

TRIBUTE

# SALIL CHOWDHURY Traveller with a Torch

by Tazeen Choudhury



Salil Chowdhury with wife and daughter.

—Photo: Courtesy-Anandaloke

**C**ELEBRATED music director, composer, singer, lyricist Salil Chowdhury passed away at the Woodlands Nursing Home, Calcutta a couple of days ago. Although he was seventy, his death was rather unexpected. It was like a bolt from the blue in our literary and cultural circles. Salil Chowdhury has been a household name among lovers and connoisseurs of Bengali music since the fifties. I was quite familiar with the songs he composed from the days of my infancy like "Dhitang Dhitang Bole", "Kono Ek Gnaer Badhu", "Aae Brishti Jhepe" etc. As I grew up I heard more and more of his Bengali and Hindi compositions sung by eminent artists like Lata Mangeshkar, Hemant Mukherjee, Sandhya Mukherjee, Manna Dey, Suchitra Mitra, Mukesh, Amal Mukherjee and Krishna Chatterjee. I used to admire him greatly.

Born in a family steeped in music, Salil Chowdhury was courageous enough to break the tradition of his predecessors and create a novelty in the realm of Indian music. As a music director he had a style of his own — altogether different from his contemporaries. He dealt primarily with folk tunes, Indian ragas and western music. After becoming a member of Indian People's Theatre Association (IPTA) he composed a number of *ganosangeet* which earned him laurels.

I had the privilege of meeting this great composer in New Delhi thirteen years back. We were living in Panchshil Park. On March 15, 1982 I was blessed with a daughter. My gynecologist Dr Pramila Gupta and her husband Dr K D Gupta had been our family friends for a long time. We had great intimacy with them. Promiladi tele-

phoned me on 20th March saying, "Salilda has come from Bombay. We'll be having a cultural evening tomorrow at our place. Please do come and also bring Mashima with you". I readily accepted the invitation, as I was very enthusiastic to see the great wizard of Indian music. The next evening my mother, my husband and I went to her residence at Safdarjung Development Area.

Salil Chowdhury and his wife Sabita Chowdhury (also a noted singer) rendered a good number of songs like *Shurer ol Jhorne*, *Aamae*

*proshno kare neel dhruvotara*, its Hindi version and many others. The songs were sung in a very homely atmosphere. Soon a splendid dinner was served. We had very informal discussions. Both Salil Chowdhury and his wife seemed very simple in clothes, manners and amiable and modest in behaviour. They discussed about their two lovely and talented daughters whom they named "Antara" and "Sanehari" meaning the second and third stanzas of a lyric. How beautiful and appropriate the names sounded. As for my new born we were looking

forward to a Bengali name. Suddenly I murmured in Promiladi's ears asking her to tell Salil Chowdhury to suggest a name for my daughter. Having heard this Salil Chowdhury remarked, "You can name her Antara unless you feel such a name is unacceptable in your Bengali Muslim society". To me it seemed like a blessing from the Guru. We did name her Antara.

In November 1990, Salil Chowdhury with his wife and two daughters came to Bangladesh. They took part in a musical soiree for two consecutive evenings which was

organised by Udichi Shilpi Gosthi. The audience was enthralled by their superhit songs especially by those rendered by Antara Chowdhury.

Salil Chowdhury is no more. But his *gano sangeet* (people's songs) were a source of inspiration to the patriot and leftist movements and also in our liberation struggle of 1971 along with those of Rabindranath Tagore's and Kazi Nazrul Islam's I still remember when I was studying Honours at Dhaka University in the years 1969 and '70 and being involved with Sangshkriti Sangsad (Menon Group) took part in a number of cultural functions like "Nabeen Baran", "Biddhastha Basanta", "Jalche Aagoon Khethe Khamare" etc. with Sheikh Luftar Rahman, Ajit Roy, Nizamul Huq and Monu Dey. How relentlessly we worked day and night rehearsing some of Salil Chowdhury's immortal creations. *O alo patho Jatril* (The traveller with a torch), *Bicharpoti Tomar Bichar Korbe Jara*, *Dheu utchhe kara tutche*, and Sukanto Bhattacharya's *Abak Prithibi, Bidroho aaj bidroho charidike*, and "Runner" which were of course tuned by Salil Chowdhury.

Salil Chowdhury was indeed a versatile genius. His songs are eternally enchanting and have a trans-generational appeal. He fought against tyranny, oppression and exploitation. His deep love for the poor, the down-trodden and the underprivileged is reflected in many of his songs. This is his outstanding contribution in the field of Bengali music. Our music remains in many ways indebted to this great cultural personality, who became a legend during his own life time.

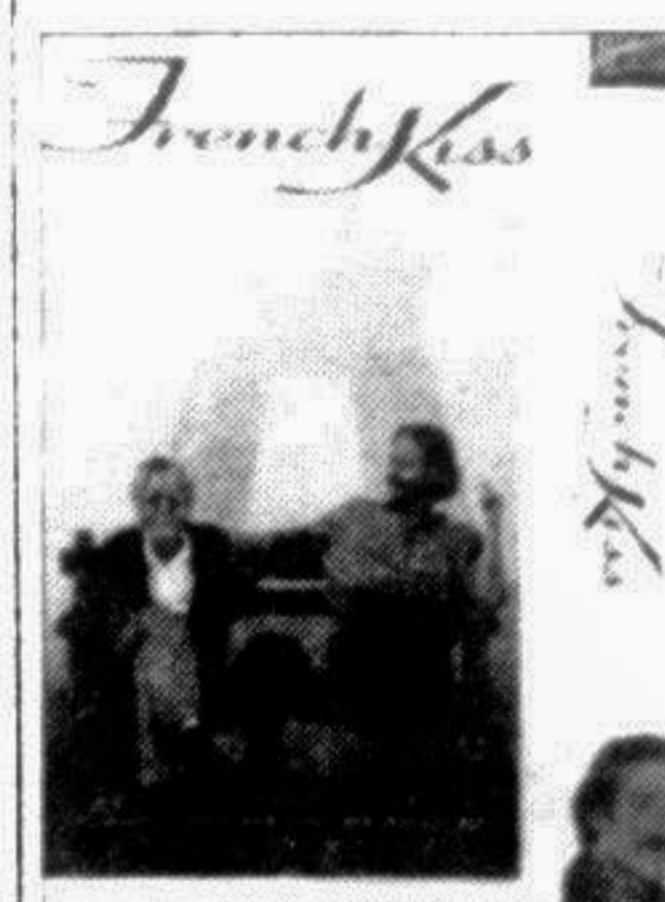
## Viewing Video

by Lenin Gani

**F**RENCH Kiss is a romantic comedy in which Kate (Meg Ryan) has the adventure of a lifetime in Paris where she has to go to see the woman who has stolen her fiancé's heart.

It all started she met Luke (Kevin Kline) on the plane. Luke has smuggled a diamond necklace into the country inside Kate's bag. After realising Luke's game she confronts him. Luke says the diamond will help raise funds to make improvements to the family vineyard. Kate says she'll only help if he can get her fiancé back. But as we all know love is a funny thing and because of it not everything goes according to plan.

Michelle Pfeiffer stars in *Dangerous Minds* Pfeiffer is an ex-US Marine and has the



unenviable task of educating a group of students society would like to forget.

Her first day on the job was almost the last when she is overcome by their hostile attitude. However drawing on her experience as a soldier coupled with some background reading on the art of discipline, she ultimately wins their trust.

Now her toughest battle has just begun. Instead of following the prescribed curriculum, she innovates it and teaches in her own style subjects such poetry. To encourage the students she holds pop quizzes with the promise of prizes for the contestants.

The school authorities naturally disagree with these methods and try their best to stop her.

Pfeiffer, seeing that her fight with the establishment could get ugly, opts to quit to the dismay of the students.

HINDI		
NAME	TYPE	CAST
1. Rangeela	(Rom/Com)	Jackie/Amir Khan/Urmila Mithun/Madhu
2. Jallad	(Action)	
ENGLISH		
3. French Kiss	(Rom/Com)	Meg Ryan/Kevin Kline
4. Star Trek	(Scifi)	Patrick Stewart/Malcolm/Generations McDowell/William Shatner
5. Mighty Morphin Power Rangers	(Scifi)	
6. The Arrival	(Scifi/Horror)	
7. CIA III	(Action)	
8. Nation Under Siege	(WWF)	
9. Invasion of Privacy	(Rom/Thriller)	Robby Benson/Jennifer O'Neil
10. Klute	(Thriller)	Jane Fonda/Donald Sutherland
11. The Setup	(Action/Thriller)	
12. Spymaker	(Action)	Jason Connery
13. Madona Innocence Lost	(Drama)	
14. Honour Among Thieves	(Action)	Charles Bronson
15. Bhawani Junction	(Rom)	Stewart Granger
16. Mirage	(Action)	James Olmos/Sean Young
17. Boys to Men Now and Then	(Concert)	
18. Tintin The Lake of Sharks	(Cartoon)	
19. Uz 200 Live From Sydney	(Concert)	
20. Aerosmith Big Ones	(Album)	
21. Nirvana Live Tonight Sold Out	(Concert)	

Source: Film Fair Video and other clubs.

MEDIA

**Z**AMBIAN journalists are writing headlines about themselves as the media finds itself in the news again.

First came the Parliamentary and Ministerial Conduct Act, which can be used to force journalists to reveal sources of information.

While proponents of the legislation say its target is leaders behaving unethically, journalists consider the aim is to frighten them from publishing articles revealing the misconduct of government officials.

The Act coincided with a police raid on the independent Post newspaper in Lusaka and its Ndola-based printing firm, Printpak.

Police said they were searching for "seditious material" the paper wanted to publish. But the paper subsequently claimed that police had been looking for a picture allegedly depicting President Frederick Chiluba in an embarrassing situation with his personal secretary.

The action was widely criticised, even by some leaders of the ruling Movement for Multiparty Democracy. The German Ambassador, Dr Peter Schmidt, was particularly tough, threatening economic sanctions by foreign donors against Chiluba's government.

Vice President Brigadier-General Godfrey Miyanda denied that the police move had been ordered by the government, but no one seemed to believe him.

Even the state-owned media was doubtful. Reporters from a government-owned daily, The Daily Mail, asked executive members of the Zambia Union of Journalists (ZUJ) to fight not only for better pay and conditions but also for press freedom.

Journalists, particularly younger ones, in the government-owned media are demoralised by their organisations' policy of toeing the

## Journalists Find Themselves in the News

Venarcious Mwansa writes from Lusaka

"Good governance" is part of today's development jargon, and a free press is generally considered to be an integral component. But as Zambian journalists are funding, establishing the dividing line between fair and unfair reporting is a contentious business.

## Press freedom in danger



Banned photo: Armed police seal off the offices of *The Post* newspaper in Lusaka during a search for allegedly seditious material. The Zambian government said the picture, printed twice by the *Daily Mail*, should not be used again

government line, and the police raid focused their criticisms.

"I personally feel discouraged associating myself in public with the 'Daily Lies' said a Mail features writer at a meeting of the newspaper's journalists. "ZUJ should check this rampant self-censorship." And he added: "We should not be ashamed to say our performance is mediocre."

Journalists claim they write accurate stories about government leaders but that if editors feel the stories put the government in a bad light they will not publish them.

Alternatively, they say, stories are printed but are twisted during the editing process, sometimes to an extent which embarrasses even the ministers editors want to please.

Such self-censorship, say disgruntled journalists, includes the use of photographs. The picture showing armed police outside The Post offices, for example, has been banned from further publication, after being used twice by The Mail.

The Mail was once temporarily banned from covering parliamentary proceedings for its "misrepresentation" of

debates and has been threatened with the same punishment at least three times by the courts. But, unlike their colleagues in the privately owned media, government journalists have not been harassed by armed police and are rarely called in for police interrogation for their reporting.

Nevertheless, they claim their victimisation is worse since it is so subtly done and therefore attracts little public sympathy.

A junior editor in a state-owned media organisation who does not want to be named claimed Health Minis-

ter Michael Sata "will simply walk in (to an editorial meeting), interrupt editorial proceedings, give you the diary and important points to highlight in tomorrow's paper."

Editors have to walk a tightrope. Before she resigned from her Cabinet post, the Community Development and Social Welfare Minister, Princess Nakatindi Wina, confided that managing editors of the country's two dailies, The Daily Mail and Times of Zambia, would be fired for not doing enough to publicise the government's economic policies.

Since then, the Times chief, Cyrus Sikazwe, has been sacked for what Josephine Mapoma, permanent secretary in the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting Services, said was incompetence.

His Mail counterpart, Emmanuel Nyirenda, must be wondering whether he will be next.

Many journalists are annoyed by the lukewarm or total lack of condemnation of such acts by the Press Association of Zambia (PAZA), which is expected to ensure that ethical standards are upheld.

Several have rejected calls by the PAZA executive to join the Association, on the grounds that the K 5,000 monthly subscription would be a waste of money. They say PAZA, dominated by government-owned bodies, lacks teeth.

Said Post sports reporter Goliath Mong'onge: "While we appreciate their (PAZA) contribution, we also recognise the limitations placed upon them by their employment. They have to look to government for promotion and therefore cannot afford to differ with it." — GEMINI NEWS

VENARCIOUS MWANSA is a Zambian freelance journalist.

BOOKS

## Underscoring a Vital Need

Continued from page 10 on. However, most of the narrative is historical, legal, structural, and formal in content. Chapter 8 is particularly well written and indicates a mastery of some of the complexities of the system of development planning and administration examined in the light of his conceptual and comparative understanding.

While I think that the study has succeeded in achieving what the author planned in the first place. His postulated assumptions might have been well checked up! However, I strongly believe that the scholarly quality of this study could have been far more improved if the author has taken extra care about clarifying precisely and elaborately some of the decentralization issues and developments that he proposed.

First, the author seems to have approached the issue of decentralisation in Bangladesh in the light of a definition of the term noted in one of the studies made by the United Nations in 1962. The term was used in that study to refer to the transfer of authority away from the national capital whether by deconcentration (i. e. delegation) to field offices or by devolution to local authorities or other local bodies. In other words, decentralisation of administration in a country could be initiated and implemented either by the process of 'deconcentration' or by 'devolution'. But the author seems not precise enough on

this point. What particular form of decentralisation should he be suggesting for Bangladesh? One may, however, point out that the popular demand today is for involving people in democratic politics at every administrative level, i. e. the establishment of representative and general purpose local government.

Second, the author has repeatedly underscored the need for extensive decentralisation of the central government's powers and functions to local authorities. But he seems inconclusive about suggesting an effective mechanism to ensure that the local authorities discharge their assigned responsibility efficiently and effectively. In the existing arrangement, the functions of ensuring accountability of the local authorities are divided between the field bureaucracy and the central government. But one must point out that the concept of 'local-self' government and the field bureaucracy's prescribed 'control functions' stand opposed to each other.

Third, the author suggests that a new type of local authority be constituted at the divisional level to oversee and monitor primarily the planning and its implementation functions within the jurisdiction of that level. The idea seems innovative indeed. However, if the suggested new authority is constituted, Bangladesh will then have a four-tier local government system. And, if the relevant constitutional provisions relating to the establishment of representative local government at every administrative unit are finally given effect, one cannot help foreseeing the possibility of an extended dimension of the typical inter-tier conflict. For evidence have it that the representative leaders in most emergent countries hardly trust each other. So, the author should have elaborated his idea in further detail.

Finally, the reader of the book do take note of the author's fondness for the defunct upazila system. The decentralisation scheme implemented under the previous regime was the most ambitious attempt in the history of Bangladesh to bring responsible government to the thana-level. However, there were major problems with this scheme of decentralised administration. First,

the electoral system tended to represent only the wealthiest and most influential members of the society. These persons made decisions that strengthened their own patronage networks and influence at that level. The poorest strata in society had little direct voice in upazila committees. Second, the defunct upazila councils were designed to create and implement development activities in their areas, but they were typically slow to draft long-term plans or carry through broad-based development efforts. Most of their projects emphasized construction or public works, and they sometimes neglected staff management, public relations and training components necessary for effective upazila management and social involvement.

Third, civil servants have long lacked respect for local politicians, looking to their own advancement from their official superiors in the centre. They have often been slow to cooperate with elected members of upazila committees. For example, although the upazila chairman was responsible for writing the nirbahi officer's annual confidential report, the officer was expected to submit the form of such report to the upazila chairman, and in many cases these forms did not appear, thus preventing the chairman from exercising control. Finally, the entire system of decentralised politics was viewed by opposition politicians as a patronage network designed to attract local elites to the party of the regime in power. Critics tend to conclude that, in place of furthering decentralised democracy, the system only strengthened the national party which wielded control from the centre. I think the author should have thought about responding to these and other criticisms.

Nevertheless, the study does have some definite strengths as pointed out earlier. For someone wanting to know historical, formal and legal aspects of the decentralisation process and politics in Bangladesh, it is a valuable study. It will also be useful to all civil servants and students of both politics and administration.

Reviewed by

Dr Syed Giasuddin Ahmed

## Yet Another Report, from Last Year

# Government Muffles Silence Naval Gun Reports

Stephen Carr writes from Jakarta

**A**T the end of a year of greater openness for Indonesia's cautious press, the government has shut down three weekly news magazines.

The ban follows reporting of alleged ministerial corruption in arms procurement deals.

Goenawan Mohamad, a founder of the banned *Tempo*, said there was more at stake than the loss of the three magazines. It was reflected in the street demonstrations that followed the government action: "The issue at stake is freedom."

The Indonesian press was "not a very bold one," he noted. "But now even such a silent press is banned and what else is there left?"

Indonesia's already cautious press has been further weekend by government closure of three news-magazines, apparently for reports of an arms deal. Gemini News Service looks at the ban and subsequent protests.

*Tempo's* editorial content was cited as the reason for the banning order, while *DeTik* (a brash new tabloid with a circulation of 450,000) and *Editor* were said to have violated the terms of their annual publishing licences.

The most controversial of *Tempo's* recent reporting has been over the government's purchase of 39 warships from the former East German navy. The magazine criticised the role of influential Technology

Minister B J Habibe in brokering the deal.

It said his \$ 1.12 billion estimate for buying and refitting the ships was highly inflated. The navy was also unhappy about the figures and regarded Habibe's role in the purchase as trespassing on its own province.

The Finance Ministry, which has to authorise the spending, involved in the controversy when it said it would set a \$ 308 million limit on

the deal. *Tempo*, read by most of the country's liberal intelligentsia, is no stranger to run-ins with the government. Since 1982 it has received 33 official warnings.

Readers of the banned magazines organised street demonstrations and rallies outside the Information Ministry.

After photographs of security forces charging one of the first demonstrations appeared

all over the world, a group of 40 women went to Jakarta's Parliament to protest at the brutality of the riot squads.

Five people were severely injured and one was crippled, said Wardah Hafiz, spokeswoman for the group, which called itself the Human Rights Defenders.

She called for a parliamentary investigation into the "cruel actions" of the security forces. The incident "was only an example of many such cases in which the military has resorted to force in handling demonstrations," added Wardah.

After several days of protests, Jakarta police chief Moch Hindarto warned demon-

strators to stay off the streets. He said all demonstrations needed police permits and using force against them was justified if they were illegal.

"If they want a contest of power, they'll have it," he warned.

Following the arrests and injuries, the protest organisers changed tactics. About 300 people, including many journalists, took their case to the House of Representatives.

They laid posters in the foyer of the building and distributed paper flowers with messages condemning the press ban. Among them was a group calling itself the Voice of Women for Press Freedom.

STEPHEN CARR is a British freelance journalist who has just left Indonesia after three years.