

In memoriam

Rediscovering Zainul: The Harbinger of Bangladeshi Fine Arts

A commemorative discussion meeting held at the Shilpakala Academy on the eve of 25th death anniversary of Zainul Abedin.

TAWFIQUE ALI

ZAINUL Abedin is ... famous at home and abroad. We ought to try to rediscover our Shilpa Acharya, Abdullah Al Mamun DG of Bangladesh Shilpakala Academy, set off the memorial meeting on the country's foremost pioneer of fine arts movement Zainul Abedin on the occasion of his 25th birth anniversary on May 28.

Among others, Prof Kabir Chowdhury, Prof Nazrul Islam, artist Rafiqun Nabi, artist Prof Qayyum Chowdhury, art critic Mainuddin Khaled spoke on the occasion analysing the key note paper presented by artist Nisar Hossain from different dimensions. The speakers made various points highlighting trend subject matter and theme of Zainul's art work. A vast amount of diverse art work during the period expanding through forties, fifties and sixties, go to his credit. Movement for Bangladeshi art and culture woos significantly to this fine arts giant who had powerful foresight and progressive vision.

The key-note paper, presented on the topic "Zainul's influence in our contemporary fine arts," maintains "50-52 years back a liberal atmosphere of artistic activities today was beyond imagination. Evolution of fine arts today, has not developed as a natural consequence during this span of time. Rather cultural blooming, in this part of Indian sub-continent, had to experience extreme socio-religious adversity."

"Therefore, in course of the struggle for an upliftment of art from that dark state, Zainul took the pivotal role and did the ground work for a progressive cultural movement."

"Zainul had to act as a person, a teachers, a guardian, a social reformer simultaneously as an artist. But the wonderful fact is that artist Zainul had no conflict with his other selves."



Rafiqun Nabi speaking at the function commemorating Zainul Abedin's 25th death anniversary

Nisar further stated, "Zainul's influence in the country's contemporary fine arts and cultural arena is so wide and deep that it is too difficult to ascertain. His direct and indirect influence in our fine arts has enriched our art activities in different ways. He has influenced our ideal and objective of art work sometimes by his work; sometimes by his spirit and philosophy. Sometimes his influence affects us consciously and sometimes unconsciously. Whoever examines Zainul's work, in details, can hardly evaluate artist Zainul passing over person Zainul."

"When Zainul became up and doing in his pursuit of fine arts, an adverse atmosphere was prevalent in the then Muslim society with its religious forbiddings across this land."

"Zainul Abedin was an outstanding figure in the cultural arena in the then East Bengal. His work made expression of art's relation with life, its social significance, difference between imitation and art and necessity of self-realization immediately after his entrance into the Art College in Kolkata. Basing upon this we can recommend an opinion that Zainul had preconceived his idea of art before he went to the Art

College." Nisar mentioned, "Though I did my research paper on Zainul Abedin in 1982-83 as an M.A student, I perceived a quite different idea of Zainul when I started working on the present topic."

While commenting on the paper, art critic Mainuddin Khaled said, "Nisar maintained a generosity in rediscovering Zainul." Khaled termed Zainul "realistic, romantic and expressionist as an artist, who had a folk tradition to form his career as a painter. He is not only an outstanding artist over the sub continent but he is one of those African or Latin American artists as well." Khaled fervently made a demand for display of all of his work, where ever they are preserved, for the benefit of the present day artists.

Rafiqun Nabi expressed his gratitude to this art giant saying, "We owe to Zainul from any consideration of our art activities. Our art treasure is nothing without Zainul and his work. It was due to his inspiration that we obtained modern art education. Exploiting folk elements is typical of Zainul. We had a complete Zainul even in the fifties with his folk art oriented work. Throughout the sixties his influence has stretched

far us who were his students."

Prof. Kabir Chowdhury opined that Zainul's work entertains 'synthesis' of reality and abstraction. Life's synthesis is there in his art work. He is simultaneously a Bangalee and having universality. Prof. Choedhury cited one Zainul's comment about himself. "I paint with a view to establish beauty."

Begum Jahanara Abedin, who attended the memorial meeting, said, "I rediscover Zainul coming to such meeting. I realize him better than he was at my home."

Artist Qayyum Chowdhury commented, "Zainul had an enticing power to inspire and keep others spell bound. If we are influenced by his spirit and ideal, only that would mean his influence exerts upon us."

All the discussants converged at one point that Zainul could have created an artistry and form of his own. In the realm of art he had no set tradition to follow. He had to pave his own path to tread in this field.



Toiletry by Zainul Abedin

Music

A performer par excellence

A classical music evening by Ustad Mashkoor Ali Khan

NAFID IMRAN AHMED

It is not often we get the chance to experience pure classical music. However, the High Commission of India has always cared about people's thirst for classical music in Dhaka. The May 27 evening witnessed the spontaneous flow of the mellifluous gayaki of Ustad Mashkoor Ali Khan, a master in the domain of Indian classical music, at the National Museum auditorium.

In the tradition of the subcontinent music runs deeply from one generation to the other through gharanas. Music in this part of the world is viewed more as an spiritual encounter rather than something which is only a matter of skill and excellence.

Ustad Mashkoor Ali Khan is a direct descendant of the family of the great Ustad Abdul Karim Khan and the legendary Sartaj-e-Mousiqui Ustad Abdul Wahid Khan who were the founders of the famous Kirana gharana. He is the son of Padmashree Ustad Shakoor Khan, the great sarangi nawaz. His family tree shows that he has a distinguished line of elders who once reigned supreme in the world of music.

Initiated and trained by his father for fifteen years, young Mashkoor secured a place for himself in the world of music before his father breathed his last. To polish and further develop his undiluted style of Kirana gayakee he joined the Sangeet Research Academy in 1981 as a scholar. Now, as a guru of the Academy, he is nurturing scholars under his able guidance.

Now Ustad Mashkoor Ali Khan displays multi-dimensional imaginativeness and vocal agility in his recitals. He has an erudite concept of ragas and keen understanding of the various ang of Kirana gayakee emphasising the numerous permutations of Khandamru.

As one of the front ranking artists of All India Radio, Mashkoor has performed in many programmes of radio and television, including national programmes of music and dance. He has also performed in numerous festivals and conferences of classical music in India. He has, in addition enthralled audiences in Canada, USA, Europe and many other places. He has also



Ustad Mashkoor Ali Khan

achieved many awards to his name. Nisar Ahmed a well-reputed tabla player accompanied Ustad Mashkoor Ali Khan at the show.

The national museum auditorium was full. Mashkoor took some time to tune up with his co-artists. He started off with raga Puriya Kalyan. He performed it in Vilombit Taal and then moved to Drut Taal. With a low voice he started the recital. Creating a nice pattern as he began, Mashkoor was joined by Nisar in tabla and Wali Mohammed in harmonium. Together they transported the audience with their marvellous music to a transcendental world.

Pa ma... pa ma he circled through the sargams. The sargams were highly complex sometimes, but Mashkoor structured them well and also sang them with perfection.

Next he started raaga Sahana. One thing was clear from Mashkoor's performance was that he is a perfectionist. He wanted to present the audience with some intricate and pure classical presentations.

Playing the bina in one hand, Mashkoor sang along. With some

prolonged humming tonal expressions he really exhibited the control and power of his voice. These taans perfectly portrayed the emotional content of the raaga.

Next he started playing a request from the audience, Chandni Kedara. This performance could be characterised by the depth of expression and purity of tone. During his performance he elaborated the essence of the raaga and presented the audience with some delicate tonal vibrations in different scales, which certainly points at the capability of this talented artist.

The last raaga that Mashkoor performed at the programme was Desh Kalyan. He sang this with such passion, as if he spoke with the inner language in presenting the tale of joy and pain. And silence prevailed at the auditorium. The audience once again continued their journey through the wondrous world of classical music.

Overall, it was an unforgettable experience.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Duhsomoy: The Rape and Death of Shima Chowdhury

'Duhsomoy', a documentary video by Yasmine Kabir will be shown at the Liberation War Museum on June 9 at 5:00 p.m.

The film recounts the terrible tragedy of Shima Chowdhury's death, a 16 year old garment worker who was allegedly gang raped by four policemen in the Police Station.

A discussion on the film and the case (including Yasmin who was raped and murdered in Dinaipur) will follow the film show.

New German Film Festival

On the inaugural day of the week-long festival of New German Cinema celebrating the 50th anniversary of Goethe-Institut in Germany and 40th anniversary of Goethe-Institut in Bangladesh, Zahir Raihan Film Society and Goethe-Institut Dhaka will screen three films today: 'The Bridge' by Bernhard Wicki, 'The Black Rider' by Pepe Danquart and 'Naked Among the Wolves' by Frank Beyer. Venue: Goethe-Institut Dhaka, Road No 9, Dhanmondi. Time: 3:30 pm, 5:30 pm, and 5:45 pm respectively.

Cultural Programme

Nazrul Institute, in celebration of 102nd birth anniversary of National poet Kazi Nazrul Islam, has chalked out a two-day long elaborate cultural and discussion programme on June 2&3 at Kabi Bhaban, House# 330/B, Rd.# 28, Dhanmondi R/A. Programme opens at 10:00 a.m. everyday.

Group Exhibition

A group exhibition by six front ranking artists of the country will start at the Bengal Gallery from June 8.

The artists are - Shafiquddin Ahmed, Mohammed Kibria, Kazi Giasuddin, Monirul Islam, Shahid Kabir and Shahabuddin.

TV GUIDE

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