IME is up to pay tribute

to the donkey and

relate its achievements.

As a token of tolerance a

donkey always welcomes a

kick from its lover. Yet man

thrusts lavish praises on every

animal and bird and ignores

donkey's patience and tenacity.

The pigeon's legs, cuckoo's

voice, duck's walking, lion's

personality, hyena's laughter

and fox's cunningness have

But the donkey, like the

remaining always on the bitter

tongue of the opposition

leader, is the eternal wrong

fount. Only two persons.

Shakespeare in his poetical

soaring and the Kabultwala, in

his misplaced gratitude thrust

greatness on this otherwise

tenacious and uninspiring an-

painters also portrayed the

life style of donkeys. One such

painting portraying the donkey

and his spouse in a painting

exhibition attracted the atten-

tion of an inquisitive child. He

wanted to know from his intel-

ligent father whether donkeys

too enter into marriage bonds.

The father who harvested the

bitter fruits of wedlock laconi-

cally told his son that only

donkeys enter into wedlocks.

Here the donkeys literally or

figuratively take the full load of

the social-spiritual-biological

liabilities of the bond called

cluding the Holy Quran don-

key's reference is only for its

hoarse voice. Donkeys also

brought fortune. Prophet Saul

or Talut by a divine command

became a king when he went

out in search of his father's

donkeys. In the Old

Testament, referred to in the

Holy Quran, donkey is men-

tioned symbolically to have

suffered death and decay only

to be clothed with flesh again

by Allah who has full control

over time. Braving of ass has no

musical effect but still the

musicians have accepted it as a

The Americans credited

Life for all of us is a journey.

standard for being unmusical.

If that is so, it is convenient to

travel this path by the sturdy

In the religious books in-

marriage.

Besides Shakespeare, some

been cited and commended.

political party in power

# The Dhaka Book Fair: A Laudable Effort

HE Dhaka Book Fair which began on the 1st of January on the gro und adjacent to the Buoy Sa ram in the capital was desfined to become a major book event in the years to come The lan which concluded on 15th January was part of the country-wide book exhibition programme organised as part of the Grantha Dibash" or National Book Event announced by the Prime Minister Beguin Khaleda Zia in her maugural address at the 1993 National Book Fair at the Osmani Memorial Hall on 1st January 1993.

In fact, the latest Dhaka Book Fair substituted the National Book Fair which was being regularly held every year under the sponsorship of the National Book Centre and the Ministry of Culture. Earlier. the government announced a National Book Policy which was drafted by the representatives of afl the sectors concerned with the book industry in the country, But the development which has thrown cold water on all the good steps taken by the government in the book sector, is the unprecedented price hike of paper since August 1994.

However, the Dhaka Book' Fair was well organised by the National Book Centre and the book lovers and readers responded positively and enthusiastically. As had been the case with the earlier National Book Fairs the publishers displayed and sold their own books and publications at the Dhaka Book Fair. This helped to give us the true picture of the publishing industry in Bangladesh. The Amor Ekushey Book Fair held in the month of February at the Bangla Academy presents a picture of rows of bookshops along with rows of shops selling anything from handicrafts to T-shirts, and does not give a true picture of the state of the publishing industry.

by Mohiuddin Ahmed

However, the Bangla Academy Book Fair has developed its own typical character and is hkely to go on its own steam.

For a long time the publish

ers in Bangladesh have been teeling the need of some kind of an international book event in Dhaka and perhaps the Dhaka Book Fair will, gradually over the years, assume this character. The Fair was open to international publishers and already a number of them displayed and sold their books as a test case. Two things possibly have happened (a) Those of our publishers who have so far failed to see the book world beyond Dhaka, and in some cases beyond Bangla Bazar, got an opportunity to see developments in the international book industry and (b) many of our readers and book lovers might got to see and buy the books they had been wanting to buy.

Besides, each year we would be able to compare the progress made in our own book industry with others in the world. Our authors would get the exposer to foreign publishers. Foreign publishers par ticipating would be booking for potential writers from Bangladesh. The Dhaka Book Fair may become the meeting ground of books from both East Asia and West Asia and if this was to be achieved in the future, we need to start planning now

We hear of great developments in the field of education in Bangladesh, but have the funds for the libraries increased? This calls for rapid and effective steps to build up a national library network without which neither education not book industry could move forward. These are steps which should also be on the agenda of all political parties.

A significant development with regard to the Dhaka Book Fair had been the support and sponsorship coming forth from the members of business and industry sectors. It may be worth noting that the National Book Centre had not to spend any money in building up the fair infrastructure. All the pavilions and stalls were sponsored or erected by either big business houses or publishers themselves.

The National Book Centre also arranged for cultural events: discussion on books. art and culture to inform and enlighten the visitors. The cultural events drew a good audience each evening and the law and order agencies did a tremendous job by keeping Dhaka Book Fair premises free of mastaans.

Let us hope that this Book Fair takes the desired course of becoming an annual important international event in Dhaka.



Visitors at the book fair

This faith in hope is a thing to be learnt. This learning

something which merely enriches the knowledge of a pedant. Life of the great ones teach us that it has to be bred into the character. This is a task of lifelong practice. Robert H Schuller gives a wonderfully convincing pictorial description of this practice in his book "Tough Times Never Last. But Tough people Do". He narrates "I remember one winter my dad needed firewood, and he found a dead tree and sawed it down. In the spring, to his dismay, new shoots sprouted around the trunk. He said. "I thought sure it was dead. The leaves have all dropped in the wintertime. It was so cold that twigs snapped as if there were not life left in the old tree. But

now I see that there was still

Never cut a tree down in the winter time. Never make a time. Never make your important decisions when you are in your worst, mood. Wait. Be patient. The storm will pass.

The spring will come." Life, for everybody, will come to an end. But there is definitely no logic in dving everyday by the cuts and wounds of life, by the the rigours of meeting the demands of ambition, by the others. We all can understand that only a positive attitude can

life at the taproot." He looked at me and said. "Bob. don't

> cart of a positive attitude. And this should have two stallions -hope and enterprise. Provi

sions in the cart should be simple - patience, humility. kindness and love. Such an attitude can negotiate the ups and downs of life well. No matter whether it is a bumpy track or a potholed one. It is a common knowledge that even the bumpy track has smooth patches, even the paved path has potholes. A positive attitude of this kind saves us from breaking down as a wreck before our time has come. Should we not then look forward to 1995 with hope and patience. The storm surely

does not come to last forever

### Distant Drum M N Mustafa

with inventing alternatives for everything, have recently made a cocktail out of donkey and zebra. Through cross-breeding between a male donkey and female zebra they were successful in producing a hybrid which has been named 'zonkey'. With zebra's white and black stripes the zonkey will now inherit the donkey's tenacity and stupidity and zebra's beauty. Paying tribute to America's inventive and innovative genius, some anti-Americans claim that the Biblical and the Quranic devil does not exist now. They have reported that the American biologists successfully made a cocktail of men and devil. This cross-breed. America's enemies claim, have been distributed round the world. Hitler suspected them to be Jews. But Ayatullah Khomenei. fed by America in his rainy days did not give this credit to the Americans. He claimed that the devil lived in America with exit permit only to visit Soviet Russia.

I was glad to find a donkey playing a significant role in a circus in Moscow, side by side with horses, possibly brought from Uzbekistan. They donkey was not alone, he had his spouse too to play the assigned role. It was not immediately known whether donkeys have since been absolved of the common charges against them in respect of their follies after the successful bourgeois proletariat revolution. But the Moscow circus authorities while portraying Pushki's story, did not forget the donkey whom alone we have given the sobriquet - the beast of burden. By assigning a role to play, the Russians made sin cere attempt to instil an artistic sensibility in the otherwise dull and uninspiring physical constitution of the donkey.

I was also told by my friends

in Moscow that the great exponent of donkey's talent. Nasiruddin Hodja, belonged to Central Asian region which now is a part of Soviet Russia. Hodja was once invited by Timur Lane to play polo with him. True to his great sense of humour. Hodja went to play the game riding his donkey. Timur felt amused at this and asked Hodja about the difference between him and donkey. Hodja, instantly measuring the distance between him and the donkey and between the donkey and Timur, said that the donkey was nearer to Timur than Hodia. As Timur was fondling Hodia's donkey. Hodia was quick enough to comment that the mighty conqueror was showing his brotherly love towards the donkey as love always flowed first towards those with whom it had the affinity of blood or brotherhood.

Returning totally drenched

from a hunting mission Emperor Bahadur Shah ordered that thenceforward the donkey would be the chief of the official meteorologists. The human meteorologists were surprised at this queer royal decree. Explaining the decision it was told that on the advice of the court meteorologists that there would be no rain, the emperor went a hunting. He met a washerman on way as he was returning home without washing clothes. The emperor wanted to know the reason of this hurried retreat. In reply the washerman said that his donkey indicated impending rain by raising its ears. To the emperor's sur prise, soon rain set in and the emperor was drenched in the heavy shower. Since donkeys could foretell onset of rain so accurately, they deserved to head any meteorological body with human members to par-

patience in long-time plan-

ning. He worked in a circus and met another donkey, fat and healthy, belonging to a washerman. The washerman's donkey took pity on the circus donkey for his ill-health and asked him to leave the circus since he did not get adequate food. The circus donkey. heaving a sigh, replied that it was serving the circus only for a prospect. It ran like this. The owner of the circus had a beautiful daughter. She walked on tight rope in the circus. Once she fell down the rope. The owner got angry and before everybody vowed that if she fell again from the rope, she would be married to the donkey. And since then the donkey was awaiting the moment when she fell from the rope and then a formal proposal for marriage between the donkey and the owner's daughter would be made.

Shakespeare paid the richest tribute to the donkey, the lover. In the annals of love and lovers, a donkey had the fortune of winning the heart of the fairest, the queen of the fairies. In the drama, A Midsummer Night's Dream. Bottom turned into a donkey by the magic spell fell in love with no less a person than the Queen of the Fairles, Titania. Here Titania agog with praise for donkey's beauty, claimed that God created donkey in His spare time to bestow all beauty on him.

Another lavish tribute was showered on the donkey by an Afghan. A Kabultwala who came to Bengal to earn his bread once failed to pay for his meals in a hotel. The hotel-keeper. as a measure of punishment. got his head shaven half and made him to ride a donkey with his head turned towards the tail of the donkey. But the Kabuli took this punishment of shaving and donkey ride as a token of Bengali hospitality. On return home he praised Bengali hospitality which included free ride on a donkey He invited other Kabulis to Another donkey showed his visit Bengal at least for a ride on a donkey.

### A Question of Attitude Continued from page 9

on its perilods way/From a tree's summit; a poor Indian's sleep/While his boat hastens to the monstrous steep/Of Montmorenci. Why so sad a moan?/Life is the rose's hope while yet unblown;/The reading of an ever-changing tale:/ The light uplifting of a maiden's veil:/A pigeon tumbling in clear summer air:/ A laughing school boy, without grief or care./Riding the springy branches of an elm." It requires extraordinary courage for a man who is being ravaged by the pernicious tentacles of . tuberculosis to write such splendid lines which lift the spirit of even the most

dejected heart. What powered his thoughts? HOPE. The mellow light that shows the path. His faith in hope was so firmly rooted. It imparted great sensibility to his attitude. This fuminous light led him to write in the poem "To Hope". "When by my solitary hearth I sit./And hateful thoughts unwrap may soul in gloom/ When no fair dreams before my 'minds eye' flit./And the bare heath of life presents no bloom, / Sweet Hope, etheral balm upon me shed,/And wave thy silver pinions o'er my

should not be treated as

forget this important lesson

negative decision in the low

weight of the daily grind, by exertions of outdistancing save us from these daily perils.

#### The Last Plays: The Final Victory process of moral upheavals was tion of the characters at the

not allowed here to cause the

destruction as planned. The

Serpentile eyil raises its hood.

charming power of good.

but it has to recoil to the

Prospero has more than

Continued from page 10 kill his sleeping brother Alonso This conspiracy would have been executed, had there been no intervention of Prospero through the agency of Ariel, This conspiracy, if executed successfully, could have brought in some what tragic consequences. The foul, conspiracy of Caliban and his drunken associates though a burlesque of the more serious machination of Antonio Sebastian was hatched out for execution in the afternoon when Prospero would enjoy his routine sleep. So sleep that facilitated Duncan's murder leading to the explosive tragic

reasonable ground to resort to revenge turning The Tempest a not too unreasonably Seneccan tragedy. Folded within his power, his enemies could have been heavily punished, but the sole drift of his purpose does not extend bevond their repentance. He has strong resentment against his enemies, but that does not blur his vision by having recourse to revenge. Revenge, to him, is a wild justice which does no good to the doer -nay, it is harmful and derogatory as it tantamounts to the breach of self-control, self-mastery and moral elevation which Shakespeare's maturer vision of life has invested Prospero

An audience which has witnessed the performance of the great Shakespearean tragedies might have been reasonably expected to be alarmed by the impending catastrophe that usually overtakes the encounter, at the end, between the conflicting groups. In Othello, numerous deaths occur and the hungry forces of destruction devour all alike. The final impression that this tragedy leaves is a sense of hollowness and of a hostile universe that obliterates the guilty and the innocent like. In The Tempest, the congrega

close brings about no misery. no ruin and destruction, but reunion and reconciliation between the hostile groups and what may be called a process of creation, symbolised by the marriage of Ferdinand and Miranda. Thus the play ends with no sense of universal wastage and man's helplessness against hostile forces, but with the creation of an atmosphere of beauty, serenity and

composure.

Shakespeare's last plays may, therefore, be viewed as plays in which the evil, though it makes its entry since 'flesh and blood is heir to it', is relegated to a position where it is too feeble to counterbalance the benevolence of the good, and on each occasion, when it resorts to guileful devices and machinations, it has to give in to no tragic happenings at the least. These plays are redeemed by the omnipresence of an eye that keeps constant beneficent, watch over the frailty and mortality of human beings. All these have been achieved by the skilful manipulation of the materials and devices which were fraught with tragic consequences of the greatest magnitude. Shakespeare's 'art' - his stagecrafts 'make vile things precious' crowning him with the glory of final victory, and herein lies at least one aspect of his infinite variety.

The writer is Inspector of Colleges (Acting). University of

# Aliaz Ahmad's Talk on the Future of Marxism

Continued from page 10

While referring to the Rousseau-marked fissure of the Enlightenment, Professor Afimad not only brings to the fore the unresolved questions of democracy and equality by exhibiting this very ideational logic that "ideas of equality in one domain lead necessarily to ideas of equality in other domains." Professor Ahmad at the same time makes this important point that we have had so far the fractured Enlightenment, the incomplete Enlightenment out of which both Marxism and feminism were born - born with that undiminished scar the question of equality, and that not only Marxism and not only feminism. but democracy itself still lives in its prehistory." The future of Marxism is also indicated thus : it depends on accomplishing unfinished tasks left off by Marxism's prehistory

As one would see. Aijaz Ahmad does not speak categorically of the future of Marxism in the manner of a prophet; he does not predict or foresee any future as such. What then he does is that he views the future in terms of its relationship with the past and the present, and also goes on to indicate as to how the future can be built. In other words, the theme of his 'talk is not "what is the future?" as such. but it involves the question "how can a future be built?" In providing some answers of his own. Professor Ahmad now turns to the actual history of political Marxism in order to review "the balance-sheet of Marxism's gains and losses.

While speaking of Marxism's 'gains' which are at times paradoxically 'losses'. Ahmad begins by saying that Marxism has transformed its enemy beyond recognition, and that the amount of transformation capitalism itself has undergone over a hundred years directly under the pressure from Marxism, that is to say, from organised labour is simply phenomenal. He goes on to say that by the time Marxism arrives in Asia, it gains historically on two fundamental issues, namely. i) agrarian revolution and ii) national liberation. Indeed, as Professor Ahmad tellingly illustrates, Marxism accounts for all the radical land-reforms that have taken place in Asia with the single exception of Japan. Such radical reforms, be it noted, have been carried out either by communists themselves or in fear of communists. Given the tempo and extent of radical agrarian reforms in Asia. "Marxism", as Ahmad points out. "actually becomes a revolutionary theory of transformations of predominantly agrarian society." as it also becomes the most powerful ideological component of wars of national liberation. What he actually indicates here is that Marxism as a body of thought has been transformed as it has come to be practised in predominantly agrarian, usually colonial societies.

The next argument that Professor Ahmad makes is that having been transformed in these two fundamental ways, the Marxism of and tomorrow must defend those grounds of transforming the lives of the peasaritry, the people who actually work in the land. Professor Ahmad adds: "One also needs to defend the issue of national independence

from the pressures of multinational capital which are greater today than they have ever been in the history of humankind. The issues of national autonomy, national independence and agrarian transformation continue to be the two fundamental issues in which Marxism historically had its deepest roots in our soci Aijaz Ahmad now turns to yet another fun

damental task of Marxism by underscoring the need to invent more and more rights and defend them, because what has happened is that the passage of history has thrown up new and newer needs, and new historical subjects. At this point, he particularly emphasizes the issue of the massive destruction of nature by capital ist appropriation, all feminist issues that are coming up, and the issue of radically transforming the meaning of democracy itself in terms of inventing, defending and consolidat ing new rights in harmony with the new needs and new historical subjects. Democracy, to Ahmad, is certainly a question of defending its familiar mode of articulation in the right of representation, the electoral process, and so on: but then, as Ahmad argues, it is also a question of constant radicalization of new rights, and a question of ensuring the equality of rights and opportunities. The future of Marxism, comments Ahmad, much depends on how Marxism accommodates, addresses, ne goțiates, and even radicalizes all such issues.

The next issue Aijaz Ahmad takes up is that intractable logic of Marxismr - the issue of the reconciliation between central planning and democratisation of life. He observes that one of the fundamental problems in the twentieth century is that there are certain levels of economic life which require central planning - a central planning that is not tied to the issues of profit, but tied to the issues of social survival. What is important, for Ahmad, is the issue of how one articulates the market which is based on exchange and profit, in relation to social uses of economic production. This requires, further observes Ahmad, that there be central agencies that would look at this articulation: but then this is not workable without greater and greater democratization and devalnation of power to the smallest possible unit down to the village and the small community. This is still a problem. Stresses Ahmad, which needs to be thought through, both politically and theoretically. However, Professor Ahmad indicates that the relationship between central planning and democratisation at the level of the smallest unit is partly a question of articulating political democracy and large scale economy; but, then, it is also the whole question of restructuring the economy of various social skills

It is precisely at this point in his talk that Professor Ahmad suddenly returns to the issue of Marxism's 'gains.' He says, 'let me follow just another chain of thought. I spoke of what Marxism gave us in Asia; but before that. I barely remarked on the fact that Marxism transformed the nature of capitalism in its very heartlands." He refers to the 1930s when two important things happened and coincided

chronologically. One is that the restructuring of the Imperialist system - the transition from a completely competition based capitalism to a fully monopolistic capitalism - created such a crisis in the very structure of capitalism that it brought about the depression in the 1920s and the early 1930s. This chronologically coincided with the highest rates of economic growth in the Soviet Union, rendering explicit the qualitative gap between Soviet Union and the rest of Europe That was the first historical moment of pressure from Marxism on Europe. Professor Ahmad now explains this pressure by saying that the whole of Europe - particularly the West European countries of advanced capital - had to restrategise their economic and social relations with the working class. Wages increased, a better standard of living was ensured for the working class, and the 'welfarist system was also invoked, all in response to the Soviet Union which by then had the world a most advanced, cultured and literate working class. So, "in a very peculiar sense," affirms Professor Ahmad. "just as the land reforms took place under the communist pressure either by the communists themselves or in response to communism. likewise in Europe, many of the reforms were either made by the communists or in response to communism."

Emphasizing the point that certain things must not be forgotten and that remembrance. too, demands some courage. Professor Ahmad says. "What the Soviet working class had been back in the 1930s surpasses even the American working class of today. Then, the Muslim women of the Soviet Union (Asia) are more advanced Muslim women than those anywhere in the world. It is quite beyond doubt that the East German women had many more rights than the West German women, and that the East German women have lost a quantum of their rights after the unification of Germany." So, it was that kind of world within which one had hoped that there would be an internal movement of any scope - mass movement or whatever - which would preserve the socialist aspects of that society and liquidate the authoritarian regimes. As Ahmad explains, to speak of the causes of what then went wrong in the Socialist world is no doubt to speak of an internal bureaucratic degeneration and of external pressures, meaning that there was no internal, enduring mass movement at the cultural level.

Finally, Professor Aijaz Ahmad brings up the issue of the fundamental theoretical struggle of Marxism whose life-force lies in rethinking the real shape of the world and the place of Marxism in it. Pointing out explicitly that the twentieth century has quickened the process of throwing up new needs and new agents of history and new processes of history. Professor Ahmad maintains that Marxism also has to rethink its relation with those other agents which are not necessarily class-agents of the proletarian life in the classical sense. In fact, he thinks that one of the great challenges that exists for Marxism today and tomorrow is to rethink some of the constitutive categories of

other thoughts, including its own categories such as class, production labour, wage, and so on. He boldly underlines this point that ecolog ical degradation and the coming-into-being of a very powerful feminist movement require from Marxism a historically new kind of theoretical effort to think through precisely the issues that come from outside the historical knowledge of Marxism, for which, perhaps, some an alvtical categories in various forms exist some more thought, some much less thought. Professor Ahmad their concludes his talk with this note: "Once the question of radical equality has been posed, nothing eventually can actually stop Indeed, the most radical kinds of questions come from those Marxisms which are always ready enough and open enough to think of all the needs and all the transformations as much as possible."

The talk, as one notices, privileges a theoretical imperative, namely, rethinking. This imperative itself is an integral part of the Marxist dialectical philosophy, and one can readily refer to Lenin for his insistence on this imperative always felt crucial for theoretical and political struggles. And recently Henri Lefebvre, in his Toward a Leftist Cultural Politics," underlined this imperative as a theans of getting out of Marxism's crisis, both internal and external. But, the strength of Ahmad's talk lies elsewhere, particularly in his brilliant analysis of the prehistory of the moment of the birth of Marxisth, on which Ahmad's talk seems to spend more time than he spends on any single issue. Significant in direction, this analysis, by identifying both the void of the Enlightenment and its filler-in of sorts, namely, Marxism, in fact foregrounds the unfinished tasks and the future agenda of Marxism, which he also ties to a number of specific issues, namely, transformation of agrarian societies, national liberation, ecology feminism, and so on. However, with regard to the proposed theoretical negotiation between Marxism and Feminism, we have actually very little concrete suggestions on which to build such a negotiation

That certain constitutive categories of Marxism itself, such as class, production labour, wage, etc. need to be rethought is no doubt a challenging proposition. But, Professor Ahmad does not seem to meet this challenge on his own in that he does not provide his own rethinking on such categories. Indeed, what are those alternative explanations and applications of such categories? Or, are there any viable alternatives to such categories themselves? Or what particular forms of alternative relationships between them can one necessarfly evolve in response to the new needs and new historical subjects - new agents of history? And who are, after all, these new agents of history who tend to move beyond the classical confines of the proletariat?

The fact that Aijaz Ahmad's talk on 'the Future of Marxism has been able to generate questions with regard to Marxism is certainly ohe of the measures of Ahmad's critical power and potentials which characterise much of his

# 

by A Zabr

## THE PROPERTY OF THE PROPERTY O A Shopping List for the Opposition

HAT the Opposition parties are doing may not be very clear, but what they are not doing for are disinterested in) is easier for the people to list.

The current 'people's programme" unleashed on the masses by the Opposition may be too technical for the major ity of the voters, as the implications of the care-taker government proposal (during the general election) may be debatable only by a very small minority of the enlightened citizens, as it is a high-level technical issue, which, according to the Opposition view. cannot be solved even inside the parliament. How hartals, blockades, and street agitations could provide a solution have not been understood very

clearly. Here is a partial list (alphabetical, A to Z) of issues of possible interest to the Opposition MPs The readers may add to the list, if interested in some form of patriotic exercise.

'A' for Anti-corruption, the Drive may be revived or re-introduced. Agriculture is well

known hence the leaders may deliberate on the erosion of some other form of Bengalee culture, now rapidly facing obliteration. The effectiveness of the Parliamentary Committees (encouragement of opposition proposals).

Bangladeshis abroad (employment, investment packages, anti-hundi measures); banana export: Bandarban and Baridhara problems; border anti-activities. (smuggling of heads, herds, and coin). Bakshish which areas to legalize).

Coal (economical disposal of the unsold surplus in the state stock); curry powder export (a 3m market, including one million Bangladeshis living abroad); charity (national code on uncharitable remarks); cholera (export of the famed Oral Saline): campus peace tstabilize) and violence (destabilize). Children (weight increase). Opposition amendments to the new Coast Guard scheme. And the silent and invisible Civil Service (Do's and Dont.sl.

Continued on page 12