

Dhaka Day by Day

Wingless Lark in the Dark Hour

by Mostofa Sarwar Farooki



Recreation of '71 in installation art.

Gone has the wind, so has the light, even the wings as well. The mythical Lark is set 'neath the blade of demons. With a piercing screaming, sinder-coloured (vermillion) blood grounds festive alpans on the hapless white wall. Endless time experiences all the details, winkless. And, what does the Lark do, then? Almost unconscious she, lying on the floor, looking straight up to the sky, sees clouds covering her face with monstrous Paki's flag. This was the dark hour of '71, which young but powerful artist Ashok Karmaker has recreated in the art gallery of Shilpakala Academy.

This is an installation art show first ever in Bangladesh which is, in other words, a twenty-seven minute voyage towards the dark hours of '71. Installation art has recently been taking its place in the contemporary art world. To get their desired emotions expressed, artists all over the world are continuously experimenting, breaking the lines among varieties of art-genres, and creating new horizons for art. They simply are not stuck with certain forms and patterns. Ashok's installation art show is a kind of experimentation composed of paintings, sculptures, music, light, space and some other details.

It's a 27-minute show. At first you come to stand before a shattered mirror while you are entering into the 'Dark Hour'. You are numb to see your ruffled image. Is it to remind you, at the very beginning, that your pride as a human being, the best creature in nature, is going to be ruffled, shattered? Or, is it your real image? Ask yourself, ask how cruel men can be to create a dark '71.

The gallery is a two-storied one. On the ground floor, there is a theme work in the middle. Defoliated trees with a kite, coloured as the national flag, tied on its top and yet to make a wing. An abandoned white 'saree' with red 'par' (border) is there, at the feet of the trees, as if someone forcibly took away life and its rosy views. A number of little figures appear to be burnt into ashes. The artist has applied a fruit-fut technique in creating this. 'In my childhood, I used to play and make puppets. I still

remember it. I have got these figures in that way. And then I put them into fire to get the shape of burnt child-corpse', he explained.

Then you move from left to right, look at the wall. Spot light unveils some different paintings. The ground floor makes you feel that it's Hades. How to get out of it? In which way? Colour-combination and light suggestive of that abyss plant you before the heath where once a time humanity was graced. You will have to flee away. But you're trapped into a 'Paula'. A huge net surrounds the whole gallery from its top. You're stranded. You can't get out of it.

You have only one loop-hole to ride on the upstairs. This balcony is designed as a torture-chamber. The artist has used different size boxes wrapped with semi-transparent white polythene and tied tightly with black ropes. It symbolizes the salvation-starved soul artistically. Most of the boxes are painted with blood. One wretched painted her name 'Kohinoor' with her own blood at the last moments of her life. She desperately wanted to live on, to cross the sign of physical existence.

Ashok really deserves praise for his success in using details. No doubt, he has a very good filmic sense. He showed what 'montage' is. When we see pieces of broken 'churri' (bangles) on the floor with a pair of military boot on one side, we don't need to be told anything more. 'Churri' military boot, abandoned and blooded 'saree' — 'blouse', blood-split on the floor — all the details drag us into a world of brutal massacre, we can feel the restagine of the tragedy of the past. Obviously, Ashok has been successful in recreating 'Black Hour' in 96. 25 years after the real massacre had happened.

Yet, there remain some questions. The music he has opted for seems quite unfamiliar. He may have used much more oriental instruments and familiar sounds. We have the sound of 'Aazan'. But it's too short. He may have used 'mantras', or opted for classical 'raags'. Well, it's always unfair to preach for 'what it should be'. It's the artist who will decide what he wants. We just can say how we respond to his creation.

PM urges teachers Inspire people to take up economic activities

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday called upon teachers to act as catalysts to change society by inspiring the people of their respective areas to take up various economic activities and help eradicate the curse of illiteracy, reports BSS.

Talking to an 18-member teachers' delegation of Sheikh Fazilatunnesa Mohila College of Gopalganj, which called on her at the International Conference Centre in the city yesterday, the Prime Minister said that the teachers could motivate their students to spend leisure time for the benefit of the people and eradication of illiteracy.

Referring to the local problems, particularly the poverty situation of the most neglected areas of Gopalganj, the Prime Minister said that the situation would be improved by taking up massive economic activities like poultry farming, pisciculture and livestock raising. "You can persuade the people to start such profit making ventures," she told the teachers.

Hasina advised the teachers to plant trees particularly fruit-bearing trees along the boundary of the college. "You can set example for the rest of the country by improving the lot of the common people," she said.

The Prime Minister assured the teachers that the demands made by them including nationalisation of the college would be considered duly. "Our government has plans and programmes to set up at least one nationalised girls college in each thana," she added.

Earlier, the teachers presented a set of books to Sheikh Hasina as a birthday gift.

CIRDAP director calls on Biswas

Director of the Centre on Integrated Rural Development for Asia and the Pacific AVS Reddy called on President Abdur Rahman Biswas at Bangabhaban yesterday, reports UNB.

Talking with the CIRDAP Director, Biswas stressed on development of agriculture, particularly in a country like Bangladesh, where 80 per cent people are dependent on agriculture.

Agro-based self-employment projects should be encouraged with a view to employing the educated unemployed youths, the outgoing President suggested.

Biswas said improving the standard of life of rural people is a must for social stability in the country.

Bangladesh most vulnerable to climate change, sea level rise

Speakers at a lecture session on climate change and sea level rise have described Bangladesh as the single largest vulnerable country in this regard and led for introduction of urgent and saline-tolerant varieties of crops and massive afforestation to combat the phenomenon, reports BSS.

The lecture was delivered by Mahfuzul Haque, Environment Ministry, at the Bangladesh Civil Service (Administration) Academy at Ibbagh in the city on Saturday. Panel discussants were Rezauddin, Department of Environment, Quamrul Islam Chowdhury, general secretary, Union of Environmental Journalists of Bangladesh (FEJB), Syed Iqbal Ali and Tusher Ader Hoq of Canadian Development Agency (CIDA) and Ayer Tarequzzaman. Over twenty government officials of administrative cadre attended the lecture.

In his articulation, Dr Mah-

fuz touched upon the vulnerability of Bangladesh and said climate change and sea-level rise would affect the whole of the country and not the coastal areas alone.

He said the north-western part of Bangladesh is extremely vulnerable to drought conditions, even under low climate change scenario, while the whole coastal zone is extremely vulnerable to salt water intrusion.

Dr Mahfuz said the Sundarbans mangrove forest is currently under threat even without any climate change and sea-level rise.

He forecast an increase in human illnesses due to rise in temperature, salinity, flooding, and rainfall variation and called for policy measures to address these issues.

Citing scientific evidence, he said, it would also have adverse impact on sweet-water fisheries and livestock.

Dr Mahfuz suggested switch-

ing over to alternative sources of energy like wind power, solar power and bio-gas plants while developing fuel-efficient technology in industries, power generation and transport.

Rezauddin said Bangladesh is not at all responsible for the 'greenhouse' gas emission. Western countries are the culprits and Bangladesh is a victim of the global emission, he said.

Quamrul Chowdhury said a one meter rise in sea-level leads to estimated land loss of 17.5 per cent of the surface area of Bangladesh.

He suggested creating awareness among the people in general and the officials in particular about the possible adverse impacts and formulation of combative measures.

Dr Syed Iqbal Ali of CIDA said Bangladesh's ecosystems are at risk especially the mangrove system, coastal wetlands, coral reefs, coral atolls and river deltas.

Iranian envoy meets Speaker

The Iranian Ambassador to Bangladesh Mohammad Mahmoud Bayat called on Speaker Humayun Rasheed Chowdhury at his Sangsad office yesterday, reports BSS.

They discuss various matters of common interest including the agenda of the forthcoming conference of Islamic Inter-parliamentary Association, to be held in Tehran October 22-23.

The Speaker said a parliamentary delegation from Bangladesh would be sent to the Tehran meeting.

They also agreed to form a Bangladesh-Iran parliamentary friendship association.

Free entry to Shishu Park today

Shishu Park at Shahbag will remain open to all, free of charge, from 10 am to 4 pm today on the occasion of World Children's Day, a Dhaka City Corporation press release said yesterday.

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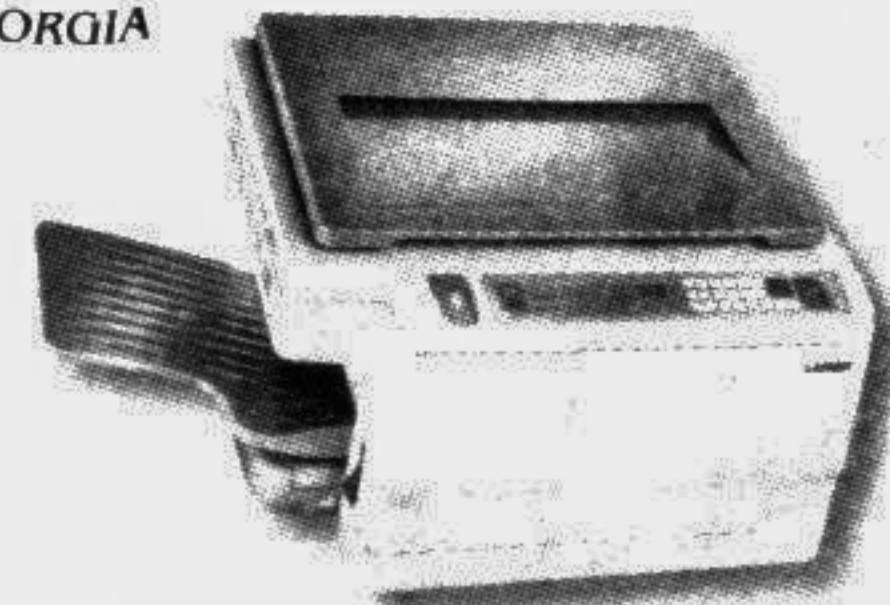
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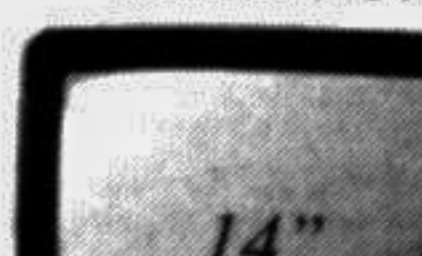
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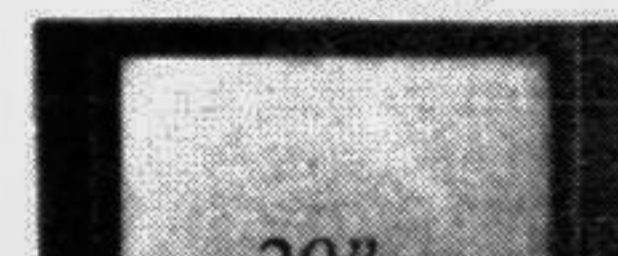
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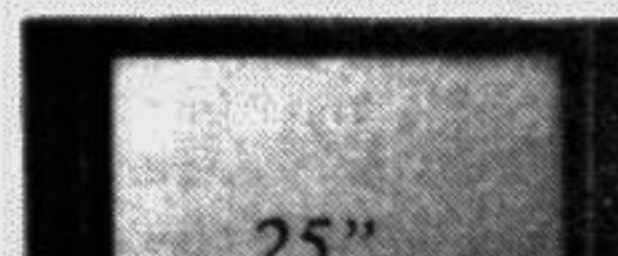
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