

112th Anniversary of Nazrul

Reconnecting with Nazrul's Compositions

Are classics and masterpieces truly immortal, or like everything else in the real world, they too have a shelf life? Putting a work of art on a pedestal often makes it unreachable; soon it becomes a niche genre -- perhaps not a fate the masters would have wanted for their creations. Many believe Nazrul Sangeet is currently going through this phase. While exponents continue to question the authenticity of many Nazrul tunes, generations of audiences are alienated. Young listeners often blame the "disconnect" -- music arrangement and style of presentation they often cannot relate to. Some musicians are making efforts to connect to that "lost" audience. Random remakes of Nazrul Sangeet have been featured in recent pop/fusion albums and more are seemingly underway. How do exponents, devoted Nazrul singers and contemporary musicians feel about the current state of the national poet's repertoire?

should specialise in different sub-genres of Nazrul Sangeet.

Priyanka Gope, classical vocalist and music teacher
Limitations could never control Nazrul. Nazrul developed 20 distinctive ragas; composed *Khayal*, *thumri* and *tappa* based Bangla songs; *bhajan*, *kirtan*, *ghazal* and many more. Nazrul was an institution. Limitations remain among us, in our inability to justly evaluate the national poet.

Inspired by the success of that song, we planned to release an album featuring rock covers of Nazrul Sangeet. But we had to step back when we realised that available recordings of Nazrul Sangeet -- on the 'rebel' theme -- that we were looking for are too few.

I believe Nazrul was way ahead of his time. To keep his spirit alive, we need progressive minds as well. Artcell still wants to do an album on Nazrul Sangeet. I urge the authorities to release more songs, on diverse themes, from



I admit that singing Nazrul Sangeet is a difficult task. One needs a certain level of skills to render these songs. As a consequence, the number of artists who venture into the territory of Nazrul Sangeet is decreasing. I believe the use of contemporary instruments in Nazrul Sangeet should be encouraged. New electronic inventions have revolutionised the way the music industry functioned only a couple of decades ago. It's a good idea to use state of the art instruments in the songs rather than trying to make time stand still.

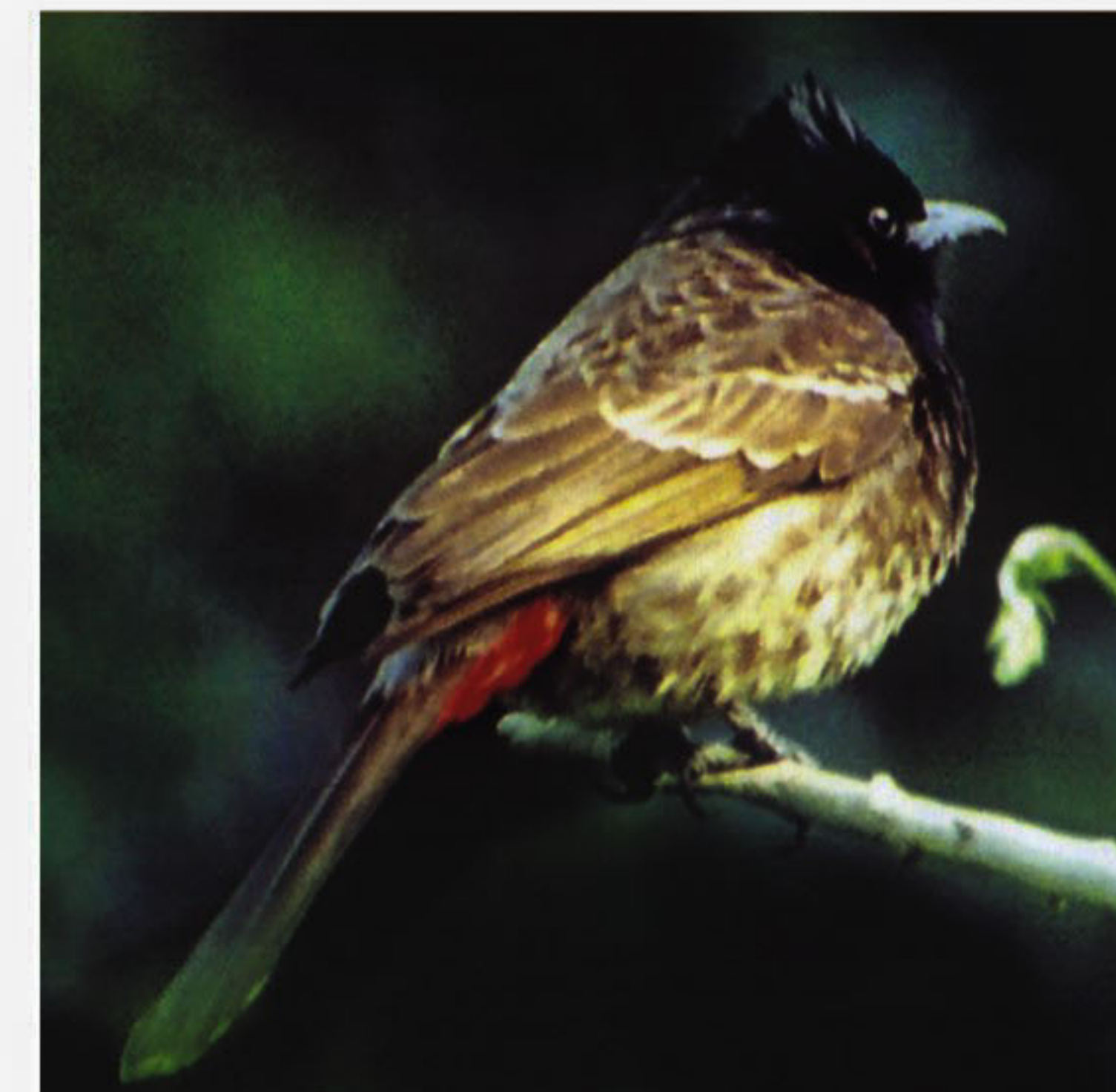
For example, in Don't Ask's cover of Nazrul's "Kaberi Nodi", we have retained the original tune and infused elements of swing reggae into it. We experimented on the *alapa* elements. However, maintaining the original tune of the song was of prime importance to me.



Cezanne, bassist of Artcell
We took the decision of covering Nazrul's "Kandari Hushiyar" (Durgom giri kantar moru) on the spur of the moment. It was at a concert by Gramophone, where the organisers wanted to feature Shadhin Bangla Betar Kendra songs, covered by popular rock bands. We opted for "Kandari Hushiyar" because of its powerful, inspiring lyrics. We found that the words perfectly fit to our ideology.

The rock version of the song was later included in the mixed album, titled "Rock 202", and it has become one of the greatest hits of Artcell.

Nazrul's opulent repertoire.
Nazia Ahmed, vocalist of Don't Ask
I don't think Nazrul Sangeet has lost its appeal altogether; people who understand the songs listen to them quite often. It must be considered that Nazrul Sangeet is a genre that is based on classical music. And our first reaction to something as serious as classical is that of awe. When I, for example, decided to take classical music lessons, my friends would ask, "Why are you taking so much trouble to learn this?" or "Who listens to this music these days?"



Bulbuli
SADYA AFREEN MALICK writes from London

As our train sped through the evening fog and the clogged Dhaka streets opened up to the quiet suburbs, we started counting down the hours to reach Rajshahi. When we finally disembarked, a sweet aroma of mango blossoms greeted us. Spring was in the air.

We were staying at the outskirts of a newly developed neighbourhood by the river Padma. Vast plantations stretched to the horizon, as far as the eye could see. Our host, Professor Abdul Khaleque, seemed to have a green thumb. The garden in front of his house was a wild burst of colours of dahlia, marigold, chrysanthemum and more.

While we chatted away in the garden, our host pointed out to a bird on the nearby fragrant *kamini* bush. "It's the rare *Bulbuli* that Nazrul was so fascinated with," he said.

"The *Bulbuli* lays eggs in a nest, deep inside the bush, to keep predators away," he added. I watched in amazement at the small greyish bird with a crop of feather on its head -- much like a crow. So this was the *Bulbuli* -- the Red-vented Nightingale that had inspired Kazi Nazrul Islam to write countless songs!

I could see with my mind's eye how the poet must have sat and watched in wonder as the *Bulbuli* chirped away and flapped its dainty wings. One of his famous ghazals, "Bagicha-e-Bulbuli tui phool shakhatay dishney aaji do!" (Bulbuli don't shake the stems laden with flowers) was an apt homage.

Nazrul had even named his son Bulbul. When the son died prematurely at the age of four, Nazrul was shaken. He wrote: "Bulbuli, my songbird, is tired and has fallen asleep. The evening's flowers, dropped off from their stems, gaze with mournful eyes. Flowers blossomed to its singing until it was silenced by some hunter's arrow; in the forest's lap. The Evening-queen wails with dishevelled hair." (Translated by Sajed Kamal)

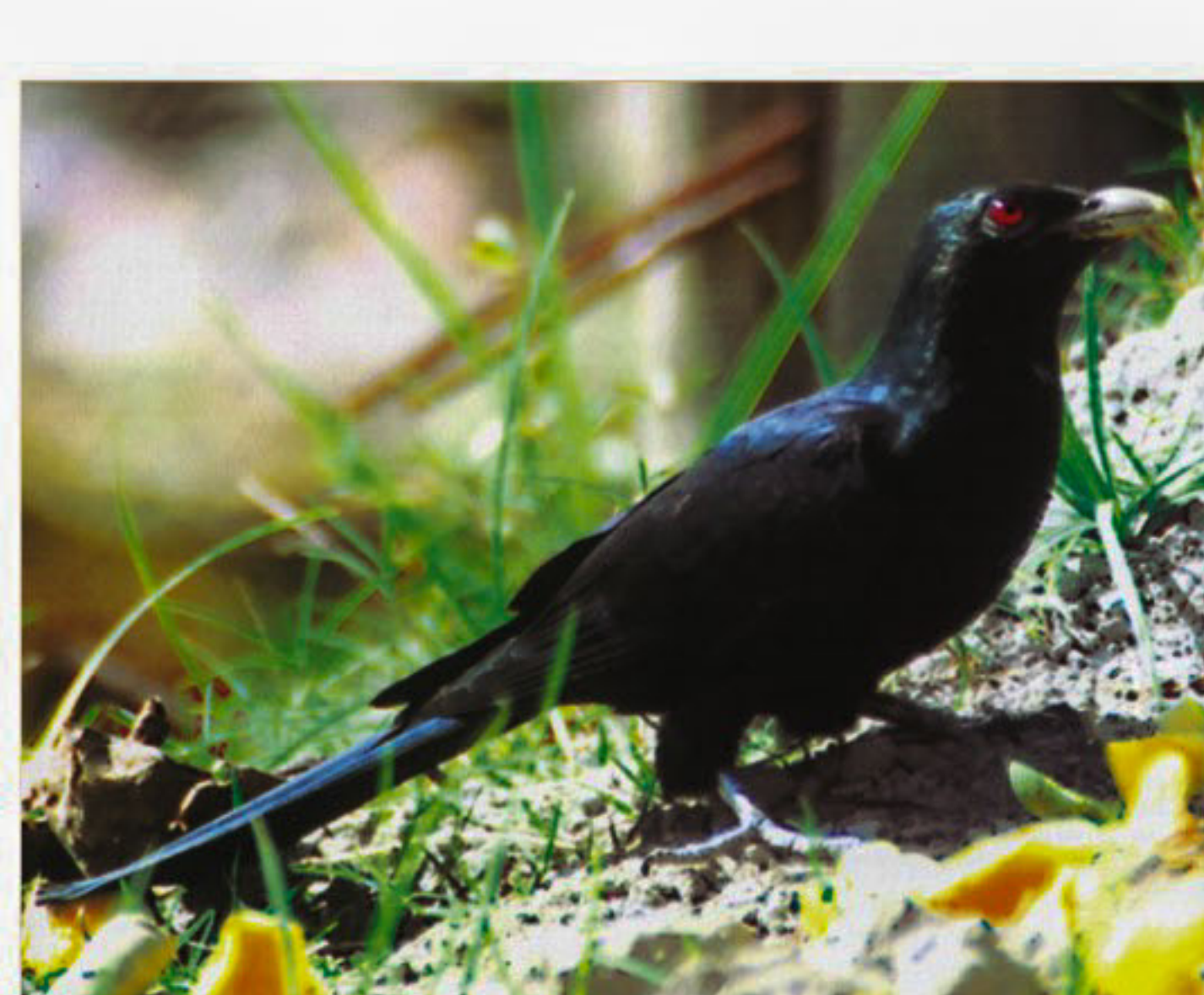
Nazrul had used the imagery of the *Bulbuli* no less than 69 times in his works. Besides the *Bulbuli*, there are as many as 45 species of birds woven in the rebel poet's literary works and songs. Mujahidul Islam, a photographer, had captured the images of these birds and displayed them at an exhibition at the Nazrul Institute some time back.

Another bird, the long tailed *Papiya* whose melodious songs captivated the poet so deeply that he wrote odes to it 64 times. Interestingly, the *Papiya* during monsoon is known as *Koyal* or *Kokil* in spring.

The Black Drongo, which is

Flights of Passion

The Songbird in Nazrul



Kokil

The popular folk song "Nodir naam shoi Onjona -- nachey teerey Khonjona" is about the *Khonjona* bird that the poet visualises, perched happily by the banks of the river Onjona.

The song "Bajey mridongo boroshar oi" includes the lines "Bon moyur anonde nachhey -- dhara pollob shoney", depicting the *Bon Mayur* or the Peacock in the woods spreading its majestic plumes to greet the rain.

"Mora aar jonomey hongshomithun chhilaam" elaborates on two Swans locked in blissful union. In "Bhoriya poran", composed on Raga Behag-Basant, the verses "Chandrachur megher gae -- moral mithun uriya jaye -- nesho dhorey chokhey alo chhayae" brilliantly describes moonlight brushing against the clouds; the soul steeped in torpor, as a couple of *Moral* fit across the sky.

In grief, as in love, birds form vivid images in his poems.

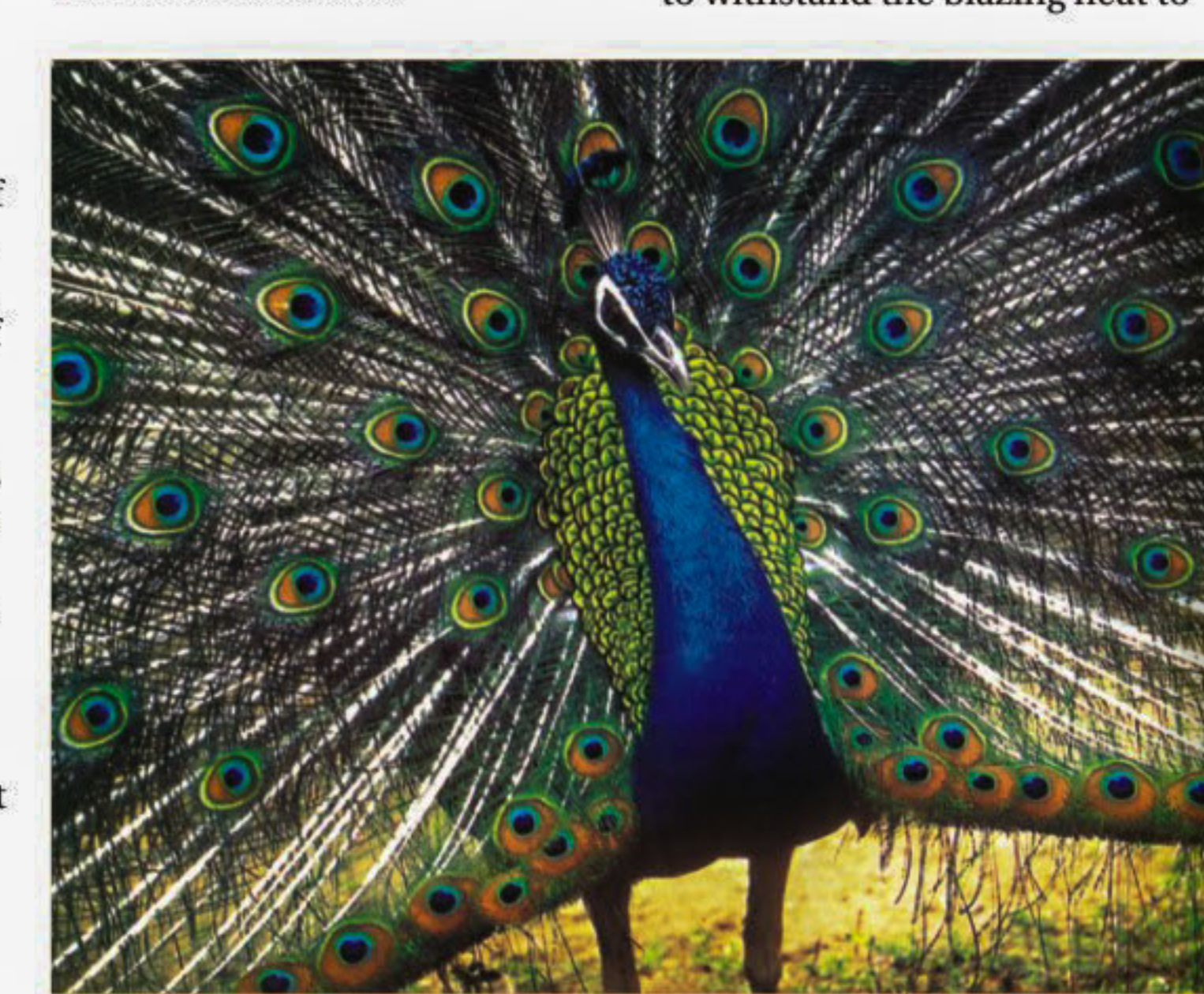
"Aajo kande kanoney Koyelia", in Raga Hambir, the *Koyel* pines away in spring. In "Papiya piu piu boley -- phagun ummono bono", the *Papiya* weeps for its mate in spring as nature offers its bounty. In "Potho hara pakhi", Nazrul articulates a grieving lover lost like a bird losing its bearings. In "Kuhu kuhu Koyelia", he articulates a bird singing away in the mahua woods.

wait for the raindrops, the only water that will quench its thirst. He speaks about the mythical birds *Bihog-Bihogi* in "Nishi nijhum ghum nahi ashney" -- a restless bird that cannot sleep even in the dead of the night.

Apart from these birds, many others feature in his works such as the *Jhut Shalik* (Jungle Myna), *Gang Chil* (Gull), *Pyacha* (Brown Hawk Owl), *Chorui* (Sparrow), *Babui* (Weave Bird), *Bene Bou* or *Holiday Pakhi* (Black Oriole), and *Khanjan* (Black Necked Stork) and *Khanjan* (Wagtail).

Poetry is painting passion with words, and Nazrul was a virtuoso at this art, drawing a seemingly endless source of energy from nature all around him. Birds captivated his imagination. It was as if he was captivating them, in turn, in his mind and through the power of his pen, setting them free to fly across the barriers of time and distance. The birds, in reciprocity, have carried Nazrul's message of love and heartache to millions of people seeking a higher meaning of life.

We hardly noticed as dusk engulfed the sky. I hummed a few lines of the songs mentioned above. The birds, after a long day of flight, were happily gliding back to their nests. Nazrul, if he were here, would undoubtedly have penned memorable lines to describe the beauty of the birds, flying in unison across the setting sun. We simply sat in silence, lost for words.



Peacock
PHOTO: BIRDS OF BANGLADESH BY M A TAHER



Karunamaya Goswami, music exponent
The question of popularity of a poet of such high stature among the masses should be considered from all angles. For example, almost half the population of this country is illiterate, while many among the "educated" have questionable taste. So, I don't expect Nazrul to be popular among the masses. I rather reasonably expect and believe that Nazrul is still popular among sizable enthusiasts; people with discernible taste in literature and music.

When I watch TV, I see and hear the few overly familiar Nazrul Sangeet making the rounds. This tendency has got to be changed. When we have the notations of more than a thousand songs, why should we not introduce unfamiliar songs? That is perhaps the best way to reveal the talent of a great composer before an ever-increasing audience. To that end, we must ensure that enough attention is being paid to the quality of learning, singing and instrumental accompaniment.

I don't think anyone has the right to distort Nazrul's compositions. I haven't personally come across any such instance. We have a responsibility to our national poet and so far his songs are concerned, they should be performed by and large the way they were found on the authentic gramophone records. If a particular person or a group were trying to present Nazrul's songs through self-discovered improvisation, I'd simply say no that effort.

There may be a new approach to instrumental arrangement in some of Nazrul's patriotic songs but the melody should never be toyed with.

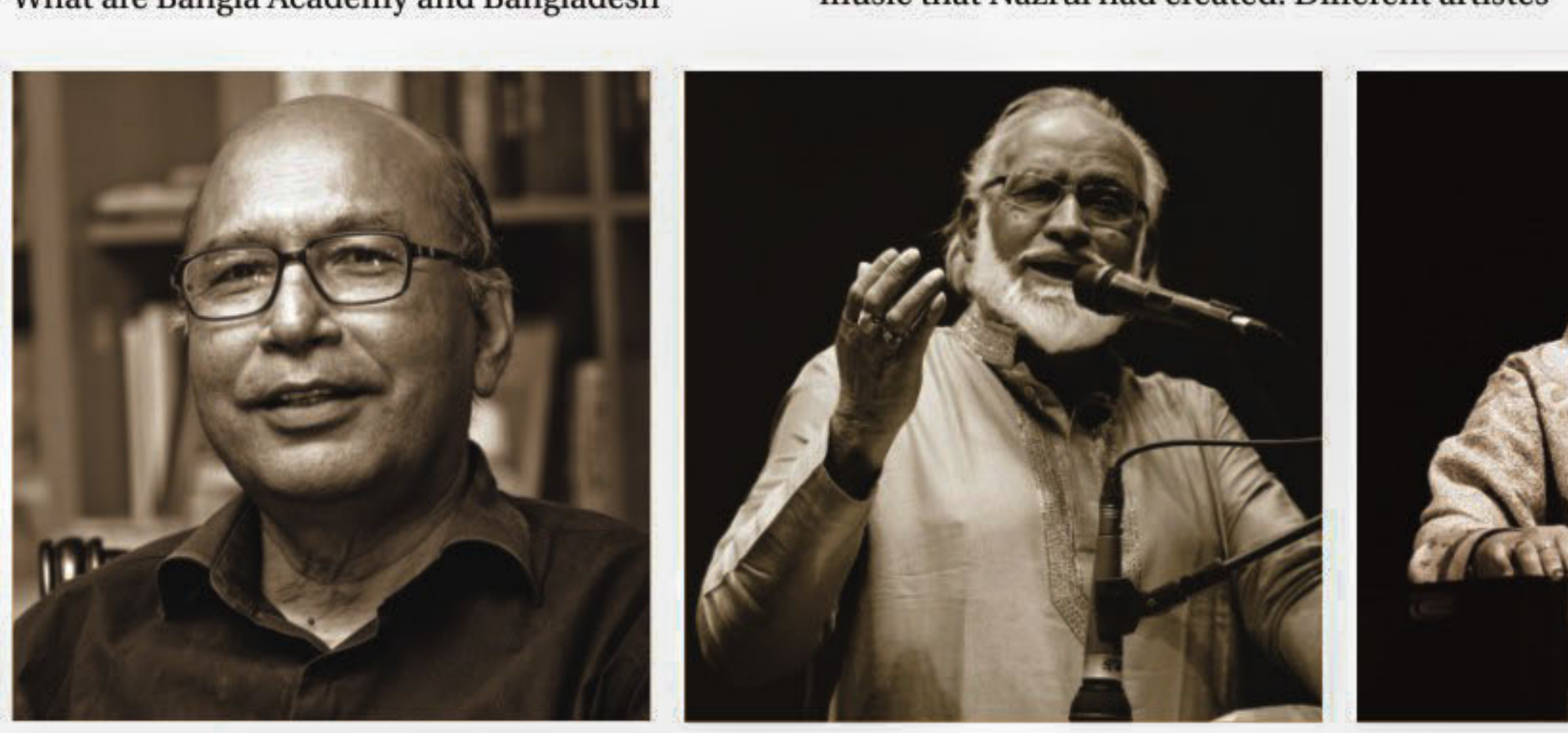
Mustafa Zaman Abbasi, Nazrul and folk singer, researcher
Nazrul had his day in the past. The popularity of his music is now on the wane. Nazrul doesn't even get the deserved attention on his birth and death anniversaries. Not only his music but also his plays, novels, stories don't enjoy proper exposure. What are Bangla Academy and Bangladesh

Shilpakala Academy doing about this? TV channels do not have regular programmes on his music and literary works. Lack of planning and proper guidance is the prime reason for this disinterest in the national poet.

Nazrul enriched almost all the genres of Bangla songs. His compositions are based on the solid foundation of Indian classical music. It was through the uniqueness of his musical prowess that the folk genre of Bangla songs was linked to the sub-continental tradition of classical music. Nazrul Sangeet should be taught, learned, practiced and performed with utmost devotion. One can experiment with different instruments and arrangements, but must give the due attention to authentic tunes.

TV channels should air the poet's songs more often. Research, criticism, festival and conference on Nazrul Sangeet are necessary. Initiatives on both public and private levels are equally important in popularising Nazrul Sangeet.

Contemporising Nazrul Sangeet depends on the artistry and dexterity of both singers and instrumentalists. Keeping the originality of the poet's tunes intact, musicians may produce such covers that can create an impression on young audiences.



Karunamaya Goswami **Mustafa Zaman Abbasi** **Sujit Mustafa** **Priyanka Gope** **Artcell** **Don't Ask**

ATN BANGLA	04:15	Shorashori Doctor	
10:30	Bidroh	05:15	Boishakhi-CNN Shara Bishwa
12:15	Chokkaler Nazrul	08:30	Musical Programme
04:25	Onjali	08:45	Drama: Shilpi
05:10	Nazrul-er Filar Gaan	10:50	Reporters Daily
08:00	Tele-Film: Jhilmil	11:30	Boishakhi Binodan O Sanskriti Sangbad
10:45	Bihango Kotha		
11:00	Drama: Kon Kule Aj Bhirlo Tori		
		Diganta TV	
		09:05	Shomoy-er Sanglap
		03:30	Bhorer Alor Bulbuli
		06:30	Musical Programme
		08:30	Drama: Shuidmata
		09:25	Chiro Bidroh Bir
		12:30	Probash Bangladesh
		ZStudio	
		10:30	Crippled Avengers
		01:30	Fun With Dick and
		04:30	Dirty Dancing: Havana Nights
		06:30	Pirates of the Caribbean:

RADIO			
abc radio FM 89.2	07:30	Hello Dhaka	
06:00	Bhorer Janaty	10:00	Morning Express
09:00	Mukhorito Robney	12:00	No Tension
12:00	Darun Dipurey	04:00	Dhaka Calling
03:00	Duranto Bikeloy	09:00	Knight Riders
05:00	Shamcha Tara	RADIO TODAY FM 89.6	
07:00	Shay-er Maya	08:00	Good Morning Dhaka
09:00	Rak-er Akashay	12:00	Today's Adda
11:00	Galper Shech Nei	04:00	U Turn
Radio Footi	07:00	Tobey Tai Hok	

Shilpi
On Boishakhi TV at 08:45pm
Single Episode TV Play
Cast: Tauquir Ahmed, Jyotika Jyoti

Bon-er Papiya
On BANGLAWISON at 08:15pm
Visual Poem
Cast: Mukit, Shoshi

Shuilmala
On Diganta TV at 08:30pm
Single Episode TV Play
Cast: Mir Sabbir, Shohana Saba

02:30	Shure Shure (Live)	The Curse of the Black Pearl	
05:30	Fraser Kazi Nazrul	09:30	Smart Little
06:15	Siddika Kabir Recipe	11:30	Breakfast at Tiffany's
09:00	Drama: Kajri		

ETV			
11:30	Ekashey-er Business (Live)	11:30	Bewitched
04:30	Pratham Moner Mukure	03:15	Knowing
05:25	Onjali Loh Mor	07:00	Remember Me
07:50	Shurer Akashe	08:55	Wrong Turn 3: Left for Dead
	Dhubotara	10:35	Christmas with the kranks
09:30	Dolina Chapar Bone	12:25	Wayne's World
10:10	Drama: Neel Konthi		

Rtv			
12:35	Tawheed-er Marshid	10:30	Home Fries
	Amzar	10:30	Crossville
01:10	Bangla Feature Film	05:30	Battle star Galactic: The Plan
05:00	Protidin-er Gaan	07:45	Dogfight
09:05	Drama: Keno Ee Obelay	09:30	Robocop 2
12:00	Protidin-er Pottika	12:00	Jackie Chan's Who Am I?
12:05	Gahi Gaan Gathi Mala		

BANGLAWISON			
11:05	Drama: Oghi-giri	02:30	Las Vegas
12:05	Ghar Bholano Shur	08:30	Two And A Half Men
01:05	Bangla Feature Film	09:00	The Simpson's
06:05	He Partho Sharathi	10:30	Dexter
08:15	Boner Papiya	11:30	How I Met Your Mother
09:05	Drama: Begum		
11:25	Amare Debona Bhalite		

Desh TV			
12:30	Prem O Dhoer Kobi	10:30	Creative Vision
01:30	Basi Bajay Ke	04:30	Planet Mechanics
	Shayma Kiron	07:30	I Didn't Know That
06:00	Rozhik Nazrul	09:30	Mega Footprints
08:15	Hushbuha Nazrul	11:30	Great Migrations
10:30	Praner Aloy		
11:45	Bhalabachar Shadhaj		

Boishakhi TV			
10:30	Amader Nazrul	11:30	Monster Tracker
		02:30	Destroyed in Seconds
		09:30	Man vs. Wild

NEWS BULLETIN			
BTV	News (Bangla) at 6:00 am, 2:00 pm, 5:00 pm, 8:00 pm, 9:00 pm, 10:30 pm, 11:30 pm.	BANGLAWISON	News (Bangla) at 7:30am, 1:30pm, 5:00pm, 7:15pm, 10:30pm.
News (English) at 10:00am, 4:00 pm, 10:30 pm.	News (Bangla) at 10:00am, 12:00am, 4:00pm, 11:30 pm. (To be telecast on all Bangla channels).	News (English) at 6:00pm Rtv	News (Bangla) at 2:30 pm, 4:30 pm, 6:30 pm, 8:30 pm, 10:30 pm, 12:30 am
CHANNLE-I	News (Bangla): 7:00 am, 9:00 am, 2:00 pm, 6:00 pm, 10:30 pm, 12:30 am	CHANNLE-II	News (Bangla): 7:30am, 12:00pm, 2:00pm, 7:30pm, 10:30pm, 1:00am
ATN BANGLA	News (Bangla): 7:00 pm, 1:00 pm, 1:00 pm, 4:00 am, 01:00pm, 3:00pm, 04:00pm	NEWS	News (Bangla): 9:00am, 11:00 am, 1:00pm, 3:00pm, 5:00pm, 7:00pm, 9:00pm, 6:00 pm.

TALK SHOW				
ATN BANGLA	12:30am	Local News	07:00pm	Our Democracy
01:00am	Vision 2020	05:30pm	Shammy Nazrul	
CHANNLE-I	09:45am	Trito Matra	03:20pm	Kobike Jemon
rTv	12:00am	Ei Shomoy	12:00am	Zero Hour
09:45am	01:00pm	03:00pm	04:00pm	05:00pm
10:40am	Tarikolap	11:05pm	Juge Juge Asi	