



SPOTLIGHT

Books breathing life into us

Visiting the 'Ekushey Book Fair' always instigates a sense of belongingness as does the entire month of February. Almost 65 years ago, in 1952 the language movement materialised in protest of not giving official status to 'Bangla' as a state language.

Many decades later, we still commemorate the episode in many ways, with a lot of respect and fervour nationwide. The month long book fair, officially known as the 'Amar Ekushey Grantha Mela' is one of the most well-known ways to pay homage to that struggle.

With so much said we must also appreciate the Bangladeshi literary scene; rich with exemplary writers and intellectual books allowing us to cherish the language that so many have fought for with their lives on stake.

Amongst so many writers, is it fair to have any favourites? To each his own, I say! But a list can surely be derived, given the wide variety of writers and depths of their work, as well as an abundance of uncontested classics, without perusing which a Bengali cannot claim a stake to its literary culture.

Poetry and works of fiction by Kazi Nazrul Islam

Why was he called a rebel poet? Is it because he was politically inclined towards the underprivileged or oppressed? Not exactly! The intellect that was Nazrul defied injustice in all forms, talked about equality in all aspects of his life, indulged in free and scathing discourse on issues like rac-

ism, religion, and even gender.

In a time when women were paid no respect at all; Nazrul came up with lines like, "I sing of equality. In my eyes there is no difference between a man and a woman. Everything of value in this world is half due to women, and half to men."

There is another reason why the rebel poet is unique; he depicted the true lives of the Muslim facet of the population existent in his time. Before his works, Muslims were very much

and others. It must also be mentioned that many of his songs and poems were used during the Bangladeshi Liberation War, motivating the nation against tyranny.

Books that nourish the intellectual quest

If you were on the lookout of an intellectually stimulating evening quenching your thirst for the rational; look no further. Bengali literary scene is proud to have owned such remarkable writers who are passionately provocative in logical spur-

ated, the writer brought out the authentic state of affairs of the lower income population, and their struggles.

Another writer dealing with societal prejudices has been Ahmed Sofa. His very words in Onkar - "Whose blood is more red; my deaf wife's or martyr Assad's?" will definitely strike a chord in any individual's heart.

The writer also dealt with trifling issues of life in a sardonic tone. A line from his short story, Ordhek Nari Ordhek Isshori, reads - "We have spent crores of taka in conducting seminars and symposiums on women's empowerment issues. But till now have we not failed to produce at least two dedicated public toilets for the ladies in Dhaka?"

Talking more about pragmatism, another writer comes to mind who has dealt with most emerging topics under the sun; Shahaduzzaman. His solo anthology, Chirkut, is a must read for people trying to break the shackles of bigotry in all our lives.

Usually autobiographies are about one person, his life aspirations, his travel stories, etc. We do love reading those, to be able to know more about our favourite personality. Another completely different aspect to the autobiography has been dealt by Syed Shamsul Haque in his Teen Poishar Jochona. Here, he introduced us to all the influential characters in his life like Murtaja Baseer, Fazle Lohani, among others. It's definitely a thought provoking read and worth looking up at the book fair.



unrepresented in the canon of Bengali literature. The rebel poet's essays, novels, and poems are a 'must have' for every Bengali library. Compilations are available at all bookstores, you may particularly look out for Sanchita, Agnibina, Rikter Bedon, Bathyar Daan, Baunduler Atmakahi, Mrittukhuda,

Akhteruzzaman Elias, one of the greatest exponents of Bengali fiction, as proclaimed by his esteemed peers, might not have gotten much time to gift us with innumerable write-ups, but his two novels, Chilekothar Shepai and Khwabnama hold the admiration of many. Politically moti-