# CULTURE



# RIBUTE SZTUITHE Rebel

#### (Bidrohi)

Proclaim, Hero, Proclaim: I raise my head high! Before me bows down the Himalayan peaks!

Proclaim, Hero, proclaim: rending through the sky, surpassing the moon, the sun, the planets, the stars, piercing through the earth, the heavens, the cosmos and the Almighty's throne, have I risen--I, the eternal wonder of the creator of the universe. The furious Shiva shines on my forehead like a royal medallion of victory! Proclaim, Hero, proclaim: My head is ever held high!

I'm ever indomitable, arrogant and cruel, I'm the Dance-king of the day of the Doom, I'm the cyclone, the destruction! I'm the great terror, I'm the curse of the world. I'm unstoppable, I smash everything into pieces! I'm unruly and lawless. I crush under my feet all the bonds, rules and disciplines! I don't obey any laws. I sink cargo-laden boats--I'm the torpedo, I'm the dreadful floating mine. I'm the destructive Dhurjati, the sudden tempest of the summer. I'm the Rebel, the Rebel son of the Creator of the universe!

Translated by SAJED KAMAL

## Rare moments with Feroza Begum

Feroza Begum has been the leading light for Nazrul songs for over half a century. She has almost single handedly popularized and upheld the tradition of Nazrul Sangeet to millions of music lovers in the sub continent and to the western world. She has been awarded the Shahdhinata Puroshkar, Nasiruddin Gold Medal, Puroshkar, Nasiruddin Gold Medal, National Award for Best Singer, Netaji Shubhsash Chandra Bose Award, Satyajit Ray Award and Golden Disk Award by CBS/Sony amongst others. We met her for a rare interview, to find out how she assessed the spread of Nazrul songs nearly 30 years after the poet's death. Excerpts of her frank and insightful comments and insightful comments....

SADYA AFREEN MALLICK and KAUSHIK S DAS

reasons, I can't point to only one.

Before independence, many standard

programmes on Nazrul used to take

place here at Bangla Academy and

Engineers Institute. I used to take part

in each of those programmes. These

programmes where the eminent person-

Unfortunately, after the independ-

of this country. Due to some incapable

people in our cultural sector, some

artistes were 'black listed' and some

were brought in the limelight. With the

change of governments, the national

media also favoured certain artistes.

Though I never fell victim of this sys-

tem, a section of people in the media

made me very angry and at the same

time, wary of pampering to anybody's

wishes. It is very unfortunate that it

of Nazrul Sangeet artists?

happens only in our country not any-

where else. I don't want to speak more

TDS: Does it happen only in the case

FB: Probably it does, I am not sure.

But why should it happen in any sector

60 years and I should have some say in

the process of planning to take forward

like me are not getting enough opportu-

the Nazrul legacy. The situation is

nities to perform in the national

planning in this case.

talking about?

simply ridiculous. The senior artistes

programmes. The people are slowly

forgetting Nazrul's songs. The singers

can contribute, but there is no proper

TDS: What type of planning you are

FB: First of all, the planning should

be neutral and justified. If the authorities

can't do it, then they should leave it to

us. They should talk to the senior art-

istes about it and plan with them. Then

Let me recall some events that took

place in mid 70s. When Ziaur Rahman

preserved. I gave him my own plan, but

steps should be taken to stop the pro-

cess of neglecting artistes with the

came to power, he asked me how

Nazrul's songs, his works could be

change of governments.

at all? I have been singing for the last

ence, politics crept into the music world

were mainly government-arranged

alities were invited.

about it.



PHOTO: ZAHEDUL I KHAN

## The Immortal Rebel with a cause

**OBAIDUL HUQ** 

WENTY-seven years ago on this day (Bhadra 12, 1976) the Rebel Poet and our National Poet Kazi Nazrul Islam left us after prolonged illness. The bereaved nation pays its homage of eternal love, respect and gratitude to the undying memory of the poet whose genius transcends the national frontiers.

Kazi Nazrul Islam is not just and inimitable poet committed to upholding the supremacy of man emancipating man from all kinds of inequalities and injustices, in short, from "man's inhumanity to man"

It is aptly said that poetry is a novel way of seeing life in its totality and saying about it with keener passion and compassion

It is truer in the case of Nazrul who sees life with the keenest emotions and says about it in the boldest terms. He introduced a new and vigorous tone and style with a strange blending of sound and sense and so animated the Bengali poetry that it considerably changed the literary taste of the time. Too creative and inventive to follow the beaten track and be patronised as a humble satellite of the master, poet Nazrul set Bengali poetry on a revolutionary course liberating it from the inhibiting influence of old hackneyed conventions and ideas.

He coined and borrowed new words and expressions giving a fresh resonance to them and in the process enlarged the Bengali vocabulary and further enriched the Bengali language, which was already indebted to many other foreign languages. He gave meaning to what is called the "revolution of the word."

in the assertion that Bengali poetry

did not quite step into twentieth century until the luminous appearance of poet Nazrul Islam on the literary horizon of Bengal.

It is absurd to think of Nazrul, the

poet, without trying to know Nazrul, the man. In fact, he is to date the boldest, the freest, the friendliest and the most original voice of humanity and liberty in Bengali poetry. His idea of man is that of a fully autonomous being enjoying freedom of thought and expression makes a clear difference between service and slavery. Having seen life at its worst, he called art into the service of man unlike those who mince tensile words in the name of serving art. Unlike many tired voice which lacked the courage of conviction and commitment in dealing with human issues. the Rebel Poet Nazrul Islam (which is only one of his many moods) came roaring and boldly expressed the social, economic and political exploitation and injustices perpetrated by the entrenched vested interests and launched literary crusade for the emancipation of the suffering humanity. And unlike the starry eyed, hard-nosed, detached-fromlife, escapist 'academic' versemakers who split up the literary audience into two a highbrow one of so-called intellectual elite and a lowbrow one composed of popular poetry -- and delight in metaphysical exercises, poet Nazrul, the realist and the subjectivist, did not hesitate when needed to nobly employ poetry in fearlessly discharging his social and human obligations.

dignity and freedom Poet Nazrul called open all to break open the doors of prison cells and liberate the mprisoned multitudes.

As a lyricist and composer of music he holds a unique position. Qualitatively and quantitatively speaking he still has no peer.

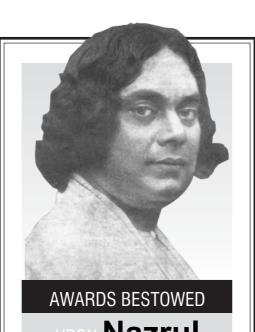
We do not know of any one else in the world of Bengali poetry who affirmed so much so long so passionately and artistically. This is the essential poet Nazrul, the lover and be remembered and adored for his crusading commitment to humanity and who practically sacrificed himself to the cause of humanity. A real humanist, his bold espousal of the cause of down-trodden made him a rebel. so far the only one in the realm of Bengali poetry. Naturally the concluding lines of his famous and immortal poem, the Rebel are --

The war-wearied rebel I'll rest on the day when the wailings of the oppressed Will not rend the air and skies.

When the tyrant's sword Will not flourish in the battle field.

The wailing of the oppressed continue to rend the air and the skies. And the tyrant's sword still flourishes. So the silent and timid majority must return to Nazrul again and again for the courage and vitality that they so badly need for their survival. And also for the intellectual and spiritual nourishment that the poet provides without which we shall not in an enervating state of degradation and degenera-

The author, a renouned journalist, is former editor



#### **Nazrul**

On December 15,1929, Nazrul was accorded a grand national civic reception at Calcutta Albert Hall under the chairmanship of Acharya Prafulla Chandra Ray. He was declared the poet of the Bangalee Nation by Netaji Suvash Chandra Bose, the Chief Guest

Jagattarinari Gold Medal was awarded to Nazrul in 1945 by Calcatta University. The year 1960 was one of the most coveted for Nazrul since he was decorated with Padma Bhushan, the highest literary award conferred by the government of India

In 1976, Nazrul was conferred citizenship of Bangladesh. He was also awarded Ekushey Padak by the Government of Bangladesh. Earlier, in 1975 Dhaka University conferred an honourary D.Lit. on Nazrul.

HE Daily Star (TDS): Why has apart from formation of Nazrul Institute, your golden voice not been nothing much materialised. But there is heard in recent times? still time. I haven't lost hope Feroza Begum(FB): There are many

TDS: What other suggestions did you make in your plan given to the authori-FB: To my mind, training of the teach-

ers is very important. To build up trainers should be our primary task. Then collecting the recorTDS and the notations. The next step could have been arranging special training for the senior artistes. And I wanted them to make it a priority. They accepted some of these measures but I don't know how far they have succeeded TDS: What is your opinion about the

activities of Nazrul Institute? Do you think what they are doing is enough?

FB: Many senior artistes are not being involved with the institute. They don't get the proper facilities there. And often they get frustrated. That's the main problem. If the artistes were happy with their Sadhana(practice), then no planning or steps would fail. Sadly the evaluation of Nazrul is not done properly and I want to ask them why?

TDS: But organistaions like Shilpakala Academy, Nazrul Academy and Nazrul Institute are holding many programmes. Don't you think theses are worthwhile initiatives?

FB: Shilpakala Academy could have done much more in its history of last 15 years, which they failed to do. I want to know categorically why at least two conferences every year, on our National Poet, could not be arranged by the Academy? Why do we only remember him on his birth and death anniversary? Then what was the necessity of making him the National Poet? The whole year goes without any special programmes except those two days. The government spenTDS loaTDS of money on programmes on those two days, but the artistes don't get their remuneration properly, the programmes are not properly directed. The question of capability is also important here. Those who are skilled should be patronised.

TDS: The Rabindra Sangeet singers did not wait for any official initiatives and began it's own programme to popularise Tagore's songs around the country. Why couldn't the Nazrul Sangeet singers do this?

FB: Yes I agree they have been

successful. If the Nazrul singers tried to do it, they could have been successful too. Bangladesh Nazrul Sangeet Shilpi Sangstha was formed to carry on such activities, but the spirit was missing among the singers to take such initiatives by themselves. There were problems among the artistes, there was lack of leadership and sincerity.

TDS: Do you think the notation that Nazrul Institute is doing is right?

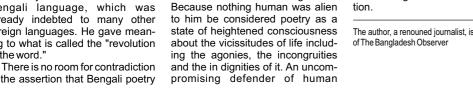
FB: If we say the notation process is right, then why don't most of the singers follow the right notations? In Nazrul Institute many popular and common lyrics are also being interpreted incorrectly. Even the lyrics are being changed. I listened to a song recently and it contained six mistakes. I want to ask why? It's not only the authority, it'st also the artiste's duty to correct these mistakes.

TDS: Do you think that exchanging artistes between West Bengal and Bangladesh should be encouraged to promote Nazrul's songs?

FB: Definitely. At this moment, I don't see any exchanges. After independence, I performed in many programmes over there. But very few artistes have visited Bangladesh in the same way. There seems to be barrier. The film actors come and go, but when the issue of bringing Rabindra and Nazrul Sangeet singers comes up, the problems begin. It is the duty of Shilpakala Academy and they should take innitiative

TDS: You obviously seem very disturbed about the way Nazrul and his works is being neglected. What should we do to change the scenario?

FB: I am very concerned about this, too. We have two great literary personalities -- Tagore and Nazrul. But the world is yet to know much much about the latter. More translations of Nazrul's works should be carried out in English so that the literary circle around the world has more access to the work of this genius. It's also the government's responsibility to focus on Nazrul while sending cultural troupes abroad, which they don't. There are problems in selections. They emphasize more on the popular modern songs and singers while Rabindra and Nazrul Sangeet singers are given secondary treatment in these troupes. This has to change.











Mark agos (soo)