

Looking beyond Boi Mela

Interview with Director, Bangla Academy

On an occasion like the Ekushey Bangla Academy becomes the focal point of attention. It is a symbol of our cultural identity and a centre to peg our literary and creative imagination.

The Daily Star: There is a growing feeling among a section of the citizenry that an academy of letters like Bangla Academy should not waste its time and energy in holding a book fair which could be the responsibility of something like the Publishers' Guild or the Jatiya Grantha Kendra that deals particularly with the publishing industry and that the Academy should devote its time in promoting the country's arts and culture.

SH: In our young writers' programme budding writers and poets were given opportunity to prepare their manuscripts under the guidance of renowned writers and these were published by the academy at a later period.

DS: You must be aware that UPL has recently published an international journal on arts and letters to give our writings a global exposure. The Academy has failed on that account. Don't you think so?

SH: The Academy has been publishing a half-yearly journal, Bangla Academy Journal, almost since its inception which is now suspended due to lack of editorial hands.

Selina Hussain: If you look at Boi Mela just as an annual event where people come and choose titles of their choice from the shelves will be a contrived idea of what the Boi Mela is all about.

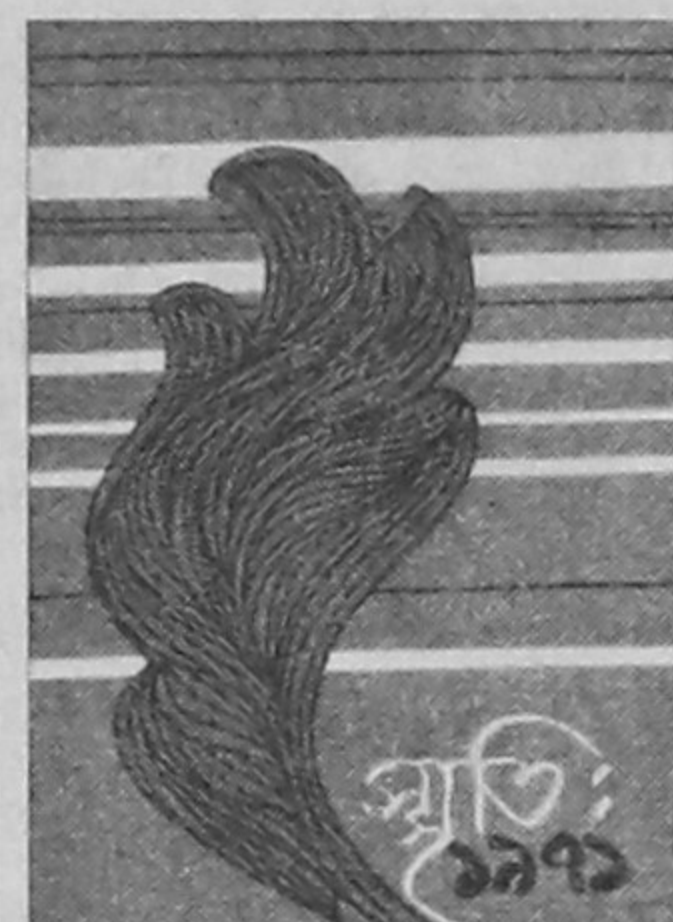


The Ekushey Boi Mela

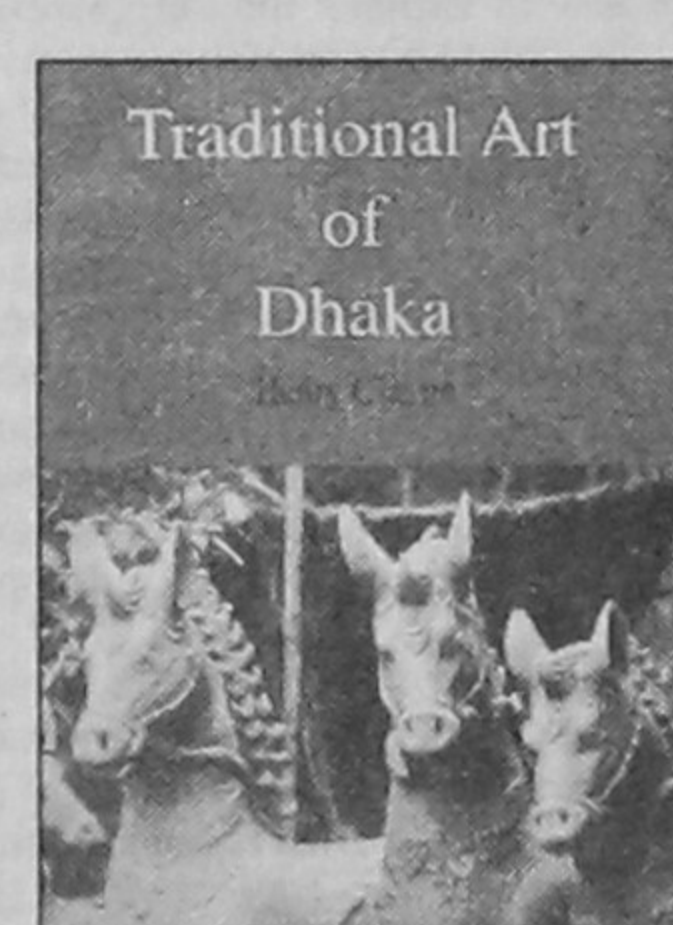
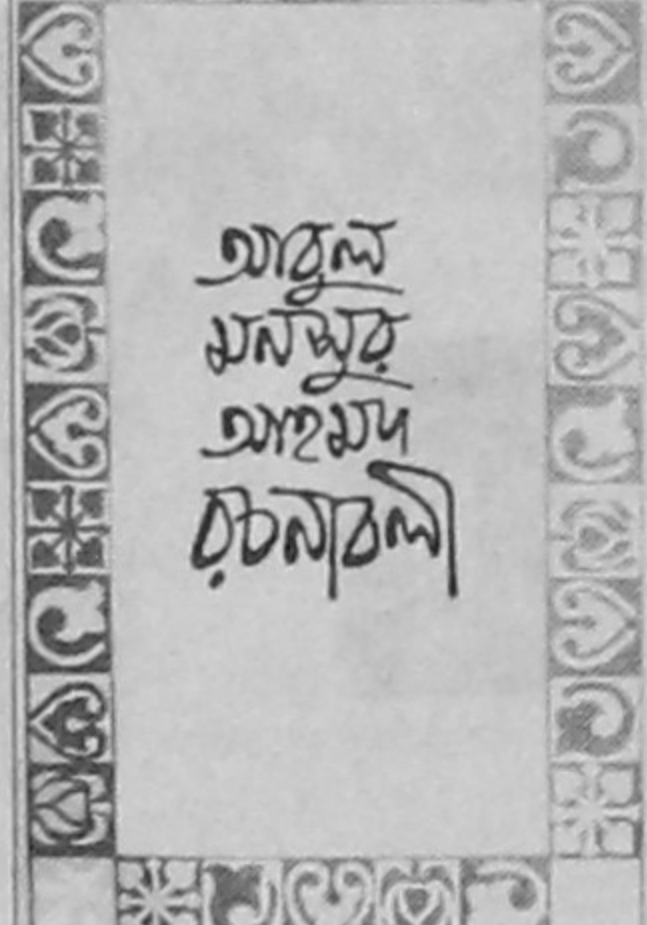
events and Ekushey February lectures. It is also an expression of the nation's emotions associated with and intellectual aspiration attached to language movement.

we aimed at and also it was basically meant for local consumption. We never stove for international exposure.

DS: If the academy aims at interaction between writers, like playing the window to the arts and literature of the world then it should be holding international seminars, writers' conferences or writers-in-residence programmes and the likes.



SH: You are right. Yes, Bangla Academy should have played the window to the arts and literature of the world and be a catalyst to global interaction between writers.



Some of the publications

Reminiscing Ekushey from afar

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 5

It decided to visit East Pakistan for the very first time, that the government decided to build the four-lane road, which is the main road passing through the Farmgate area.

Rashtr Bhasha Andolon. Still there were no words from Karachi as to whether Bangla would be considered one of the state languages of Pakistan.

By this time, the Bangalees were thoroughly disgusted over the way some Muslim League leaders of East Pakistan were behaving and selling out the interest of our province.

In 1955, the Bhasha Andolon day commemorated its third year anniversary. By now, we have grown a little older. We could venture out to the main road to see if there is any action going on over there.

Those early years of our Bhasha Andolon were great days for us, the kids. We were too little to understand the intricacies of politics of subjugation.

schools were organizing Probhateri, arranging walking tours to Azimpur cemetery to lay flowers next to Shahid Salam and Barakat's graves.

protest the step-motherly attitude of some powerful Muslim League politicians from Punjab, Sindh, and NWFP who thought Bangla was not good enough of a language to be considered as one of the state languages of Pakistan.

Looking back at February 21

DR MAJOR MUHAMMAD MAHFUZ HUSSAIN, RETD.

THE veterans of the historic language movement and people of Bangladesh expressed their happiness and satisfaction over the UNESCO decision to observe the 21st February as 'International Mother Language Day' all over the world.

The action on the peaceful language movement processionists by the armed law enforcing personnel on 21 February 1952 was not an isolated event, rather it had links with all previous movements for language.

The State language movement became a national issue for people of the then East Pakistan and we held frequent meetings and processions with banners proclaiming our legitimate demand.

In May 1949 when I was a first-year student of Dhaka Medical College we came out in a procession to attend a meeting at the Dhaka Hall (now Shahid Ullah Hall) premises of Dhaka University.

On 21 February 1952, from morning the students were assembling on road sides and inside the hostel to lead a procession towards the Assembly Hall.

First, we received the deadbody of Rafiq. A bullet had pierced his forehead and skull. Next was Abul Barkat with bullet injury in left groin.

From there we reached Curzon Hall area and dispersed. Later on we found that all those Ministers gave us false promises just to avoid further agitation.

Then onwards many more processions were brought out by students in Dhaka city and every time we were intercepted by the police.

The State language movement became a national issue for people of the then East Pakistan and we held frequent meetings and processions with banners proclaiming our legitimate demand.

In May 1949 when I was a first-year student of Dhaka Medical College we came out in a procession to attend a meeting at the Dhaka Hall (now Shahid Ullah Hall) premises of Dhaka University.

On 21 February 1952, from morning the students were assembling on road sides and inside the hostel to lead a procession towards the Assembly Hall.

First, we received the deadbody of Rafiq. A bullet had pierced his forehead and skull. Next was Abul Barkat with bullet injury in left groin.

From there we reached Curzon Hall area and dispersed. Later on we found that all those Ministers gave us false promises just to avoid further agitation.

third man we received was Salam who sustained bullet injury in his left upper abdomen. He was operated upon by Professor Novak of Clinical Surgery.

After sunset the students of Dhaka Medical College decided to construct a monument (Shahid Minar) in the same place where all those three young men were killed/severely injured by bullets.

The Shahid Minar was about 14-15 feet. This which was constructed by the students of Dhaka Medical College themselves with the help of some labourers.

From morning, on 22 February 1952, hundreds of men and women started visiting the blood stained site. Students of all schools, colleges and Dhaka University observed strike in Dhaka city.

From the depth of darkness punctuated by scattered stars/came a rebuke: 'when I let you grasp me you call a deception, and yet when I remain concealed, Ashy do you hold on to your faith in me with such conviction?'

armed police. They fired tear gas shells and bullets. In that police action Shafiqur Rahman, a clerk of Dhaka High Court was killed.

After completion of Shahid Minar on 23 February 1952 in the early morning, hundreds of people were visiting it to pay respect to the martyrs.

Radio Dhaka was functioning with recorded songs only, since the firing on February 21, by non-Bangalee employees.

We stopped their transport and asked them to go back but they resisted. We attempted to puncture the tyres and they quickly drove towards Dhaka city.

On February 24 in the early morning police in groups raided different barracks of Dhaka Medical College students hostel and arrested many students.

On February 26 in the afternoon truckloads of police and army personnel came the Shahid Minar and demolished it.

From the depth of darkness punctuated by scattered stars/came a rebuke: 'when I let you grasp me you call a deception, and yet when I remain concealed, Ashy do you hold on to your faith in me with such conviction?'



The first Shahid Minar erected on Feb 22-23, 1952 by DMC students

completed overnight (between 22 February and 23 February 1952 with bricks, sand and cement which were available in the nearby area as some construction of the hospital was going on).

The Shahid Minar was about 14-15 feet. This which was constructed by the students of Dhaka Medical College themselves with the help of some labourers.

From morning, on 22 February 1952, hundreds of men and women started visiting the blood stained site. Students of all schools, colleges and Dhaka University observed strike in Dhaka city.

From the depth of darkness punctuated by scattered stars/came a rebuke: 'when I let you grasp me you call a deception, and yet when I remain concealed, Ashy do you hold on to your faith in me with such conviction?'



Remembering the martyrs

Thinking about language

The value of Bangla re-visited

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 5  
vein, when Syed Mujtaba Ali writes of one of his teachers (quite the character in his own right) who is paid Rs. 25 whilst Rs. 75 is spent on his English superintendent's dog.

From the depth of darkness punctuated by scattered stars/came a rebuke: 'when I let you grasp me you call a deception, and yet when I remain concealed, Ashy do you hold on to your faith in me with such conviction?'

A H Jaffer Ullah, a senior research scientist, writes from New Orleans

Syed Nageeb Mustafa Ali writes from Boston