

WHAT'S ON THIS WEEK

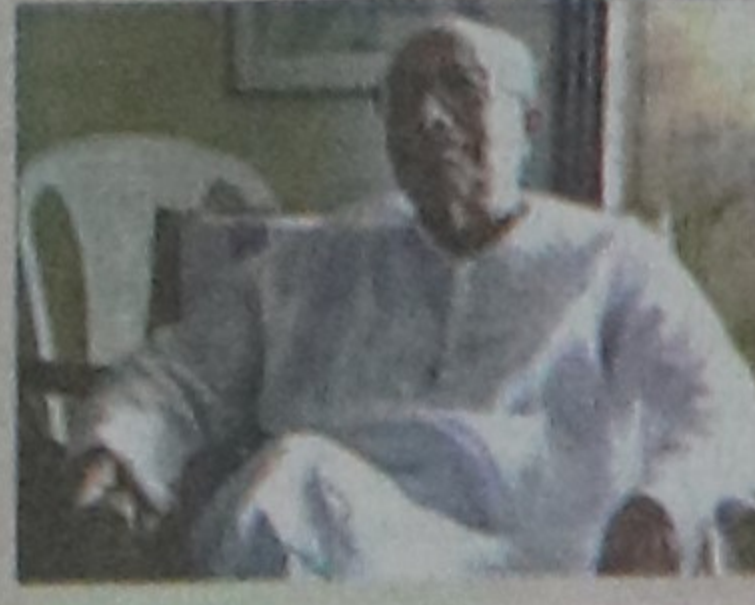
Photography Exhibition

Title: Climate Change
Venue: Drik Gallery, H 58, Rd 15A (new), Dhanmondi
Date: June 5-11
Time: 3pm-8pm



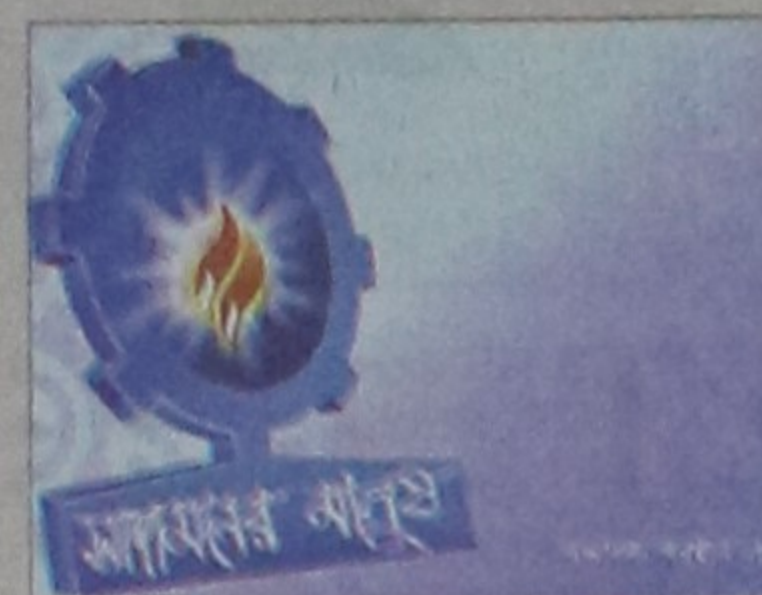
Birth Anniversary

of Tagore exponent Kalim Sharafi
Organiser: Sangeet Bhaban
Venue: Natmandol, Dhaka University
Date: June 6
Time: 6pm



Award Giving Ceremony

Title: Shada Moner Manush
Organiser: Unilever Bangladesh Limited
Venue: Winter Garden, Hotel Sheraton
Date: June 6
Time: 6pm
Guests should bring invitation cards

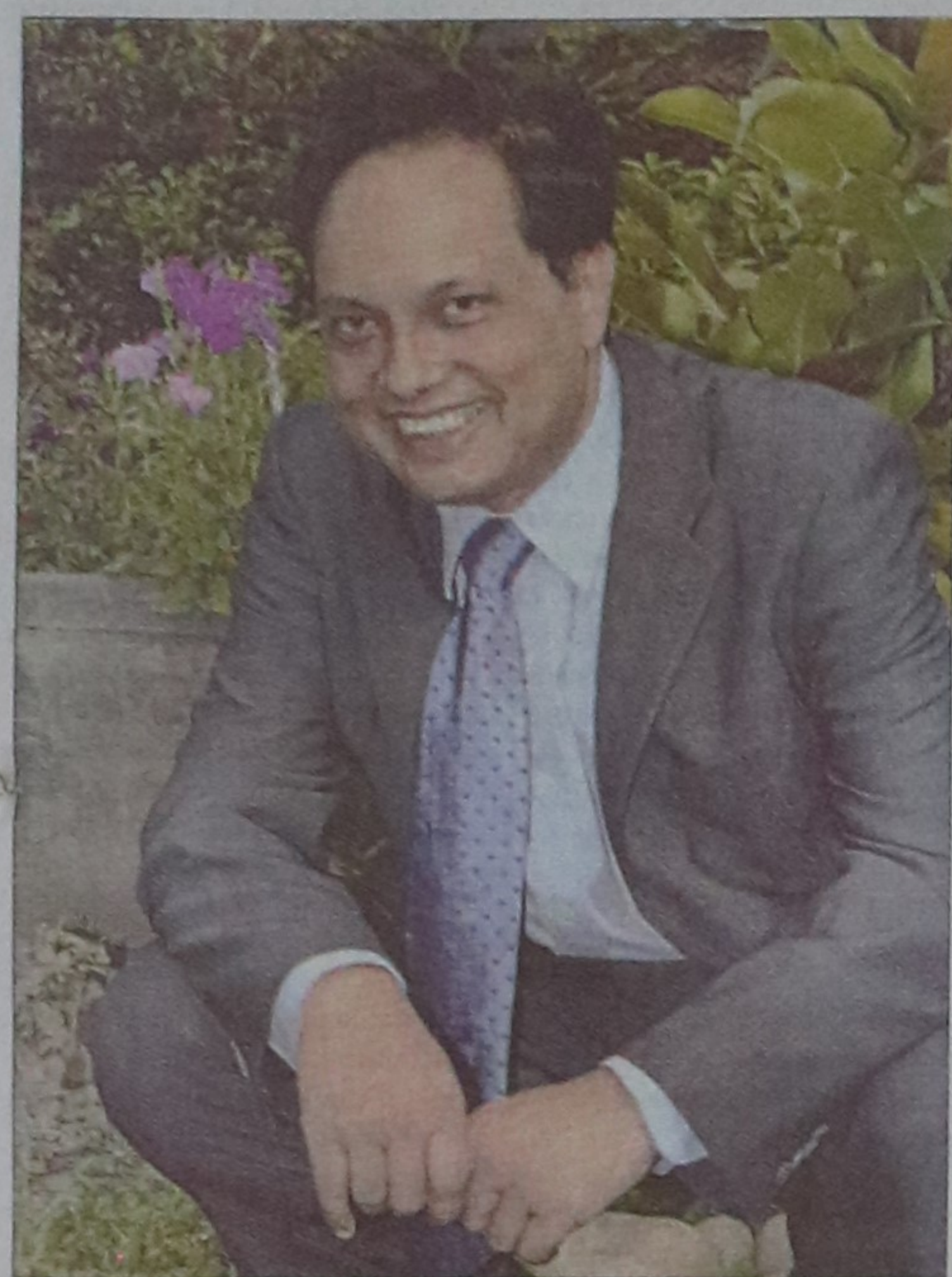


Film Screening

Films from Raja Sen and Rituparno Ghosh
Venue: Alamgir Kabir Chalachchitra Kendra, 62, Science Laboratory Road
Date: June 6-7
June 6
"Daru" at 11am, "Bariwali" at 5pm, "Chokher Bali" at 7pm



Diplomat and baul songs? Why not?



Anwar Chowdhury

SHAHNOOR WAHID

I came to know about the former British High Commissioner Mr Anwar Chowdhury's penchant for baul songs from others at different times towards the end of his four-year tenure of office in Bangladesh. They said underneath that immaculate three-piece suit he

wore and the suavity with which he addressed official business, Anwar Chowdhury had a Bengali heart. He was a diplomat on one side and on the other a lover of the songs of the bauls that paid reverence to the creator in their own gnostic way and talked about the special relationship man had with nature.

I almost forgot about this aspect of Anwar Chowdhury's personal-

ity. But one day, as I was channel surfing at home, I stopped at a local channel when I discovered Chowdhury singing with a bunch of local bauls at a recording studio. And like the bauls he was shaking his head and moving his body with the beat of the *dholok* and tune of the *dotara*. Then on another occasion, I saw him singing and dancing with another group of singers on stage at one of the farewell parties for him. A few weeks later, I happened to be at his residence as a guest when I noticed an oil painting of Shah Abdul Karim on the wall. Well, this time I was intrigued

Chowdhury's voice trembled with emotion as he showed his deep respect to the baul, the sufi, that Karim was.

to the point of incredulity and thought I would talk with the High Commissioner someday to know about this particular predilection of his we knew so little about. I did not have to wait too long.

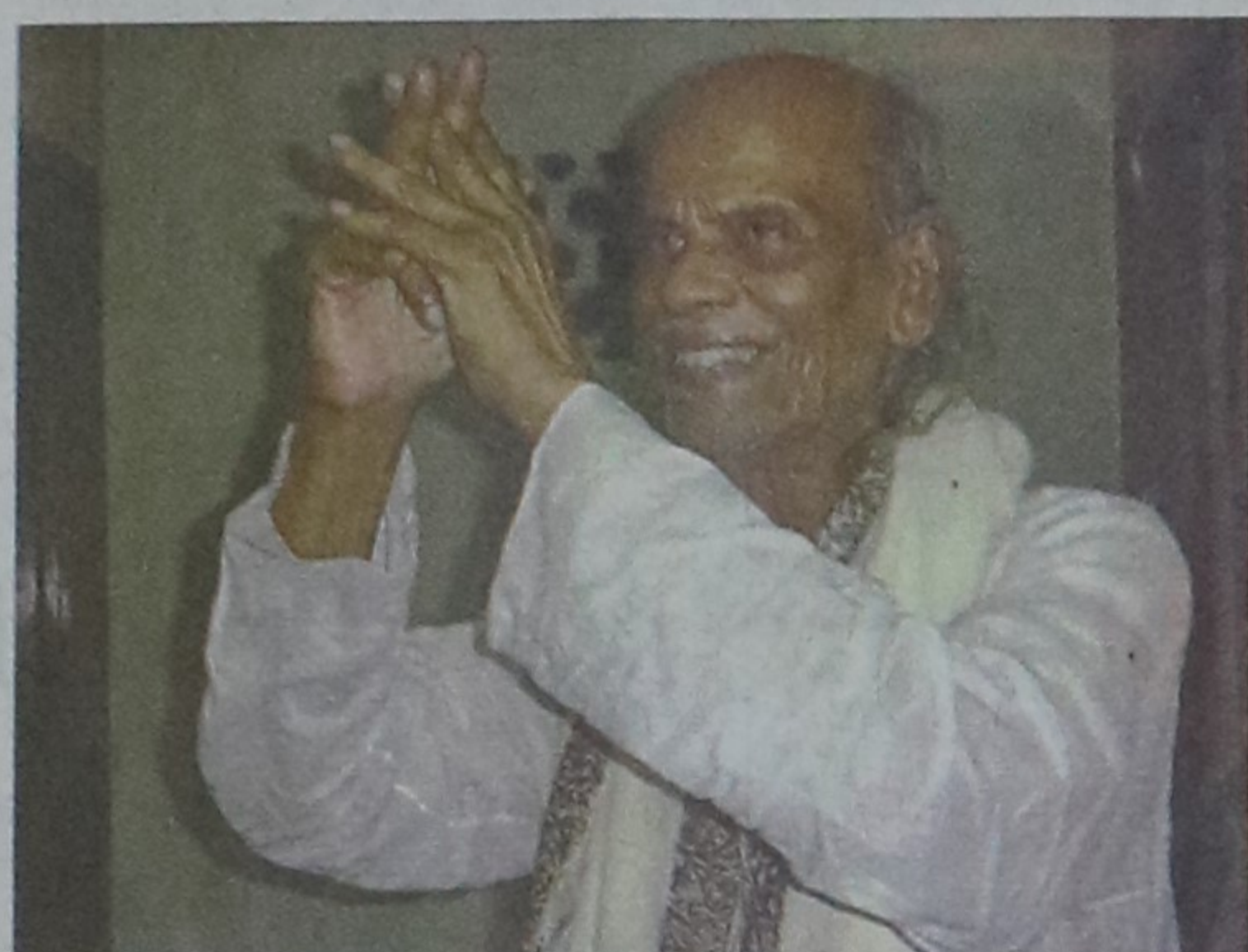
About two weeks before he left the country to join his new post in London, Anwar Chowdhury invited some of us to his residence at Baridhara to talk about a few things. There, after a round of exchange of pleasantries, he invited us to watch a video of the baul singer Shah Abdul Karim. He told us in a matter of fact voice that he was a great fan of this singer and that he has translated some of the songs in English. He allowed us to hear some of Abdul Karim's soul-rending songs. As the meaning of the lyrics and the tune sunk in deeply in all of us, Chowdhury went on to talk about

the meaning of this temporal life, the creator and influence of nature on humans that Karim's songs imparted. He also drew our attention to the richness of the tune that Karim composed.

Chowdhury's voice trembled with emotion as he showed his deep respect to the baul, the sufi, that Karim was. I could detect pathos in his voice when he

of wind that blew across the vast paddy fields. He wrote songs as he looked at the endless dark waters of the large *haors* from his country boat. He wrote songs as he watched flocks of white cranes flying towards the darkening horizon in the distance. Truly, we soaked in the grandeur of eloquence of the songs of the soil.

Today, Shah Abdul Karim is in



Shah Abdul Karim

PHOTO STAR

requested us to come forward to help this baul who had never shown any greed for material gain in his life. Chowdhury requested us to write about Shah Abdul Karim so that people could know more about the works of the saint like man who had devoted his life to baul songs.

As we listened to some more songs, I could discern that Karim was a singer who constantly searched for his creator. He searched for his creator in nature that appeared with all its magnificence and sublimity at every sunrise and every sunset. He wrote songs as he listened to the whining

of his nineties. His recent songs talk about man's ultimate desire at the end of the sojourn - to meet his creator. Karim feels he has come a long way and it is time to start yet another journey. The film ends showing Karim in a country boat, looking out at the setting sun, and singing about how he waits to go to the place where he has come from. Shah Abdul Karim sang on as the twilight faded into darkness.

The writer is Senior Assistant Editor, The Daily Star

Remembering Shanti Sharma

DITHI HASNAT

Shanti Sharma, an accomplished classical singer, passed away recently at the age of 52. This was a great blow to me; an irreparable loss to Hindustani classical music and music aficionados of India, Bangladesh and all over the world.

There are mixed opinions about her end. Her students from Delhi say that she committed suicide by jumping off the roof of her house. On the other hand, her sister re-opened the case and suspects that Shanti may have been murdered. I draw comfort from the fact that the truth will be revealed, and carry memories of the touch of her feet, her voice and her sparkling eyes. I feel an immense void after this incident. My message to *dididi* (Shanti) is, "The eternal flame of music remains luminous in my heart. I am blessed that you bestowed on me a garland of melodies."

How I met *dididi* is a different story. At the age of 14, as a student of Chhayantan, one of our teachers said that we should take practicing music as a prayer. From that moment, the basic



Shanti Sharma

seven notes or *swar* became a passion. After a few years, when I was in the ninth grade, our favourite teacher Sanjida

Khatun came to our class and told us to stay back and listen to a renowned classical vocalist, Shrimati Shanti Sharma.

From the beginning I was hooked to her music -- she performed *Raaga Bhairav* at noon and yet managed to create the ambience of early morning.

Fifteen years passed by. In addition to learning music, I had completed my master's degree. I realised that this was not the proper path. So, I decided that I should train under a guru. Things fell into place when I got the opportunity to go to Delhi's Shriram Bharatiya Kala Kendra. There I began learning classical vocal from Sonia Ray, a disciple of Shanti *dididi*. All the while I was keen to meet *dididi* again. Suddenly, after three months, I got a God-given opportunity when she accepted me as her disciple.

I never ceased to marvel at her remarkable voice. Once she took me to a recording studio to play the *tanpura*. I was captivated by her performance as she sang Amir Khan's best-loved *raagas*, *Megh Malhar* and *Ahir Bhairav*, with great spiritual profundity.

Another memory: Last year, along with her other disciples, I accompanied her when she performed and gave lecture demonstrations to students of Faridabad Delhi Public School at the initia-

tion of Spic Macay. As she introduced *dididi* to the school children, chief guest Dr Annapurna said that *dididi* was an example of a holistic human being as she attained the feat of combining a degree in chemistry with her mastery of classical vocal music.

My memory also takes me back a few years ago when I was undergoing a personal crisis at a time when I was doing my honours in Botany and master's in Development Studies. Music was my saviour at that stage and I learnt how to surrender myself wholly to the art form. I have to thank *dididi* for seeing me through in that rough period.

I can see her creative genius in many of her performances: Shankarlal Festival, ITC Sangeet Sammelan, Tansen Samaroh, Sawai Gandharvi Festival and others such as Spic Macay tours. As I see it, her major accomplishment was to gain praise from critics and laymen for her serene and contemplative touch, which went along with swift and complex *taan* and *sargam* patterns.

Though *dididi* is no more, her music will live on amidst disciples like me.

The writer is a freelance contributor

Big screen stars lured by small screen

PALLAB BHATTACHARYA, New Delhi

Bollywood's big stars are getting ready for a popularity contest on the small screen. Starting from June 6, two television channels will air separate game shows with two of Hindi cinema's top stars, Salman Khan and Hrithik Roshan as anchors.

While Salman hosts "Dus Ka Dum", modelled on the popular international series "Power of Ten", on Sony Entertainment channel, Hrithik appears

on the same day on NDTV Imagine lifestyle channel in "Junoon...Kuchh Kar Dikhaane Ka".

And both shows go on air at a time when superstar Shah Rukh Khan-starrer game show "Kya Aap Paanchwi Paas Se Tez Hain?" on Star Plus is performing much below expectations. The reality shows hosted by Bollywood couple Ajay Devgan and Kajol as also by actress Urmila Matondkar are yet to catch on. Another Bollywood star Akshay Kumar is also slated

to host a TV show soon.

Both Sony and NDTV Imagine are trying to test popular ratings by roping in Salman and Hrithik for their respective shows.

NDTV is clearly banking on the box office success of Asutosh Gowariker's latest film "Jodha Akbar" starring Hrithik in the role of the Mughal emperor. Sony, on the other hand, is seeking to cash in on Salman's comic abilities to see its show to hit the popularity scale.

For both the actors, this is their debut on the small screen. However, it remains to be seen if any of these shows can reach or surpass the popularity that India's first celebrity quiz show "Kaun Banega Crorepati" starring Amitabh Bachchan some years back. It not only revived Bachchan financially but also his floundering film career. The later edition of the same show with Shah Rukh as anchor failed to come up to the one hosted by Bachchan.

TV WATCH

"Mashi-Pishi" on ATN Bangla tonight

CULTURAL CORRESPONDENT

ATN Bangla will air a single-episode play, *Mashi-Pishi*, tonight at 8:00 pm. The play is the adaptation of a short story by Manik Bandyopadhyay. Shimul Yusufi, Ishrat Nishat and Chandni play the major roles in the play.

The story revolves around the lives of three women. Two of them are widows. Pishi lives with her brother. Mashi lives with the same family; her sister is Pishi's sister-in-law. Mashi and Pishi have a nephew and a niece. Ahladi, the niece, was married off at a tender age. Not being able to tolerate the mistreatment of her alcoholic husband, Ahladi comes to live with her parents. Her parents and brother pass away after an outbreak of cholera. Mashi and Pishi henceforth take on all responsibilities of Ahladi.

Fauzia Khan has directed the play.



Chandni in a scene from the play

"Surer Kathan" on Banglavisision

Surer Kathan, a musical show presented by Bengal Foundation, is aired on Banglavisision every Friday at 11:00 pm.

The theme of the programme is the art, culture and melody of our country. Renowned artists have appeared in music videos featured on the show. The programme aims at promoting songs of Nazrul and Tagore, as well as folk and *adhunik* songs.



"Radhuni Bangladesh Night" on Channel-i



Sabina Yasmin sings at the programme

Channel-i will air "Radhuni Bangladesh Night" at 2:35pm today. The cultural programme, organised by Radhuni, a brand of Square Consumer Ltd., was held in Rome recently.

Various popular artistes of Bangladesh performed at the programme and engaged the Bangladeshi expatriates in Italy in a festive mood. Sabina Yasmin, Kumar Biswajit, Bari Siddiqui, Ankhi Alamgir, Biplob, Shanaz Beli, Nakul Kumar Bishwas, actors Mahfuz Ahmed, Tishha, Timni and model Nobel were present at the event to entertain the audience with their performances.

Impress Telefilm Ltd., Channel-i was the media partner of the event.

Fahmida, Bappa and Partho on tonight's "Aainaghar"

Popular singers Fahmida Nabi, Bappa Majumdar, and Partha Barua will appear on tonight's episode of *Aainaghar*. The show will be aired on Ekushey TV at 8:15 pm.

Two guests are invited on each episode of the show. A third guest makes an appearance to analyse and evaluate the ideas shared between them.

The show is produced by Shameem Shahed and hosted by Aupi Karim.



Host Aupi Karim, seen with the guests on the show

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