

Festival

Poets voice their dreams

Two-day Jatiyo Kabita Utsav 2002 opens amid enthusiasm and gusto

AZIZ AMIRUL

THE two-day national poetry festival, Jatiyo Kabita Utsav 2002, kicked off yesterday morning at the premises of Central Public Library in the city.

A grand rally was brought by renowned poets and cultural personalities of the country to mark the festival from the main venue at 11:00 in the morning. Poet Shamsur Rahman, the grand old man of our poetry, led the procession. The rally visited the graves of rebel poet Kazi Nazrul Islam and artist Quamrul Hassan. On its way back the rally stopped at Shaheed Minar to pay homage to the martyrs of the Language Movement.

The festival, featuring poetry reading, seminar and exhibition of posters and news clipping, is a regular annual event, organised by Jatiyo Kabita Parishad on the first and second day of February, since 1987.

Leading poets of the country Syed Shamsul Haq, Abul Hossain,



Poet Belal Chowdhury and others seen in front of the grand rally

Mazharul Islam, Asad Chowdhury, Nirmalendu Goon, Lutfar Rahman Sarker, Rabiul Hussain, Samudra Gupta, Aslam Sani, Sajjad Qadir, Khaleida Edib Chowdhury, Habibullah Siraji, Golam Kibria, Mohammad Samad, Helal Hafiz and Rafiq Azad, among others, were present at the first session of the two-day affair.

Raising of the national flag, songs on Ekushey were other activities of the day. An obituary note was read out in memory of the cultural personalities who passed away within the 12 months of March 2001 and January 2002.

In the evening, two sessions of poetry reading was held participated by young as well as veteran



Members of the rally lay wreath on the graves of Nazrul and Potua Kamrul

poets of the country. Eminent personalities Habibullah Siraji and Ramendu Majumder presided over the sessions.

Kaal-er Jatra-ey Kabita-r Jayoddhoni meaning Triumph of Poetry in the Passage of Time is this years slogan of the festival.

The festival greeted six guests poets from West Bengal. They are

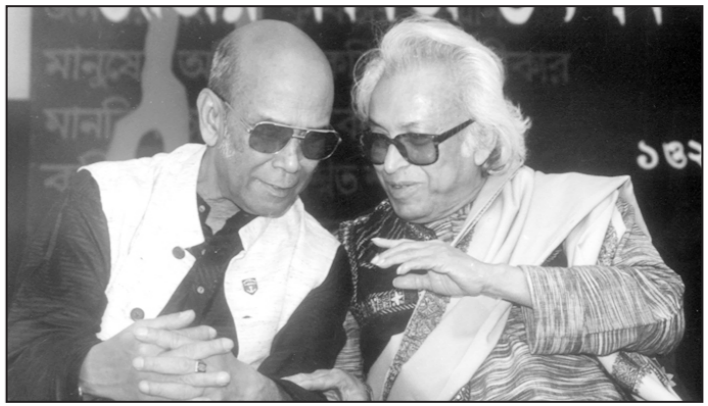
Korobi Deb Burman, Mridul Das Gupta, Chitra Lahiri, Sebonti Ghose, Srijat and Panchali Deb Burman

Like in other years, the current version of the festival has given bright opportunity to several hundred poets from across the country of deliverance of speech and recitation of poems in front of enthusiastic audience and guests from home and abroad. Most of the compositions have been written in spirit of the Martyrs of Language Movement of 1952 and the martyred freedom fighters of the Liberation War of Bangladesh.

The concept of the poetry festival was shaped by literary personalities of the country in the mid-80's during the autocratic regime of the military rule in Bangladesh. Every version of the festival carried a particular theme and those focussed mainly on ideas and statements against all sorts of issues that gave rise to terrorism, comm-unalism, violence and fundamentalism.

"Our chief purpose of holding this poetry festival lies in the fact of raising voice against all sorts of communal and autocratic mismanagement in the society", observed Belal Chowdhury, President of the Parishad.

The current festival has had a special significance in observance as it coincided with the 50th year of



Syed Shamsul Haq and Shamsur Rahman, two most famous poets discuss in between a brief break

our Language Movement. Incidents of the struggling days of 1952 have always played a key role in pumping up the emotional spirit of the poets.

"This festival has become a national event. We want to spread the spirit of the festival among the younger generation, said Poet Rabiul Hussain, convener of the festival. The best part of the whole affair is the congregation of poetry lovers irrespective of class, creed or quarter. There is no doubt that the common people have started realis-

ing the importance communal harmony', added Hussain. On the closing day today there will seminars on 'Ekushey February Anthology Edited by Hassan Hafiz Rahman and another on Our Poetry: 50th Anniversary of Language Movement at 11:00 in the morning at the same venue. Curtain will come down on the festival with poetry reading, award giving ceremony and musical soiree in the evening.



(From L to R) Poets Rabiul Hussain, Belal Chowdhury, Syed Shamsul Haq and Shamsur Rahman sitting on the stage of the festival



The chorus group renders song on Language Movement

Poetry Festival

Jatiyo Kabita Parishad has organised a two-day long National Poetry Festival that ends today at 8:00 pm at the venue of Central Public Library. Seminar on Ekushey and on 50 years of Language Movement takes place at the festival venue at 11:00 a.m. today.

Drama Festival

Natty Utsav 2002, the national festival of drama is going on at the Mahila Samity auditorium in the city. The festival will continue till February 20 organised by Bangladesh Group Theatre Federation. The drama festival is featuring 'Natty Jalsa' after the staging of the theatrical productions, each evening. Each Jalsa includes cultural events performed by members of the theatre groups. Coinciding with the drama festival began the 'Street Drama Festival 2002' that will continue till February 7, 2002. 'Fair & Lovely Drama Festival 2002' is continuing at the Showkat Osman auditorium of Central Public Library. The weeklong festival has been arranged with the theme 'Reach for the Skies'. DESH NATOK has composed five of the seven theatrical plays of the festival.

Etching Print Exhibition

A solo etching prints exhibition by Rashid Amin, a Charupith Fellow (2001) is continuing at Gallery 21. The exhibition will remain open till February 10 from 2 p.m. to 8 p.m. everyday.

Book Fair

Amar Ekushey Grantha Mela, a three-week long book fair at the premises of Bangla Academy is in progress. The fair is open everyday from morning till evening

Award

In recognition of quality production

Weeklong celebration of 7th Dhaka International Film Festival ended on January 28, 2002 with declaration of awards in five categories to two films from Iran and one each from India, Japan and Sri Lanka

CULTURAL CORRESPONDENT

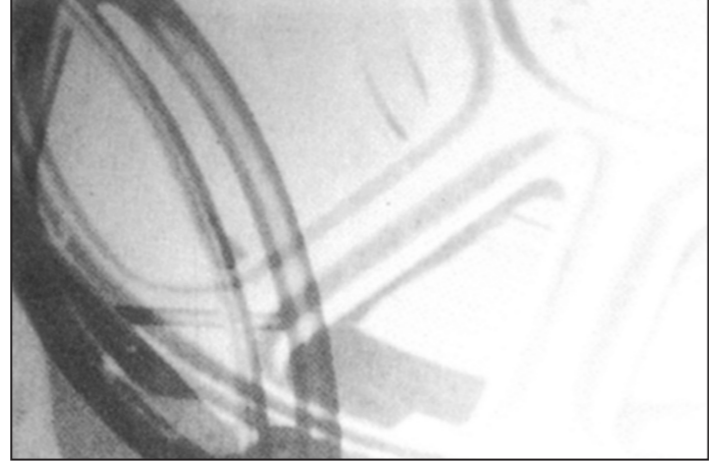
CURTAINS came down on 7th Dhaka International Film Festival on January 28. A total of 99 films from 19 countries were exhibited at the auditoriums of Central Public Library, Goethe Institut and Indian High Commission Cultural Center. Sev-

Iran earned a very important recognition in the festival by way of winning Audience Award. The film, directed by Jafar Panahi, was honoured with crest and certificate. Audience Survey was co-ordinated by Bangladesh Federation of the Film Societies and the Convener of the survey committee was Mr. Sirazul Islam Khan. International Federation of Film

lives of the Kumbharas or the potters of Kerala. The film looked into the harsh and crude lifestyle of the poverty-stricken third world community bull-dozed by progress of industrialisation. The entire story is seen in the perspective of Alagiri, a maverick among the potters and the life of a family. The neighbouring families carried on with their daily money, Razieye met a lot of people who seemed uninterested in her thoughts and many simply were too busy with other works than to give attention to her requests and queries. Thus at a point, the girl's hopes and dreams were shattered like house of cards and there remained no joyful moments for the girl in the New Year's day.



Going-By is a well-composed feature film from Iran



Feature version of the film The Future Diary The Movie receives a high degree of repute in the festival

eral public cinema halls were also included in the list of venues of the film festival that lasted for 7 days. Rainbow Film Society had a special reason to celebrate this year's festival a little bit more than usual as The 7th Dhaka festival coincided with the 25th year of Rainbow's life.

At the end of the weeklong event, members of different Jury Boards who were designated for the film festival carried out judgement on the exhibited films. There were five awards for presentation from different sponsor groups both from the side of hosts as well as from foreign delegates.

The sponsored categories were of Rainbow Silver Jubilee Award, Audience Award, Don Quixote Award, International Film Critics Association FIPRESCI Award, and International Jury Award for the best film.

Rainbow Film Society introduced an award to highlight and commemorate its Silver Jubilee and the Rainbow Silver Jubilee Award went to an Indian film Monkalang (Guardians of the Earth) directed by renowned filmmaker Subrahmanian Santa Kumar. Award included a crest and a certificate.

Co-ordinator of the Committee of Rainbow Silver Jubilee Award was Mohamed Mijaral Quayes.

The White Balloon, a film from

Societies has introduced Don Quixote Award, and this year the award went to a Sri Lankan film, The Compensation. Director of the film was Bennett Rathnayake, a young filmmaker who made his debut through this festival. Ole Petter Bakken from Norway, Ebbe Preisler from Denmark and Morshedul Islam from Bangladesh were members of the Jury Board.

International Film Critics Association honoured a film from Iran, Unfinished Song with FIPRESCI Award. Seyed Maziar Miri directed the film. Prize included crest and certificate. Jury Board included three members, Derek Malcolm from UK as Chairman of the board, Probodh Mitra from India and Nasiruddin Yusuf from the host country.

International Jury Award for the best film was presented to a Japanese production, Future Diary The Movie. Sugimoto Toru directed the film that received crest, certificate and a financial amount of taka One hundred thousand. Members of the Jury Board included film personalities from Bangladesh and India like Masihuddin Shaker, Baby Islam and Sreelekha Mukherjee.

Guardians of the Earth, the Indian film that won Rainbow Silver Jubilee Award was a colour, 35 mm production with a serious type of plot, full of emotional stress in the

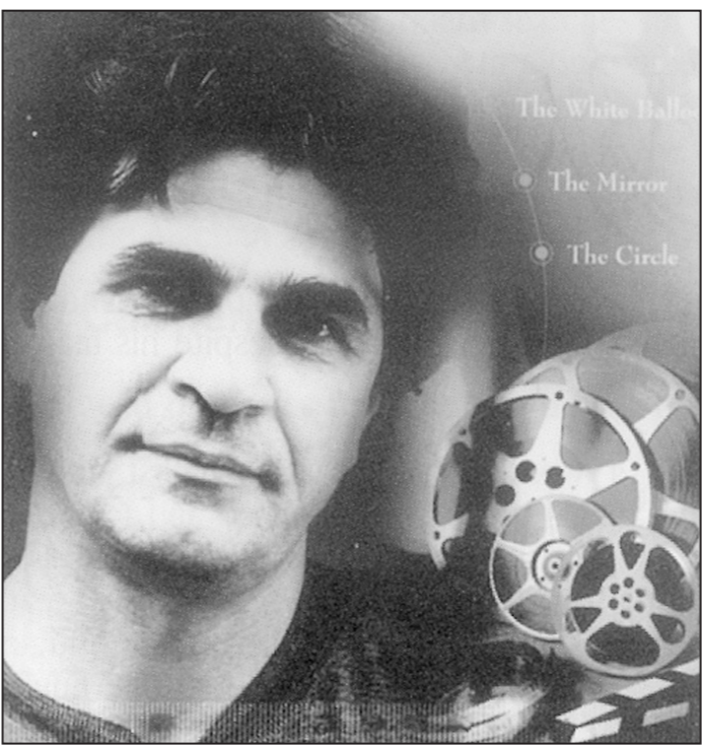
rituals and finally the Kumaran couple met a tragic end to their lives.

Plot of the film The White Balloon told the story of Razieye, a girl child who, before the start of a New Year, went out to buy a fancy gold fish. On way to the shop she lost her money. At this particular stage of the film, Panahi, the director tried to introduce the child to the audience as a serious human being who was worried about personal possession rather than being a mere child with careless thoughts and shuffling attention. In her search for the lost

The Compensation introduced a man whose wife had died the previous day and the man remained stationary beside the funeral pyre. After the completion of the final rituals he reached a police station and disclosed a shocking truth. He demanded his arrest for an earlier committed murder some 52 years ago. The couple had a secret pact that the truth should be revealed by one of them after the death of the other spouse. The police now started looking into the murder story and gradually the gruesome tale turned

to be real. After the narration of the incidents, the old man seemed relieved of his duties and felt as if he had awakened from a spell of deep meditation.

Unfinished Song focussed upon a young musician who headed to the north-west province of an Iranian town, Khorasan. His intention was to collect some folk songs, sung by village girls, where he was born. It was also the birthplace of Iranian folk music. He only found traces of lullabies and sad mourning songs. There remained no one to sing the song of joy and happiness.



Jafar Panahi, the most successful director of the festival

The Future Diary was a feature film based on a TV show. City girl Yuka spent a summer in the hills with city boy Taru and island boy Kuniyuki. The three fell for each other but again became worried by obeying the rules inscribed in the pages of a mysterious diary they were handed upon. The natural obstacles of the small group, their emotions and ideals received full attention in the plot of the film. A poignant, moving story of pure teenage love and friendship could be found in the scenes.

The theme of the present volume "Culture and Politics" suggests the diversity of Prof. Choudhury's interest. The editors of the volume, Fakrul Alam and Firdous Azim, write, "The Academic Committee of the Department of English approved our proposal for bringing out a book of essays compiled in honour of SIC's unique contributions to English studies in Bangladesh and selected us as the editors of the volume. Accordingly, we invited contributions from SIC's colleagues, students, and associates on the theme of "Culture and Politics," since we felt that this was a rubric broad enough to bind the diversity of his interests. The aim, as we saw it, was to bring out a collection that would be tribute to a great teacher who had inspired many us. We thus sought contributors from not only among his students but also many others who have been influenced by him in his role of public intellectual."

Both the editors of the volume were themselves student of Prof. Choudhury and therefore had had the opportunity to follow closely their teacher's teaching method. "Literature teaching worldwide has to grapple with issues of position -- of where literature belongs in the lives of people. When we, the editors of this volume, were students in the Department of English in the early 70's, literature teaching had perhaps been

marked by the "belles letters" approach. However, even within that system Serajul Islam Chowdhury held us spell-bound with the way that he blended in the poems of Tennyson with England's colonial ventures, or the ways in which he read D H Lawrence's novels to look at issues of economic exploitation. Literature departments all over the world and including our own have changed considerably in the last three decades, but that whiff of the broader world in which literature has its place has hopefully been reflected in the expansion of the courses offered in Serajul Islam Choudhury's department."

The volume is rich in content and varied in scope with contributions from academics, researchers, journalists and essayists. Most of Prof Choudhury's illustrious students have written for this unique volume from Syed Manzoorul Islam, Kaiser Haq, and Shawkat Hussain and Nuzhat Amin.

As the editors of the memorial volume say, "We have aimed at inclusivity, and have used this volume as a space where all of us can express, in our different ways, our gratitude and homage to Serajul Islam Choudhury," this meaty anthology is also a gratuity of the nation to this exemplary educationist.

Book Launching

Homage to an exemplary teacher

Commemorative volume on essayist, educationist, and man of letters Serajul Islam Choudhury released

CULTURE DESK

A Festschrift or commemorative volume titled Politics and Culture: Essays in honour of Serajul Islam Choudhury has just been released.

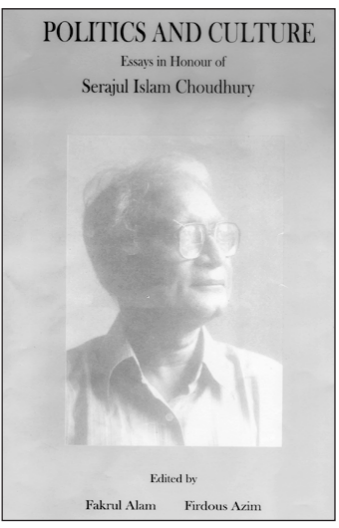
The volume features essays, reflections on Serajul Islam Choudhury's contributions to English studies in the country.

A legendary teacher at Dhaka University, Serajul Islam Choudhury has been a fountainhead of inspiration to generations of students at English Department.

A trenchant critic of culture and politics, Serajul Islam analysed the trends in society with disenchantment.

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