

CELEBRATING INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY

...from bricks to walls

RECOMMENDATIONS



Exhibition
March 06-26
To celebrate the 5th anniversary of the Bengal Gallery of Fine Arts, an exhibition featuring the recent works of the eminent artist Qayyum Chowdhury is going on. The show will be open for all till March 26 from 12:00 pm to 8:00 pm.

Events at Alliance Francaise

Exhibition
March 04-March 14
2nd solo exhibition of Ronni Ahmed is open at La Galerie from 5 to 9 pm.

March 19-30
The inauguration of a painting exhibition of artist Awena Cozannet will take place at 6 pm at the gallery.

Recitation
March 09-10
To celebrate Spring, poets will recite Bangla and French poems accompanied by piano at 6 pm.

Jazz evening
March 11
A Jazz evening will take place at 9:30 pm at the cafeteria, which is free for the members of the institute.

Musical evening
March 25
A musical programme will be held at the cafeteria at 9:30 pm. The members of the institute can enjoy the show free of cost.

SADYA AFREEN MALLICK

THERE was a time when groups of young girls would gather at the rooftops to practise *brotochary*. With the daily wash hung all across the roof as an ad-hoc tent off course.' my mother would tell us whenever the topic of women's movement came up. 'Here they learnt the *brotochary* dance and sang songs with simplest wordings known as *brotochary* songs...there was always intense resistance to women's freedom you see, and this was the only compromise they accepted. Little did they know how these 'un-threatening' actions would slowly build up to create a stage for women to come out of the stifling 'tent' that the larger society had built around them for centuries' she would continue. It never ceases to amaze me how the big ideas always start from small actions. And my mother's account of how the women's movement started was proof enough for me knowing that she was never far from the forefront that over the last 50 years had changed women's role in our society.

The *brotochary* dance form, encouraged the young people to be patriotic, non-communal and most importantly develop a sense of physical fitness and mental strength. With economic prog-



Malka Perveen,



The first Radio Station centred at Nazimuddin Road in Old Dhaka

ress and change in consciousness, social change was imminent. Progressive families championed the spirit of education and culture even amongst girls. A handful of girls who were blessed with such opportunity were very soon exposed to the world outside their courtyard.

It was a change that came about one step at a time. The time was approaching when the mass of the society would be exposed to women in performing arts. The radio off course played a significant role.

After the partition of 1947 the first Radio station was centred at Nazimuddin road at old Dhaka which was then the city centre.



Nomita Anwar,

Vocalists like Afsari Khanam, Anjali Mukherjee, Laila Arjumand Banu, Malika Perveen were already performing then. The two legendary figures Feroza Begum and Laila Arjumand Banu were amongst the most senior and popular artistes of that time. The Golden era of music in the then East Pakistan was pioneered in 1955-60 by Ferdousi Begum, Anjuman Ara Begum, Mahbuba Rahman, Farida Yasmeen, Nina Hamid, Sanjida Khatun, Farida Bari Malik and a host of others. This lineage was carried on from the pre-liberation of Bangladesh by Sabina Yasmeen, Shahnaz Rahmatullah, Runa Laila, to Papaya Sarwar, Nilufar Yasmeen,



Raushan Jamil,

Shabnam Mushtari, Rezwana Chowdhury, Farida Perveen, and a host of internationally reputed artistes.

I often heard stories from my mother Dr. Nurun Nahar Fyzennessa, how very few women joined the drama circle when she herself along with Madhobi Chatterjee, Nomita Anwar, Lilly Chowdhury, Biju Mustafa and much later Ayesha Khanam, Mirana Zaman and others entered the scene. In films Sultana Zaman, Reshma, Sujata, Sumita Devi, Shabnam, Rozy and later Kobori, Babita, Shuchanda and others joined in gradually.

Then there was *Khelaghar* an immensely popular radio programme aimed at nurturing the budding talents way back in the mid-sixties. Shahnaz Rahmatullah, Sabina Yasmeen, Shaheen Samaad, Sabiha Mahboob, Abida Sultana and myself along with many more appeared almost every Sunday, a weekly holiday then. Children gathered from all around the city to sing or recite a few lines from the poem. Dr. Fyzennessa initially conducted the programme and after a decade, Hena Kabir and others conducted it. One of the most active proponents of dance as a performing art was Bulbul Chowdhury. In 1938 he set up the dance institute Oriental Fine Arts Association. Through his exceptional performances, he earned widespread repute across Dhaka and Calcutta. After he passed away in 1954, his wife Afroza Bulbul, carried on his work through the setting up of Bulbul Academy of Fine Arts.

Around 1949, Gauhar Jamil, another great dancer came into limelight. He partnered with another stalwart of the dance world Raushan Jamil in the dance ballet, *Inder Shobha*. After they married in 1952, the couple established Jago Art Center- an institute that played an important role in the development of dance in the region. He introduced such new forms as *Jeley*



Feroza Begum

Nritto (Fishermen dance), *Gypsy, Cha Bagan* (tea garden), *Naga* (snake charmer), *Shaotali* (Santal) etc. In 1956 after the establishment of Bulbul Academy aspiring talents flocked to other dance institutes such as Nikkon, Jago Art Centre, Altaf Mahmood Music Academy and Chayanaut.

Over the years, some of the



Laila Arjumand Banu

leading performers to grace the stage in dance were Rahiza Khanam, Laila Hasan, Sharmin Hasan, Dahlia Salaududdin, Kajol Ibrahim, Lubna Marium, Zeenat Barkatulla, Shamim Ara Nipa, Sharmila Bandyapadhyay, Shukla Sharkar, Mun Mun Ahmed and others.

Performing arts have had a

profound impact on societal thought. It would be almost impossible to find an alternative to songs, drama and dance that can similarly convey such a direct and powerful message to inspire social awareness.

The changing role of women happened one step at a time, from the tents on rooftops, to the drama stage to public media. It was almost as if others drew strength from them in whatever fields they wanted to pursue be it the arts, work place or any other careers. Brick by brick, the walls that seemed impregnable, slowly faded away.

Change always needs a face, and these performing artists in dance, drama, radio and television would be the everlasting images of the women's movement. Let us pay tribute to them not only as part of a program today, but cherish them as the role models they are, carrying their dreams forward.



Flashes from the 60's: Dr. Fyzennessa (C) hosting the popular 'Khelaghar' with budding stars surrounding her. (L-R) Sabina Yasmeen, Shahnaz Rahmatullah, Rehana Ashiqur Rahman, Kajal Ibrahim and Shaheen Samaad

Voices of cultural activists

Today is the 'International Women's Day--a day dedicated to women all over the world. It is a day to recap the struggles of the last year, assess progress and initiate discussion about women's issues. In Bangladesh too, NGOs, government and civil society will observe this day through seminars, processions and meetings. The Daily Star spoke to eight eminent women from the world of art and culture about the importance of this day. -- SHILPI MAHALANABISH



Ferdousi Priyobhashini
sculptor

Given the discrimination that women face even today, I believe that it is important to have a special day dedicated to them. However, just one special day is not enough. As women have found to their bitter experience, we need more than meetings and processions once a year.



Ferdousi Rahman
singer

In our country, we have to accept the reality of violence against women. This is exemplified by dowry killings, acid attacks and domestic abuse. We need to look at women's issues the year round. Society needs to address itself to improving the position of women in the long term.

Ferdousi Majumdar
actress

A special day, earmarked internationally to promote women's rights, is a step in the right direction. Though women are gaining greater access to health, education and information, the reality is that we live in a male dominated society. The situation of rural women is particularly pathetic and needs to be addressed by policy makers.



Dolly Zahur
actress

Women activists and the political leaders should give proper direction to the women's movement. Personally, I don't believe that the women can truly achieve their rights through observing one day in the year as International Women's Day. We need to join hands with women from all over the world.



Joya Ahsan
model-TV actress

Why is there only one day for women? Every moment belongs to women. However we are at a long distance from our goal of equality for women. In a small and less developed country like Bangladesh, the pressing needs of development make it difficult for women to get their place in the sun. Just words will not do.



Catherine Masud
film maker

Of the 365 days in a year, only one day is for women. I strongly believe that each and every day is for women. Women all over the world are deprived of their rights. It is only a question of degree. In Bangladesh, women are particularly deprived and the problem of poverty cannot be solved rapidly.



Munmun Ahmed
dancer

Though women are now visible in the workforce, they are still second class citizens both at home and outside. Their rights to health care, education and information need to be safeguarded. Society needs to nurture the talents and skills of women. Women need to work together and strive for greater tolerance



Aupi Karim
actress-model

Paying lip service to women's issues will not help. We need to mobilise public opinion so that women get a better deal. Education is critical for women to achieve their true potential. The status of rural women needs particular attention. We should enlist the support of our family, friends and society.

'Women do not necessarily make women-centric films'

RENOWNED actress and film maker Aparna Sen firmly believes that the popular perception that women only take up women-centric films is misleading. She cites some examples to support her theory. 'Look at Sai Paranjpe's *Katha*. It is not a woman-centric film. Look at the male directors like Ritupurno Ghosh who was making women-centric films. Hence the label is a misnomer', she said after inaugurating the first international women film festival recently.

The whole idea of feminist films is a recent development. 'When I made *36 Chouringee Lane*, it was never seen as a feminist film way back then.' Moreover, we never got to see films like those of Vera Chytilova way back then.

The politics of feminism keeps changing. The concept has been changing and is being expressed through various mediums, including art, books and media.

To a query whether women directors still faced problems when it came to funding their films, she said, "If people feel that they were not sure about entrusting their money in a women's film, they have to be stupid".

"If women's films are not being funded it might be because of the scripts. However, I also know of women like Honey Irani whose scripts are commercial success", she said.

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Source: Internet

Milestones for Women

THE idea of an International Women's Day first arose at the turn of the century, a period characterised by expansion and turbulence, booming population growth and radical ideologies in industrialised countries.

Some of the key milestones in the history of International Women's Day are as follows:

1909: The first National Women's Day was observed across the United States on February 28.

1910: The Socialist International, meeting in Copenhagen, established a Women's Day, international in character, to honour the movement for women's rights and to assist in achieving universal suffrage for women.

1911: As a result of the decision taken at Copenhagen the previous year, International

Women's Day was marked for the first time (March 19) in Austria, Denmark, Germany and Switzerland, where more than one million women and men attended rallies. In addition to the right to vote and to hold public office, they demanded the right to work, to vocational training and an end to discrimination on the job.

Less than a week later, on March 25, the tragic Triangle Fire in New York City took the lives of more than 140 working girls, most of them Italian and Jewish immigrants. This event had a significant impact on labour legislation in the United States, and the working conditions leading up to the disaster were invoked during subsequent observances of International Women's Day.

1913-1914 :As part of the peace movement brewing on the eve of World War I, Russian

women observed their first International Women's Day on the last Sunday in February 1913. Elsewhere in Europe, on or around 8 March of the following year, women held rallies either to protest the war or to express solidarity with their sisters.

1917: With 2 million Russian soldiers dead in the war, Russian women again chose the last Sunday in February to strike for "bread and peace". In response to the unrest, the political leadership was forced to take notice. Four days later, the Czar was forced to abdicate and the provisional Government granted women the right to vote.

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Source: Internet

WOMEN'S DAY SPECIAL



Protikriti's International Women's Day special program 'Bibortoner Dharay Nari' directed by Sadat Hashmi and produced by Rubaiyat Farman will be telecast on Channel I at 4:30 pm today. The show will be moderated by Ferdousi Sultana.