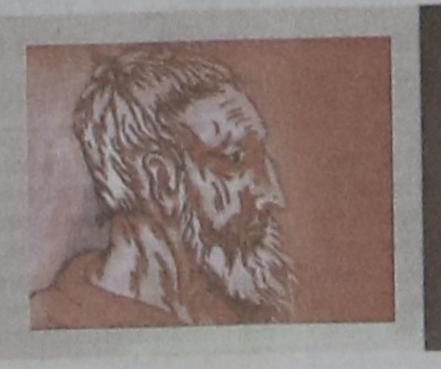


Solo Art Exhibition Abdur Razzaque Retrospective Title: Rhythms of Figures, Forms and Nature Venue: Bengal Gallery of Fine Arts, H 275/F, Rd 27 (old), Dhanmondi Date: October 10-29 Time: 12pm-8pm



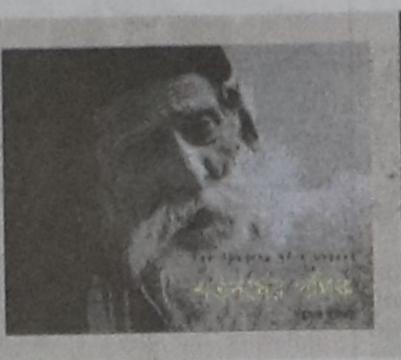
Lalon Death Anniversary Organiser: Lalon Academy, Kushtia Venue: Lalon Academy premises, Chheuria, Date: October 16-18 Time: 7pm everyday



Solo Photography Exhibition Title: The Journey of a Legend Photographer: Shahadat Venue: Zainul Gallery-1, Faculty of Fine Arts, DU

Date: October 10-16

Time: 12pm-7pm



Theatre Play: Kinu Kaharer Thetar Troupe: Prachyanat Venue: Mahila Samiti Auditorium, Natok Swarani Date: October 16 Time: 6:30pm



Controversies shroud Lalon and his songs

ERSHAD KAMOL

Today marks the 118th death followers, which are the doctrines anniversary of Fakir Lalon Shah (1774-1890), the most prominent guru of the five schools under Baul traditions. Fakir Lalon Shah's calibre lies in his ability to raise some universal questions in the simplest of ways.

authentic tunes and lyrics of Lalon the 'physical state' to attain the songs has become a hot topic, after UNESCO proclaimed the traditional Baul songs of Bangladesh as one of the 43 masterpieces of oral and intangible world heritage. Unfortunately most of the research done on Lalon and his songs are quite controversial.

The confusion related to Fakir Lalon Shah and his philosophy surfaced after a few scholars, NGOs and government institutions such as Lalon Academy Complex and pseudo Bauls started promoting different interpretations of Lalon's verses as well as organising programmes on Bauls with the primary objective of drawing foreign funds.

Questions have been raised regarding the authenticity of lyrics, tunes and philosophies of Lalon songs. Several intellectuals have interpreted Lalon's biography and philosophies in different ways, which is confusing for the average individual.

A controversy regarding Lalon's religion continues to ensue, since a few scholars during the Pakistani period wanted to label him as a Muslim. Lalon expert Dr. Abul Ahsan Chowdhury, a teacher of Kushtia University told The Daily Star, "Lalon did not disclose his religious background even to his close associates. Rather, in many verses he took a stance against any The Lalon Shrine at Chheuria. form of institutional religion except humanism."

also the convenor of Lalon Mazaar O Shebashadan Rakkha Committee, said, "He was neither a Hindu nor a Muslim, rather developed a new doctrine called Ohedaniat, not allowed to visit the shrine of our Guru Lalon Shah, as some infamous influential locals have

barred it." traditions of devotional rites such as Shahajiya of Buddhism,

upazila of Dinajpur.

Santals, lately people from the Orao community

as well as local Hindus and Muslims have been

of the devotional rites of Ohedaniat.

Fakir Lalon Shah is unique in that in his verses he has interpreted dehotatwa in his own way. Lalon in many of his verses on dehotatwa has implicitly provided Nowadays, preservation of the guidelines on how to go beyond metaphysical. A layperson perhaps cannot fathom the inner

In fact it was not Siraj Sain, but Maulana Malam Shah who picked up the child and adopted him, and Shiraj Shah was Lalon's mentor.

When Professor Sirajul Islam, chairman of Asiatic Society of Bangladesh was asked to comment on the issue, he told The Daily Star, "We have noticed that one Lalon exponent's research varies from the other, however,

Shahajiya of Vaishnavism, Sufism doned in a critical condition. Siraj composed by Gopal Shah, Adam and India in search of Fakir and several other. And the verses Sain, a Muslim fakir, picked up the Chan, the followers of Sati Mayer Maniruddin Shah's manuscripts. by Lalon are called Kalaams by his child and nursed him back to Ghar, have been later claimed as So far I've found 20 manuscripts in Lalon's by pseudo Bauls in India.

"Many songs that conclude with words "Lalon boley" are not essentially composed by Lalon Shah. The diction and philosophy delivered in these songs are totally different from the authentic verses by Lalon. Many Bauls have added "Lalon boley" in their own compositions to popularise the songs, a phenomenon that made the documentation of authentic Lalon

common people." Professor Dr. Abul Ahsan Choudhury said, "Most of Fakir Maniruddin Shah's manuscripts are now untraceable. It is an appreciable effort by Mantu Shah, who under the guidance of seasoned Fakirs and Lalon singers is documenting the authentic lyrics of Lalon. He has so far presented over 800 songs, which is the largest documentation of Lalon songs in

Fakirs as well as scholars and

the country." Moreover, authenticity regarding the tunes of Lalon songs is also equally controversial. Three types of tunes of Lalon songs are familiar in the country: Akhrai tradition, blending of Akhrai tradition and classical music and fusion of western music with Akhrai tradi-

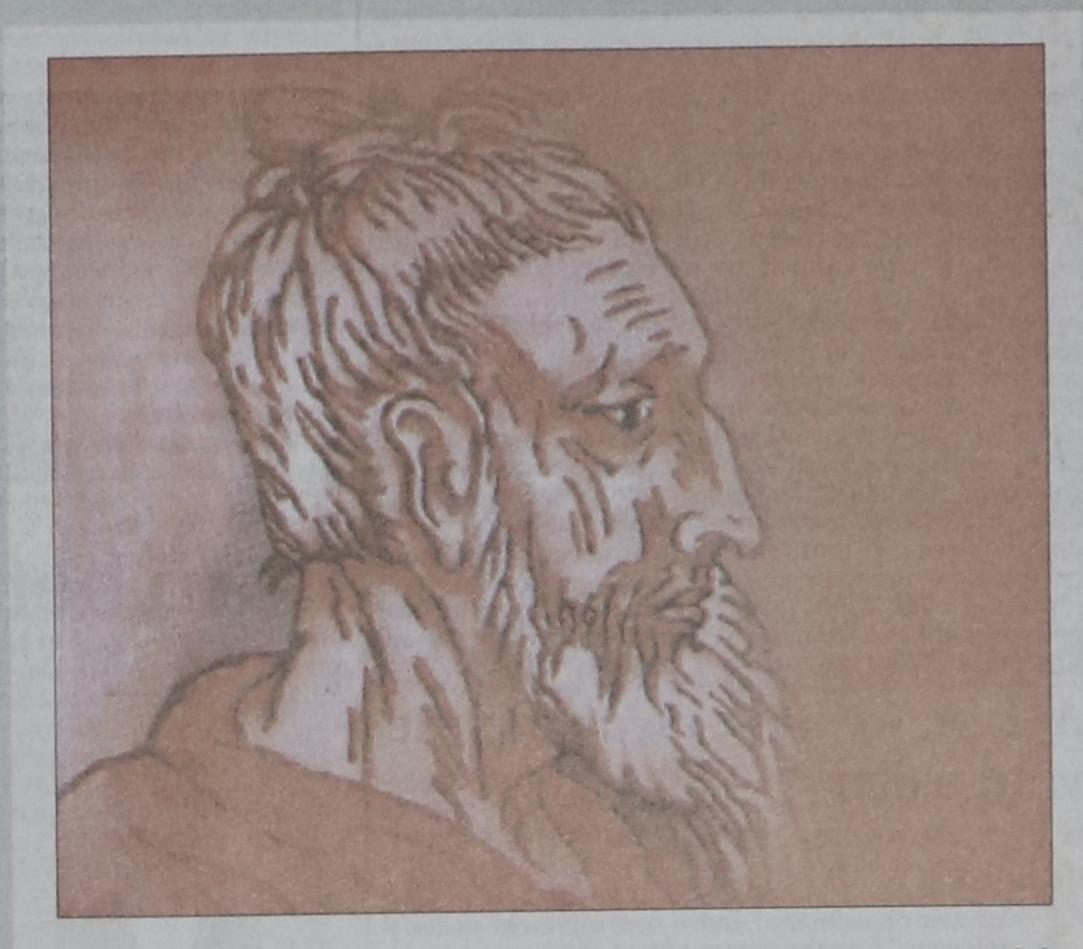
As Akhrai tradition is oral, the tunes vary from singer to singer. And tunes of Lalon songs presented by the traditional bauls is different from that of the urban Lalon singers such as Lalon exponent Farida Parveen, who try to blend classical music with Lalon songs for a more polished presentation. And a few rock/fusion bands these days are trying to blend the Akhrai tradition with western music.

According to the experts, Lalon composed about 2000 verses. The manuscripts by Fakir Maniruddin Shah were composed by another disciple Fakir Manik Shah. At that stage, verses were considered simply as the manifestation of discourse of Ohedaniat. Subsequently, Fakir Maniruddin Shah, and his disciple, Fakir Khoda Bakhsh Shah, attempted to put these Kalaams into a particular frame of music. Khoda Bakhsh's disciple, Amulya Shah, was a reputed musicologist who set the Baul songs, in particular Lalon songs, to music. These songs were further developed by his disci-

Analysing these facts, experts believe that it is imperative that all of the manuscripts of Fakir Maniruddin Shah should be collected from personal collections and then preserved. Lalon music experts must be involved to verify the authenticity of the lyrics as well as the tunes.

118th death anniversary of Lalon

Three-day elaborate programme begins today at Chheuria



AMANUR AMAN, Kushtia

On the occasion of the 118th death anniversary of the mystic Fakir Lalon Shah a three-day programme will start from today at the Lalon Akhra at Chheuria in Kumarkhali near Kushtia town.

Lalon Academy, an organisation consisting of elected individuals, to look after the shrine is arranging the programme in association with the Ministry of Cultural Affairs. Banglalink is the

sponsor of the programme. The three-day programme includes Lalon Mela, discussion and rendition of baul songs by artistes of Lalon Academy.

Cabinet Secretary, Ali Imam Majumdar will inaugurate the programme today with Kushtia Deputy Commissioner (DC) Sarkar Abul Kalam Azad in the chair. Among others, Police Superintendent of Kushtia, Mosleh Uddin Ahmed; Chief Executive Officer of Kushtia Zila Parishad, Dhirendranath Sarkar and Head of Public Rela tions and Communication, Banglalink, Solaiman Alam will attend the programme. Professor Anwarul Karim, treasurer of Kushtia Islamic University, will speak as the chief discussant.

Vice-Chancellor of Kushtia Islamic University, Professor Fayaz Mohammad Serajul Haque, will be the chief guest at the second

day's programme. Kushtia DC, Sarkar Abul Kalam Azad; Dean of the faculty of Humanities and Social Science, Kushtia Islamic University, Dr. Md. Shahinur Rahman; Principal, Kushtia Government College, Professor Qader Hossain Chowdhury will attend the programme as special guests. Noted folk researcher and a professor at the Bangla department of Kushtia Islamic University, Dr. Abul Ahsan Chowdhury will be the main discussant at the programme. Taizal Ali Khan, secretary of Lalon Academy, will deliver the welcome address. Additional Deputy Commissioner (general) Ashok Kumar Debnath will preside over the programme.

On the third day, Secretary to the Ministry of Cultural Affairs, Md. Sharful Alam, will attend the programme as chief guest. With the Kushtia DC in the chair, the discussion will include Principal of Kushtia Government Women's College, Dr. Bimal Krishna Majumdar; ADC, Kushtia, Alamgir Hossain; journalist Abdur Rashid Chowdhury and Regional Commercial Head of Banglalink, Md. Babul Haque as special guests. M. Maniruzzaman, vice-president of Lalon Academy, will speak as the chief discus-

On the occasion, a large number of Lalon enthusiasts and admirers from the region and around the country have gathered at the Lalon

meaning, but these songs are the Fakir Anwar Hossain, known as base of secret devotional rites, Mantu Shah, a cult leader who is centring on the belief that the human body is the seat of all truth.

Many scholars have added new words and many have written verses following Lalon's style and claimed them as Lalon's. Morewhich we follow. However, we are over, a few have written Lalon's biographies with serveral contra-

The Lalon Shah entree in the Banglapedia, national Ohedaniat combines different encyclopaedia of Bangladesh, reveals, "As a young boy, Lalon caught smallpox and was aban-

'most authentic' one. We will crosscheck the issue."

Lalon songs is always a controversial issues as some Bauls claim the number of songs composed by Lalon to be up to 10,000 whereas Maniruddin Shah, a direct disciple veteran Lalon devotees such Fakir Bader Shah and Mantu Shah claim the number is just over 2000.

The problem is that after so mentation. many years of Lalon's death many pseudo Bauls have labelled songs composed by other Baul Gurus as Lalon's. For example, many songs

everyone claims his work as the songs more difficult," said Lalon expert Dr. Abul Ahsan Chowdhury.

Mantu Shah has preserved And the correct number of authentic lyrics of Fakir Lalon Shah in his book titled Lalon Sangeet (three volumes). He is using the manuscripts of Fakir of Fakir Lalon Shah. Maniruddin Shah was authorised by Lalon to note down the verses, for the docu-

> Mantu Shah has been working on the documentation since 1960. To quote him, "I've travelled to different areas both in Bangladesh

'Bou Mela': A festival where potential

Novel about India's underclass wins the Man Booker prize

Aravind Adiga, 33, won the 40th Man Booker prize on Tuesday night for his debut novel, "The White Tiger," a vivid exploration of India's class

who becomes the chauffeur to a rich man. Adiga, who lives in Mumbai, was born in India and brought up partly in Australia. He studied at Columbia and Oxford and is a former correspondent for Time magazine in India. He is the second youngest writer to win the award; Ben Okri was 32 when he won for "The Famished Road" in 1991.

struggle told through the story of a village boy

Michael Portillo, a former cabinet minister and the chairman of this year's panel of judges, praised Adiga's novel, saying that the short list had contained a series of "extraordinarily readable page-turners." However, Adiga's book had prevailed, he said, "because the judges felt that it shocked and entertained in equal measure."

Adiga said his book was an "attempt to catch the voice of the men you meet as you travel through India -- the voice of the colossal underclass."

"This voice was not captured," he added, "and I wanted to do so without sentimentality or portraying them as mirthless humourless weaklings as they are usually."

When he accepted the award, Adiga dedicated it to "the people of New Delhi where I lived and where I wrote this book." When asked what he would do with the money, Adiga joked, "The first thing I am going to do is to find a bank that I can actually put it in."

The Man Booker prize, Britain's best-known and most generous literary award, is given annually to a novel written by an author from Britain, Ireland or the Commonwealth nations and is accompanied by a check for £50,000 about \$86,000 -- as well as an inevitable increase in sales.



Aravind Adiga after winning the 2008 Man Booker prize in London.

This year's list of finalists was one of the least star-studded in recent years. It included two first-time novelists, and several of the favourites were snubbed by judges. Joseph O'Neill's critically acclaimed "Netherland" was omitted from the short list, as was "The Enchantress of Florence" by Salman Rushdie.

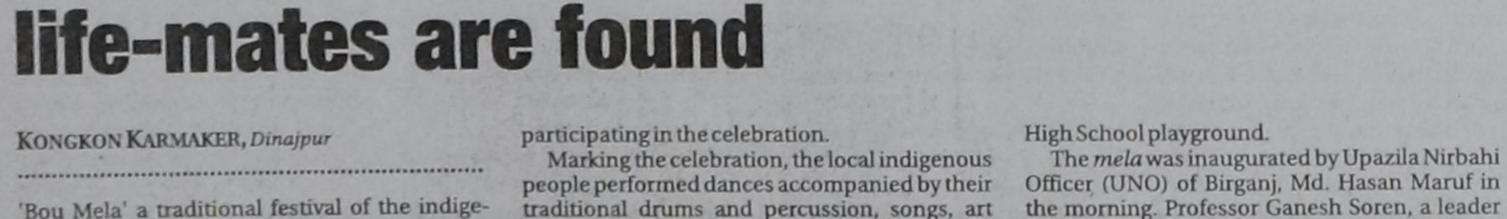
As a result, bookmakers were divided over the likely winner, oscillating between Adiga and the Irish writer Sebastian Barry, 53, whose

book "The Secret Scripture" is the story of an Irish patient in a mental hospital sharing her shocking family history with her psychiatrist. The other books on the shortlist were "Sea of Poppies" by Amitav Ghosh, "The Clothes on Their Backs" by Linda Grant, "The Northern

Clemency" by Philip Hensher and "A Fraction

Source: The New York Times

of the Whole" by Steve Toltz.



traditional drums and percussion, songs, art nous people of the northern districts, was celecompetition and discussion on their heritage brated with music and dance recently at and culture. Golapganj, a remote village under Birganj Though the festival mainly involves the

the morning. Professor Ganesh Soren, a leader

The mela was organised by 'Dinajpur Adibashi Unnayan Sangstha' -- a platform for the local indigenous communities -- in associa-

tion with 'Gram Bikash Kendra' -- a local NGO. The daylong celebration was held at Golapganj



of the local indigenous community, attended

At the discussion, speakers urged the govern-

ment to implement the much-awaited demands

of the indigenous people including the constitu-

tional rights and recognition of their culture and

the festival as special guest.

Speakers also urged the indigenous communities to refrain from underage marriage. There is a high rate of underage marriage among the communities due to lack of education.

According to the locals, the traditional festival has been celebrated for the last hundred years. The celebration takes place after the 'Bijaya Dashami! -- one of the biggest festivals in the country. Thousands of indigenous people of Dinajpur, Thakurgaon, Panchagarh, Nilphamari, Rangpur, Jaipurhat and Naogaon attend the celebration.

Professor Ganesh Soren told The Daily Star that the significance of the celebration is that single men and women find their life-mates

This year's festival ended with a play performed by the indigenous artistes.

People of the local indigenous communities thronged the festival.