

68th Death Anniversary of Rabindranath Tagore

Tagore and the world beyond

KARIM WAHEED

*Amar pran-er porey choley gelo ke
Bashant-er batashtukur moto
Shey je chhu-e gelo, nu-e gelo re
Phool phutiye gelo shoto shoto...*

It is believed that Rabindranath Tagore wrote this song when he was mourning the death of his sister-in-law, confidant and muse Kadambari Devi. Perhaps this was the definitive death in Tagore's life. Overpowering lyrics certainly suggest an intolerable sense of loss:

*Shey dheu-er moto bheshey gechihe
Chand-eralor deshey gechihe...
Mon-e holo aankhir koney amaye jeno dekey
gechheshey*

*Ami kothaye jabo, kothaye jabo, bhabtechhi
tai ekla boshey...*

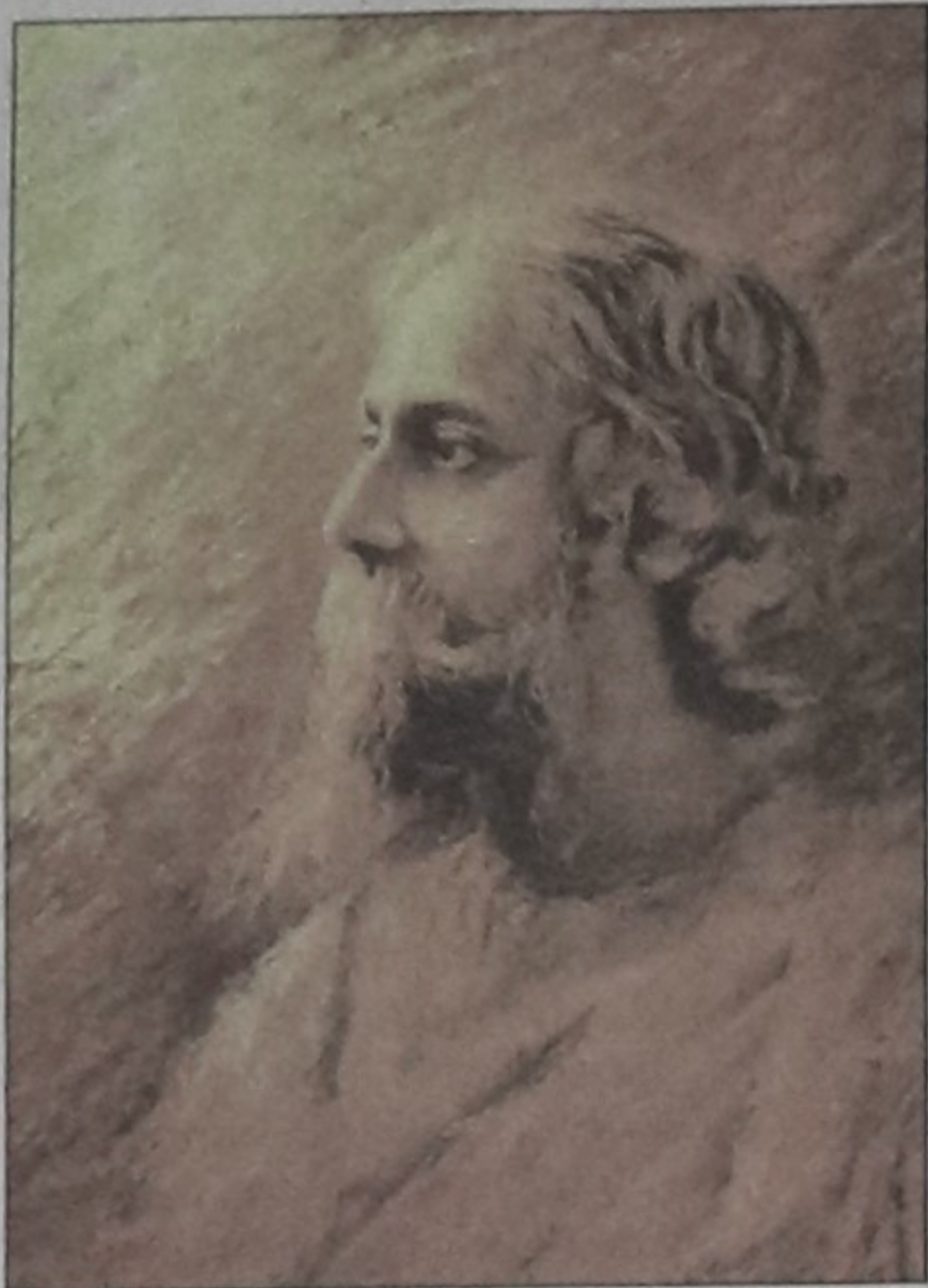
Death appears in Tagore's writing time and again — in many shades, under varied circumstances. Supposedly, the Nobel laureate poet held séances (channelling spirits).

Tagore seemingly considered death as an inevitable episode, but not "the end." He saw death as another beginning, if a soul is to be considered immortal, eternal. This philosophy is apparent in one of his quotes: "Death is not extinguishing the light; it is only putting out the lamp because the dawn has come."

In "Maran re" Tagore puts death on a pedestal:

*Maran re, tunhu mamoi Shyam-saman
Meghbarani tui, meghjatojoot
Raktokamolkar, rakto-adhorput
Tapbimochan karun koro tabo
Mrityu-amrityu korey daan...*

At times, like all mortals, Tagore too questioned the Divine about death and seemed uncertain.



*Maran-er mukhey rekhey duurey jao, duurey
jao choley*

*Abar byathar taan-e nikatey phirabey boley
Andhar-alor paarey, khey dei baarey baarey
Nijerey haraye khunji, duli shei doley doley...*

Immortality may seem impossible, biologically, but through accomplishments, individuals remain relevant well after their physical demise. Tagore's ode to them:

*Maransagar paarey tomra amor,
Tomaderi smari...*

*Sangsar-e jeley geley je nabo alok
Jai hok, jai hok, taari jai hok...*

The poet also saw death as an offering, a validation of divine intervention:

*Mor maran-e tomar hobey joy
Mor jibon-e tomar parichay...*

What makes Tagore's creations timeless and the poet forever relevant is the scope of limitless interpretations. Regardless of how we interpret Tagore's philosophy and works, almost seven decades after death the poet lives on.

Tagore memorabilia in a state of disrepair in north Bangladesh

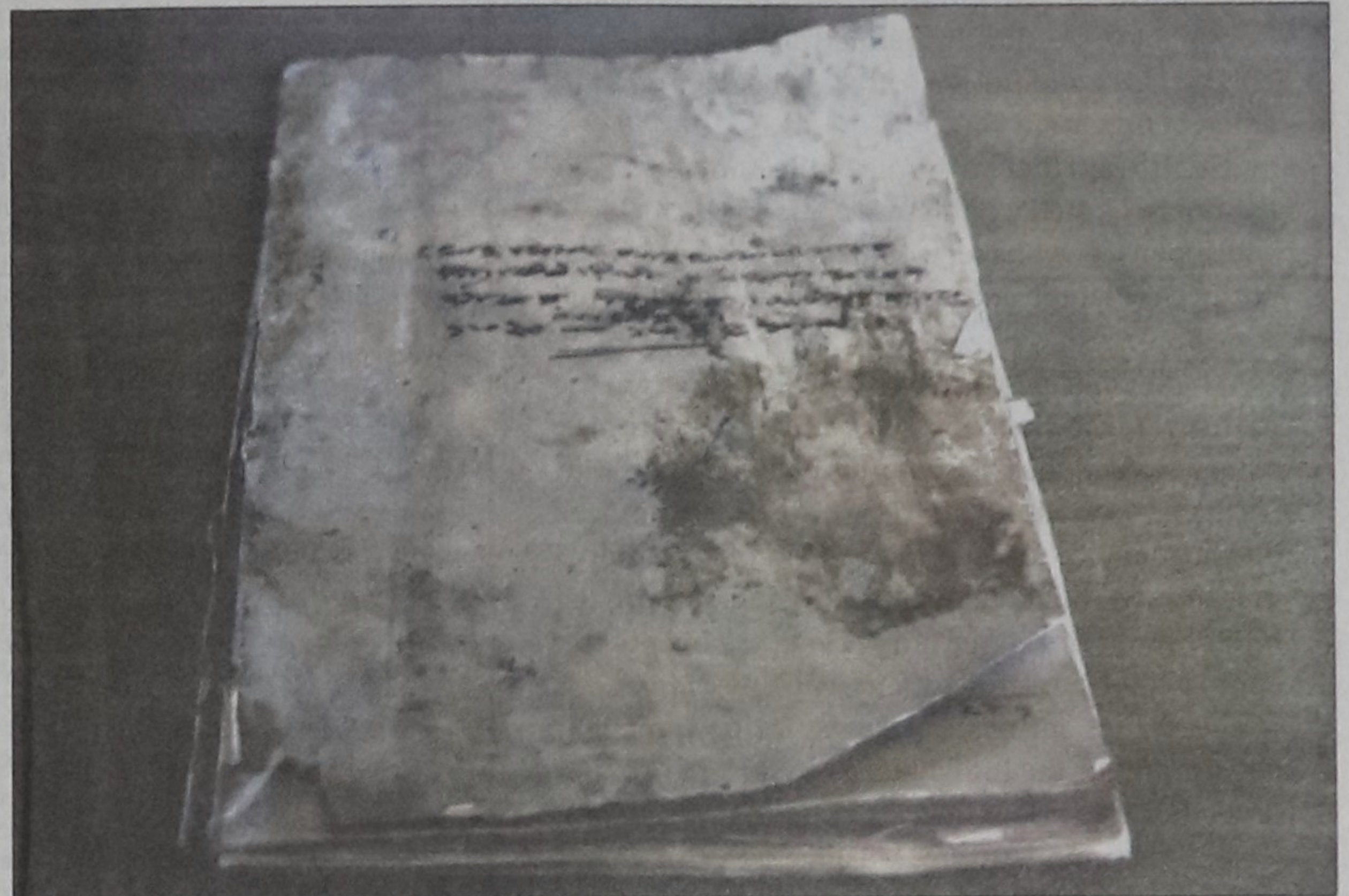
HASIBUR RAHMAN BILU, back from Naogaon

Several Rabindranath Tagore memorabilia, including manuscripts from several districts including Naogaon, are in a state of disrepair, according to the Department of Archaeology, Bangladesh.

The department has not taken adequate steps to preserve the memorabilia, including 11 letters of Tagore's son Rathindranath, which have been neglected since 1946 at Kaligram Rathindranath Institution Office under Atrai upazila of Naogaon district. A senior official of the department told The Daily Star that the organisation had been informed 16 years ago about the rare manuscripts but has still to collect them.

Tagore aficionado M. Matir Rahman Mamun, founder general secretary, Rabindra Shahitya Parishad, Atrai upazila, asserted that two iron safes are negligently being kept at the local land office and post office. The authority, he said, has been informed about the iron safes along with other memorabilia, such as a ledger where the poet maintained his bank accounts of the Nobel Prize money. The ledger was collected by Mamun from local sources and is still to be handed over to the department as a rare antique, said sources. To preserve the rare collection, Mamun handed it over to the local administration on May 8 this year but the field officer of the department Badrul Alam has failed to provide information about its location.

Earlier Mamun collected another rare letter of Tagore, which has been



handed over to the Department of Archaeology and is in safe custody at the Mahastan Museum in Bogra.

This is in stark contrast to several Tagore memorabilia such as a clock, bathtub, and mirrors, which are uncared for at the Potisar Kachharibari. Earlier the department officials made a commitment to the locals that Potisar Kachharibari (an estate that belonged to Tagore's family) would be transformed into a museum but that has not come about.

Local journalist Bimal Kunda said

that he had come across a boat used by Tagore, known as "Chitra," at Shahzadpur Kachharibari premise in Sirajganj district but now there is no trace of the boat. "I saw two wooden steps in the main building but the steps have disappeared as well," he said.

Naheed Sultana, custodian, Rabindranath Memorial Museum, had earlier recovered many memorabilia from local government sources and placed some of them at the museum.

Memorabilia, such as a ledger where the poet maintained his bank accounts of the Nobel Prize money, are not being preserved.

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