

WHAT'S ON THIS WEEK

Solo Art Exhibition
Painter: Zahura Sultana Hossain
Title: Contemplation
Venue: Bay's Galleria, Radius Centre, Gulshan-2
Date: December 11-24
Time: 10 am-8pm



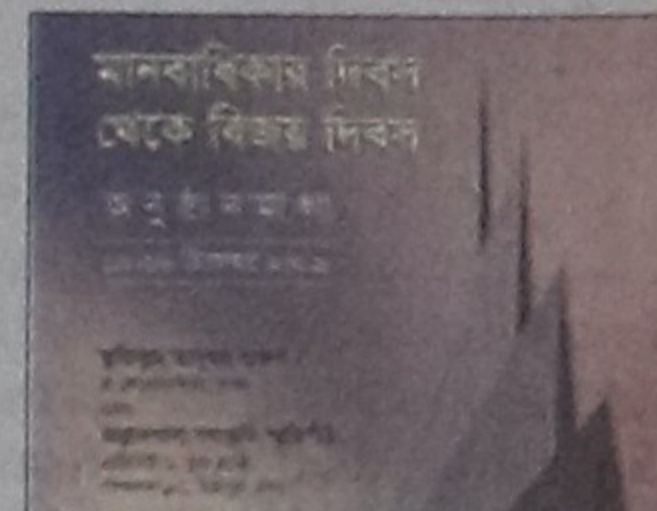
Victory Day Celebration
Songs, films, theatre, exhibition and more
Organiser: Bangladesh Shilpakala Academy
Venue: Shilpakala Academy premises
Date: December 14-22
Time: 5pm onwards



Victory Day Celebration
Title: Bijoy Utshab
Organiser: Chhayanaut
Venue: University Laboratory School & College, DU Campus
Date: December 16
Time: 12pm onwards



Victory Festival-2009
Title: Manobadrikar Dibosh
Thekey Bijoy Dibosh
Organiser: Liberation War Museum
Venue: Liberation War Museum Premises
Date: December 10-16
Time: 10am onwards



Cultural movements: For the people, by the people

In conversation with Kamal Lohani

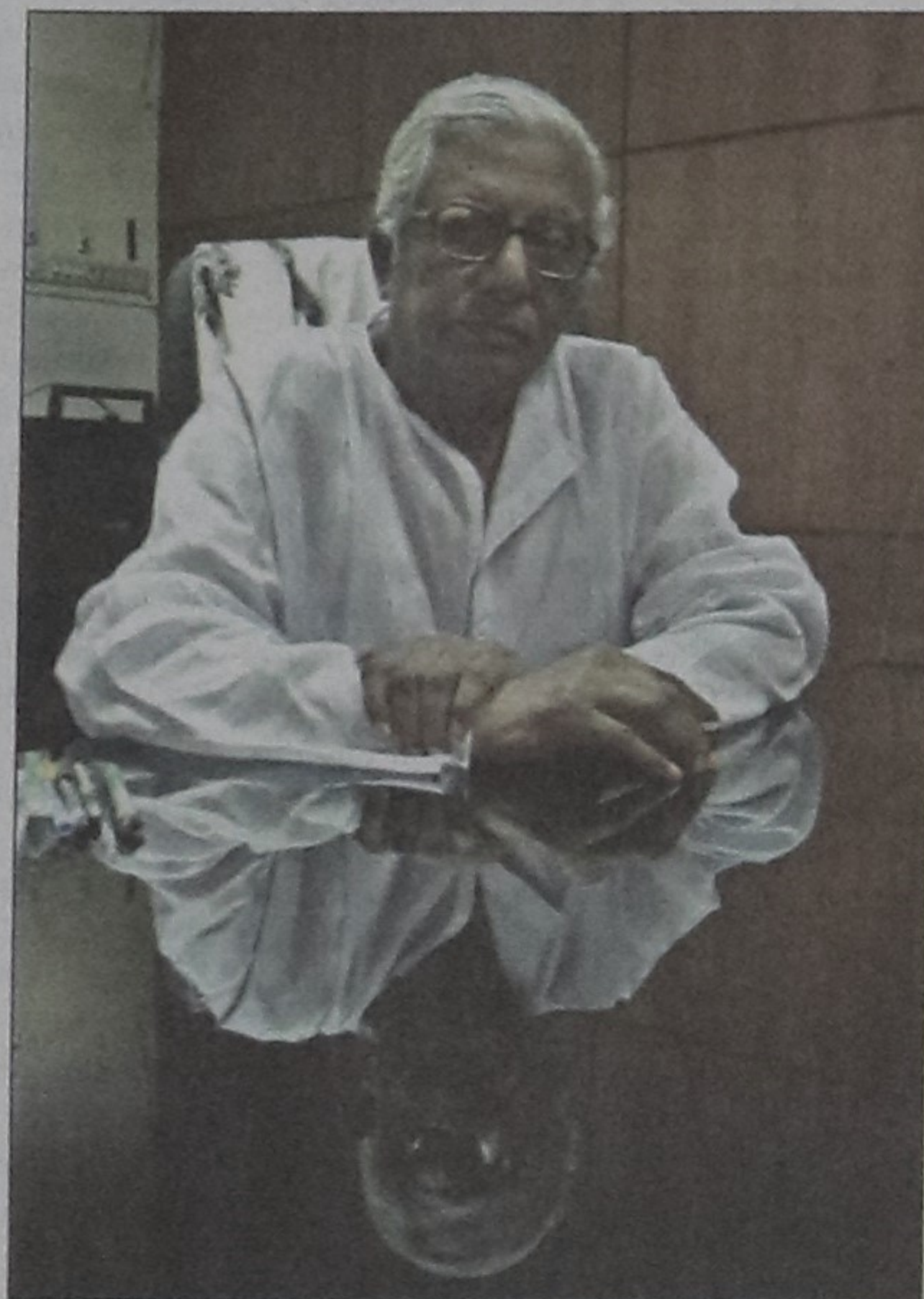
STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Music, poetry, plays and art -- culture on the whole has always had a major impact throughout our national history. Politics may bring down tyranny, change policies but it's culture that promulgates the message to the masses, generates awareness and takes a national movement to its peak. And who better to discuss the cultural aspect of national movements than Kamal Lohani? Lohani, a journalist, cultural personality extraordinaire is the Director General (DG) of Bangladesh Shilpakala Academy (BSA) at present.

"The Pakistan era -- over 23 years -- was riddled with democratic movements. What started with the Language Movement in 1952 culminated in the Liberation War in 1971," said Lohani.

"These movements of course had a cultural aspect. When the military government took over in the '60s and political parties couldn't voice their grievances directly, it was Kranti Shilpi Goshthi artists who sang 'Manbo na e bandhaney, manbo na e srinkholey...' protesting the autocracy. The song was written and composed by Salih Chowdhury. We [Kranti members] learnt the song from Sheikh Luthfar Rahman.

"Cultural organisations Kranti and Udichi, which



Kamal Lohani

PHOTO: MUMIT M.

are committed to the national cause, were formed in the '60s. In 1967, when the Information Minister of Pakistan, Khwaja Shahabuddin denounced Tagore, Kranti, Chhayanaut and other cultural organisations formed 'Shangskritik Swadhikar Pratishtha Parishad' and held a four-day programme. The programme received overwhelming support from the masses."

Lohani continued, "Following Bangabandhu's historic speech on March 7, 1971, the whole nation united against the junta. Swadhin Bangla Biplobi Betar Kendra went on air on March 26. A group of valiant, young radio staff was operating it. The radio station faced air raid, was forced to dismantle a 10 kW transmitter and move across the border to Tripura."

"Swadhin Bangla Betar Kendra (SBBK) eventually went on air from Ballygunge Circular Road, Calcutta (now Kolkata). The radio station was part of psychological warfare. It served several major purposes: It was the voice of the Mujibnagar Government (in exile); it provided hope for the Bengalis feeling incarcerated in their own land; it boosted the morale of fatigued freedom fighters and it presented what truly was taking place in East Pakistan to the whole world."

"At SBBK, I was in charge of news. Initially I was in charge of both Bangla and English news. Later Alamgir Kabir joined and took charge of English news. Apart from news we had music, narratives, plays etc. The most popular programme was 'Charam Patra' by M.R. Akhter Mukul; another was 'Jallader Darbar', a play written by Kalyan Mitra. Raju Ahmed, renowned film artist, directed and acted in it."

"We also had Urdu programmes which explained to the non-Bengali population of Pakistan why the Bengalis were fighting the Pakistani army."

Coming back to present, Lohani spoke about the current state of traditional culture in Bangladesh and the role of BSA in safeguarding and promoting it. "After 1975, religion-centric and non-Bangladeshi cultural elements were incorporated. That trend went on for years. However, we are

hopeful that our traditional culture has the merits to sustain," Lohani remarked.

"BSA has taken up initiatives in this regard. We are promoting the diverse genres of Bangla folk songs, which are on the verge of extinction. Recently, we held a Baul Music Festival, featuring researchers from Bangladesh, India, Italy, UK and Japan," he said.

Victory Day celebration is on at BSA as well. This year's arrangement is extensive and has been meticulously planned -- offering music, dance, poetry recitation, plays, photography and painting exhibition and more. An installation -- a replica of a *baddhyabumi* (killing field) -- has been created at BSA, drawing the attention of visitors.

The DG also has bigger plans. "With assistance from the Norwegian government (through the embassy), we're going to open up a painting preservation lab at BSA. Though a much-needed facility, this will be the first lab of its kind in Bangladesh," Lohani revealed.

"Trainers at district Shilpakala Academies all over the country are ill paid and without them one cannot expect these institutions to operate. Our major constraint is funds. However, the good news is that the Finance Minister has assured us of enhancement," Lohani concluded.

Memories of their martyred father

In conversation with Sadi and Shibli Mohammad



PHOTO: NELOY HOSSAIN

Sadi and Shibli Mohammad

JAMIL MAHMUD

Tagore singer Sadi Mohammad and dancer Shibli Mohammad are familiar names in our cultural circuit. In 1971, collaborators of the Pakistani army killed their father brutally. On the eve of Victory Day, the siblings shared their thoughts on the Liberation War, memories of their father and a host of other issues.

The first part of the conversation was dominated by recollections of their father. Though Sadi recalls the incident, which cost his father's life, Shibli said he was too young to remember it.

"Our father was not involved in active politics, rather he was known as a philanthropist and a respected individual in our neighbourhood. Mostly non-Bengalis lived in the area (Mohammadpur) then. As a committed individual, my father always fought against the odds from an ethical point of view," said Sadi.

"They killed our father on March 26, 1971 in front of our house," said Shibli. As a sign of honour, a road in the

Mohammadpur area was named after their father, Shaheed Salimullah.

"My impressions of our father is not like my elder brother's, as I was too young to remember anything; rather whatever I am today is due to the support and encouragement of my mother and siblings," added Shibli.

Shibli has been involved in the field of dance since 1980, after graduating from Jahangirnagar University. On the other hand, Sadi was more into music.

The conversation then veers to the question of how they draw inspiration from their father or how they remember him on their respective cultural fronts. The siblings have differing views.

"In my performance I always try to demonstrate the spirit of the Liberation War. Dance gives me the option to articulate that spirit in a more profound manner," said Shibli.

"Music seeks universal peace. So, my way is to disseminate the message of peace through songs. I think it's not only about my father, who is one of the three million martyred during the war;

through my performance I try to honour all of them," said Sadi.

The siblings are unanimous on one score: "One thing is for sure; we want to ensure that our mother is able to see the trial of the war criminals," said the siblings in one voice.

What about the hurdles that they faced being the offspring of a Shaheed.

The siblings lamented that they were blacklisted from the cultural arena during the last political regime, which they found unexpected and caused them much sorrow. "I bear no political label, why then did I have to go through such ordeal?" questioned Sadi.

Both artistes expressed their woes and as the offspring of a martyred individual, both want the war criminals to be brought to justice.

At present Sadi is busy preparing for his organisation Rabi Raag's 23rd anniversary, which will be held next February. Shibli, in turn, has recently returned from India. He is pulling out all the stops for a mega event, in which his troupe Nityanchal is to perform at the inaugural ceremony of the upcoming SAAF Games.

Songs of freedom at Liberation War Museum



PHOTO: MUMIT M.

Shila Momen (right) and other artistes of Raktokarobi sing at the programme.

A CORRESPONDENT

The weeklong Victory Day celebration, titled "Manobadrikar Dibosh Thekey Bijoy Dibosh" is on at Liberation War Museum (LWM). As part of this event, a cultural programme along with discussion was held at the premises of the museum on December 14 (on the occasion of Martyred Intellectuals' Day).

Two cultural organisations Badhyabhumir Shantan Dol (relatives of people executed at the Mirpur killing field) and Raktokarobi (from Chittagong) performed patriotic and inspirational songs of Rabinranath Tagore, Kazi Nazrul Islam, Satyendranath Dutt, Gobinda Haldar, Rajanikanta Sen, Gurusaday

Dutt and Poresh Dhar.

The programme started with a speech by Dr. Sarwar Ali, a trustee of LWM. He said, "Two issues get priority on this Victory Day -- one is the trial of war criminals and the other is revival of the values of Liberation War."

"Shono Ekti Mujibur-er Thekey", "Guerrilla, Guerrilla, Amra Guerrilla", "Ajkey Amra Chhotto Shishu", "Karar Oi Louha Kopat" and "Nongor Tolo Tolo" were performed by Badhyabhumir Shantan Dol.

Artists of Raktokarobi -- Shila Momen, Ruchira Barua, Lucky Dutt, Srabonti Dhar, Subrata Das, Purabi Barua, Farhana Nurat, Satyajit Ghosh, Pulok Mallik and others performed "Sharthok Janom Mago", "O Amar Desh-

er Mati", "Kon Deshetey Torulota", "Purba Digontey Shurjo Uthechhey", "Mayer Deya Mota Kapor", "Bangla Ma-er Durnibar", "Ek Shagor Rokter Binimoye", "Ekbar Biday De Ma" and more at the programme.

Shila Momen directed the music while Palash Dev was on *tabla* and Ashit Biswas was on *esraj*. Nilotpol Shadhya and Rezwan Ali assisted the programme.

Prior to the performance by Raktokarobi, Bhashwar Bandyopadhyay, on behalf of the organisation, recited a solemn eulogy to the martyred intellectuals, titled "Mormey Gantha Bishwamoyi". He also recited "Pherari Swadesh" of Shantosh Gupta at the programme.

TV play "Shesh Potro" on ATN Bangla

A CORRESPONDENT

ATN Bangla will telecast TV play "Shesh Potro" tonight at 8:45 pm. The play is written and directed by Abul Hayat.

The plot: Once close friends, Sheli, Rasheda, Tani and Shobita drift apart after their HSC. Now in their '60s, they get a chance to meet when Sheli arranges a get together session at her house. The foursome discover that time has wrought many changes in their lives: Sheli is the wife of a rich man, Rasheda is now a writer, Tani has become a social worker and Shobita is a popular singer. As their memories surface, the story progresses.

The cast includes Dilara Zaman, Sharmili Ahmed, Dolly Zahur and Chitrakha Guhu.



A scene from the play.

একটি স্বপ্ন
একটি যুদ্ধ
একটি ফুল
... এ আনন্দ চিরদিনের



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