

# Impact of Bangladesh on Tagore's creativity

In conversation with Sadi Mohammed

ERSHAD KAMOL

**R**ABINDRANATH Tagore spent the prime of his life at Patishar of Rajshahi, Shilaidah of Kustia and Shahjadpur of Pabna in Bangladesh. Though he came here to oversee his zamindari, these visits had immense impact on his thought, philosophy and creativity. The Tagore songs composed in this tradition are treasures of our music.

He spent most of the time watching the unique natural beauty, interacting with the bauls and rural bards as well as writing and composing. Most of his popular writings - from *Chhinnapatra* to Nobel Prize-winning book *Geetanjali* -- have spontaneously overflowed through powerful emotions recollected from tranquility of these regions, especially in his poems and songs.

Eminent Tagore singer Sadi Mohammed, who after completing a Master's in Music in Rabindra Sangeet from Shantiniketan is currently teaching as the head of the department of Rabindra Sangeet at Government Music College, said, "Tagore claimed himself as 'Rabi Baul'. All of his devotional songs are based on Sufism. The philosophy and tune of 'baul songs' had an immense impact on Tagore songs. However, folk music of Bengal has



Sadi Mohammed

been presented uniquely by Tagore like the other music genres, western music, north Indian raga and more,

which have been followed in his songs. And the mastery of Tagore is that when he fused the folk music

genres of Bengal in his songs, it was quite distinct from the original form. He extensively used tunes and styles from *baul*, *kirtan*, *shyamasangeet*, *sari*, *bhatiali* and even *kathakali* to give his songs a unique flavour and beauty."

Rabindranath was an adherent of 'Brahmo Samaj', to whom music is a kind of devotion. This is similar to 'doctrines of bauls', as the latter also offer the mystic songs as prayer for the supreme God. Tagore's intimacy with bauls such as Gagan Harkara, a disciple of great baul Lalon Shah, Khepa baul and others generated interest in Tagore about baul songs.

And like the bauls' quest for *moner manus* (urge for reunification of the soul and God), Tagore has also wandered in search of the supreme creator in his devotional songs. Sadi said, "After visiting the then East Bengal in the early 20th century, Tagore was greatly influenced by the bauls, who believe that the mystic creator lives in the soul of human beings. Tagore believed that love is devotion and nature is its background. That is why love, devotion and nature are interwoven in Tagore's songs.

"For example, Tagore heard Gagan Harkara rendering *Ami kothay pabo tare amar moner manushere*. The tune and lyrics of the song attracted Tagore so much

he instantly composed *Amar shonar bangla ami tomay bhalobashi*, which later became the national anthem of Bangladesh. Tagore composed *Ebar tor morar agey* being influenced by Khepa baul's *bhatiali* song *Mon majhi samal sama*. In fact, Tagore's familiarity with the folk tunes, and *kirtan*, *shyamasangeet* and *ramprasadis* is found in the songs he composed between 1884 and 1886. The use of baul tunes became noticeable since 1905 onwards."

Not only the tune but also the unique natural beauty of Bangladesh -- especially monsoon and spring, boating on river Padma, the beauty of the rivers, diversified landscape, have appeared repeatedly in his writings. Lyrics of many of his 2,232 songs, especially devotional songs, love songs and songs on seasons as well as many poems have been influenced by his visit to this region. The thematic variety of these songs reflect the rich emotional life of the Bangalees. This has made Tagore songs an essential part of life of the Bangalees -- in happiness, sorrow, and at work.

In their speech, the speakers expressed their views about Tagore and his contribution to our culture.

# BAFA celebrates Tagore's 145th birth anniversary



Artistes of BAFA perform in the dance-drama *Chitrangada*

CULTURE CORRESPONDENT

Bulbul Lalitakala Academy (BAFA) celebrated Nobel Laureate poet Rabindranath Tagore's 145th birth anniversary by organising a cultural programme. The programme was held at the Shishu Academy auditorium on May 9. The participants were the enthusiastic students of BAFA.

In their speech, the speakers expressed their views about Tagore and his contribution to our culture.

The consensus of opinion was that poets like him have been catalysts in the flowering of our culture.

The well-attended celebration included a composite programme of Tagore songs and a dance-drama by the poet, *Chitrangada*.

*Chitrangada* features the life of the eponymous warrior princess of Manipur. Her father, the Raja of the kingdom was blessed by Lord Shiva

so that he could have a son. However, when a girl was born, the King raised her like a prince. She was trained in warfare and learnt the finer points of royalty. However, fate decides otherwise -- *Chitrangada* falls in love with Arjun, a *Brahmachari* and undergoes a transformation. The story unravels from this point.

The play was directed by the principal of BAFA, Rahija Khanam Jhunu. The chief guest of the programme was Abdus Salam Pintu MP, deputy minister of Information.

## CULTURAL FEAST

### Art Exhibition

**Title:** Existence  
**Artist:** H. Shahdat  
**Venue:** Gallery Kaya

**Date:** April 28 - May 12  
**Time:** 11am-8pm

**Artist:** Nazia Andaleeb Preema  
**Venue:** Art & Soul Gallery  
**Date:** May 5-18  
**Time:** 11am-8pm

**Title:** Harmony

**Organiser:** Bangladesh Artist Welfare Organisation and Delegation of the European Commission in Dhaka  
**Venue:** La Gallerie of Alliance de Dacca  
**Date:** May 7-16  
**Time:** 9am-12pm and 5pm-7pm

**Title:** Exhibition of Ibsen Commemoration 2006  
**Organiser:** Centre for Asian Theatre, Bangladesh Shilpakala Academy and Norwegian Embassy  
**Venue:** National Art Gallery, Bangladesh Shilpakala Academy  
**Date:** May 10-20  
**Time:** 9am-12pm and 5pm-7pm

### Theatre

**Play:** The Lady from The Sea  
**Organiser:** Department of Theatre and Music, Dhaka University  
**Venue:** Natmondu Auditorium  
**Date:** May 10 and 11

## Nazia Andaleeb Preema Reflections of an artist

KAVITA CHARANJI

Titled *The Blue Mood*, an oil on canvas painting enchants the viewer. Here is a eye-catching depiction of the Jamuna bridge and the river by moonlight. The work draws from the artist's impressions of a journey frequently undertaken by bus.

In quick sketch, *Senses-Colombo 1*, oil pastel on paper, the painter focuses on an archaeological structure near Habarana village in Kandy province, Sri Lanka. The

columns are straight and plain, yet decorative.

*Untitled A*, pastel on newspaper, is a quick sketch on newspaper. Here the artist recomposes a woman's face and also uses the lettering and typography of a daily as a base. The idea is to make the work a harmonious, unique composition.

The above works are the creation of painter Nazia Andaleeb Preema. They are a part of her ongoing 'Untitled 2006' exhibition of 45 paintings at Art & Soul Gallery in



Artworks by Nazia at the exhibition

Gulshan. They represent her creative evolution over the years, punctuated by many years of travel to places such as Colombo, Delhi, Kolkata, London, New Orleans and Tokyo. "Many of my works are based on my travels and the people I encounter," says Nazia, adding, "I reinvent myself every time I go out of the country and return."

A lot of inspiration, says Nazia, comes from her visits to Colombo. The people here are, in her view,

"very laid back and at peace with themselves" -- somewhat akin to the rural denizens of Bangladesh.

Most of the art works on display are untitled -- a deliberate choice for Nazia. She firmly believes that viewers today do not spend enough time on paintings and they want to have some clues to the artist's mindset through a title. Her view is that they should interpret the work themselves.

Talking about her modus operandi, she says, "For me it is more important to portray my personal feelings rather than just zero in on a landscape or object." Always searching for more meaning in life, she is a passionate if restless artist. Among the eternal questions to which she seeks answers are: what she thinks about life, where she sees herself now and in the future and what she wants to achieve. All this requires a great deal of discipline. Nazia puts in her efforts to paint everyday and not just for exhibitions.

Nazia has her favourite artists: in their ranks are Shishir Bhattacharji, Mohammed Kibria, Naima Haq, Waqilur Rahman, Aminul Islam along with Rokeya Sultan. She has no complaints about the encouragement from viewers or senior artists. Her philosophy is that "We have to encourage and welcome the support of men artists. The greater the rivalry between men and women, the more the former will be aggressive towards women."

The exhibition is on till May 18.

Lately Nazia has also been experimenting with digital art, coupled with illumination.

Nazia has a busy calendar for her artistic endeavours. Late July she will exhibit her Delhi works along with the present works in Mumbai.

## "King Kong" comes to Dhaka

Peter Jackson's remake of *King Kong*, one of the blockbusters of last year, is being released in Dhaka on the big screen. Star Cineplex at Bashundhara City Mall will launch the film on May 12, according to a press release.

The film narrates events that occur after reckless, somewhat quirky filmmaker Carl Denham sails off to the mythical 'Skull Island'. An

aspiring actress, Ann Darrow accompanies him. But once they reach the island, the natives kidnap Ann and sacrifice her to 'Kong', a colossal ape. However, Kong doesn't kill Ann and they develop a friendship. The film follows the fate of Kong when he is taken to New York in chains.

The film stars Naomi Watts, Jack Black and Adrien Brody in lead roles.



A scene from the film

## TV GUIDE

All programmes are in local time. The Daily Star will not be responsible for any change in the programme.

### News Bulletin

**BTB**  
News Headlines (Bangla) at 8:55 am; 12:10 pm, 2:00 pm, 3:00 pm, 4:00 pm, 7:00 pm.

News (Bangla) at 8:00 am, 1:00 pm, 5:00 pm, 8:00 pm.

News (English) at 3:00 pm, 10:00 pm.

Late Night News (Bangla and English) 11:30 pm.

Telecast of BTB news (Bangla and English) at 11:30 pm.

**CHANNEL-i**  
News (Bangla) at 7:15 am, 9:00 am, 2:00 pm, 7:00 pm, 9:00 pm, 10:30 pm, 12:15 am.

Telecast of BTB news (Bangla and English) at 11:30 pm.

**ATN BANGLA**  
News (Bangla) at 7:00 am, 10:00 am, 2:00 pm, 7:00 pm, 10:00 pm, 11pm.

News (English) 8:20 am, 7:00 pm.

Telecast of ATN news (Bangla and English) at 11:30 pm.

**ATN BANGLA**  
News Headlines (Bangla) at 10:00 am, 12:00 am, 6:15 pm, 9:30 pm.

News (Bangla) 7:30 am, 2:00 pm, 5:00 pm, 7:30 pm, 10:30 pm.

Telecast of ATN news (Bangla and English) at 11:30 pm.

**TARA BANGLA**  
News Headlines (Bangla) at 8:30 pm, 7:30 pm.

Tara News (Bangla) at 8:30 pm, 11:30 pm.

Tara News Bangladesh (Bangla) at 9:30 pm.

**BBC WORLD**  
Every hour on the hour

**BTB**  
Musical Programme

Sashwato Jibon

Open University

Satellite Broadcast

Sangbad Potre Pata

Theke

Selected Programme

Khete Kheti

Computer

Rupkothar Deshey

Prokreti O Jibon

Cartoon

Prochitra

Jiboner Alo

Gronthya Bhuban

Agipe Cholar Pathay

Protidin Bangladesh

Weekly Drama

Teknaf Thekey Tetulia

Apnar Shawsthya (Live)

Shobnoj

Mukto Shanglap

ATN Rannaghari

Shundor Jiboner

Ispahani Pure Snax

Quiz Time

Amader Joto

Kotha

Islamli Saual O

Jobab (Live)

Muktangan

Prapok

Rock Link

Drama Serial: Feran

Siren

Human Nature

Aj Potrika

**CHANNEL i**

Shongbadporey

Bangladesh

Public Reaction

Tritiyamatra