

WHAT'S ON THIS WEEK

14th Asian Art Biennale 2010
 Organiser: Bangladesh Shipakala Academy
 Venue: National Art Gallery (BSA) and Osmani Memorial Hall
 Date: October 8-November 6
 Time: 11am-7pm



Duet Art Exhibition

Artists: Tajuddin Ahmed and Syed Iqbal
 Venue: Tivoli Art Gallery, DCC Market, Gulshan-2
 Date: November 5-15
 Time: 10am-8pm



Solo Art Exhibition

Title: The Hybrid Planet
 Artist: Dravid Saikot
 Venue: Zainul Gallery, Faculty of Fine Arts, DU
 Date: October 29-November 7
 Time: 11am-8pm



Solo Painting Exhibition

Artist: Khurshid Alam Saleem
 Venue: Shilpangan Art Gallery, H-26, R-3/A, Dhanmondi
 Date: October 31-November 10
 Time: 10am-8pm



IN MEMORIAM

Kalim Sharafi: Epitomising Tagore songs

SADYA AFREEN MALLICK

Kalim Sharafi, celebrated Tagore singer, passed away yesterday due to old age complications. When I heard the news, I was saddened. My mind travelled back to an early summer afternoon when we engaged in a relaxed conversation on music and its place in life. The wonderful raconteur that he was, Kalim Sharafi related many an interesting episode from his eventful life.

An account:
 "Cream? Sugar?"
 That was so typical of Kalim Sharafi, or "Kalim Bhai", as he is known to us. No sooner had I arrived at his Bailey Heights apartment, he'd become a busy host.

"There's actually an anecdote behind my question..." went on Sharafi. "Tagore had often frequented the hill station, Mongpu at Darjeeling. There, the host, and author Maitreyi Devi had once asked Tagore if he wanted cream or sugar with his tea, he'd answered, 'I drink tea mainly for cream and sugar'."

That was the other side of Kalim Bhai. If he wasn't on stage performing Rabindra Sangeet or leafing through Tagore's work in his free time, he was reminiscing on Tagore's quips. For a man who had per-

formed Rabindra Sangeet for over six decades and was known as "the man with the golden voice" not only to the audience but the musical greats such as Devabrata Biswas, Hemanta Mukhopadhyay, Suchitra Mitra, Kanika Banerjee as well, this was hardly surprising.

Even within the various niches of Rabindra Sangeet, Sharafi, was perhaps most loved for his timeless patriotic songs. In fact, his association with the political movement of his generation has been one of the key inspirations behind his songs.

"Many people would actually be surprised that I didn't get admitted to Shantiniketan because of my political convictions! I was seen as 'left leaning' and that didn't go well with Professor Anil Chandra, the principal at that time," said Sharafi.

"While I was in jail, I had come into contact with several people such as Pronob Guhothakurta who was arrested from Shantiniketan. I got the taste of Tagore songs from him and was soon inspired into singing the songs."

Reading my thoughts, he immediately went on. "Why was I in jail? Those were the turbulent days of the Quit India movement initiated by Gandhiji. I had appeared for my matriculation. During this time many of us

were arrested and sent to jail for 11 months. In fact, in jail, I had come into contact with some noted pro-Liberation leaders like Kamoda Prasad Mukherji, Kobiraj Nrisingho Sen and Dinkor Koishik.

When Sharafi joined Indian Peoples Theatre (IPTA), renowned singers Suchitra Mitra, Hemanta Mukherjee and Debabrata Biswas frequented the organisation and that's how he rubbed shoulders with the stalwarts and his interest in Tagore songs was spurred. It is at the same time his guru, Shubho Guhothakurta, made a tremendous impact in his development as an artiste, added Sharafi.

President, of Bangladesh Rabindra Sangeet Shilpi Sangstha, until his death, Sharafi's contribution to the cultural setting in Bangladesh is well noted. Around 1957, he along with professor Anisur Rahman and Dr. Rafiqul Islam organised several cultural programmes, including Tagore's dance drama "Tasher Desh" in Dhaka under the banner of 'Hojoborola'.

Even after his death, Sharafi, an epitome of Rabindra Sangeet, will continue to inspire generations of music lovers. His unmatched renditions of patriotic songs will continue to resonate in the hearts of millions across the nation and beyond.



Rabindra Sangeet exponent and artiste Kalim Sharafi no more

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Kalim Sharafi, considered one of the trailblazers in Rabindra Sangeet practice in Bangladesh and one of the most accomplished singers of the genre in the subcontinent, passed away at his Baridhara residence in the capital yesterday. He was 86.

Sharafi had been ill for a while. He breathed his last around 12 pm.

Sharafi was born in Birbhum, West Bengal on May 8, 1924. Ironically, he was born into a family that was far removed from the world of music that he was destined for. His ancestors were *pir* (holy men), based in Sonargaon. As was the custom, Sharafi was forbidden to practice music. Despite that, his love for music led him to defy his family's traditions. He would listen to famed artistes and musicians of the then undivided India and learn.

"I was always a quick learner," Sharafi once said. "As a child I used to find Rabindranath's compositions melodic, and could grasp them easily."

Sharafi got involved in politics at the age of 18 and joined the Quit India movement in 1942. He was arrested by the police from his village and spent more than a year in prison with other activists.

Ideologically a leftist all his life, Sharafi used to complain that communalism and political favouritism have taken over the national culture.

Noted economist and Tagore singer Professor Anisur Rahman says, "Kalim *bhai* was undoubtedly one of the best singers of the Rabindra Sangeet genre. More importantly, he brought about a new style of rendition."

"He didn't go to Shantiniketan. He was a student of Dakkhini, Kolkata. But the style taught at Dakkhini was rather conventional. Later he joined Shambhu Mitra's group Gano Natya."

"Kalim *bhai* used to say that Shambhu Mitra was his real guru. It was Mitra who told him, 'Don't just sing the words, grasp them and disseminate that understanding through your rendition.'"

"I was a student then and heard Kalim *bhai* live at Carzon Hall. He sang 'Ami Tokhono Chhilem Magano Gahano Ghum-er Ghorey'. That song stayed with me for days. It's a shame he didn't record enough albums."

He was the founder president of Bangladesh Rabindra Sangeet Shilpi Sangstha. Tagore singer and general secretary of the organisation, Tapan Mahmud, says, "Kalim *bhai* was a legend. There are few aspects of our cultural arena that he didn't touch. Apart from being an authority on Rabindra Sangeet, he had also recorded *adhunik* songs, was an accomplished music director, a playback singer and a filmmaker. The song 'Pothey Pothey Dilam Chhoraiya', composed by the late Khan Ataur Rahman and recorded by Kalim *bhai*, is considered a masterpiece. This is an irreparable loss for the nation."

A recipient of Ekushey Padak (1985) and Shadhinota Padak (1999), Sharafi used to say, "Life is much more than the yearning for money and power. It cannot be defined by how much we get, but rather what we have given back to the people."

Photo exhibition on the ravages of explosives

AHMED HUMAYUN KABIR
 TOPU, Pabna

The cluster bomb explosions were a tragedy of immense proportions and many people around the globe paid the price. What happened in Laos shows how cluster bombs can continue to kill years after a war is over.

The speakers in a discussion, organised by Cluster Munitions Coalition, asserted these facts. They also organised a photography exhibition at Pabna Press Club auditorium on Saturday. At the programme viewers saw the photos of cluster bomb victims and lamented for humanity.

The speakers also called on the developed countries to come forward to end the cluster bomb massacres across the world. The upcoming



PHOTO: STAR

Visitors at the exhibition.

ing Convention of Cluster Munitions should come into the force across the board, they said, in the nations that are responsible producing the cluster bombs massacre.

President of Pabna Press Club Rumi Khandaker chaired

the programme while the Cluster Munitions coalition member Nadira Mollik; executive director of Pabna Protishruti Momota Chaklader and secretary of Pabna Press Club spoke on the occasion.

A spirited celebration

AMINUL ISLAM, Mymensingh

Udichi Shilpi Goshthi, a leading cultural organisation of the country, observed its 42nd founding anniversary at Bangladesh Agricultural University (BAU) campus on October 29.

Marking the occasion, a daylong programme was chalked out which included a colourful rally, discussion and cultural programme.

The programme began with a choral rendition by the artistes of Udichi BAU unit. Earlier, a colourful rally was brought out which paraded the campus and saw a big turnout of teachers, students and cultural activists.

A discussion was held at the premises of Udichi of BAU. Presided over by Udichi BAU unit president Professor M. A. M. Yahia Khandakar, vice-chancellor of Pataukhali Science and Technology University (PSTU) Professor Syed Shakhawat Hossain addressed the meeting as chief guest. Vice-chancellor of Sher-e-Bangla Agricultural University Professor Shah-e-Alam was the special guest.

Among others, BAU Students' Affairs

Adviser Professor Mohammad Mustafizur Rahman, Proctor Professor Abu Hadi Noor Ali Khan, Professor A.K.M. Zakir Hossain, Udhichi Mymensingh district unit secretary Sarwar Kamal Robin, president and secretary of Gonotantrik Shikkhak Forum, cultural activists and Udichi members were present.

Udichi was established at the BAU campus on October 29, 1968. Since its inception, the organisation has included many brilliant students who have enriched the cultural heritage of the country.

Udichi epitomises a struggle to save our national culture from extinction and preserve human rights for all sections of society, irrespective of caste, creed and colour, said the speakers. The organisation will continue to give an impetus to its mission, by involving brilliant young people, especially students, in its activities, said the speakers on an optimistic note.

Later PSTU vice-chancellor Professor Dr. Syed Shakhawat Hossain inaugurated a reconstructed building for Udichi on the banks of the Old Brahmaputra River at BAU.

Bringing alive a rich oral tradition

KAVITA, New Delhi

The legend of Bobibi has become an inescapable part of local folklore in the Sunderbans archipelago. Worshipped by both Hindus and Muslims whether woodcutters, honey collectors, hunters or fishermen, the deity's blessings are invoked before they venture into the tiger-infested forests.

To bring alive a rich oral tradition, the Sunderban Chetana Sanskriti Natya Samstha, West Bengal under the aegis of Project Lifeline Sunderban recently staged dance drama "Bonbibi: The Lady of the Forest" in New Delhi. "The jungle is the mother of people who make a living there. The message of Project Lifeline is 'Serve the People, Save the Tiger'. Our aim is to reduce the man-tiger conflict. Just as we want to save the tiger, we want to reduce people's economic dependence on the jungles by encouraging them to find alternative means of livelihood. Our play is part of that awareness building exercise," says Debidas Bhakta, director of "Bonbibi: The Lady of the Forest", who is also field supervisor of Institute of Climbers and Nature Lovers, a Kolkata-based NGO. Bhakta is stationed in Anupur village in Satjelia Island, located in the Sunderban area.

The play follows the story of Bonbibi as the benign deity of the forest. Two men, Dhonai and Monai set out to collect honey wax, accompanied by their young nephew, Dukhe. As the villainous



A scene from the play.

Dhonai cannot find the beehives he returns despondently to his boat and falls asleep. Dakshin Roy (the supreme lord of tigers) appears to Dhonai in his dream and demands the sacrifice of human flesh as they had not offered any puja to him when they entered the forest.

Dhonai decides to sacrifice Dukhe. He leaves with his fleet managing to leave Dukhe behind to be devoured by Dakshin Roy. Just as the demon is about to pounce on the young boy in the shape of a tiger, Dukhe begins praying to Bonbibi. She come before him and saves him.

Bonbibi's brother Shah Janguli overcomes Dakshin Roy. Bonbibi sends Dukhe home on the back of a crocodile and bestows him with enormous

wealth. Dukhe establishes a great Darga of Bobibi in the village and thus begins the tradition of puja or hajat of Bonbibi.

What made the play remarkable was that several of the 17-member theatre troupe could strongly identify with the characters they played. Anita Mondal (who played the role of Bonbibi) was one example; her father-in-law had lost his life in a tiger attack, while Shibpada Mridha (Dakshin Roy) became handicapped after a crocodile attack.

The enactment of the story of Bonbibi was definitely compelling. However the play was marred by melodrama. The language barrier didn't do much to help. The less said about response of a city audience to the pala form of theatre, the better.



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