The Rebel Artiste

ERSHAD KAMOL

Few can forget the distinct, seasoned voice that gave Nazrul's songs the passion and vigour that it deserved. Feroza Begum, a legendary singer, not only popularised Nazrul Sangeet in the subcontinent but also exposed the depth, versatility and sophistication of this genre of music. So much so that it is impossible to talk about the evolution of Nazrul Sangeet without talking about this remarkable artiste. At a time when Nazrul Sangeet was beginning to lose its popularity due to the flawed rendition by singers, it was Feroza Begum whose passionate singing style restored or rather resurrected, the glory of the music genre and infused new life to Nazrul Sangeet in the middle of the last century in Kolkata. By her unique presentation style Feroza Begum has emerged as the most prominent Nazrul Sangeet singer in the subcontinent. Though she is popular as a Nazrul singer, she renders other music genres such as *geet, ghazal, thumri, dhadra* and *adhunik* songs. Her mastery of incorporating the delicate emotions of the lyrics has had the power to really move the audience.



For her unstinting dedication to music, Feroza Begum has been awarded the Shahdhinata Puroshkar, Nasiruddin Gold Medal, National Award for Best Singer, Netaji Shubhsash Chandra Bose Award, Satyajit Ray Award and Golden Disk Award by CBS/Sony amongst for millions of sale of Nazrul Sangeet *Shaono rate jodi*. She has been awarded the D Lit title from Bardhaman University of India as recognition of her special contribution in the musical arena.

Feroza Begum's formal training in music began under the guidance of Chitta Roy, a close associate of Kazi Nazrul Islam. She had the brief opportunity of taking lessons from Nazrul himself. And she continued learning music from her husband Kamol Dasgupta, a legendary composer who tuned about 400 Nazrul Sangeet, till the last day of his life. Born in the 1930s, the Nazrul singer continues to uphold her legacy.

Feroza Begum's life is a story of struggle, sacrifice and success. The initial stage of her illustrious career was interrupted several times since she had to give up many years to devote herself to her family. Yet there are few artistes who have been able to achieve what she had during the 65 years of her career. She released the most successful Nazrul Sangeet albums in India. She was the first singer to release a long play on Nazrul Sangeet in Pakistan. Feroza Begum is also a part of history: she was one of the two singers to render songs during the inauguration of the Pakistan radio's regional office in Dhaka.