

WHAT'S ON THIS WEEK

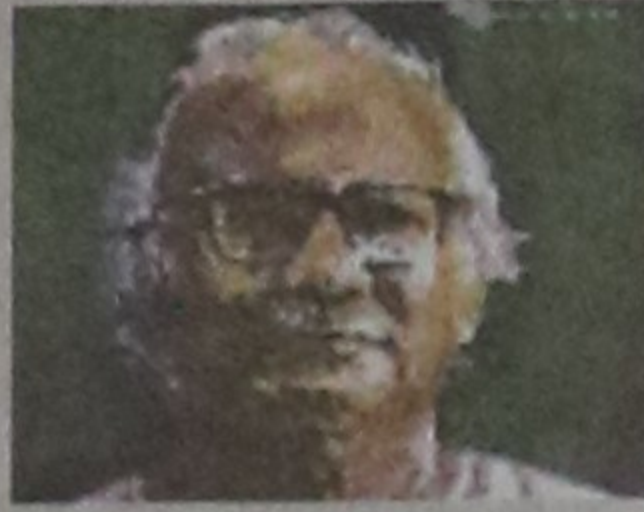
Musical Soiree

Title: Praaner Khela
Organiser: Bengal Shipalaya
Artists: Adis Mohsin, Anup Barua
Venue: Bengal Shipalaya, H 275F, Dhanmondi 27 (old)
Date: January 29
Time: 7pm



Waheedul Haque Death Anniversary

Organiser: Chhayanal
Venue: Chhayanal Sangskriti Bhaban
Date: January 27
1st session: 7am onwards
2nd session: 6:30pm



Group Art Exhibition

Artists: Mainul, Mehedi, Babu, Safin & Tomal
Venue: Shilpangan Art Gallery, H-26, R-3, Dhanmondi
Date: January 20-28
Time: 10am-1pm and 5-8pm



2nd Children's Film Festival '09

Organiser: Children's Film Society Bangladesh
Venue: Shawkat Osman Auditorium, Central Public Library, Shahbag
Date: January 24-30
Time: 11am onwards



Waheedul Haque

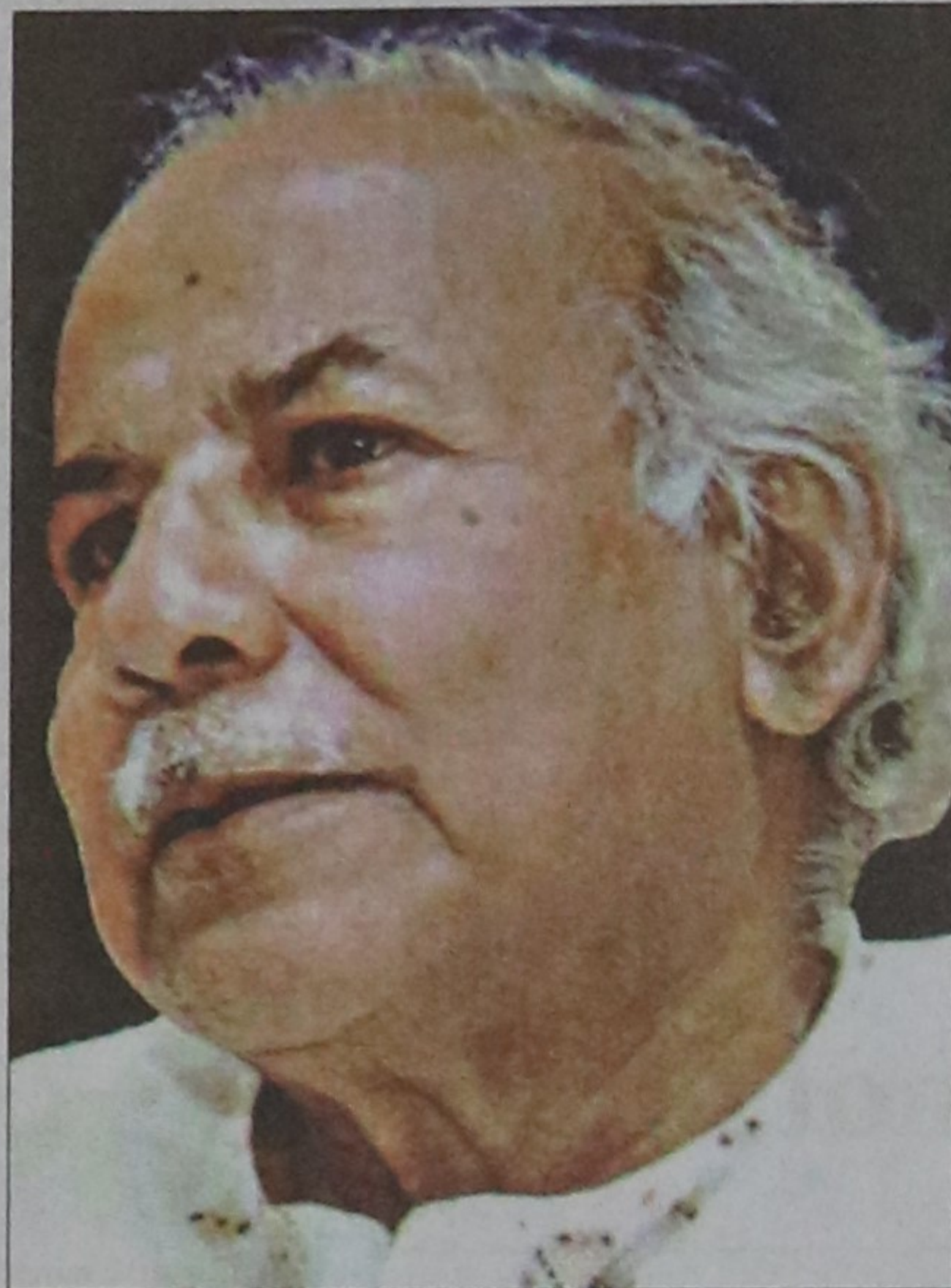
Stars in the heavens, reeds on the earth

SYED BADRUL AHSAN

There was a knowledgeable being that inhabited Waheedul Haque. He was into song, into all those feelings that contribute to the making of aesthetics. Tagore for him was a lifeline, to culture, indeed to politics. He was always humming a tune, on the rickshaw rides we took together on steamy afternoons, at his desk as a breather from the drudgery of writing editorials at a time when there was not much to write about. Tagore for him was a metaphor, for all the celebratory in life. And as a way of explaining away the darkness that enveloped Bengali society, it was Tagore he went back to. Which is when he broke into a soft rendition of *ekhono gelo na andhari ekhono roilo je badha*.

Waheedul Haque was a stickler for purity --- in music, in writing, in the way men shaped thoughts in their chaotic minds. There was the pure Bengali in him, that sense of romance that made him sing *aha tomar shonge praaner khela*. The soul came alive when he spoke of love, when he dwelt on his interaction with Debabrata Biswas. And yet there was in him a true understanding of reality, on the ground and in the spaces beyond earth. He would often speak of physics, of mathematics, of the engineering that was destined to carry man beyond the frontiers of the planet he was born into and lived on. Imagine, said he, that the universe commences in you and then expands into the fathomless wonder that it is. Or turn that argument on its head. The universe, he was fond of saying, began somewhere out there in the vastness of time and space and then travelled light years until it found its symbolism in you. That was all he said, as I observed the azure sky looming up behind the giant facade that was --- and is --- the national museum in Shahbagh.

And then there was nature Waheedul Haque placed his faith in, or lived by. He once made a gift of an old book of trees, plants, roots and herbs to me. It was his way of informing me that all that needed to be turned into objects of medicinal value was to be found in the pages of those books, in the nature that it celebrated. With him I have walked through Ramna Park and Sabarwari Udyan, in dripping rain, to learn from him stories of the life and birth of trees. He did not rest there. He went for an



enumeration of their history. It was a stunning discovery, for in Waheedul Haque lay embedded a veritable encyclopaedia of knowledge --- of the stars in the heavens, of the reeds on the moist soil of the earth. He made friends with the young, with those young he thought were willing to be educated on the mystery of life and the devastating inexplicability of death. He was not willing to please anyone. He once told one of my col-

leagues, in public, that his pronunciation of English was embarrassing. And when a rising Tagore singer asked him if he watched her programmes on television, he was curt in his response. An artiste aiming for television was anything but an artiste, he said in quiet indignation. The singer was left red-faced.

You could go on and on about Waheedul Haque. In matters that had to do with religion, he brimmed over with questions. Araj Ali Matubbor was for him, as he was and remains for many of us, the quintessential philosopher. Ask questions, said he. You will not come by all the answers, but some responses could rise and flow, lava-like, into your little world. He had a healthy dislike for pretension, for intellectual parochialism. Freedom kept whispering around him, to tell him that beyond the constricting confines of modernity lay the expansive spaces of thoughts and dreams. He found those expanses in his journeys through the hamlets and villages of Bangladesh, building on the theme of culture he had inaugurated through the centenary celebrations of the birth of Rabindranath Tagore in 1961. His politics was leftwing, but he never for a moment fell for the illusion that this country was ready for socialism, for communism. That would take time, he said, as we popped peanuts into our mouths on a rainy twilight before the Teacher-Student Centre at Dhaka University.

It takes a brave man to refuse to have his body, post-life, concealed for all time in a quiet, soon to be forgotten grave. And so Waheedul Haque, in the manner of Araj Ali Matubbor, chose to have his mortal remains claimed by students of medical science. But his soul? The soft childlike laughter that he broke into over a little joke? The song he murmured as he reclined on his chair in his cubicle? The impeccable English he employed in his editorials, the urbane Bangla that punctuated his political commentaries?

These are memories that remain. These sum up the tumultuous poetry that Waheedul Haque stood for and, to a very large extent, came to personify as he trudged toward the point where mortality becomes the ultimate truth.

(Waheedul Haque died on January 27, 2007)

TV Watch

Mohammad Asaf-ud-Daula on Gaanalap

CULTURAL CORRESPONDENT

Renowned cultural personality Mohammad Asaf-ud-Daula is tonight's guest on the musical programme "Gaanalap". The programme will be aired on Banglavisión at 9:05 pm. Asaf-ud-Daula is an accomplished singer, songwriter and music composer as well as a deft music connoisseur.

He has composed songs for legendary artistes like Mehdi Hassan, Golam Ali and Asha Bhonsle.

Tonight's episode provides an insight into his illustrious musical career.

Nahid Ahmed Biplab is the producer, while noted singer Nakib Khan is the host of the programme.



Mohammad Asaf-ud-Daula is tonight's guest on the musical show.

Heart to heart with Tahsan-Mithila

CULTURAL CORRESPONDENT

He was a serious IBA student, from a family with PhDs and no media link whatsoever, she was a political science student from Dhaka University with a family background in the media. They met in 2004 and love blossomed in the university campus via rickshaw rides and SMS. On August 3, 2006 Tahsan Rahman Khan and Rafiath Rashid Mithila tied the knot. Tahsan reached stardom initially through the band Black and went on to become a successful solo singer. Mithila is a well-known model and has appeared in ads for Meril, Bajaj, Close up and Aktel.

How did you meet?

We met through a common friend. While he left for the States we continued with our friendship.

What was different about Mithila/Tahsan?

Tahsan: All my female friends or fans would only praise me. Mithila was the only one who used to criticise and I used to hate that. But later I realised her criticism helped me rectify many mistakes, so her honesty definitely was a plus point. She understands that music is my life and she is completely supportive of that. I also absolutely adore her sweet voice.

Mithila: I have always liked people with musical talent. Initially I was attracted to his singing, but later as I got to know him better it was his dependability and overall personality that attracted me. Plus he imbued this confidence in me; he showed me how well I could do things--even when I had apprehensions about them. My trivial idiosyncrasies would catch his fancy; it really made me feel special.

How did it happen?

Tahsan: From the beginning we realised this was more than just friendship. Plus in today's techno era the mobile played a vital role. On rainy nights we used to compose poems for each other and SMS. It's simpler to express emotions.

Mithila: Rickshaw rides in Dhaka university campus was one of our favourite dating mechanisms. We spent hours in every oli-goli(lane) on rickshaws lost in time.

How did your parents react?

Tahsan: My parents were overjoyed. They wanted us to get married immediately.

Mithila: Initially my father was a bit sceptical. Marrying his daughter off to a singer didn't sound too promising to him. But then Tahsan took up teaching at a private university and things were good.



Mithila and Tahsan
PHOTO: STAR

Common comment: As a matter of fact we had just wanted to let them know about our relationship so that they didn't hear about it from others but they convinced us to get married.

Is this how you fantasised your dream girl/dream guy would be?

Tahsan: No, Mithila is totally different from my dream girl. But frankly put, after meeting her I have forgotten what my dream girl was like.

Mithila: He is the antithesis of my ideal mate. I am very outgoing and love

hanging out with large circles of friends. I also have plenty of male friends. But Tahsan prefers staying indoors and neither does he have many female friends. But at the end of the day opposites attract. Right?

What do you dislike about each other?

Tahsan: She is extremely short tempered.

Mithila: Yes I agree with him but what about the fact that he keeps irritating me? I definitely dislike that about him.

So that means you end up fighting a lot?

Combined comment (With a huge grin they agree). Oh yes we fight tooth and nail; we scream at each other. But interestingly within the next hour all our anger dissipates, we are back together, closer than before. Actually we both understand each other's point and make up.

What is the toughest part of being married?

Tahsan: Rules and regulations -- starting from my toothbrush to my closet, there are rules for everything. She never leaves me alone. But all in all I love the whole feeling of being married.

Mithila: How can I leave him alone when he keeps everything so messy?

Besides that I love being married. Before marriage I thought I might have to adjust and make change; maybe I won't be able to model. However, neither Tahsan nor his family have ever interfered. And his parents love me like their own daughter.

From the whole conversation it is so evident you are madly in love. What does love actually mean?

Tahsan: Is there a definition for love? In so many of my songs I have tried to define love, the day I will be able to define it, I will stop defining it in my songs.

Mithila: Love is a feeling you just can't describe.

The article is a reprint from an earlier version

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