

LOVE FOR BANGLA

APURBA JAHANGIR
PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

Like all languages, Bangla language has been through changes. The fifth spoken language in the world, we Bangalis take much pride in our mother tongue. This love for the language has been appreciated by other countries and their people. Seeing this love and affection, citizen and academician of Czech Republic Dr Martin Hribek studied and fell in love with the Bangla language. Invited by Bangla Academy to witness the 60-year-celebration of the Ekushey Boi Mela, Dr Martin Hribek witnessed the opening of this year's book fair.

Hribek talked about Tagore's visit to Czech Republic and how his writings connected to Czech Republic's then political environment. His researches also include what he calls Dalai Lamaism which indicates towards an orientalist construction of a post socialist consciousness.

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grew when he was studying for a Masters degree. “My time as a student at the Charles University in Prague triggered my fondness for Ethnology,” says Martin. “While studying the Indian subcontinent, I saw how versatile and in a way idealistic Bangla language is. It was love at first read.” As Dr Martin studied further, he learned about the history of this subcontinent, especially the two Bengals (Kolkata and Bangladesh). His thesis on The Saraswati puja festival from contemporary Calcutta explained how the celebration is linked with literature, music and other cultural elements in Kolkata.

In the course of studying Bangla, Dr Martin stumbled upon a Bengali writer who later influenced his academic career. “You cannot imagine modern Bangla literature without Rabindranath Tagore,” says Martin Hribek. “He is a kind of writer who wrote about everything. While doing my research I came to realise that no Bengali event can ever be complete without considering the elements from Tagore's poetry and stories.” His publication — “Tagore the Eternal Seeker: Foot Prints of a Wall Traveller”, Dr Martin

During his visit to Bangladesh Dr Martin was mesmerised by the book fair. “Bengali writers have always been a phenomenon in the west. Writers such as Humayun Ahmed, Sunil Gangapadhay are very much popular and have been widely translated,” he says. According to Dr Martin, more Bengali writers will be able to reach the international platform, only if an authority should be created in Bangladesh to deal with copyrights and translations. “There are a lot of writers whose writings are exceptional. If there was such an office, Bangladeshi writers would thrive internationally.”

Last year's Ekushey Boi Mela surrounds the unfortunate incident of the blogger killing. This year lots of precautions have been taken but still people are quite afraid to go to the fair. “What happened was very tragic but we should always remember that freedom always comes at a price,” says Dr Martin. “In my opinion, there should always be a fine line between freedom of speech and not hurting anyone's religious or any kind of sentiments. We should always keep that in mind.”

STAR PEOPLE



Dr Martin Hribek



PHOTOS: COURTESY



MUSINGS

TALES OF LONG LIFE

SYED MAQSUD JAMIL

Everybody seeks a long life. But long life is not always a blessing. It can be a life of unmitigated woes. However long life indeed is a milestone!

The oldest recorded human age is 168 years! Shirali Farzali Muslimov of Azerbaijan was the blessed person. Muslimov according to Russian record was born on 26 March 1805 and died on 2 September 1973. He was survived by his 107 year old third wife and saw his fifth generation. Muslimov survived on a diet of whole meal bread, chicken broth, low-fat cheese and yoghurt. He never took wine nor did he smoke. It is known that herdsman around that region live to have a long life.

According to the western world French lady Jeanne Calment lived to be 122! Calment was born on 21 February 1875 and passed away on 4 August 1997. She credited her longevity to a diet rich in olive oil which she also applied onto her body as well as a diet of port wine and 2.2 pounds of chocolate every day. It saw her through! Emma Morano - a 115 year old living Italian lady divorced long ago takes three raw eggs and a glass of home-made brandy every day. She shared the information that since divorce she stayed away from men! It helped her!

In general longevity is increasing, particularly in the western world and in Japan. For Japan aging of its population is a matter of concern! Happily for

Bangladesh the longevity has increased to 69 years. It is encouraging since the elements in the country like weather and living conditions are not ideal.

Of late, long life is endowed with a halo of public profile; with the British monarchy, American Presidents and indeed with film stars of Hollywood living long. Prince Philip is 94 and the Queen is 89 and President George H. W. Bush is in his nineties. On his 90th birthday (12 June 1924) he went for sky diving from helicopter!

Among the living film stars Olivia de Havilland is 99! So is Kirk Douglas! In India the thespian Dilip Kumar is 93 (11 December 1922)! Much appreciated film director Mrinal Sen is 92!

Olivia de Havilland is into her 100th year being born on 1 July 1916. She won 2 academy awards for the films *To Each His Own* (1946) and *The Heiress* (1949). Olivia de Havilland is the only artiste still alive of Hollywood's first magnum opus *Gone with the Wind* (1939). She played the role of Melanie Hamilton. In 2008 President George W. Bush awarded her National Medal of Arts.

Kirk Douglas is in his 100th year being born on 9 December 1916. He is a celebrated star of *The Vikings* and *Spartacus*. He has been awarded Lifetime Achievement Oscar Award. His son Michael Douglas won academy award for Best Actor 1988 for the film *Wall Street*.



PHOTO: COURTESY

The thespian Dilip as Satyajit Ray said - is an ultimate method actor. In his 54 years career he received 8 Filmfare Awards. In 2015 he received Padmabibhusan award. Born on 14 May 1923 Mrinal Sen is widely acclaimed for movies *Bhubon Shome*, *Kharij*, *Interview*, *Khondohor*, *Kolkata Ekattur* et al.

Once Hindi films iconic villain and later to become a celebrated character actor Pran was 93 years old (born 12 February 1920) when he passed away on 6 November 2013. He received Dadasaheb Phalke Award.

Hollywood's highly regarded leading lady Katharine Hepburn was a nonagenarian. Born on 12 May 1907, the only Hollywood film artiste to win 4

Oscars Hepburn was 94 years old when she passed away on 29 June 2003. The four academy awards she won for Best Actress are - *Morning Glory* (1933), *Guess Who's Coming to Dinner* (1967), *The Lion in Winter* (1968) and *On Golden Pond* (1980). On life she observed; "Life is hard. After all, it kills you."

Olivia de Havilland's equally gifted younger sister leading lady Joan Fontaine was 96 years old when she passed away on 15 December 2013; being born on 22 October 1917. She received academy award for best actress for 1941 for Alfred Hitchcock's film *Suspicion*.

To borrow from Katherine Hepburn; even long life is hard. For after all, it too kills you!

PEARLS OF WISDOM



“I HAD TO FACE A LOT COMING THROUGH THIS JOURNEY, A LOT OF SACRIFICES, DIFFICULTIES, CHALLENGES, AND INJURIES.”

GABBY DOUGLAS
Artistic gymnast



“IT'S THE JOURNEY OF SELF, I GUESS. YOU START WITH THIS KIND OF LONER, OUTSIDE GUY, WHICH A LOT OF PEOPLE CAN RELATE TO, AND HE GOES OUT INTO THE WORLD.”

KEANU REEVES
Canadian actor, producer, director and musician



“TO TRAVEL IS TO TAKE A JOURNEY INTO YOURSELF.”

DANNY KAYE
American actor, singer, dancer, comedian, and musician