

# A FARE OF SURPRISES IN STAGE PRESENTATION

by Waheedul Haque



As many as eight organisations presented group songs—hitting a high watermark for the cultivation of Tagore Songs in this land — at the Rabindrasangeet Sammilan Parishad function observing on August 16, the 50th death anniversary of Rabindranath Tagore. 'Abhyudoy' and 'Anandodhvani' (above) specially charmed the audience.

— Drik photo by Altaf Hossain

keep Strir Patro ever living with her and give it to audiences all over our poor illiterate nation.

The other thing about which the day-long presentation had happy messages for us all is the state of our dancing. While television continues to purvey a strange concoction passing it as dance, the nation has gone far into the field and has arrived at some very acceptable plights of both refinement and purity and sheer athletic ability. This is no mean achievement considering that all the sources and great centres of the four great schools of Indian or subcontinental dancing is outside of Bangladesh and that all four of these glorious forms are inspired by and even based on mythologies that are not accepted as a part of Bangladesh's heritage by the advanced classes and the high-rising communal forces of this land.

The happy tidings were conveyed first by Shukla Sarkar's group in the morning session. We have previously enjoyed other performances of Bharat Natyam by her group. Some of them were so good that I felt as if I were transported to kalakshetra in Thiruvannamur, Madras the highest seat of that form of dancing — and being regaled by the best of Rukmini Arundale's creations. But this morning's fare was different. A

stage-full of young kids — not one of them reaching the teens — danced a potpourri of Manipuri and Bharat Natyam pieces and danced straight to the hearts of the audience.

Our advances in dancing were confirmed in the evening session when under the very able direction of Sharmila Bannerjee a group of dancers, including the incomparable Tamanna Rahman, performed to songs of the seasons by Tagore led by Mita Huq.

Mita rendered yeoman service to the whole day's proceedings. One was truly gratified that maturing so early as one of Bangladesh's best singers had not got into her head and, on the contrary, she was doing all that must be done as a cultural worker. She participated in group songs, then again she sang to illustrate a lecture on Tagore, and next she, of course, had her solo performance to give. She did all of them with such competence and facility that only comes to her.

Four leading theatre groups gave scenes from Tagore's famous plays. That was another distinction of the programme. Unfortunately, I was not able to see for myself the presentations. But loudspeakers were reaching the dialogues and the sounds of some of their doings to a wide perimeter and the whole area was reverberating with the lines from Tagore — a



Shameema Nazreen in her remarkable rendition of Strir Patro. On top of her memorable performance, the period costume, stage-set props and effect lighting that went into moulding the presentation into an integral whole were all designed and executed by her.

— Drik photo by Altaf Hossain

new experience it must be. Kanthoshilon the recitation group — presented their tour de force Rather Roshni in a very lively and precise fashion-driving home into every heart Tagore's prophetic pronouncements of the human

society balancing itself by pushing the underdogs up.

The day-long function can serve well as a model for many others to follow. One only hopes that in that case the standard be as high as it was on August 16.

## Secularism

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one. The political Shinto has been the unifying centre for stimulating patriotism and loyalty and devotion to the throne. Attendance at these Shintoes is compulsory on ceremonial occasions for all citizens including Buddhists and non-Buddhists. To enforce this obligation these Shintoes had to be officially declared as non-religious. The culmination of the process was reached only twenty years ago when divinity and infallibility of the Mikado was formally repudiated by Emperor Hirohito himself.

So it is clearly seen from the analysis of the historical events that separation between religion and the state was effected by mutual consent in the interest of both. Religion separated itself from the state because as a partner of state powers it could no longer maintain its right to divinity. The state on the other hand separated itself from religion because that was the only way to safeguard its right to the undivided loyalty of its subjects.

Another aspect of this separation was that everywhere it was wanted by the weaker of the two parties. In the case of Muslims it was the Alvis later on known as Shias who conceived the idea of Imamate as distinguished from Khilafat at a time when they were being oppressed by the Sunni Caliphs. In the case of Christians it was the Catholics of France and the Protestants of Germany who wanted this separation. Pope Pius when he accepted the political sovereignty of the king of Italy was a virtual prisoner in the Vatican City.

## Fundamental Differences

Admittedly there are three fundamental differences between religion and the state. Firstly religion in its true sense is a unifying force, whereas the state is definitely a dividing force. Religion has no territorial boundaries whereas the state has and must have. Secondly, religion is more directly concerned with moral and spiritual progress of humanity at large whereas the state is more directly concerned with material and social progress of its own citizens. Thirdly, religion is based on willing submission of its adherents whereas the state is based on force and coercion applied on its citizens whether willing or not.

Thus seen, religion is man's relation with and loyalty to God, philosophically speaking, his soul or conscience. Politics, on the contrary, is man's relation with and loyalty to his state. In the modern world both religion and the state are organised entities. But whereas religion is just an organised brotherhood, the state is a tightly organised coercion. In the case of a monarchy or dictatorship this coercion is that of the minority over the majority. In the case of democracy the coercion is of the majority on the minority. It is coercion all the same. All that, however, this coercion demands is the citizens' physical obedience to the law. Its law is a law so long as it remains a law. This means that a state law can be and is changed from time to time. So there is no divinity or permanent sanctity about a state law. Today's law can be tomorrow's crime.

## Question Re-examined

But there is no such thing in religion. Its laws are clothed with divine sanctity. Today's law is always a law. Religion cannot be argued whereas politics must be. The fact that politics takes precedence over religion is no proof of the former's superiority over the latter.

Keeping the above differences in view let us now reopen the question whether religion and politics can profitably be reunited on the same plane. This examination has become necessary particularly because this question has been made a live issue in our country.

## Can they be partners?

This consideration will have to be made in the light of the following two undisputed facts: One is that whatever may be the form of government the politics of a country is governed by either the strength of arm of the powerful or by the force of votes of the majority.

First part of the abridged reproduction of an article, originally published in *The Concept*, in 1964. The article — the second part of which will appear next week — is reprinted on the occasion of the author's 93rd birth anniversary, held on September 3.

**T**HAT is was going to be some unusual fare was evident from the invitation card itself. A festival of very able and excellent stage presentations it turned out to be — the variety and colour of the whole thing could run into a riotous happening if not tempered by the fact that this was all being held in observance of the 50th death anniversary of Rabindranath Tagore.

On the invitation card a 10-hour day-long programme was promised by the Jattyo Rabindrasangeet Sammilan Parishad. Although it was something decidedly bizarre — this had simply to be believed. The Parishad are the people holding four-day-long Tagore Song conferences every year for all of the past ten years. And besides they have been holding round-the-year musical teach-in workshops in the different district towns of the country and publishing very select and quality books and journals on music and culture. The ten-hour programme could very well be a long drag. But surprises kept on popping all the while making the long proceedings not only enjoyable but also quite often memorable.

The programme opened on August 16 morning with two speeches by Shamsur Rahman, the poet and Manzura-e-Mowla, a critic and poet, both bringing out evocatively the relevance of Tagore to our lives. Manzura-e-Mowla was very articulate in pointing towards what he called Rabindranath's unrelenting march towards the earth-bound Man. Executive President of the Parishad Dr. Sanjida Khatun welcomed all to the day-long observance with the choicest words and Begum Sufia Kamal, the President of the organisation, rounded off the speechifying session without anyone's lolling off to a late morning slumber or waiting to leave the place to fight off boredom. That was a promising start. There was session of group singing — of Tagore songs, of course — which greatly helped keep the promise. Of the four groups offering four songs each — Obhyudoy provided the first of the many surprises of the day. It performed with strength and precision, verve and a kind of excellence specially in the Dhrupad — Nitya Satye Chintono Karo. While congratulating the group on its near-perfect renditions one hopes very fondly of steady progress by the same. This is not to say the other groups were mere pedestrians. In fact, all of their performances, together with those group singing pieces offered by other groups in the evening session, decidedly beated by Anandodhvani, combined to form a very high watermark for rendering Tagore songs — comparable to all the best in the world. This is a sure pointer that the cultivation of this wonderful genre of Bengali Songs is on the right tracks and in splendid health. I am grateful to the Sammilan Parishad for allowing us such a sounding of our musical situation.

Even the Obhyudoy surprise was surpassed by the performance of Shameema Nazreen. She did not sing, nor did she recite or act. Then what did she do? She did something very new to Dhaka. She gave us the whole of that immortal story by Tagore — Strir Patro. All of its thousands of words, taking up full 45 minutes, were coming from her heart — not from any text hidden anywhere anyhow. And to give life to her story-telling, she acted a little, a very subdued kind of acting so that it never becomes a piece of play-acting. She was helped in this by the form of the story — it all came from the mouth of the heroine — Mrinal by name. And she also made good use of period costumes, very sparse set proping and effect lighting. Shameema did herself a great credit by, shall we say for the first time in Dhaka, doing all of these all by herself.

But it was the histrionic performance that couped above everything. And Shameema hit a rare high here. She has a problem with her 'r's and 'sh's that stands formidably on the way of making a fully satisfying acquittal of her art. But on the day, the sheer power of her rendition and the sweep of the way she identified her whole being to the heroine of Tagore made us all oblivious of that otherwise bad shortcoming. At the end of the story Mrinal, so reminiscent of Ibsen's Nora, abandons her home and enters a world of her own — that world no one knows, not even Mrinal herself. She literally soars on to it, cutting away from all the fetters that gravitate particularly a woman to the unrelenting and degrading status quo as far as women are concerned, of the present few millennia of civilisation. And Shameema too soared and touched our hearts in the raw.

All the women's rights groups would find a godsend in Shameema's recreation of Mrinal. I know, indeed we all expect that she will go on to recite and act out other masterpieces of our literature but I would very much like her to

## Drugs and Prison: Partners in Crime

Addicts turning to crime to finance their expensive drug habits are on the rise. But treating those addicts once they are in prison is a problem the country has not yet learned to deal with.

A yet-to-be-published Home Office report on prisons estimates that one in 10 men and one in four women inmates are hooked on drugs. "Drug misuse is not just a growing problem in its own right - it is associated with an increasing proportion of crimes of theft, prostitution and violence," says Paul Cavadino of the National Association for the Care and Resettlement of Offenders (NACRO).

"Our own research department found that most young heroin users were social security claimants with an average legitimate income of \$90 a week. But they spent on average 500 a week on heroin and 80 per cent of them were continuously involved in an enormous amount of crime to finance their drug habit." Cavadino believes that imprisonment rarely tackles the underlying problems of addiction, and consequently many prisoners go straight back to drug abuse. As well as treating drug users in prison, NACRO believes that many should be diverted from prison altogether "to alternative sentences combined with treatment pro-

grams in the community." The Home Office survey points to a worsening picture of drug abuse among prisoners. It calls for treatment programmes in prison to help them avoid drugs when they are released. Researchers interviewed 2000 men and women sentenced to six months or more. Without counting cannabis, a milder drug, 11 per cent of the men were found to be drug dependent. Two-thirds were injecting drugs during the six months before arrest. Half the drug-dependent men said they would accept treatment for their addiction if it were available in prison, and a quarter expressed a strong desire for it. More than twice the percentage of women, 23 per

cent, were classified as drug-dependent, and again, two-thirds were injecting. A third of the addicted women had no contact with drug-help agencies before coming to prison. Heroin is the drug most addicts rely on. In the 1960s and 70s, it was mainly middle class people who used it, but about 10 years ago, it suddenly became much more widely available. Now it is used by the unemployed to blot out the long hours of the day. As they get more and more dependent on the drug, they have to get

into some sort of crime to pay for the habit. The Home Office report praised a pilot drug treatment programme at Holloway women's prison. There, therapists came into the prison to help women prepare for their return to the streets where drugs would once again be easy to get. Nevertheless, the report said that overall, "present services for drug users in prison are poorly developed, variable and fragmented. Attitudes and practices vary enormously, both within and between different prisons. "Every prison receiving drug users should have available a standard opiate withdrawal regime similar to that found in Holloway. The report also says that all remand prisons should have at least one visiting psychiatrist specialising in drug abuse. Says Dave Turner of the Standing Conference on Drug Abuse: "Any extension of the Holloway programme which brings in outside specialists to help inmates prepare for release would be welcomed."

## Britain's drug list

Drug addicts recorded by doctors under UK Notification Regulations

	1988	1989	1990	1989	1990
New addicts notified:	5,212	5,639	6,923	8%	23%
All addicts notified:	12,644	14,785	17,795	17%	20%
Of which heroin:	10,808	12,484	14,497	16%	16%
*methadone:	2,369	2,951	4,992	24%	69%
cocaine:	786	868	1,085	13%	22%
Average age:	28.3	28.9	28.8		(percentage change)
Proportion injecting:	69%	67%	65%		
National drug related deaths:	1,206	1,177			

Number of UK seizures

	1988	1989	Change
All class A:	3,900	4,800	+23%
Of which:			
Cocaine:	830	1,200	+46%
Heroin:	2,200	2,100	-5%
LSD:	360	700	+88%
*Methadone:	210	270	+30%
All class B:	35,300	46,100	+30%
of which:			
Amphetamines:	3,300	3,300	-5%
Cannabis:	33,300	44,400	+38%
All class C:	210	430	+105%
All drugs:	38,200	49,800	+30%

\*Methadone is used to replace heroin in the rehabilitation of heroin addicts. It is also used illegally.

## WRITE TO MITA

Dear Mita,

You give very clever answers which my whole family enjoys reading. Please advise me on this problem. My younger brother got married 4 years ago to a girl of his choice. My mother lives with them and it was okay the first year. Since 3 years my sister-in-law has been behaving very badly with all of us especially with our mother. My brother is weak and cannot control his wife what should be done? My mother has to live with them.

Taslima (not real name) Dhaka.

Dear Taslima,

I am afraid I cannot give any advice on such a one-sided story. There might be many factors involved which I know nothing of. It is true that sons and their wives are expected to look after their parents and there are instances that daughters-in-law have ruined some homes, but the opposite is also true. As for your statement that your brother is weak and cannot control his wife speaks for your attitude. When a new person comes into the family it is their responsibility to make her feel wanted. I really don't know how welcome you have made your sister-in-law feel.

Dear Mita,

After much hesitation I write to you. I was divorced 4 years ago after 5 years of marriage. We have a son who was 4 at that time and is now 8. I have tried very hard to bring him up with all the love and care but recently he has become very difficult and sometimes wants to go back to his father who is rich and can give him expensive gifts. Please advise me. I will die if he leaves me.

Anonymous, Dhaka.

Dear Anonymous,

I do not know what is the situation between you and your ex-husband regarding your son. Does he visit him? Please be very careful about what you say to him about his father regardless of what might have happened between you two. It is very natural for the boy, as he grows older, to want his other parent. Unfortunately in our culture divorce ends in such bitterness that any normal relationship with the ex-spouse is not possible. Your son is trying to say something to you so please listen and try to be sensitive and not only emotional when dealing with him.

Dear Mita,

My husband pays compliments to other women in a way that I don't like. It's not that I am jealous but somehow his ac-

tions are irritating and in bad taste. How can I let him know very tactfully that I want him to stop as he might get upset.

Salma, Nilket, Dhaka.

Dear Salma,

You were not very clear when you say that your husband's actions are in bad taste. It seems there are other problems which you should look into first. Some men are gregarious and expressive. They like giving and receiving compliments. This should not bother couples who are confident and secure in their relationship. Please open up to each other, communication will ease tension and help you to know the others feelings better.

Dear Mita,

My husband puts me down at every opportunity. It is through sheer will power and determination that I have not lost my self-confidence. I have never understood why he behaves in this way but sometimes I get tired and demoralized. Nothing I say or do seems good enough. Even if everyone else praises me he finds a fault. What do you think I should do?

Anonymous, Chittagong.

Dear Anonymous,

Accept my compliments for keeping up your spirits and your self confidence. There could be other reasons for your husband's behaviour but generally it is out of a sense of insecurity, lack of confidence and low self-esteem that some people behave like him. These people find easy victims in their wives to make up for the deficiency in their personality. This will take a lot of work on your part but if you have the will then begin by boosting his ego and self image but let him know that his attitude is not acceptable. Praise him for his accomplishment but be very careful when you criticize him. As I said, this will require a lot of patience and perseverance but I am sure you can do it.

Run by a trained and experienced Family and Marriage counsellor, assisted by a professional team of doctor, psychologist and lawyer, this column will answer questions relating to family, marriage, health, family laws, and social and interpersonal relationships. Please address letters to Mita, The Daily Star, GPO Box 3257 or to 28/1, Toynbee Circular Road, Motijheel, Dhaka-1000.

## VIDEO SCENE

Kaiser Parvez Ali

THIS week's video scene has a number of new entries in the Hindi, Bengali, and English charts. Hindi film 'Saajan' has occupied the number one slot and advance requests for reservation of the video cassette has been registered all over the country's video clubs.

The story is of two friends, one rich (Salman Khan) and the other one poor and lame who stays in a missionary school (Sanjoy Dutt). Salman brings Sanjoy home with his father's (Kader Khan) permission. As time passes, they grow up — Salman becoming a spoiled brat and Sanjoy a studious boy later given charge of Salman's father's business. Both the friends fall in love of the same girl—Madhuri Dixit. Sacrifice and counter sacrifice takes place, and in the end Sanjoy takes the lead in the love game. The film has a fairly good story with absorbing music, comedy and emotions.

The top videos is circulation this week are:

- Hindi**
1. Saajan — \* Sanjay Dutt, Madhuri Dixit, Salman Khan.
  2. Saudagar — \* Dilip Kumar, Raj Kumar, Vivek Mashran, Manisha Kotrala.
  3. Indraject — \* Amritabh Bachchan, Jaya Prada, Kumar Gurav, Neelam.
  4. Dil Hai Ke Manta Nahin — \* Aamir Khan, Puja Bhatt, Anupam Kher.



5. Pratikar — \* Anil Kapoor, Madhuri Dixit.

- Bengali**
1. Ashati — \* Soumitra, Aparna Sen, Utpal Dutt.
  2. Shakha Prashaka — \* Soumitra, Mamta Sankar, Ranjit Mallik.
  3. Shrirman Prith Raj — \* Mohua Roy, Utpal Dutt.
  4. Nilimai Nil — \* Tapash Pal, Indrani Halder.
  5. Abhagini — \* Ranjit Mallik, Jay Banarjee, Kali Banarjee.

- English**
1. Terminator-2 — \* Arnold Schwarzenegger
  2. Out for Justice — \* Steven Segal.
  3. Desperate Hours — \* Muckey Rourke, Anthony Hopkins.
  4. Deceptions — \* Harry Hamlin, Robert Davi.
  5. Delta Force Commando-2 — \* Fred Williamson.
- Source-Video Amity, Uttara.