

Shahana-reinterpreting Rabindra Sangeet for the young generation.

close to our hearts and we have grown up with it. Singing Tagore songs was very natural to us. Rabindra Sangeet in Santiniketan was never something which was forced onto us. All of the songs we did in the album were songs that we learned in class in Santiniketan and our school emphasised the understanding of the words and the feelings of the songs rather than the minute nuances and technicalities that constitute Rabindra Sangeet. In keeping with the tradition that I grew up with, I decided to come out with an album."

But Sahana did not always want to be a singer. She had other interests, which is probably why her husband's star status has not affected her or made her insecure in any way.

"It never occurred to me to compete as a singer so Ornob's success has never affected me in that way," she says. "I mean, we share our musical ideas with each other and I write many of his songs and he makes me listen to a tune to see if it sounds right, so I am involved but it was more of a passion for me, rather than a profession. I actually wanted to be a teacher in Literature.

"I still don't consider myself a professional singer, because it requires lots of practice, which I don't do. I suppose it is more of a love for me because my father was my first inspiration as a singer. He also came from that intellectual elite class and he taught me my first Rabindra Sangeet song, Satya Mangala Premamoy Tumi, which was

Despite working around the rules and regulations, Ornob and Sahana do not feel that they are changing the overall feel of Rabindra Sangeet.

a Brohmo Sangeet. I was exposed to all sorts of Indian and Western classical music, including Rabindra Sangeet. When I went to Santiniketan my music teachers realised that I have a penchant for singing and began training me from the time I was ten."

Ornob, surprisingly enough, failed both his Maths and Bangla entrance exams for Patha Bhavana. He was almost not going to be admitted into the school. The admissions committee decided to give him another chance and asked him to sing a song and he sang *Amar Shonar Bangl*a, and he has never looked back since then.

It was in Santiniketan at school where he met Sahana. Although the two of them had known each other for almost as long as they had been there, they were not immediate friends.

"I used to hate Ornob when I was young," says Sahana. "I thought he was such a poser with his Jim Morrison jacket and his torn jeans. I remember that he was very involved in cultural programmes and that's how we knew each other. But the real shocker came when one of my friends came up to me and said that Shayan [Ornob] wanted to marry me when he got older. I was so offended that I complained to the headmaster and he got into trouble. I guess we became friends after that incident. He used to draw pictures of me. We started dating when we were sixteen years old and have been working together on music ever since. In fact, I wrote Ornob's first song. It is called Ekta Chele."

It is safe to say that Ornob and Sahana complement each other in more ways than one. Apart from being childhood sweethearts, they work well together, which is obvious to anyone who has heard their album. They both contribute their own individual flavour to the album and both believe that it is important to bring Rabindra Sangeet back to the mass public. They also hope that with their step in this direction, other musicians will feel encouraged to do similar projects and Rabindra Sangeet will come out of its cobwebs of the past and move towards the future. ■