The Pioneer of Bangladeshi Theatre

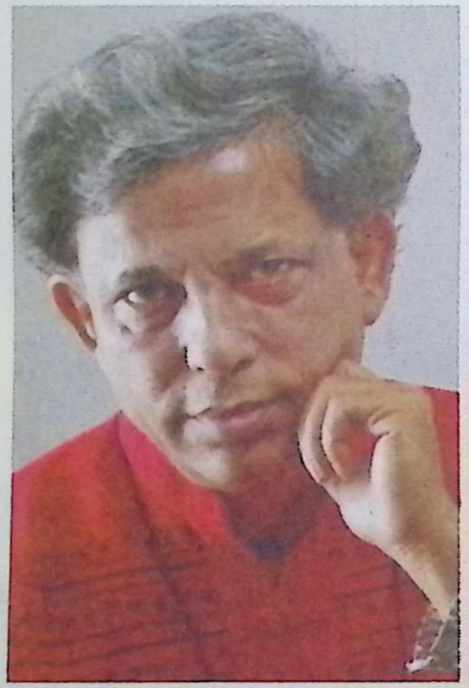
Selim Al Deen (1949-2008) is one of the most prominent Bangladeshi playwrights and theatre artists. In the post Tagore era his works on classical drama is unparalleled in Bengali literature. As a teacher of drama and dramatics and as an artist, he has established the foundation of Bangladeshi theatre culture. On his 5th death anniversary (14th January 2008), we remember this great scholar and artist.

The Beginning

- Selim was born on 18th August 1949 in Feni as Mainuddin.
- He was a student of Bengali literature.
- He started writing from his student life and assumed this pen name later
- Though Selim's ambition was to be a poet but his mentor Munir Chaudhury, the legendary Bengali literary personality, encouraged him to work more on drama.

Creating the treasures

- Selim Al Deen conducted extensive study on Bengali theatres called *jatra* and his renowned drama *Kittonkhola* was influenced by his study.
- He introduced Epic Realsim in his works such as *Bashon, Atotai, Keramat Mongol* etc.
- He also brought out the folklore tradition called *Kathyanatya* to his dramas like *Joiboti Koinnar Mon*
- Selim Al Deen was one of the founding members of Dhaka Theatre which is a leading theatre group of Bangladesh
- He was also the founder of Fusion Theory. His play *Ekti Marma Rupkotha* is one of the few instances of Neo-ethnic Theatre in Bengali literature



Selim Al Deen (1949-2008)

Literary Works

- All of Selim's writings have been published in four volumes named *Rachona Shomogro-1, 2, 3 & 4th part* (2005–09), edited by Saymon Zakaria
- He also published two poetry collections called *Kobi O Timir* (1990) and *Swapna Ramanigan* (2007)
- *Amrita Upakshan* is the only novel authored by Selim Al Deen
- Selim also compiled a Bengali theatre dictionary called Bangla Natyokosh
- He is the pioneer of street theatre movement in Bangladesh



Recognitions

- Selim Al Deen received numerous awards for his contributions
- He also received the two most prestigious civilian awards of the Bangladesh government the Bangla Academi Award in 1984 and Ekushey Padak in 2007
- His plays are included in the text book curricula of many prominent universities around the world



Death and Unfinished Projects

- Selim Al Deen died on January 14, 2008 in Dhaka after a cardiac failure.
- Selim's dream project was to establish a world cultural centre in Dhaka.
- He was working on a new play called *Haar-Haddi* that remains unfinished.

—MSKC