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A tribute to Syed Waliullah

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AN INTERNATIONAL symposium on the Life and Works of Syed Waliullah was held at the RC Majumdar Auditorium, University of Dhaka on Sunday, February 19th.

Organised by Intercultural Forum, San Diego, USA and writers:ink, the event took place on the occasion of the publication of 'Night of No Moon', a translated rendition of Syed Waliullah's *Chander Ambasya* by Professor Afi'a Dil.

Professor Dil received her B.A. Honours and M.A. degrees respectively in English Literature from the University of Dhaka, Master's in English and Applied Linguistics from the University of Michigan, and Ph.D. in Linguistics from Stanford University. She is currently Professor Emeritus at Alliant International University in San Diego, California.

Professor Dil had also translated Waliullah's *Taranga Bhanga*, which was published as 'The Breakers' by the Bangla Academy in 1987.

Guest speakers at the occasion included Professor Anwar Dil, Professor Serajul Islam Chowdhury, Dr. Sultana Zaman, Mr. Syed Abul Maksud, Professor Niaz

Zaman, Ms. Shaheen Westcombe, Mr. Mortuja Baseer, Professor Rafiqul Islam and Mr. Nurul Karim Naseem. Professor Kabir Chowdhury was the Chief Guest while Professor Khan Sarwar Murshid presided over the symposium.

The speakers provided an eclectic mixture with some impromptu speeches, some written, interspersed with personal anecdotes of having known Waliullah the award-winning novelist, playwright, essayist and short story-writer.

Dr Sultana Zaman, the author's literary agent and relative and Shaheen Westcombe, Waliullah's niece, not only spoke of him as a great writer but also as a person who possessed a generous spirit, while Mortuja Baseer reminisced over his experiences as an illustrator of Waliullah's books.

Syed Abul Maksud also presented an original manuscript, containing unedited portions of the writer's work, at the symposium. Professor Kabir Chowdhury spoke at length of *Chander Ambasya* and of Waliullah's craft.

The writer's works, he mentioned, are infused with internal drama-long monologues, introspections and the like—and Waliullah is said to delve deep into



From (L) Professor Serajul Islam Chowdhury, Professor Kabir Chowdhury, Professor Afi'a Dil, Professor Anwar Dil and Professor Sultana Zaman at the event.

the psyche of the characters he etches. Professor Chowdhury also highlighted the fact that Waliullah had consciously introduced the absurdist technique in his plays, a

novel technique in Bengali drama at the time.

All speakers at the symposium lauded the author as a storyteller of the highest rank, as one of the

most socially conscious writers of South Asia, and as a visionary who within the short span of his life had made a significant contribution to Bengali Literature.