



Curious reads @ Boi Mela

BOOKS are an invaluable means of keeping your mind busy. Rather than spending countless hours in front of the PC, wasting every spare moment in social media, one should start rechanneling their leisure in more fruitful pursuits.

We are a blessed nation as we have the Ekushey Boi Mela, which keeps bringing us back to our habit of reading every year. It gives a wonderful opportunity to come close to some of the best books that have been published. From the latest novel by Anisul Hoque, or poetry by Nirmalendu Goon to timeless classics by Kazi Nazrul Islam, Kaikobad and Begum Rokeya, this is one place where hunting for titles is made easy.

Needless to say, the assortment of subject matters covered by the entire range of new publications is a staggering one. Versatility is key to the attraction of the Mela. But there are some books that stand out in a crowd of countless new publications due to their rich content, the writer's writing prowess or sheer ingenuity in the selection of the topic.

Bangla Probad O Probachan, published by Bidyapokash, is a wonderful treatise that presents the rich nuances of the Bengali language through an alphabetically arranged list of Bengali proverbs and idioms, and their English equivalents.

Citing the origins of particular proverbs the book discusses the matter at length. Author Shubolchandra Mitra writes, for instance, 'Haley pani paye na' originated as a saying of a boatmen, while 'Hater paanch' can be traced back to the game of cards.

He then goes on to say that some of the popular forms of idioms in English are literal translations from Bengali and not the exact expressions of the saying. To make it clearer, 'Ek dhiley dui pakhi mara' is a literal translation of the English -- "To kill two birds with one stone"; the exact Bengali proverb in this case is "Roth dekha o kola becha". This 240 page book of Bengali proverbs and idioms is as good for quick reference as it is for a casual perusal.



Shifting on to another glossary of terms, from sayings in a language to a genealogy, **Bangalir Padabikosh** will make a wonderful addition to any library. If your surname is 'Qureshi' and you want to explore the lineage of the surname, this book just might come in handy. Packed with 250 odd pages of information, priced at Tk.300, Bangalir Padabikosh is a publication of Jyotipokash.

It is quite natural for a person to feel pride in his ancestry. As Bengalis, we take pride in our rich heritage and culture. We



find dignity in our thousand year old legacy and lineage and often show it off. Yet, there are people, sons and daughters of the same soil we live in, who are denied this self esteem. The book, **"Adibashi Achey?...Achey!"** – mimicking a popular political slogan for a title – explores the double standards we set for the indigenous population of Bangladesh.

An anthology of articles printed in the print media, this book presents the case of the indigenous population of the country and their right to be treated, not as a small ethnic group, but as equals in society. With an elaborate preface that introduces the issue, the book, priced at Tk.200, is edited by Sayema Khatun and Mahmudul Sumon and features 25 essays/newspaper articles.

Shifting from social recognition to finding gender biases in the works of Shakespeare, Professor Serajul Islam Choudhury presents a curious case of women portrayed in works of the greatest English bard ever to have lived. Ranging from the Dark Lady in his sonnets to the popular persona of Desdemona, Juliet or Catherine, to lesser acclaimed characters, the book presents a shade of Shakespeare's writing process.

Islam writes, "Compared to females, Shakespeare's dramas focus on the male protagonist. That is natural, reality was such...in his time women were never the central character. Yet, in some cases his portrayal of women has transcended their male counterparts and their presence could not be denied."

The anthology of essays, **Shakespeare's Meyera** is priced at Tk.270 and has been published by Chitra Prokashani.

If you are interested to understand the psyche of a poet, the book, **Ginsberg er Shongey** by reputed poet Nirmalendu Goon presents his tête-à-tête with another literary giant, Allan Ginsberg. Goon had the opportunity to meet Ginsberg in the early nineties and this title shares his anecdotes. This book portrays a chemistry, not between two poets, but also between two human beings who fight from their souls for justice.

Ginsberg er Shongey is a book by Bivas Publication and comes at the nominal price of Tk.160.

Aside from all this serious talk, readers and writers alike sometimes just like to go crazy! And the **Pagol Shangkha** by little magazine, Dhamani is a testament to that. This special edition of the magazine portrays everything that you need to know about madness, from musings, to anecdotes and features, not to mention poems and short stories.

Not everyone is an avid reader. Yet, most of us enjoy a curious read. Walking down the stalls of Boi Mela, one finds themselves spoilt for choices. We, however, are unable to save you from that predicament. Read what you like reading. Rather than wasting time on a scholarly review for pretentious reasons, redirect your reading experience to something you like. Curious reads are easy to find. Only thing you need is an eagle eye and self-awareness.

By Mannan Mashhur Zarif
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