

seminar

# Perspective on Contemporary Bengali Arts

Professor Henry Glassie discusses on "The dilemma of the modern for the traditional artists in Bangladesh"

By Saima Islam

THE Library Hall of the Centre for Study of Bengal Art (ICSBA) was filled with listeners on the pleasant afternoon of May 19. Professor Henry Glassie of the Indiana University Bloomington, USA talked on "The dilemma of the modern for the traditional artists in Bangladesh" on the 19th seminar of the Centre.

Dr. Glassie the author of 'Art and Life in Bangladesh' has been working in Bangladesh since 1987. "I write," he says, "to introduce you to the people of Bangladesh through their art and to use their art to exemplify the study of creativity in its own contexts as part of a general inquiry in to the human condition".

Dr. Glassie has visited Bangladesh many times and had the opportunity to work very closely with the potters, weavers and many such artists scattered all over Bangladesh. His work has taken him to the distant villages of Feni, Savar and many more so, when he speaks on art of Bangladesh he speaks from his first hand experience.

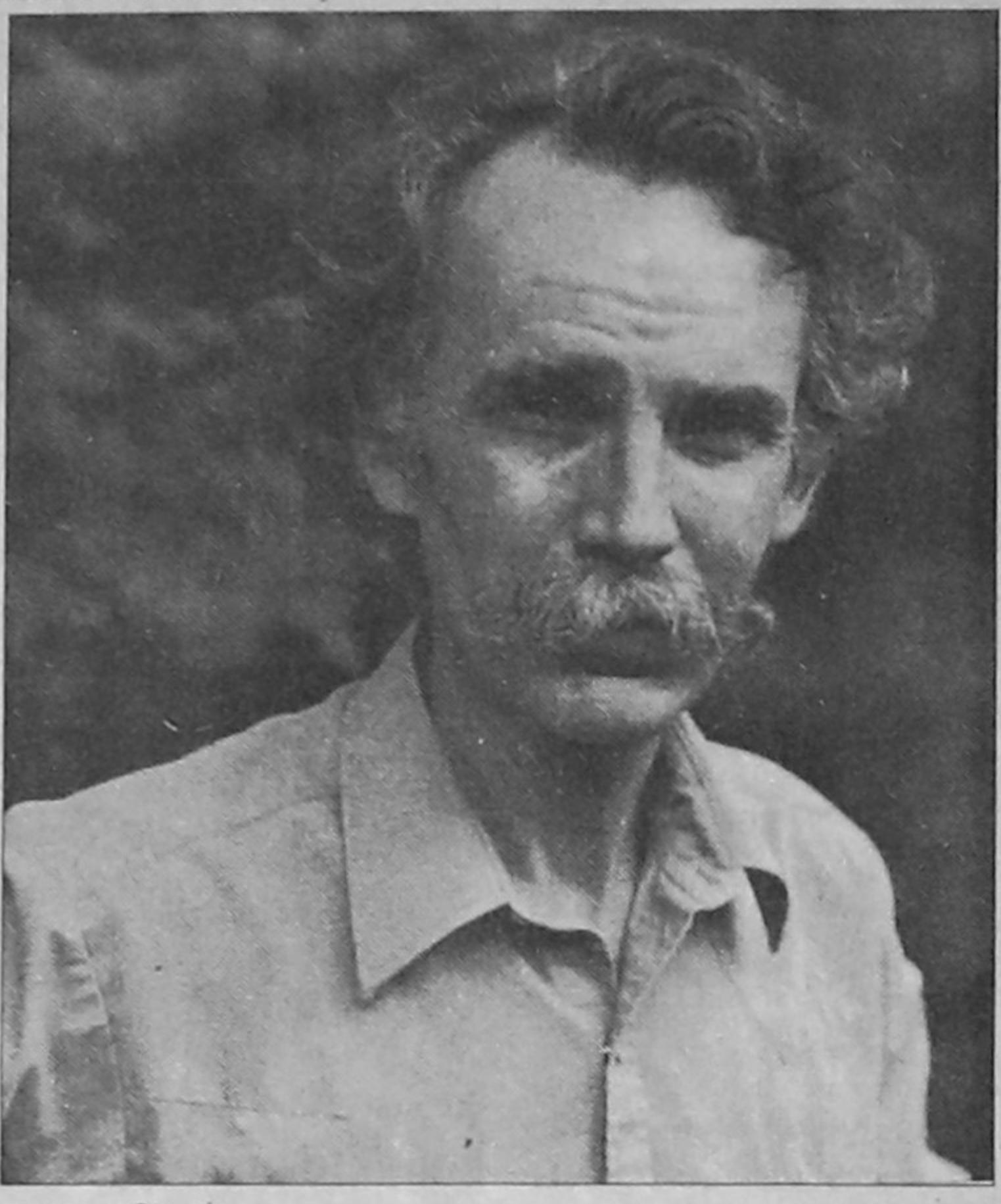
Dr. Enamul Haque, Chairman and Academic Director of the Centre began the discussion by welcoming everyone. He said, "Over the years Bangladesh has gained a reputation as a rural country. But the concept is changing very fast as communication has improved a great deal. Our countryside is being exposed to many western-developing organizations in recent times. Dr. Glassie will shed light on the changes these have brought upon the artists of Bangladesh".

Dr. Glassie began his speech by quoting from Eliot where he

said, "All art is traditional". According to the Professor, all the artists from all over the world has the same creative urge, which inspires them to create and which reflects their traditional background. To him the potters of the Kazi Para reflect as much tradition as Michael Angelo or an artist of New York. He cited the example of Haripada Pal, a potter, as one of the greatest artist in the world who could earn up to 75 thousand dollars a year if he

lived in USA. The economic, geographical, academic or any such factors do not really matter because an artist is an artist despite everything.

Haripada Pal creates his pieces out of love for his art. His energy transcends in to his works and a new Haripada Pal is born through his works. Pal's works show a beautiful fusion of the spiritual with creativity. Dr. Glassie says, "In that moment of creation all the artists are one".



Dr Henry Glassie

But with the changing time, materialism has spread its influence on art and the artists, some of which are good and some are bad. According to the Professor, modern art is done out of greed not out of love. The artists end up making things for money.

He remembered a village where potters used to make water pots, 'Kolshi' but with time they switched to making flowerpots, 'Phooler Tob'. Dr. Glassie said that he has noticed how the whole village bore the depressed overtone of this materialistic change; the men did not seem to find pleasure in their jobs anymore and left the task to the women. This, to him is the simple story of death of art in a capitalistic system.

How can a pretty woman in sari, living in Bangladeshi village compete with 'Globalisation'? Consumers do not want to buy clay kolshis instead they want to buy flowerpots. "My 13 years of research in Bangladesh showed me that capitalism kills useful crafts".

But there is a whole different angle to this story as well. The wealthy consumers like to collect and display. Here comes the exquisite piece of art like, Jamdani. The Jamdani makers of Rupshi depend on the rich clientele.

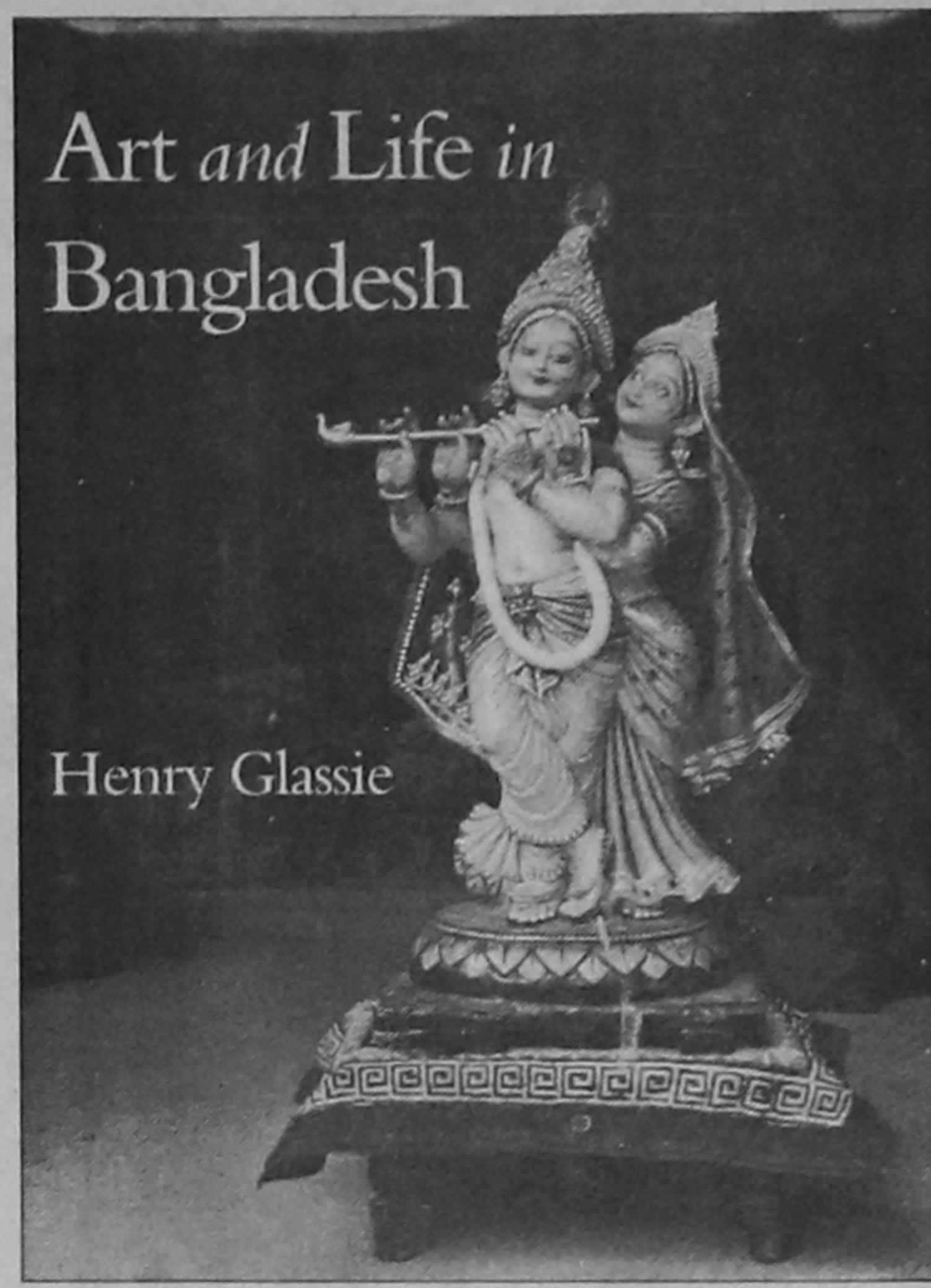
If the artists do their own trades they get a good bargain the problems arises when the middlemen are involved. Sometimes the NGOs play the part of the middlemen. These middlemen crush the artists. If a Jamdani is sold for Taka 3000, then the weaver gets about 1000 Taka for it. But there are instances, where a Nakshikatha was sold

buy an NGO for 300 dollars and the maker only received 25 dollars for it. These example shows, capitalism works well than NGOs.

Dr. Glassie recorded two kinds of changes brought up by capitalism, one that encourages the artists and one that destroys the art and the artists for money.

Another aspect of the modern art is its absence of God; the reality of life takes the upper hand to the spiritual expression. In this regard the Professor said, "The most rich, profound and dedicated art is the religious art, be it Hindu or Muslim". Dr. Glassie ended his discussion remembering Babu Lal of Shimulia and Paru Begum of Feni. He took a hectic journey to Shimulia to see Babu Lal and his sculpted figure of 'Radha and Krishna'. To the Professor, "This artistic piece has made the world bigger and better". He went to see Paru Begum who makes prayer mats. "The simple geometric patterns, the enclosing squares made the prayer mat a wonderful piece of art and all my trips and my 13 years of hard work in Bangladesh was worth while because of these two brilliant pieces of art".

Dr. Henry Glassie is a professor of Folklore and Co-ordinator or Turkish Studies at Indiana University, USA. He has been a Guggenheim Fellow and a fellow of the National Humanities Institute; he has also served as President of the vernacular Architecture Forum and of the American Folklore Society.



Glassie has received many awards for his work, including the Chicago Folklore prize and the Award for Superior Service from the ministry of Culture of the Turkish Republic.

Three of his books have been named among the notable books of the year by the New York Times. His books include:

## RECOMMENDATIONS

### Musical Extravaganza

the High Commission of India will be presenting 'Bangla Gaan' from May 27 to 29, 2000 at the Indian Cultural Center auditorium at 754 Satmasjid Road. The programme will start on May 27 with Rabindra Sangeet by Mita Haq followed by Folk songs by Farida Parveen. On 28th May, there will be Rabindra Sangeet by Sharna Rahman and Nazrul Geeti by Nasheed Kamal Waiz. The programme will conclude on 29th may with Rabindra Sangeet by Rezwan Chowdhury 'Banya' followed by Nazrul Geeti & Kirtan by Nilofer Yasmin.

The programme will start at 6:30 pm everyday and will be held at 754 Satmasjid Road auditorium.

### French Musical Night

Alliance Francaise de Dhaka will be organising a 'French Musical Evening dedicated to the famous French composer of classical music Claude Debussy on Saturday, May 27 at 7.00 pm. There will also be visual display of French classical music over the century.



### Folk Art Exhibition

A month-long exhibition on traditional folk art and crafts began at the National Museum, Shahbagh. State Minister for Information Prof Abu Sayeed inaugurated the exhibition on May 21. Prof. Tofael Ahmed and Dr. Henry Glassie was also present as special guest on the occasion.

### Exhibition on Iranian Architecture

A three-day long exhibition on pictures of Iranian architecture began yesterday on the occasion of International Cultural Heritage and Archeological Day at the Iranian Cultural Centre, Road No 8/A, Dhanmondi R/A. Time: 10:00 am - 1:00 PM and 3:00 pm - 7:00 pm.

### Contemporary Iranian films

Venue: German Cultural Centre, Dhanmondi. Organized by Zahir Raihan Film Society, this festival showcases a selection of some of the finest films made and produced by Iranian film makers. Everyday beginning at 4:30pm, the festival also features two retrospective shows by Makhmalbaf and Abbas Kiarostami.

### The Contemporary Iranian Film Festival: Part Two Dariush Mehrjui Film session

Date	Time	Film
22.05.2000	5:00 PM	Hamoon

### The Contemporary Iranian Film Festival: Part Three The Iranian Women Filmmakers

Date	Time	Film
23.05.2000	4:30 PM	The Sealed Soil

### The Contemporary Iranian Film Festival: Part Four The Makhmalbaf Retrospective

Date	Time	Film
28.05.2000	5:55 PM	The Peddler
	7:30 PM	The Cyclist

### The Contemporary Iranian Film Festival: Part Five The Abbas Kiarostami Retrospective

Date	Time	Film
30.05.2000	4:30 PM	The Bread and Ale
	4:40 PM	The Traveller
	6:00 PM	Where is my Friend's home?
31.05.2000	4:30 PM	The Chorus
	4:47 PM	And Life Goes on
	6:15 PM	Through the Olive Trees
01.06.2000	4:30 PM	Close Up
	6:15 PM	The Taste of Cherry

## TV Guide

Monday 22th May  
(All programmes are in local time. The Daily Star will not be responsible for any change in the programme)

### BTW

3.00 Opening Ceremony, 3.20 Open University, 4.00 Khabar, 4.05 Cartoon, 4.30 Health Information, 4.45 Sports Programme, 5.20 Anu Paramanu, 5.45 Nutrition Facts, 6.00 Khabar, 6.10 Programme from Chittagong Centre, 7.00 Weather Forecast, 7.05 Dolon Champa, 7.25 Bara Prabha, 8.00 News in Bengali, 8.20 Drama, 10.00 News at Ten, 10.20 Badhan Hara, 10.30 Khabar/The News, 11.45 Close Down.

### EKUSHEY

7.00 Circus Circus, 7.20 Animated Show Jumanji, 7.45 News, 8.00 Nurjahan, 9.00 MTV Bangladesh Countdown, 10.00 News at Ten from BTV, 10.30 Chena Mukh Chena Soor 11.00 The Big Fight

Akasher Niche 9:00 Serial: Jhara Samayer Upakatha (\*Rupa Ganguly) 9:30 Serial: Jibaan Rekha (\*Indrani, Kushol) 10:00 News in Bangali 10:30 Serial: Shoni-Robi Mojar Chobi #10 11:00 Serial: Half Chocolate 11:30 Serial: Nil Chander Alo 12:00 Serial: Guest House 12:30 Bharat Bhroman 1:00 Ghirosaja 1:30 Bangla Movie 4:00 Serial: Param Para (\*Nina Gupta, Monah Vandana) 4:30 Beauty Parlour

Today 5:00 BBC World News Inc. World Business Report/24 Hours

### Zee English

8:00 Late Show with David Letterman 9:00 Kate And Allie Academy Awards Winners 9:30 Remarkable 20th Century 10:00 Music Zone 10:30 The Roseanne Show 11:30 Benny Hill Show 12:00 Sunday Special: Nothing Lasts For

12:55 Quraan-E-Hakeem 1:02 Bismillah 1:15 Drama Serial 2:00 Drama Serial 2:50 The Face Of Cultural 3:15 Roushni 3:30 Paimanay 4:00 Roudhari 4:35 Biology For 10th/Geography/Chemistry 5:55 Inter College Chemistry 7:45 English News 8:00 Potluck 8:20 Ali Baba 8:45 Yeh To Hai Hi Lollywood 9:00 Break For Headline News 9:02 Yeh To Hai Hi Lollywood 9:50 Pura Chand 10:00 Khabarnama & Commercial News & Pak Business Update 11:15 Classics Drama Serial: Crime Files 12:20 Special: TBA 1:00 Khas

Mag 9:30 Bajaj Music Box 10:00 Sizzlers 10:30 Himal Gold T. Jharokha 11:00 Indi Pop Ka Baap Kaun 11:30 Shabab 12:00 Music Zone 1:00 Brake Fail 1:30 Himal Gold T. Jharokha 2:00 Bajaj Music Box 2:30 Just Jammin 3:00 Ta Ra Rum 4:00 Music Zone 5:00 Brake Fail 6:00 Sizzlers

Samachar 7:45 Kashmir Dateline 8:00 Serial: Saharafan 8:30 The News 8:32 Serial: Kapal Kundla 9:00 Samachar 9:15 The News 9:30 Serial: Beta 10:00 Serial: Jai Gang Maih 10:30 Serial: Suraj (Detective Serial) 11:30 Daily Soap Kartavya 12:00 Amanat 12:30 Chingari 1:00 Warish 1:30 Professor Pyarelal 2:00 Gudgudee 2:30 Naye Nazrane (Film Triller) 3:00 Feature Film (B/W):

Ayub Khan) 10:30 Thriller At 10 11:00 Daily Soap Aangan (\*Neena Gupta, Farha, Sumeet Saigal, Arun Gavil, Rohit Kumar, Karlika Rane) 11:30 Daily Soap Kartavya 12:00 Amanat 12:30 Chingari 1:00 Warish 1:30 Professor Pyarelal 2:00 Gudgudee 2:30 Naye Nazrane (Film Triller) 3:00 Feature Film (B/W):

### SONY TV

7:30 Khas Khabar 10:30 Gane Game 10:35 Daily Sope: Shree Ram Krishna 11:00 Daily Sope: Dropadi (\*Rupa Ganguli, Suneeta, Kushal, Sankar) 11:30 Classical/Folk Songs 11:30 Parliament Hour / Musical 12:30 Bengali Film 3:00 Daily Sope: Maha Prohbu 3:30 Daily Sope: Mohini 3:55 Daily Sope: Bhul Thikani 4:20 Nepali Programme 5:05 Tarunder Janey 5:30 News 5:40 Gaan 5:50 Palli Katha: 6:10 Serial: 6:40 Khas Khabar 6:50 Daily Soap: Ghar Mandir 4:30 Bangla Sambad 7:55 Dindan 8:00 Serial: 8:30 Serial: Juti/Bangla Sodee Gaan 9:00 Daily Soap: Jamimbhumi 9:30 Daily Soap: Shree Ram Krishna 10:00 Khas Khabar 10:20 Mokho Mukhi 10:50 Sambad 11:00 Bengali Movie: 2000 9:30 MTV Hit Film Music 10:00 MTV House Full VJ Nafisa 10:30 MTV Gaao Baby Gao 11:00 MTV Lovelife VJ Malika 11:30 The Grind (Beach Show) 12:00 MTV Chill Out VJ Cyrus/Asif/Nikhil 1:00 MTV Say What 2:00 Non-Stop Hits

7:40 Atma 8:00 Sant Asaram Wani 8:30 Chartbusters (Trailer Show) 9:00 Ek Mahal Ho Sapo Ka (Daily Soap) 9:30 Amanat 10:00 Music Mantra (Trailer Show) 10:30 Daily Soap- Ithaias 11:00 Daily Sope- Nazdeekyan 11:30 Daily Sope- Naza 12:00 Chartbusters (Trailer Show) 12:30 Movers And Shakers 1:30 Music Mantra (Trailer Show) 2:00 Boogi Woogi 2:30 Daily Sope- Ek Mahal Ho Sapo Ka 3:00 Daily Soap- Aurat 3:30 Daily Soap- Ghar E Mandir 4:00 Daily Soap- Ithaias 4:30 Daily Soap- Nazdeekyan 5:00 Junoon 5:30 Bajal Ki Lehran 6:00 Just Mohabat #148 6:30 Tujhe Dil- Surban 9 (\*Parmesh Sheth, Grusha Kapoor, Ronit Roy) 7:00 The Poppadom Show 7:30 Music Mantra (Trailer Show) 8:00 Chartbusters (Trailer Show) 8:25 Kabhi Yeh Kabhi Woh 8:55 I Love You #25 Ep- (\*Anup Soni, Shruti Ulfat) 9:35 Saaya #77 (\*Achintay Kaur, Anup Soni, Aar Mahadev, Monisha) 10:10 Missing #47 Ep- Rambabu Bhat Pt-1 (Pre. Jacky Shroff) 10:45 Movers And Shakers 11:30 Ek Mahal Ho Sapo Ka 12:00 Heena #73 (\*Rakhi Bhat, Siman Singh, Rahul Bhatt, Nina Kulkarni) 12:30 Family No.1#81 (\*Kanwaljeet, Tanvi Azmi, Kabir, Aporna) 1:00 Thodi Si Bewafa #2 1:30 Kaash #3 2:00 Movers And Shakers 3:00 Daily Soap- Nazdeekyan 3:30 Cine Nite Show-Hindi Feature Film : Mahasati Savitri

### DD METRO

7:00 Anhad 7:15 Bhakti Sagar 7:45 Subah Aaj Tak 8:30 Imaging Science 9:00 The First Edition 9:30 Captain House 10:00 Serial: Alif Lalai 10:30 Ret Par Likhe Naam 11:00 Daily Sope- Naya 11:30 Daily Sope- Naza 12:00 Chartbusters (Trailer Show) 12:30 United Tele Shopping 12:30 Geeton Bhai Kahan 1:00 Serial: Bajee Payal 1:30 TV Brand 2:00 Daawat: Cookery Show 2:30 Daily Sope- Bandhan 2:55 News In Urdu 3:05 Serial: Swaranjali 3:30 Hindi Film Show: 6:00 Flash Garden 6:30 Mickey & Friends 7:00 Nature Calls 7:30 Parody Time 7:45 Navrang 8:00 Fashion Square 8:30 Daily