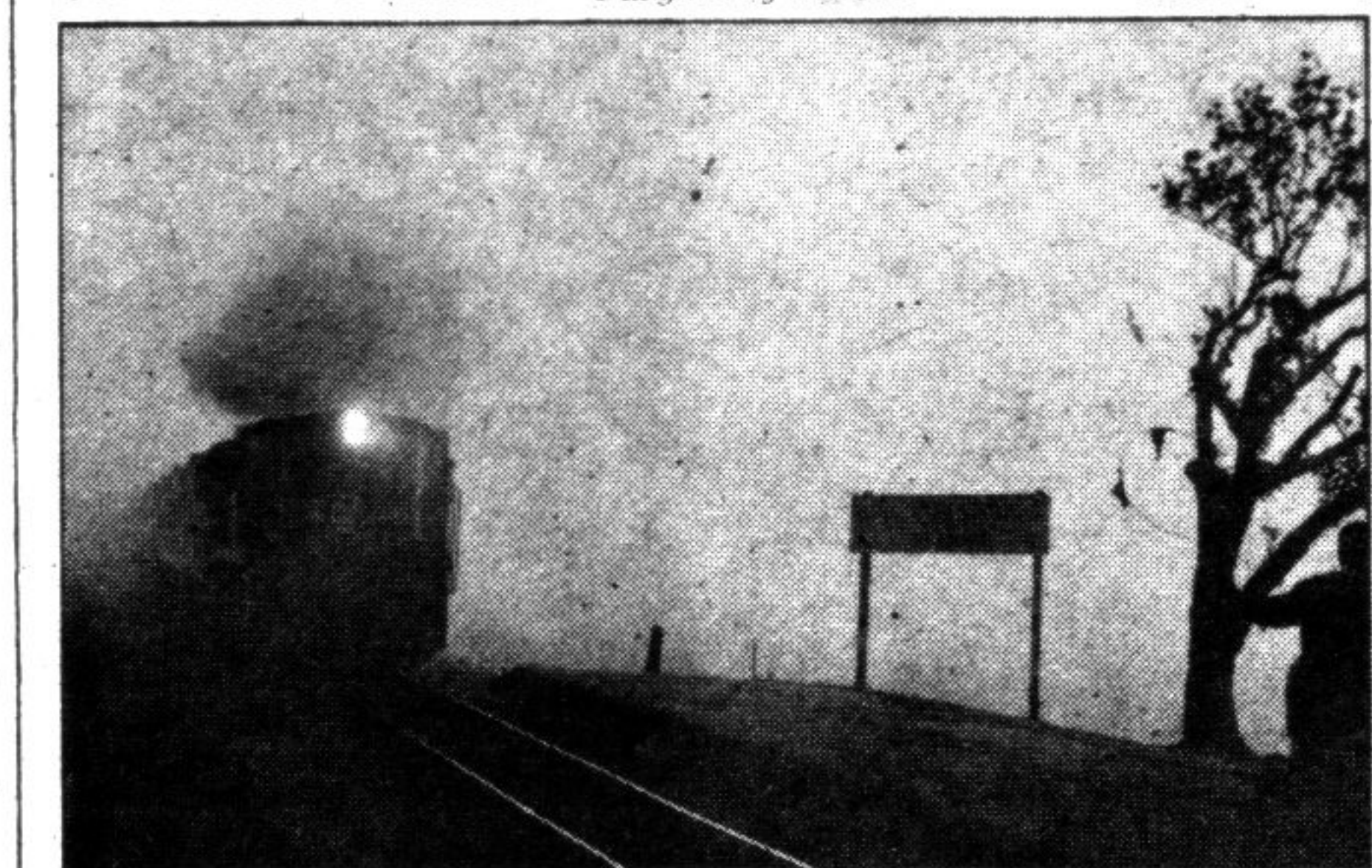
A Portrait Study



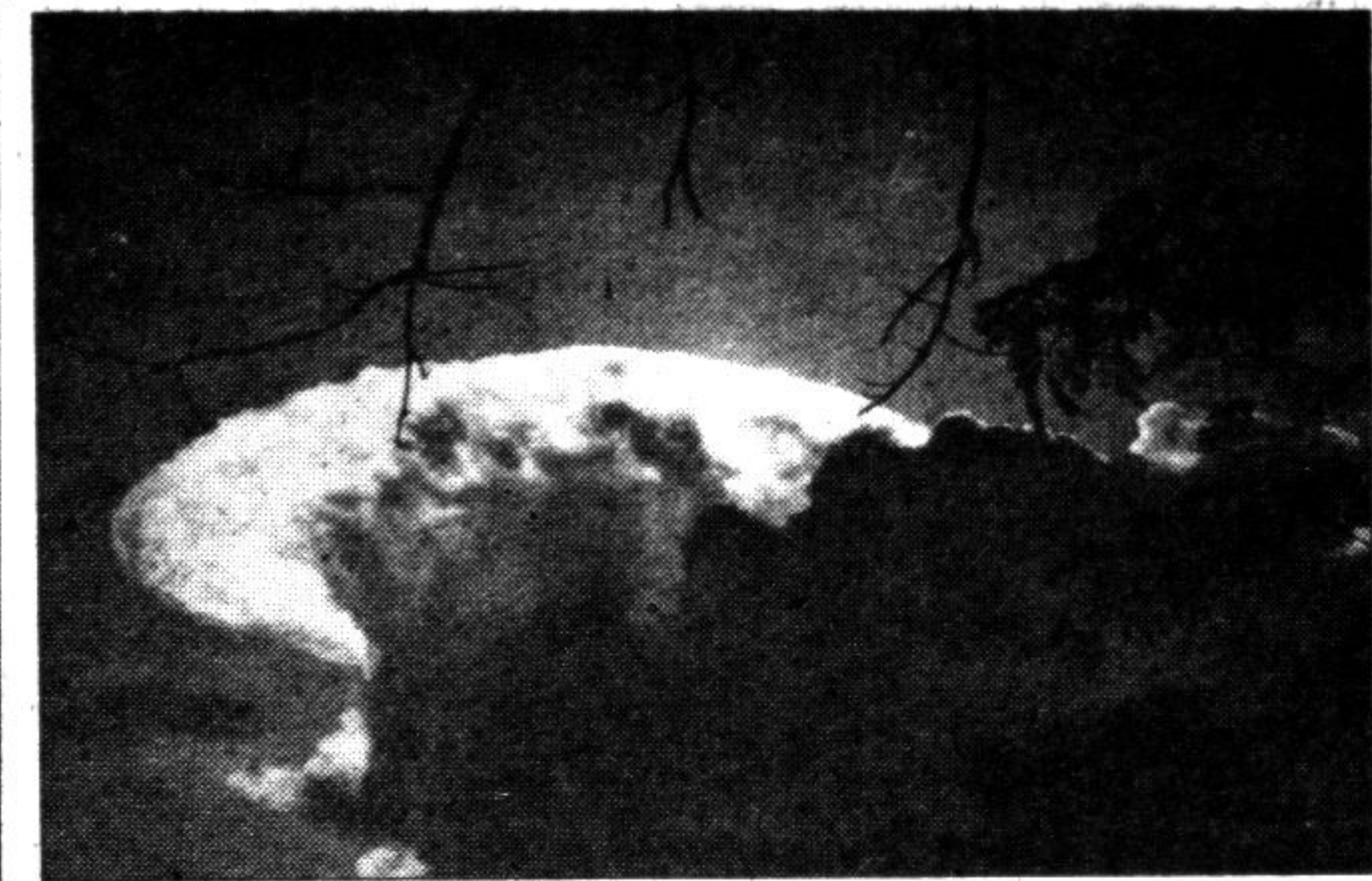
A Portrait of Deceit

comments. "The Octopus" had a young girl smiling from behind a large and ancient mango tree. The thick branches denoted the strict inhibitions and limitations that will inevitably be imposed on the girl by society once she comes of age, although she might not have been aware of her fate at that juncture in life.

Rupam Chakraborty's fifth exhibition may not have lured many buyers but they certainly made waves among the eager viewers who flocked to the show. Young and brimming with enthusiasm, Rupam should do well in his field if he perseveres and persists with serious speculations.



Coming out of Dark



The Tempest

Ravi Shankar

Genius Behind the Sitar

by Tadib Muqtada

Indian literature, culture and music.

During his cultural tours with his brother, Uday, Ravi Shankar had the opportunity of meeting Baba Alauddin Khan — a renowned Guru of classical music. In India the tradition of learning classical music was normally from a Guru. Also the student receives his training through serious practice and Shadhana. He must renounce other pleasures and practise music for about twelve to four-

Khan's daughter Anna Purna. Out of Ravi Shankar's compositions most noteworthy are:

1. Raga Paideep, 2. Raga Durga, 3. Raga Megh, 4. Raga Kafi, 5. Raga Bhairav. All of these ragas are very well known and excellently played by Ravi Shankar.

All Indian classical music is based on "Ragas." Old texts say that "Raga" is that which colours the hearts and minds of men. A raga is a composition of a selection of notes. It has a particular pattern of unfolding. It sets a particular mood and emotion and was sung or played at a particular time of the day. Ragas are related to the various times of the day or various seasons. Ragas also express emotions such as happiness or sadness or loneliness.

The artist may compose his own raga. His mastery also lies in the way he plays the raga. I liked Ravi Shankar's playing of Raga Megh. Megh literally means cloud and this composition is based on the rainy season. This raga tries to bring out the feeling a person would get on a rainy day.



ther was also a well-known vocalist and his brother, Uday was an internationally reputed dancer. Ravi Shankar's father staged one of the first Indian ballets produced in the west in London in 1924. During one of Uday's performances, the famous Russian ballet dancer Anna Pavlova came, who was very impressed and asked for Uday's help on the next two ballets. She was going to produce on Indian themes.

Ravi Shankar also joined his brother's troupe as a dancer. They started off by playing in India, but after a while they were en route for Paris. In Paris Ravi Shankar lived nearly 2 years, and studied in a French catholic school. During this time he learnt more about

ten hours regularly. This is the way Ravi Shankar learned from his Guru Alauddin Khan. In the book "My Music, My Life", Ravi Shankar gives an interesting detail about the way he mastered classical music from him. Guru (teacher), vinaya (humility) and shadhana (practising religiously) are the key words in the traditional of learning Indian classical music. Ravi Shankar thoroughly followed this tradition.

There were no notes written or books studied. The lessons were passed on orally from the Guru.

After several years of training with his Guru, Ravi Shankar moved to Bombay after he got married to Ustad Alauddin

the hardships of the lives of the people such as the poor in Jejeppara for the world to learn of their deplorable conditions, but he complains that the people themselves hinder his work due to their sheer ignorance.

His entry, "Indomitable Smile" showed a bright-eyed girl, bare beyond her belly button, with her hair askew but with a dazzling smile to make you forget her poverty and her inconsequential surroundings. The photograph focused well on the sweetness and simplicity of village life, weaving an idyllic air around the subject.

A torn quilt in vermilion, black and white, was on focus in "Abstract Bangladesh". The quilt symbolised the poverty of our people which we camouflage with a sheet when there are visitors, just as we beautify our roads and do cosmetic work on our buildings when we have foreign visitors," the photographer comments.

"The Tempest", which had been shot at Kaptai, had overwhelming black and grey clouds with a silhouette of trees and foliage. The effect was also that of decades old sepia photography with the focus on the oncoming rain storm. The weather and the atmosphere of our country during the ceaseless storms had been captured with accuracy and an admirable esthetic sensibility.

"Caught in a Trap" brought in a young wide-eyed girl, looking out into the future behind a fishing net in Kumira (Chittagong). Here Rupam wished to bring in the concept of our womenfolk being surrounded and gagged by social limitations, which prevent them from expressing their individuality, and make them lesser beings in a male-dominated society.

To bring the Hill Tracts people to the forefront, the photographer had shot a piece called "Pied Piper of Bandarban", where one could see the integral pride and dedication, as well as the unique musical tribal culture of a people, which the photographer felt were often being ignored and played down.

The sympathetic focus on women and children, a popular theme in the city of late, had been brought in again in "Reverse Pace". Here one could see train wagons progressing in one direction while a needy, barefoot girl was seen going to

The crisis of Russian literature even extends to emigre literary magazines, which since the ending of censorship have lost both their role and their main source of commercially profitable material — works refused publication in the Soviet Union. Some look for a different concept, like Continent, whose new editor has turned to religious philosophy.

The crisis also helps to explain the amazing aggression of some journalists and critics towards the return of Alexander Solzhenitsyn. Pieces appeared that had all the tone of the bad-old days, some even saying that "he should never have been allowed back."

While this is understandable among critics who never knew the time of oppression (one of the more virulent was a gynae-cologist doubling as literary critic from Nezavissimaya Gazeta), older ones may simply be seeing their own faces in the cruel mirror offered by the Tolstoyan patriarch.

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Poets Go for Apartments

Continued from page 10
detachment from money (by taking well-paid academic posts in Russia or abroad).

For want of fresh vision, writers joined in the idealisation of pre-revolutionary figures such as Stolypin and the Romanovs and in the popular nostalgia for the "good old days," thus encouraging the wave of self-deprecation that corrodes Russian society.

This does not mean that Russians have stopped good writing. There has even been a perceptible heightening in the quality of texts submitted by the declining number of candidates for entry into the Russian Institute of Literature. But there are no books about the problems of today's generation.

In Latynina's words, "all the centuries of literary activity were behind us. Either writing becomes part of mass culture or it becomes hermetically sealed. We're at the end of something, waiting for the next century. There's no Gogol, but then it's the same everywhere."

Viewing Video

by Lenin Gani

STEVEN King, who needs no introduction, makes a welcome return with *The Stand*, a two part apocalyptic drama spread over six hours. The film begins with a biological disaster and gradually unfolds into a biblical confrontation. In the course of a week, the entire population of America (and the rest of the world?) is exposed to a virus accidentally released from a top secret government laboratory. The few survivors not only have to cope with this but also have to struggle with the 'dark man' — the devil.

The film *Aag* (fire) develops into two parts as a classic story of fiery revenge centring around Govinda, a village guardian who has vowed not to marry (explained later) and is at odds

with Gulshan Groover, the evil son of a rich and powerful zamindar (landlord). The arrival of a beautiful dancer disrupts the uneasy calm. Why Govinda is a moral avenger is revealed in the second half from his violent past as a college student against Shakti Kapoor — a sadistic policeman. Suffice it to say, Govinda suffered a horrific injustice. The songs are good and the dance sequences are well choreographed. Watch the ending and you will be surprised at what a little sickle and a lot of anger can do!

Aag is the only new entrant in the Hindi chart run down this week with 1942 *A Love Story* still holding on to the No 1 spot from *Krantiveer*.

English			
Name	Type	Cast	
1. The Crow	(Action)	Brandon Lee	
2. Speed	(Action)	Keanu Reeves/Dennis Hooper	
3. Wyatt Earp (Part I, II)	(Action)	Kevin Costner/Dennis Quaid/Gene Hackman	
4. Blown Away	(Action)	Jeff Bridges/Tommy Lee Jones	
5. Dancin' Steel	(Drama)	Lindsay Wagner	
6. Say Anything	(Romantic)	John Cusack/Lone Skye/John Mahoney	
7. The Ref	(Comedy)	Denis Leary/Judy Davis	

Hindi			
Name	Type	Cast	
1. 1942 A Love Story	(Hist/Rom)	Anil Kapoor/Jackie Shroff/Anupam Kher/Monisha Koirala	
2. Krantiveer	(Action)	Nana Patekar/Atul Agnihotri/Dimple Kapadia	
3. Aag	(Social)	Govinda/Shilpa Shethi/Gulshan Groover/Shakti Kapoor/Kader Khan/Sonal	

Source: Film Fair Video and other video clubs