

Interview

Soulful songs to stir your very existence

Nashid Kamal talks of her preference for folk songs and Nazrul Geeti

FAYZA HAQ

NASHID Kamal, talking about how her songs are different from others in the same genre, says, "If you ask me to summarise I would say that I have tried to sing a huge range of song starting from pure classical in which I have been specifically trained, 'geet', 'ghazals', 'Nazrul Geeti' which is a



Nashid Kamal

Bangla version of 'geet' and 'ghazals' and the folk song. The addition of folk songs to my repertoire has made a big difference to whatever I have to present to the audience. Most of them have been put into four readily available cassettes. There is also a cassette of modern songs and a CD of 'Nazrul Geeti' Thus I sing all types of songs specially the songs of 'bichchedi' which are the songs of separation.

"Most of my numbers have been borrowed from my famous grandfather Abbasudin's songs like 'Oi nama madhubi boney bondhu chhilo' which are lilting numbers that are powerful and well-written like 'nodir kul kinar nai' or 'prano shokhi rey o kodombor toley'. The special number like the 'bhawaiya' which my grandfather brought to the elite of Calcutta, and songs like 'kisher mor randhon kisher mor baron' in the North Bengal dialect are the songs for which I have had the best response from the audience. There are songs like 'aji bhai koria bajao rey do tara', which was written by my grandfather's brother, Abdul Karim, and subsequently popularised by

my aunt Firdousi Rahman, is special to me for at the age of six. I sang this on the television in 1964, when the East Pakistan TV channel was being inaugurated, and I was one of the first child artist who performed there. When I rehearsed for this song before my aunt, while she was in her shower, and she later taught me how to fold my hand while performing in order to have more poise. While I sang as a child, my aunt played the harmonium. Later one, last year in Calcutta, I had a very successful programme in 'Rabindra Sadan' where 'Pahela Batik' was being celebrated at a Bangladeshi night with six artistes, I found that apart from my other songs, which were mostly 'Nazrul Geeti' the songs which were best received by the audience were the song of separation such as 'amar golar harai kholia ney ogo lolitay 'and 'marfat' (in praise of the Lord) such as 'kono rongey baidhacho ghor khana'.

"These again were my grandfather's songs for which he sometimes did not have an original name or even the words. He had heard some farmer or cart driver and he wrote it down, memorised the tune and tried to make it a number that is presentable. Subsequently some of the names have got lost but as you listen to the songs you can see the philosophies contained in the beautiful tunes. They are really worthy of being put into the tray for any audience. As I travel all over the world with my songs I find that no matter which songs I sing, it is the folk numbers that I get the most applause.

Speaking about her six cassettes, Nashid says, "There are six cassettes, such as 'Anchol bhora phul' which is in for of both CD and cassette and is my latest venture. It is a 'Nazrul Geeti' with songs like 'noyon bhora jol go tomar anchol bhora phul' Another cassette contains 'Nodir nam Sholajanam' and yet another which contains songs like 'Tumi ki shai nei'. I have another that contains the song 'Padma amar mon'. I have quite a few folk song collections with 'bhawaiya' and 'lok geeti' too such as 'Gargay bhai rey', notably the cassette 'Dadu Abbasuddin key', which contains my favourite numbers from my grandfather's repertoire.

Asked to dwell on what made her

go into singing, Nashid says, "I it is mainly my family and also the response from the audience. What I first learnt was classical music, because my parents thought the folk numbers and 'Nazrul Geeti' were something that I could learn from my uncle and aunt. We lived in such an atmosphere that the people around me were always singing. We had a joint family system. My grandfather's records were also being played in the backdrop during lunch and dinner. My father rightly thought that classical training was necessary to grasp any line of singing. My first training was from Ustad PC Gomez, when I was seven years old. Then in 1972 I received training from Akhtar Shadmani in pure classical music. In 1984 I began learning from Pandit Jasraj of India. All this training made



Nashid as a child, with her uncle and mother

me feel that I could sing any type of songs. As I went to a performance I felt that people were more interested in hearing the folk number rather than any other genre of songs. Singers from the villages add to the collection of these songs."

Asked to comment on her success, Nashid says, "I think I have a lot of family background and I certainly persevere. Whatever was taught to me I practised in my spare time. Singing is not my main career. I am a professor of Population Studies at the Independent University. I have a PhD in Demography from London, with Masters in Statistics from Canada. Apart from professional trainer, my uncle and aunt are the root of my

success. Whenever I was stuck for an Islamic song, for instance, I had their interpretation. My mother too was very careful that I should have special training in Bangla and Urdu for the 'ghazals' and other songs. I had tutors for that. This, of course, was apart from my normal school studies. Unless you comprehend and pronounce the words properly, you cannot sing soulfully and cannot bring out the beauty of the song.

"You must be able to visualise the whole theme. In the songs of parting, for instance, you must be able to convey the authenticity of the pain of separation of the wife from the boatman in 'Morey kuley raikha na jaio gangey tey ar'. You have to feel and understand to portray the emotion in your songs. I mastered the colloquial Bangla from my

Abhinash Sheel, who is the son of a maestro Kanai Lal Sheel, who used to accompany my grandfather. The flautist is Ghazi and the 'tabla' player has been with me since my childhood. When we have concerts, those organising pay for the accompaniment of the musicians when they come for the rehearsals. I maintain the 'tabla' player myself with whom I practise twice a week, and I have known him since I was seven years old. It is, I admit, expensive practising with him twice a week."

She continues, "Each of my songs have a different style. I have actively tried to cultivate the versatility because 'Nazrul Geeti', 'geet' and 'ghazals' all have a different style and a different language. Similarly classical songs that I sing on Radio

guage to have the correct pronunciation and learn to appreciate the words of 'ghazals' because without comprehending the words, you cannot put in the necessary emotions to sing it out. When you are doing the works of famous lyricists like Faiz Amed Faiz. Nasir Qazmi, Mir, Mir Taqi Mir or Daagh, you are confronted with classical Urdu and not something that you would understand right away by just watching Hindi films.

Incidentally, if you ask me about Hindi films, of course I like them, and naturally the old ones rather than the new productions. But among the new ones too I have favourite ones e.g. AR Rahman's songs from the movie 'Taal' where a variety of folk and modern tunes into single lilting numbers e.g. 'Taal sey taal mila'.



Nashid seen with her family, including her father, aunt, husband and daughters

Bangladesh are of a different genre. I have had the occasion to present my folk and modern songs in a single repertoire which has added dimension to my own life. The albums are usually produced by commercial people and they request us to make one type of songs, and I have a great desire to celebrate my grandfather's hundredth year celebration in a CD or a cassette which will contain different types of songs for example Islamic, folk numbers, modern songs, 'Nazrul Geeti'.

"I love my 'ghazals' and these were influenced greatly by my Urdu teacher, who came regularly and besides my family members' father, aunt and uncle all know Urdu and insisted in my pursuit of the lan-

'Shiq hai kea'. As for pop songs, for every generation there songs of that kind. When we were teenagers, we were listening to Azam Khan, Ferdous Wahid etc. Similarly, today I find it natural for my children to have a hankering for pop music.

Sometimes I am asked if pop music will contaminate our authentic music and to this I say 'I don't think so' because that is another stream apart and has an effect on a particular generation and people pass through phases. With maturity you like different types of songs. One doesn't have to feel threatened by it and one can take it complacently that here too are different streams which appeal to people from different age groups. These same teen-

agers also love to listen to our folk songs."

Speaking about lyrics, Nashid adds, "In singing the Nazrul songs, our classical training come in handy because Nazrul Islam has left a lot of room for the artist to improvise upon e.g. in 'raag lalith', 'piu piu pia boley.' It has been sung by numerous artists but when you are singing you have the scope to make it your very own. You maintain the main piece of the song, just as Nazrul Islam has asked you to, and in the rest of the songs there is plenty of room for improvisation. The 'taan', 'baat', 'loikan' and the rhythmic illustrations that you are going to create with your 'tabla' player is just up to your training, voice limitation, time limitation and choice. There is a lot of creative joy in singing Nazrul songs and there are similar songs in 'ghazals' where it is on a specific 'raaga' but you have the choice to elaborate it. You have, for example, heard Aasha Bhonsley, Farida Khanum, Mehdi Hassan or Amanat Ali, Fateh Ali or Mehdi Ghulam Ali singing the same number and you will find a wide range of variety in presenting the songs although the words are the same and the tunes do not differ. The artist has the flexibility of coming out in his/her true colours. Thus the creative urge is satisfied in singing Nazrul songs and 'ghazals'. There are also the classical songs where you can make your creative impressions to ad lib."

Nashid, talking about the theme of the book that she has recently written, the excerpts of which have been published in a Bangla daily, says, "Jui Phuler Barandah' is about the jasmine porch which is still there in Purana Paltan, where I lived for 21years. This is a nostalgic piece about myself, my family and friends for a decade."

Nashid has two daughters Armeen and Ashna, and her husband is the well-known cardiologist Dr Anis Waiz.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Classical Vocal Recital

The High Commission of India will be presenting a classical vocal recital by Ustad Mashkoor Ali Khan today at 7:00 p.m. at the National Museum auditorium.

Contemporary Art of Bangladesh - Trends

Organised by the High Commission of India, a ten daylong exhibition titled 'Contemporary Art of Bangladesh - Trends' is being held at the High Commission of India Cultural Centre.

The exhibition will remain open from 11:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m. till June 2.



Bonsai Exhibition

The 4th solo exhibition of Bonsai by Arham-ul-Huq Chowdhury is being held at the Bengal Gallery (Bengal Shipalaya, 275/F, Road 27 old, Dhanmondi).

The exhibition will remain open to all from 12:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m. everyday till May 31.

Paintings for the Liberation War Museum

A painting exhibition by Kanak Chandra Chakma and Khalid Mahmood Mithu is being held at the Saju Art Gallery in Gulshan. The artists donated all these artworks for Liberation War Museum's fund raising.

The exhibition will remain open to all from 10:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. till May 31.

Summer Fest

A fashion exhibition by design house Kay Kraft titled 'Summer Fest' is being held at the WVA auditorium. The exhibition will continue everyday from 3 p.m. - 9 p.m. till May 28.

TV GUIDE

BTV	BBC WORL	qua/Ext	ux	22:15
3:20 Open University		ra	Sunday	Godzill
3:45 Shukhi Poribar		Mach	Noon	a
4:00 Khabar			Show:	3:00 Lorenz
4:05 Animation Film: Animal Show		Date-	Amar	o's Oil
4:30 Pushtitathya	8:30 Holiday	line	Prem	5:45 Problem
4:45 Notun Juger Bhore	Eur	London	(Rajesh Khanna	Child
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10:30 News in English	India	Report/	Ek Nari	5:00 Day-
10:55 Abhoman Bangla	11:30 India	IT :	Ek	break
11:30 Khabar / The News	12:30 India	India	Brahm	
11:45 Closing	13:00 India	Busi-	achari	
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8:40 Ghatanar Nepathee	9:15 Drama serial: Teen Tekka	A	Sinha)	
9:15 TV show: Bhabnar	9:50 TV show: Bhabnar	Dir/US		
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11:00 Bengali Feature Film: Moner Agun	11:00 Bengali Feature Film: Moner Agun	Dir/US	Beckha	
3:30 Indian Bengali Film: Modu Bon	3:30 Indian Bengali Film: Modu Bon	A	m's	
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7:50 Drama: Uttaran	7:50 Drama: Uttaran	Gear/A	Pre-	
8:25 Annodhara	8:25 Annodhara	Week	tender	
9:00 Chaya Songlaph	9:00 Chaya Songlaph	qua/Ext	9:00 Sir	
9:35 Popular Songs Prog. Snir	9:35 Popular Songs Prog. Snir	ra	Arthur	
10:10 Megaserial: Vidroh	10:10 Megaserial: Vidroh	Mach	Conan	
10:45 Bengali Film: Dulari	10:45 Bengali Film: Dulari	Date-	Doyle's	
9:00 News Bulletin	9:00 News Bulletin	line	The	
9:05 Bharat Bhraman	9:05 Bharat Bhraman	London	Lost	
9:30 Swami Vivekananda	9:30 Swami Vivekananda	4:30 Asia	World	
10:30 Apna Der Janya	10:30 Apna Der Janya	Busi-	3:00 Geet	
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11:00 Alpha Khabor	11:00 Alpha Khabor			
11:45 Ek Palake	11:45 Ek Palake			
11:50 Saat Rang	11:50 Saat Rang			
12:20 Surer Ei Jharna Dhara	12:20 Surer Ei Jharna Dhara			
12:30 Sur Taal	12:30 Sur Taal			

TODAY'S HIGHLIGHTS	PICK OF THE DAY
<b>STAR WORLD:</b> 4:00 p.m. <i>Baywatch Hawaii</i> . <i>Strike Team:</i> Baywatch teams up with the Coast Guard to search for a group of kids in the water.	<b>The Parent Trap</b> On Star Movies at 7:00 p.m. Hallie Parker and Annie James meet at summer camp and discover that they're twins, separated at birth! The girls switch places with the goal of reuniting their estranged parents, Nick and Elizabeth, but their plan goes into hilarious overdrive when they meet a formidable opponent - Nick's scheming fiancée.
<b>ATN:</b> 7:10 p.m. <i>ATN School Debate</i> . The first episode of the Barowan form of debate. Students from the top schools of Dhaka and Chittagong are the participants.	
<b>HBO:</b> 9:30 p.m. <i>An Officer and a Gentleman</i> . Zack Mayo wants to make it through the basic training. Two things get in his way - the Navy's toughest drill sergeant and his love for the spunky Paula.	
<b>STAR WORLD:</b> 11:30 p.m. <i>Star Trek: The Next Generation</i> . <i>Qpid - Stardate 44741.9:</i> Picard is readying a speech on the subject of the planet Tagus 3, whose archaeological digs are off-limits to outsiders.	
SPORTS	STAR SPORTS
<b>ESPN</b> 6:30 Sportscenter : International Edition 7:00 Nba Anthology '87 Los Angeles Lakers : Drive For Five 7:30 Behind The Fights Buster Douglas-Victory Over Mike Tyson 8:30 B3-Bikes, Blades & Boards B3- Stop 3 Boards Louisville, KY USA 9:30 Ecb International Cricket The Npower Test Series London, England Pakistan @ England 1 <sup>st</sup> Test Day 5 Highlights 10:30 Snooker Billiards Espn World Snooker 2001 Embassy World C'Ships Sheffield England Semifinal 12:30 Cayton Boxing Films Muhammed Ali : Skil, Brain & Guts 2:00 Sportscenter : International Edition 2:30 Boxing Series Friday Night Fights Ledyard, CT USA 4:00 Nba Playoffs Conference Finals Eastern Confer-	<b>STAR SPORTS</b> 7:30 Extreme Magazine Yoz Magazine 8:00 Wta Inside Stuff 2000/01 Nba Inside Stuff 10:00 Asia Sport Show 10:30 Nfl Europe League Nfl Europe League 2001 Highlights Show 11:00 Formula One Qualifying 2001 Formula One Qualifying Monte Carlo, Monaco, Monaco Grand Prix Qualifying 12:00 Mountain Bike World Cup Mountain Bike World Cup 2001 Sarentino, Italy Highlights 12:30 Psa Super Series Al Ahram Psa Masters 2001 Hurnghada, Egypt Highlights 1:30 Asian Football Show 2:30 Samsung Nations Cup Samsung Nations Cup 2001 La Baule, France Highlights 3:30 Golf Programming Golfglobe 2001 4:00 Asian Basketball Show 4:30 Sports India 5:00 Race Day Monte Carlo, Monaco Monaco Grand

4:00	Ba	11:30	Star Trek
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