

Eleven years of bliss

Durba Chowdhury speaks on her experience at Visva Bharati

NADIA SARWAT

From 1976 to 1987, Durba Roy Chowdhury spent much of her days in the inspiring and idyllic milieu of Visva Bharati at Shantiniketan. A devoted classical and Rabindra Sangeet artiste and trainer, Durba replicated her Visva Bharati experience at her own music school 'Gayaki'. In a recent conversation, the artiste shared her fond memories of Shantiniketan with *The Daily Star*.

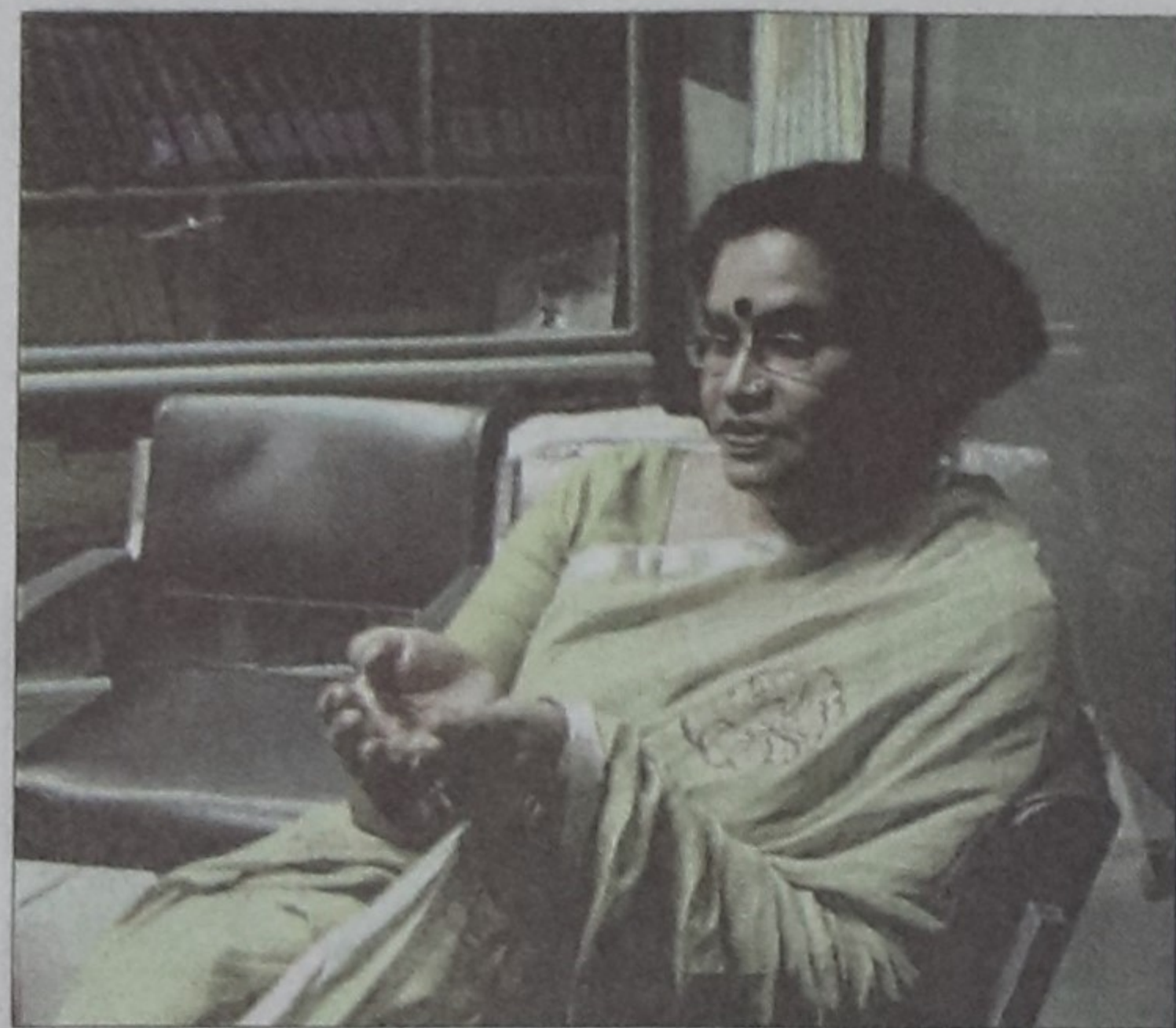
Born in a culturally oriented family in Kolkata, Durba was exposed to music at an early age. She also received intensive training in both classical music and Tagore songs. She completed the Sangeet Pravakar, a five-year diploma course from Allahabad.

"My mother (also a classical singer) wanted me to take formal training on music from Visva Bharati. However, it would not be true to say that music lessons are all I got from there. I learnt much more; it was a way of life, a unique worldview. Without any doubt, those years were the best in my life. 'Divine bliss' is how I would term this unparalleled period in my life."

The artiste gets nostalgic about special days at Visva Bharati: *Pahela Baishakh* (The Bengali New Year), *Poush Mela* (Winter fair), *Borsha Mangal* (Welcoming the monsoon), *Basanta Utsab* (Spring festival) and many more.

"Out there it seemed that we were always readying ourselves for festivals all round the year. All students had to participate in these programmes. Most days the afternoons went in rehearsals."

"On *Pahela Baishakh*, a nightlong event on classical music is held every year. *Basanta Utsab* was an event where people (between the ages of three to forty) participated in a rally, which ended at the *Amra Kunja* (mango orchard) in the institute. Everyone danced to the song *O re grihobashi, khol dar khol, laaglo je dol*. Then begins the *jalsa*, featuring songs and dance performances. In



Durba Roy Chowdhury

the end, we all showered each other with *abeer* (color). After the event, we used to chitchat in small groups; there were songs as well.

"On the seventh day of the Bengali month *Poush*, begins the three-day *Poush Mela*, the main attraction is a musical programme featuring *Baul* songs. In our time, *Bauls* from the entire Birbhum area joined the grand event. Another attraction was the amazing fireworks, which went up and down the sky, creating images of *Tagore* or *Nazrul*.

"The indigenous community of Shantiniketan, mostly the Santals, displayed their handmade products at the fair. The Santal women also took part in a special dance, putting one's hand on other's waist — a performance worth watching."

Asked if she cherishes any particular incident at Shantiniketan, the artiste smilingly says, "As I was a young girl then, it all seemed quite romantic to me; it's hard to single out one. However, on the personal front there are memories that stand out. I remember convocation day when I received my certificate from the then Prime Minister of India, Indira Gandhi.

"Another aspect is the informal relationship between teachers and the students at Visva Bharati, it was more like parent-child relationship. I had the opportunity to learn from personalities like Kanika Bandopadhyay, Neelima Sen, Ashesh Bandopadhyay, Gora Sarbadhikari, Arup Ratan Bandopadhyay, VV Wajelwar and others. 'Mohor di' (as the students used to call Kanika Bandopadhyay) was an excellent teacher. In a 40-minute class, she made almost 40 students learn a complete song — flawless, no matter how tough the song was. Her teaching method was easy and effective."

We were privileged to meet maestros such as Pandit Ravi Shankar, Pandit Gyan Prakash Chosh, Pandit Jasraj, Pandit V.G. Joghi.

Durba has replicated this teaching methodology at her own music school, *Gayaki* — established in 1992. "We are like a family. I try to teach my students in simple and inspiring ways. I try to instil a sense of right and wrong in them from a young age so that they can emerge as good human beings," she concludes.

Rabindranath Bengal's first modern artist

FAYZA HAQ

The basic thing to understand about Rabindranath Tagore, says Lala Rukh Selim, of the Department of Sculpture, DU, is that he was active in almost every field of culture. "He contributed to almost every field of culture, specially the development of modern literature, music, fine arts, etc. of Bengal. Regarding his contributions to fine arts of Bengal, he has contributed uniquely. He was present during one of the crucial stages of Bengal art, when the people of Bengal realised anew that India had a unique cultural past and the artists of Bengal wanted to go back to the past and bring it to the present context, with transformations which gave rise to the Bengal School. When Abanindranath Tagore and others established the Bengal School of Art, Rabindranath was active at that time."

As Rabindranath Tagore had been to Europe a few times, and been exposed to the Art of Europe, and had gone into a different phase with the Expressionists, Cubists and Fauvists, he came into some conclusions about what the role of an artist was and what the end of art truly was. "Tagore came to his own conclusions and differed from the Bengal School of artists. They created art due to some socio-political causes and wanted to say things through that art. But Rabindranath thought art should be the complete expression of an individual. It should not have a didactic purpose behind it," she adds.

"If we look at his art we know that he was active as an artist in the last 20 years of his life. He created about 2500 art works. He did paint before that but he started regularly painting from 1928. We also know that Rabindranath had already matured in terms of his contribution to literature and music," says Lala Rukh.

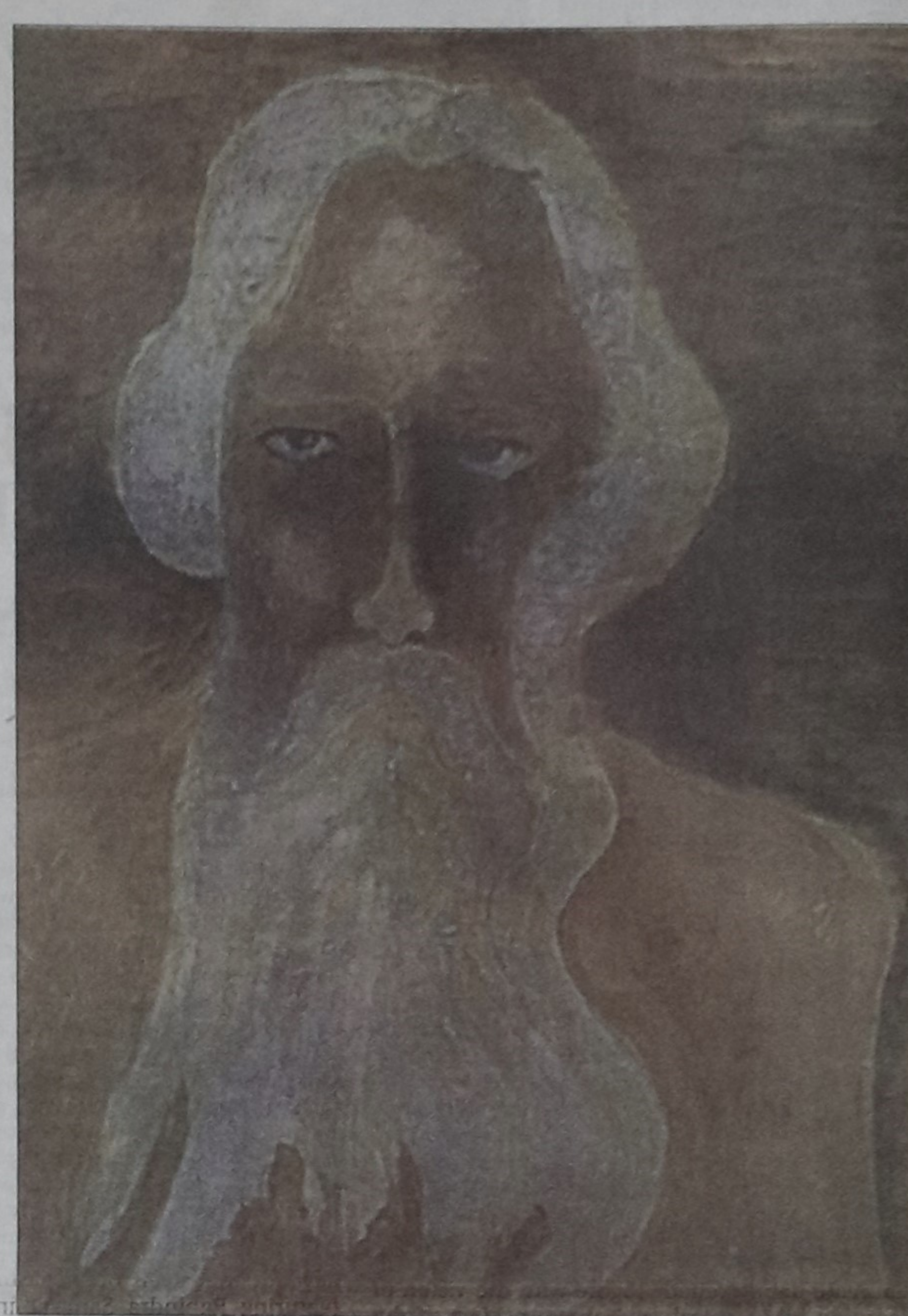
Rabindranath's art, says Lala Rukh is related to his different expressions of culture. His art grew out of his maturity and a way of expressing himself — what was unexpressed in his literature, she says. "The expression we find in his painting is much more free from considerations of society. He was already an estab-



Lala Rukh Selim

lished figure, and he had to live to a certain role in his literature. In art he was free from all those restrictions. That is what he always stressed: That an artist should give expression to the person within, says Lala Rukh.

His art evolved from his writings. He used to cross out pieces of his manuscripts and by joining the parts, his art grew out of the crossing outs. It grew out of his subconscious, as one does not consciously cross out parts of a manuscript, says Lala Rukh. The Surrealists believed with Freud that the conscious if suppressed, maybe expressed through our art, she says. "It puts a lot of insight into the mind. Thus Rabindranath's art began with his pen and ink. He even used colours that he made himself and which did not last long. He felt free to experiment and step on to areas which had not been stepped onto before. We can say he was truly the first modern painter of Bengal. No one before him had painted with that much of freedom. In his educational establishment in Santiniketan he encouraged people to experiment and discover themselves. We find his stu-



Self portrait by Rabindranath Tagore

dents like Nanda Lal, Ram Kinkor Baij and Binod Bihari practising there and experimenting at will."

One can classify his art into three distinct forms: The landscapes that he did which are very different from what people are usually used to seeing; the portraits that feature faces, specially

women's portraits; and the "phallic" which present hidden eroticism, as Prof. Shiv Narayan Rai puts it.

"The paintings show that a person's ideas can mature in different medias. Rabindranath did not learn the grammar of art, but he knew the grammar of how to express himself," says Lala Rukh.



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

On Air

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. (To be telecast on all Bangla channels).

CHANNEL-1
News (Bangla) at 7:15 am, 9:00am, 2:00pm, 7:00pm, 9:00pm, 10:30pm, 12:15 am.

ATN BANGLA
News (Bangla) at 7:00 am, 10:00am, 2:00 pm, 7:00 pm, 10:00 pm, 11pm. News (English) 8:20am, 7:00pm.

Latest News (Bangla) at 9:00 a.m, 10:00 am, 11:00 am, 1:00pm, 3:00 pm, 4:00pm, 6:00 pm and 8:00 pm.

CHANNEL-1
News (Bangla) at 8:00am, 12:00pm, 2:30pm, 6:30pm, 7:30pm, 10:00pm, 12:30am.

BANGLAVISION
News (Bangla) at 7:30am, 1:30pm, 5:00pm, 7:15pm, 10:30pm.
News Headlines (Bangla) at 10:00am, 12:00am, 4:00pm.
News (English) at 6:00pm.

Rtv
News (Bangla) at 10:15pm, and 12:15am.

ntv
News (Bangla) 7:30am, 12:02pm, 2:00pm, 7:30pm, 10:30pm, 1:00am.

ETV
News (Bangla): 1:00pm, 3:00pm, 5:00pm, 7:00pm, 9:00pm, 11:00pm.

03:05 Shorashori Rabindranath
05:30 Mukhtijudho Protidin
06:00 Shaon Gagan Ghirey
06:20 Cookery Show: Kobi Gurur Prio Khabar
07:50 Drama: Bodnaam
10:00 Musical Programme: Tomar Banitay Shimahin Asha
11:30 Drama Serial: 69
12:00 Gramphone Aker Shangbadpotro

ETV
08:30 Ekusher Shokaal
09:15 Drama Serial: Tom Tom
10:30 Ekusher Business
12:00 Ekusher Dupur
12:30 Ekusher Business: Special Focus
01:30 Ekusher Business: Shophol Jara
02:30 Drama Serial: Ghotok Ebong Amra
03:30 Cine Hits
04:00 Special Documentary Programme
04:30 Hridoye Momo
05:30 SMS Mania
05:45 Ekusher Shondhya
06:30 Desh Jurey Shangleap
07:45 Ashar Chor
08:15 Talk Show: Tini
09:30 Drama Serial: Tomtom
10:00 Musical Programme: Shobarey Kori Ahobaan

RTV
09:00 Drama Serial: Dahon
09:30 Heart Beat
10:03 Drama Serial: Chhaya Shongi
11:00 Kingfisher Taroka Alap
11:30 Amader Rabi Thakur
12:30 Puppet Show
01:03 Protidin
01:30 Cholochitray Rabindranath
02:03 Jibon Moroner Shimana Chharayey
02:30 Tele-film: Modhyo Bartini
05:20 Aguner Poroshmoni Chhoyao Pranay
08:00 Phirey Cholo Matir Taaney
08:30 Music Video
09:05 Drama: Nirjhori

CHANNEL-i
08:05 Porono Shei Din-er Gaan
09:50 Gramphone
11:05 Tintio Matra
11:05 Children's Programme: Rabi Thakur-er Golpo
12:05 Hridoyer Gaan
12:35 Talk Show: Citycell Tarokakathan
01:05 Musical Programme: Ebong Cinemar Gaan
01:30 Musical Programme: Sa Re Ga Ma
02:35 Shafajit Ray-er Rabindranath

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11:00 Cholochitro Shilpi Rabindranath
11:30 Biz Event
ntv
08:30 Aker Shokaal
08:55 Drama Serial: Jora Shako Theke Bolpur
10:05 Gallery
10:30 Music Express
11:30 Amader Robi Babu
12:10 Ei Shomoy

01:05 Japan Video Topic
02:30 Drama: Sodor Ondor
03:50 Drama Serial: Neer
05:30 Apnar Jigyasha
06:20 Shubho Shondhya
06:45 Rabindranath-er Shikhya Bhabna
08:15 Siddiqua Kabir's Recipe
09:00 Musical Programme: Kichhu Katha Kichhu Gaan
09:45 Drama Serial: Neer
11:30 Talk Show: Ei Shomoy

BANGLAVISION
08:30 Cholochitray Rabindranath-er Gaan
09:00 Chitrangoda
09:30 Chitropio Rabindranath
10:10 Hridoy Paaney Hridoy Taaney
11:05 Chitrokalay Rabindranath
11:30 Bhanushingher Podabali
12:00 Paye Chalar Path
02:30 Drama: Konok Champa
04:20 Choley Chhola Chhola Nodir Dhara

12:00 Shangbad Protidin
CHANNEL 1
08:40 Shuprobhat Bangladesh
10:30 Drama: Boshumi
11:30 Gaan-er Khanta
12:00 Tele-film: Nosto Neer
02:00 Rabi Thaku-er Chithi
03:00 Tele-film: Chokher Bali
05:15 Premey Premey Gaaney Gaaney
06:00 Saaj Bela
07:00 Ei Katha Mone Rekho
08:15 Drama: Bijoeni
11:00 Hridoye Rabindranath

BOISHAKHI
09:05 Ekti Bangladesh Kuthi Bari
10:05 Drama: Shashli
11:00 Musical Programme
01:00 Drishyo Kabyo
02:30 Educational Programme: BSB Cambrian Challenge
04:00 Musical Programme: Pranay Manush Achhey Pranay
05:00 Chanchal Uchhal
05:30 Dito Bitorko
07:30 Arshite Aami
09:05 Asbo Jabo Chirodin-er Ei Ami

STAR MOVIES
09:10 The Distinguished Gentleman
11:00 Epic Movie
12:25 Lonely Hearts
02:10 Junebug
03:55 Flika
05:30 Marine, The
07:00 Home Of The Brave
08:45 X
10:45 Punch-Drunk Love
12:20 The Ringer

STAR WORLD
09:30 My Name Is Earl
10:00 Stacked
10:30 Koffee With Karan
11:30 The Moment Of Truth
12:30 Prison Break
01:30 Brothers & Sisters
02:30 The Ellen Degeneres Show
03:30 The Bold And The Beautiful
04:00 General Hospital
05:00 Koffee With Karan
06:00 Falcon Beach
07:00 The Simpsons

07:00am Hello Dhaka
11:00am Amar 88
03:00pm Dhaka Calling
07:00pm Seven Eleven
12:00am Back to Back music
Radio Today 89.6 FM
07:15am Good Morning Dhaka
11:00am Masti Unlimited
01:00pm Today's Adda
04:00pm U-tun
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07:00 The Simpsons

07:30 Friends
08:00 Seinfeld
08:30 That '70s Show
09:00 Hope And Faith
09:30 America's Got Talent
10:30 Bones
11:30 Most Shocking

THE HISTORY CHANNEL
09:30 Modern Marvels
10:30 Ford GT-40
11:30 Eye Max
12:15 Dent King
12:20 The Fight
01:30 Secrets of the Sun
02:30 Mera India
03:30 Mini Cooper
04:30 Modern Marvels
05:30 Jaguar E-Type
06:30 The Fight
07:30 Lost City Of Inca
08:30 Modern Marvels
09:30 Digging For The Truth
10:30 Athens: Ancient
11:30 Supercity
12:00 Secrets of the Sun
12:00 Terror Goes International

ZEE STUDIO
10:30 The Lizzie McGuire Movie
12:30 Beaches
03:15 13 Going On 30
05:45 The Juron
08:30 Eraser
11:00 Cinderella Man

NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC CHANNEL
12:00 What Would Happen If
01:30 Sharks
02:30 Planet Carnivore
03:30 Costa Rica
04:30 Flying Snakes
05:30 Jaw Breakers
06:00 Big Bang
06:30 I Didn't Know That
07:00 What Would Happen If
07:30 Snakes
10:30 Countdown Crecs
11:30 World's Deadliest Animals S2
12:30 Snakes

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Shora Shori Rabindranath
On Channel i at 3:05 pm
Special programme on Tagore Death Anniversary
Host: Asad Chowdhury

