

THIRTYNINTH ANNIVERSARY OF FOUNDING

Bangla Academy: What it Means to the Nation

by Professor M Harunur Rashid

BANGLA Academy is symbolic of the intellect and ethos of the nation. If intellectual tradition and heritage of the nation could be compared with a planet, Bangla Academy occupies a place in the very centre of that planet. The centre of an orb gives it its desired strength and unity. The orb balances the impact of the forces within and without interacting on each other and thus moves along its orbit. In our contemporary experience, we see the Academy in its multi-faceted reality given the point from which we view it. There is an illusion in that contemporary

vision. Hence what we see we view only in its fractions not in its entirety.

The intellectual tradition of a nation comprises its past and present — the present which is rooted in the distant past, and the past that enlightens the present with its richness. Bangla Academy was born out of the love of our native tongue and of that is the truth, we have to admit that Bangla Academy is not born out of a momentary whim, is not gotten out of the void. Our love of the language has been sung

throughout the middle ages by both Hindu and Muslim poets and does still enthrall us with its melody and Bangla Academy is the expression of that love in material terms.

During the Language Movement of 1952, our love of the language suddenly blazed like a molten star and the lovely anger thus generated took the form of a concrete structure which we chose to call the Shaheed Minar (the Martyrs' Monument). The love that lay in the heart of that anger came to be designated the Bangla Academy. Great love and great anger are complementary emotions. That is why a thousand year old love could so quickly turn into great anger. Bangla Academy and the Shaheed Minar therefore cannot be conceived of in material terms only — they are concrete representations of two basic emotions dormant in the Bengalee ethos. You could destroy the material structure, the emotions are eternal. You can hardly kill the emotions. The Pakistanis indeed did try once during the Liberation War and dynamited the Shaheed Minar. The result was that every Bengalee heart became a veritable Shaheed Minar. That erased the geographical entity of a Country created in 1947 and out of the ashes was born Bangladesh. If the body of that great emotion of the Bengalees could be called the Shaheed Minar, Bangla Academy would be deemed its soul, its throbbing centre of gravity.

This little introduction to the Academy was considered essential, for we do not really know what the Academy is nor do we realize what it means to

us. Just as in human love, men and women seldom get to know the person they are in love with, in the case of love of the Academy too, we cannot really claim that we really understand the true nature of the Academy. Dr Muhammad Shahidullah understood because he was a seer, a rare individual endowed with a prophetic vision. Some seven years before the founding of the Academy he wrote:

We shall have to develop this Golden Bengal not only in terms of man-power and food production, but in science and technology and in knowledge and scholarly achievement. That's why we must not confine Bangla only in the sphere of poetry and fiction. Bangla has to be developed for Philosophy, History, Geography, Mathematics, Chemistry, Physics, Geology, Zoology, Linguistics, Psychology, Archaeology, in fact in all the spheres of human attainment. We have to have Bangla as the medium of instruction for schools, madrasahs, colleges and universities. We will have to establish an Academy, which will translate all the available books on science and literature from other languages.

This was Dr Muhammad Shahidullah at the East Pakistan Literary Conference in 1948. It was he who used the word Academy for the first time. But he had dreamed of such an academy long before. In his address given at the Bangiya Shahitya Paristat Student Conference in 1925 he made a clarion call to the students to go back to the root of their tradition and literary history. The speech embodied

his vision of an academy which later he helped build.

Since its inception the Bangla Academy has been trying to organize the intellectual map of the Nation. Its main thrust lay in harnessing the Bangla language for offices and for science and technology along with other branches of knowledge. Developing technical terms in Bangla was not an easy task. The Academy's Paribhasha series came in handy for the users trying to adapt Bangla for the different disciplines. After the Liberation War the Academy's role expanded enormously. The Ekushey celebrations assumed a gigantic proportion and the Amar Ekushey Granthamela came to be organized from the mid 70s. Along with such cultural activities the Academy has developed over three thousand titles endowing it the honour of being deemed the biggest publishing house in the Country. Its lexicons in particular have been very popular.

The role of the Academy in shaping the course of our struggle for independence cannot be overemphasized. The unity that was forged to go ahead with our heroic struggle came to receive tremendous impetus at successive Ekushey celebrations. Indeed it lies in the very heart of our nationalism. If the Language Movement was a little sapling that we planted in 1952, it came to grow larger as the time passed and finally became a large tree that could sustain itself in 1971.

Bangla Academy's role in the years to come would be that of a seed-store. As the seed, provided by the Academy sprouts we will experience a new lease of life that awaits us

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Catering to the cause of language for four decades.

Three Tradition-conscious Litterateurs and Bangla Academy

Mir Mosharraf Hossain (1847-1911): He is the pioneer among our tradition-conscious writers. His writings and philosophy have infused into the Bengalees a momentum and broadened their mental horizon. His 'Bishad Sindhu' is an immortal creation in modern Bengali literature.

Bangla Academy's publications on Mir Mosharraf Hossain:

- 1) Mosharraf Rachana Shamvar, Part-I Edited by Kazi Abdul Mannan, September, 1976.
- 2) Mosharraf Rachana Shamvar, Part II, Edited by Kazi Abdul Mannan, January, 1980.
- 3) Mosharraf Rachana Shamvar, Part III, Edited by Kazi Abdul Mannan, June, 1984.
- 4) Mosharraf Rachana Shamvar, Part IV, Edited by Kazi Abdul Mannan, June, 1984.
- 5) Mosharraf Rachana Shamvar, Part V, Edited by Kazi Abdul Mannan, June, 1985.
- 6) Mosharraf Manas — Munir Chowdhury, April, 1965.
- 7) Mir Mosharraf Gadya Rachana — Mohammad Abdul Auwal, August, 1975.
- 8) Atmajibancemulak Rachana: Mir Mosharraf Hossain — Prithilla Nazneen, April, 1992.
- 9) Mir Mosharraf Hossain (Autobiography) — Abul Ahsan Chowdhury, February, 1993.
- 10) Mir Mosharraf Hossain, Jivan O Shahitya — Selim Jahangir, June, 1993.
- 11) Tritiya Mir — Shantanu Kaiser, 1994.

Kaikobad (1857-1951): This great poet has shaped the collective sub-conscious of the Bengali people and still remains to be one of the leading personalities in our literary field. His was a pen motivated only by patriotism, fellow feeling and a sense of tradition-consciousness. 'Mahq Sashan' is one of Kaikobad's immortal

creations. Bangla Academy Publication and Song Cassettes on Kaikobad:

- 1) Kabya Shamkalon: Kaikobad — Edited by Abul Fazal, Baighar on behalf of Bangla Academy, Chittagong, Sravan 1374.
- 2) Kaikobad (Autobiography) — Fatima Kausar, February, 1993.
- 3) Kaikobad Rachanaboli, Part I, Edited by Abdul Mannan Syed, June, 1994.
- 4) Kaikobad Rachanaboli, Part II, Edited by Abdul Mannan Syed, June, 1994.
- 5) Kaikobad Geetika (gong cassette) — Tuned by Khan Ataur Rahman, 1994.

Abdul Karim Shahitya Bisharad (1871-1953): He was one of the most secular-minded writers who deeply loved his own country. He had collected some rare manuscripts (punthis) written by both Hindu and Muslim writers. This collection of his has immensely enriched our literature.

Bangla Academy publications on Abdul Karim Shahitya Bisharad:

- 1) Abdul Karim Shahitya Bisharad Smarak Granthya — Edited by Muhammad Enamul Haq and Kabir Chowdhury, September 1969.
- 2) Abdul Karim Shahitya Bisharad (Autobiography) — Ahmed Sharif, February 1987.
- 3) Nirbachita Rachana: Abdul Karim Shahitya Bisharad — Edited by Bhuiyan Iqbal, February, 1994.
- 4) Selected Essays on Abdul Karim Shahitya Bisharad — Edited by Farhad Khan and Syedur Rahman, June 1994.
- 5) Abdul Karim Shahitya Bisharad: Life and Works — Edited by Dr Abdul Karim, 1994.

Future Plans of Bangla Academy: 1) Publishing the life-sketch of Abdul Karim Shahitya Bisharad in an expanded form. 2) Abdul Karim Shahitya Bisharad: Collection of Essays.



Participating in children's painting competition

Ekushey Celebration

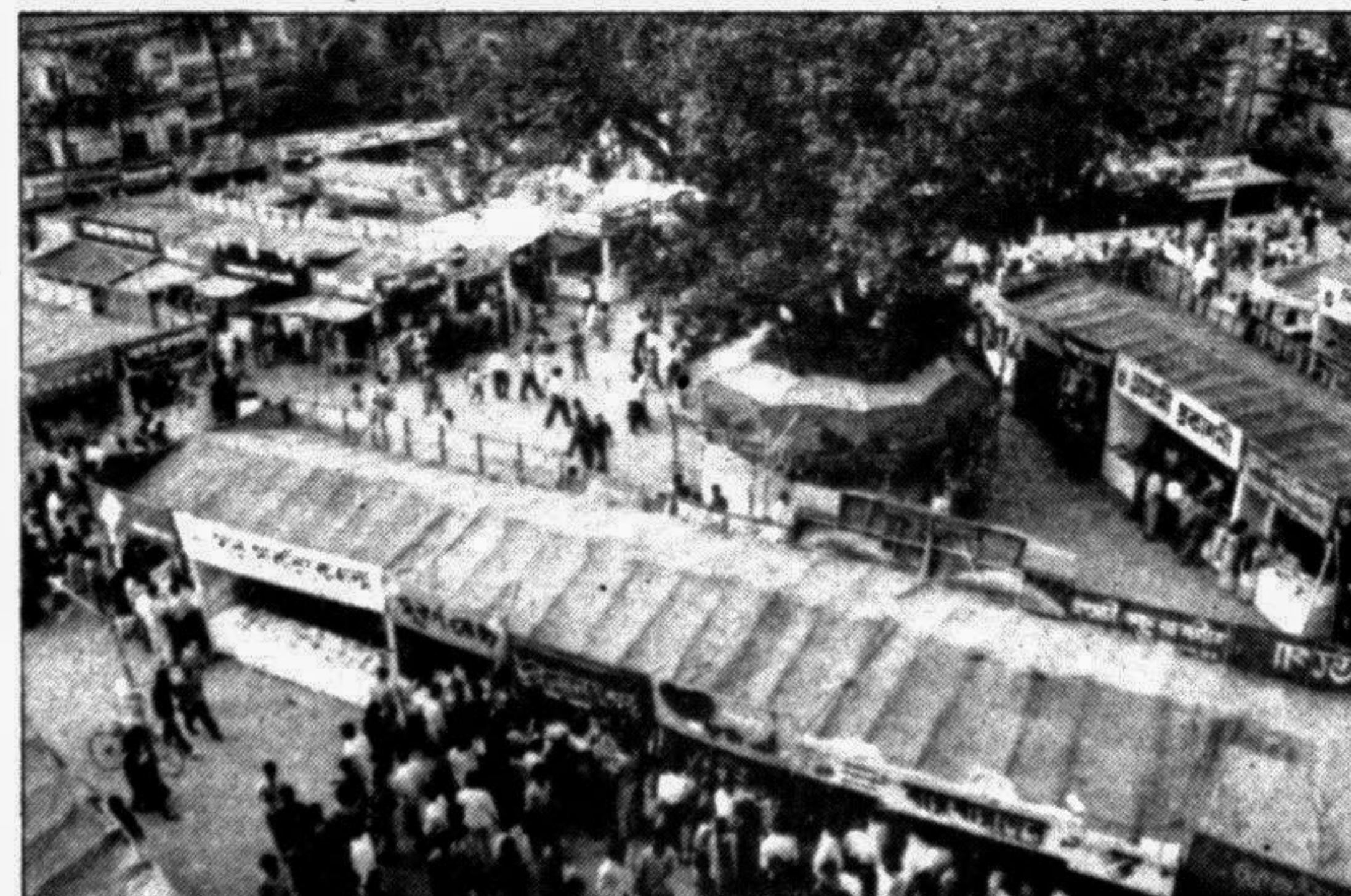
STARTED in 1948, the historic Language Movement reached its climax in 1952, when on February 21, police opened fire on the students killing many of them. This movement hardly has a parallel in our history. Bangla Academy, established on December 3, 1955, is the direct result of this historic movement. Inspired with this spirit of Ekushey, Bangla Academy for the last four decades has been working relentlessly to develop our language, literature and culture with its immortal Ekushey celebrations being pivotal of all its activities.

Bangla Academy chalked out a day-long programme to celebrate 21st February as Martyr's Day each year from 1961 to 1970. From 1971 to 1983 Bangla Academy organised a week-long Programme for Ekushey celebration. In 1984 and 1985 the Ekushey programme was expanded into two weeks. From 1986 to 1991 Bangla Academy's Ekushey celebration ran to three weeks. In 1992 and 1993 Bangla Academy organised month-long programmes including the bookfair.

Academy's Ekushey celebration is divided into two phases — primary phase and secondary phase. Juvenile painting competition, opening of

immortal Ekushey Book-Fair, discussion on various important books published by the Academy, poetry recitation and various kinds of cultural functions are usually included in the primary phase. Immortal Ekushey Lecture, seminar on different branches of language and literature and seminar on other important subjects related to our national heritage and culture are some of the important features of the secondary phase. Renowned scholars, writers, literary personalities and intellectuals of the country take part in these seminars and discussions. Besides, aimed at developing the talent and creativity of the young community, the Academy arranges every year recitation and music competition for the juvenile. Famous artists of the country take part in these cultural functions.

This immortal Ekushey celebration of Bangla Academy has become almost of a National Festival which was a long-cherished desire of the people. This celebration has already heralded a new epoch in the history of our language, literature and in our national culture. Bangla Academy, now a sacred precinct for all, irrespective of colour, creed and religion, may be treated as the emblem of the intellect of the nation as a whole.



The Book Fair

Ekushey Book Fair

THE years following the independence of Bangladesh were marked by a kind of rare cultural awakening among the conscious citizens of the country. The Amar Ekushey Granthamela (The Ekushey Book Fair) is one of the most noticeable expressions of this awakening. This fair was first organized in Bangla Academy in 1972.

The Academy started selling its publications at a special discount in 1972, as part of its Ekushey activities. In 1974 an International Literary Conference was organized by Bangla Academy. Academy books were again exhibited and sold at a concessional price at that time.

In February, 1975 some private organizations started selling their books at concessional price near the Academy Gate. In the next three years the number of such book-sellers increased considerably. In 1978, book-selling by a number of publishers became an attractive feature of Ekushey activities in the Academy ground. The entire ground wore a festive look rendering the arena into a small book fair. The Academy authority formally declared the exhibition as a Book Fair and sponsored it.

The next year saw the Bangladesh Pustak Prakashak and Bikreta Samiti (Bangladesh Book Sellers and Publishers Association) as the co-sponsor of this fair. In 1984, the fair was named as Amar Ekushey Granthamela (Immortal Ekushey Book Fair) and guide-

lines for holding such a fair were made. Since then this fair has been an essential part of Academy's Ekushey activities.

In 1992, the fair wore a different look. Its scope and size took an enormous shape. In 1970 a lone private organisation, Muktaadhar, began to sell books. In 1980, the number of sellers became 30 and in next five years it went upto 82. In 1991 the number of book-sellers rose to a dizzying height of 190.

But amazingly enough, within one year, the number of participating organizations became 270. In 1992, there were more than 350 units of stalls in 1993, in the Academy premises. This explains the reason why this fair did not confine itself in the walled campus of the Academy. A wider gate was opened demolishing a part of Academy's front wall that divides the Academy campus from the street. This helped a lot to widen the fair campus in the front street, from Doel Chatter to Milan Chatter, near TSC, Dhaka University. In 1993, the greater ground accommodated 484 stalls owned by 338 organizations.

Thus this fair, the outcome of the cultural awakening that budded in the early seventies, is more than a fair now. In the nineties, it has rendered itself into a roaring rendezvous of writers, readers, publishers, buyers, cultural workers and people belonging to all spheres of life.

Some Outstanding Publications from Bangla Academy

Itihas
Original: Herodotus
English Translation: Aubrey de Selincourt
Bengali Translation: Shahed Ali
Cover: Mamun Kaiser
Date of Publication: June, 1994
No of Pages: 32+598
Price: Tk 225.00

Hasan Bayatir Sukh Dukhho
Original: Anwar Ridwan
Bengali Translation: Mohammad Harunur-Rashid
Cover: Qayyum Chowdhury
Date of Publication: June, 1994
No of Pages: 6+130
Price: Tk 100.00

Maulana Abdul Hamid Khan Bhasani
by Syed Abul Maksud
Date of Publication: May, 1994
Cover and Illustration: Mamun Kaiser
No of Pages: 16+816
Price: Tk 350.00

Dhaka: Smriti Bismritir Nogoree
by Muntazir Mamun
Date of Publication: June, 1993
Cover and Illustration: Hashem Khan
No of Pages: 16+350+16 (colour photographs)
Price: Tk 400.00

Dhaka: 1971
Edited by: Abul Hasnat and Muntazir Mamun
Cover and Illustration: Hashem Khan
Second Edition: Paus, 1396 (BS)

No of Pages: 80
Price: Tk 120.00

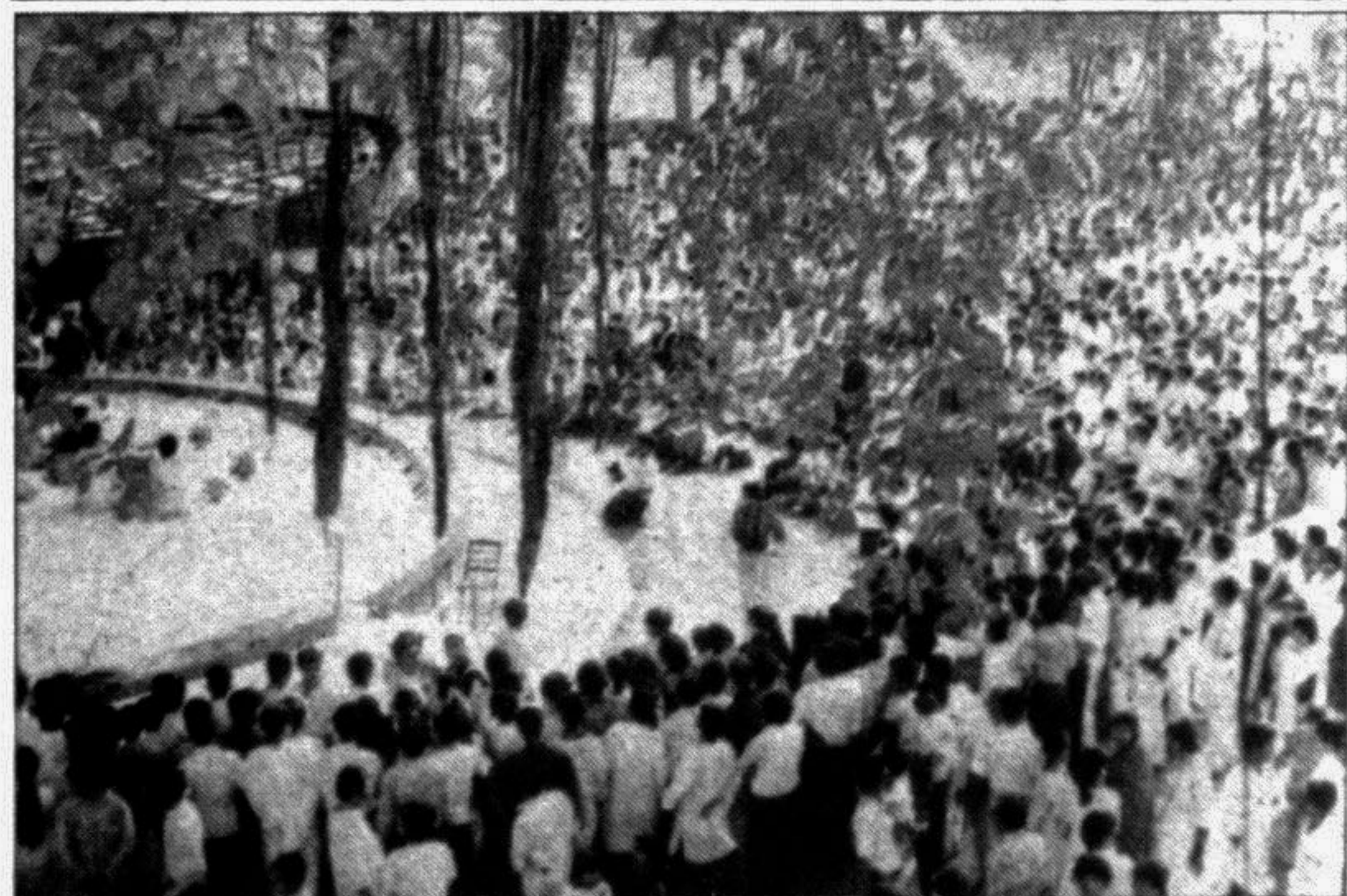
Shahnama (Part I-VI)
Original: Ferdousi
Bengali Translation: Moniruddin Yusuf
No of Pages: (Part I-VI) 3,956
Price: Tk 2,700.00 (offset)
Tk 2,100.00 (white print)

Shilpakalar Itihas
by Kamal Ahmed
Date of Publication: May, 1994
Cover Design: Mahmudur Rahman
No of Pages: 166+34
Price: Tk 100.00

Jamdani
by Mohammad Saidur
Cover and Illustration: Qayyum Chowdhury
Jamdani Design: Kamal Akhand
Date of Publication: June, 1993
No of Pages: 72+64 (photos)
Price: Tk 200.00

Bangladesher Chalachitra Shilpa
by Mirza Tarekul Quader
Date of Publication: June, 1993
Cover Design: Qayyum Chowdhury
No of Pages: 738
Price: Tk 500.00

Shatoborsher Natak (Part I&II)
Edited by: Syed Shamsul Haque and Rashid Haider
Date of Publication: Part I, 1st Baishakh, 1401 (BS) Part II, Jaishirha, 1401 (BS)
Price: Part I, Tk 400.00
Part II, Tk 400.00



Celebrating the Bengali New Year

Bangla Academy Transcends National Limits

Now Bangla Academy extended its activities also to foreign lands. The Academy recently signed a bilateral agreement with Indiana University, USA to exchange scholars on folklore. Under this agreement Bangla Academy will work alongside Indiana University on folklore research and practice.

Besides, ties have been established with the American Folklore Society, the Department of Folklore of Pennsylvania University, Turk University of Finland, Finnish Literature Society, Unesu Univer-

sity Folklore Summer School to jointly carry out research works in folklore.

A national level agreement has been signed with the Dewan Bahasa Pustaka of Malaysia during Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia's recent visit to that country. Meanwhile a novel of the Malaysian author Anwar Ridwan has been translated into Bengali and a collection of short stories in Bangla is being translated into Malay.

In joint collaboration with the Turkish Embassy in Dhaka, Bangla Academy has published

Bengali Translation of a collection of poems by Yunus Emre, the great Turkish poet.

There is the possibility of Bangla Academy's jointly working with 'Sowash' of UK. Recently, discussions have been made to bring out a collection of Bengali poems in a bi-lingual (Bengali and English) form.

Bangla Academy has established its ties with the Shahtya Academy in Delhi, India. The latter has agreed, meanwhile, to translate three Bengali books into various Indian languages.