

Nazrul: The wonder of 20th century literature Tagore in Bollywood?

International Nazrul Conference ends in the capital



Clockwise (from top left); A dance sequence by Mummun Ahmed and her group. Krishna Majumdar, Ferdous Ara and Khalid Hossain perform at the programme.



PHOTO: MUMMIT M.

ZAHANGIR ALAM
While inaugurating the International Nazrul Conference at the Osmani Memorial Hall on June 24, chief guest of the programme Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina urged that Nazrul's works be promoted globally.

ences, Huda drew attention to the different layers of meaning in Nazrul's 'Bidrohi'.

speaker has been learning Bengali for the last 11 years and is now learning Nazrul Sangeet. She also elaborated on how Nazrul is finding a firm place in China.

To celebrate the 90th anniversary of the publication of Nazrul's 'Bidrohi' (The Rebel), the most outstanding of the National Poet's creations, Nazrul Institute, joining hands with the Ministry of Cultural Affairs organised the two-day conference that ended yesterday.

In his brilliant bilingual speech (Bengali and English), Dr. Peter Custers focused on various concepts popularised by Nazrul like 'National Awakening', 'The Muslim Renaissance', 'Firm Opposition to Communism', 'Tolerance and Equality', 'Mysticism and Syncretism' and 'The legacy of Religious Tolerance'.

Chairman of Nazrul Institute's Trustee Board, Dr. Rafiqul Islam presented crests to the guests while Professor Kabir Chowdhury wrapped up the discussion said, '... The sky and the air free of the piteous groans of the oppressed... Only when the battlefields are cleared of jingling bloody sabres...'

Chaired by National Professor Kabir Chowdhury, the opening day's event kicked off with a welcome speech delivered by Rashid Haider, the executive director of Nazrul Institute.

Termed Nazrul as Mahakabi, Custers said, 'Nazrul needs to be institutionalised internationally as his poems, songs and love are not for the people of a single religion, rather for universal humanity. Nazrul focussed on religious scriptures like 'Mahabharata' and 'Ramayana' from different perspectives. He termed the exploited and downtrodden people as 'Gods' in his literature.'

In her presentation, (in Bangla) titled 'Banglar Nazrul: China-r Nazrul', Young Weing Ming said, 'My Nazrul practice started with the recitation of 'Bidrohi'. Just after reading the poem, an astonishing feeling swept my body and mind which is comparable with a volcanic eruption or Tsunami.'

emphasised,' she said.

McDermott went on to add: 'There are 130 shyama sangeet written by Nazrul which are very much different from those written by Ram Prashad and Kamola Kanta. Nazrul wrote 385 songs on Radha-Krishna and 200 Islamic songs.'

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Leena Taposhi began the cultural evening with her rendition of the song 'Gagoney Saghono'. Khairul Anam Shakil's 'Parodeshi Bo(n)dhua' followed. Ferdous Ara rendered a jhumur, 'Kalo Pahad Alo' while Suman

Chowdhury, Khalid Hossain and Selina Hossain respectively rendered 'Pashaner Bhangey Ghum', 'Ashiley E Bhanga Gharey' and 'Shoi Nadir Dharey'.

Among the guest artistes from West Bengal, India, Ramannu Dasgupta, Susmita Goswami and Khishna Majumdar performed 'Amar Aponar Chey', 'Brojogopi Keheley' and 'Hey Namaji' respectively. The programme wrapped up with a performance by several dancers led by Mummun Ahmed to the accompaniment of the song 'Aami Purob Desh-er'.

The second day's (June 25) programme was presided over by Professor Emeritus Sirajul Islam Chowdhury. Guests of honour Professor Winston E. Langley, University of Massachusetts, Boston, USA and Professor Pabitra Sarkar, former Vice Chancellor of Rabindra Bharati University, Kolkata, India presented a paper on Nazrul's works.

Professor Mohit Ul Alam took part in a discussion at the event.

Chairman of Nazrul Institute's Trustee Board, Dr. Rafiqul Islam, presented the vote of thanks as the two-day conference wrapped up.

The cultural programme that featured on the concluding day featured rendition of Nazrul Sangeet by eminent artistes of Bangladesh and India, recitation, dance performance and staging of a Nazrul play.

A three-day (June 24-26) exhibition featuring Nazrul's literary works and publications on the poet is being held at Nalinikanta Bhattacharya Gallery of Bangladesh National Museum, Shahabgha, Dhaka. The exhibition is open between 10am to 5pm and ends today.

SADYA AFREEN MALLICK, back from London

To a purist, the idea of using Tagore songs in a big budget Bollywood flick would set eyebrows arching skywards. What if Jaya and Amitabh Bachchan were to sing a Tagore song in duet? Or the glamorous Waheeda Rahman in her prime dancing to a tune composed by the bard?

But then again, Tagore has featured quite regularly on the silver screen, although almost hidden in obscurity. Only recently did noted composer Shantanu Moitra openly acknowledge that the hit song 'Piya Bole', featured in the movie 'Parineeta', was inspired by 'Phoolo Phoole Dhole Dhole', a very popular Tagore song.

A recent programme, titled 'Adaptation of Tagore's Melodies in Bollywood Music', was held at South Audley Street, Nehru Centre, London. It was conceived, researched and compiled by Anuradha Roma Choudhury and organised by the Indian High Commission, cultural wing in London.

The programme explored the adaptation of Tagore songs by musical maestros of Indian cinema over the years, with live demonstrations of both the original compositions and their corresponding Bollywood versions. While Anuradha R Choudhury presented the Tagore songs, her student, Dia Chakravarty, performed samples of the Hindi hits to a full-house.

Choudhury trained in Classical Indian vocal music for ten years, before completing the Gita-Bharati degree in Rabindra Sangeet from

Gitanatan Sikshayatan, Kolkata with a gold medal. Her book, in Bengali, on the influence of British tunes on Tagore songs, 'Bhati-gaan-bhanga Rabindra Sangeet', was published in 1987.

Granddaughter of poet Sufia Kamal, Dia Chakravarty, had an early start in her musical training in Tagore songs. Since moving to the UK ten years ago, she has added Hindi songs to her repertoire. After completing her studies at Oxford University, Dia studied law and became a Barrister in 2008. She has remained active in her cultural pursuits, including being involved with Udayan, a Bengali cultural group.

The show highlighted many of the instances where Tagore songs featured prominently in the Hindi movies. 'Mera Sundar Sapna Beet Gaya', a song with a kirtan flavour, was a smashing hit and breakthrough performance for Geeta Roy (later Dutt) in the '30s. There were other songs but it was 'Mera Sundar Sapna...' that left all songs behind and far too.

'Naina Deewane', by singer Suraiya in the film 'Afsaan', is an improvisation of the song 'Shedin Dujone Dulechhinu Bon-er'. Likewise 'Rahi Matwale', a duet by Suraiya and Talat Mahmood in the film 'Waris' in 1954, is an adaptation of the Tagore song 'Ore Grihobashi'.

The superhit number 'Bachpan Ke Din Bhula Na Dena', in the film 'Deedar' directed by Anshad, is an improvisation of the song 'Churi Hoye Gecchey Raj Koshey' from Tagore's dance-drama 'Shyama'. It also has similarity with the tunes of 'Keno Pantho E Choncholota'.

SD Burman, the illustrious music director, was also known for adapting the tunes of Tagore songs. 'Abhiman' (the soundtrack of which was directed by Burman) features

Amitabh and Jaya Bachchan lip-synching the phenomenal 'Tere Mere Milan Ke Ye Raina'. The tune is an adaptation of Tagore's popular song 'Jodi Taare Nai Chini Go'. The Talat Mahmood hit, 'Jalte Hain Jiske Lye' (in 1959) was inspired by Tagore's 'Ekoda Tumi Priye'.

The list could go on. Diya Chakravarty in her bright maroon Jamdani enchanted the audience with her rendition of the Hindi versions, while her mentor Anuradha presented 17 Tagore songs.

Diya once more captivated her audience during her tour of Dhaka, where she performed a variety of Bangla songs at the Indian High Commission yesterday.

Considering Tagore's treasure trove of songs, it's no surprise that several music composers such as Pankaj Mullick, K. Mullick, Rai Chand Boral, RD Burman, Hemant Kumar (Mukhopadhyay), Bappi Lahiri and others were inspired by his compositions. The trend of adaptation, imitation or improvisation of Tagore's melodies has its roots in 1930s Bollywood. However, in most cases it was left unacknowledged. The reason behind could be that until the Visva Bharati's copyright to all of Tagore's songs expired, it was mandatory in India for any music director/singer to obtain permission of the Music Board before releasing a record with songs composed by him. All this was possibly to avoid violation of the copyright act.

The programme was an eye opener and the cultural wing of the Indian High Commission in London deserves kudos for arranging it. The audience was treated to an evening full of melodies and left the venue deep in thought: what other popular Hindi songs could be traced back to Tagore?



Anuradha R Choudhury and Dia Chakravarty, perform at the programme.



Scenes from 'Abhiman' (top) and 'Parineeta'.



PHOTO: MUMMIT M.

Towards a humane society Book reading programme

AMINUL ISLAM, Mymensingh
With a view to promote reading habit among the students of Govt. Ananda Mohan College, a programme was launched at the college library on June 23.

Professor Abdullah Abu Sayeed, chairman of Biswa Sahitya Kendra, inaugurated the programme as chief guest.

Among others, coordinator of the programme Afzal Rahman, professor of Bengali Department, Professor Azharul Islam; Professor Bikash Kumar Badra; Professor Jahangir Kabir and Professor Rowshan Alam were present at the inaugural session.

At the opening of the programme Professor Abdullah Abu Sayeed said that

books can play a significant role in honing the inner talents of human beings and developing a strong moral base. He also told the audience that cultivating reading habit makes for a more humane and rational society.

Professor Sayeed also opened an 'Anti-drug campaign' conducted by the students of Govt. Ananda Mohan College.

Professor Afzal Rahman said that the book reading programme, which now has 450 members, will grow in future. The college has around 20,000 students, he asserted hoping that a movement for promoting book reading will start from the institution.

The mobile library of Biswa Sahitya Kendra will support the programme by enabling readers to exchange books every Sunday.



PHOTO: STAR

Art with accolades Safiuddin Ahmed's birthday celebrated



Monirul Islam (left) greets Safiuddin Ahmed. Qayyum Chowdhury and Subir Chowdhury are also seen in the photo.

STAFF CORRESPONDENT
Safiuddin Ahmed has been a distinguished printmaker for over six decades.

Among his recurring themes are rural landscapes, riverine life, memories of 1971, Language Movement and flood. His immense contribution to contemporary Bangladeshi art over the years has earned him international acclaim as well.

On June 23, the introverted painter turned 89. On the occasion, Bengal Foundation held a birthday celebration at the artist's residence in Dhannondi. The celebration no doubt cheered the artist who is critically ill at this moment because of old age complications.

Music to the ears National Ganosangeet Festival at Public Library



PHOTO: MUMMIT M.

A three-day National Ganosangeet Festival kicked off on June 24 at the Shawkat Osman Auditorium, Central Public Library, Shahabgha. Ganosangeet Shamannay Parishad (GSP), a platform organisation for artistes of the genre, in association with Bangladesh Shilpikala Academy has arranged the festival.

The inaugural ceremony began with the rendition of the National Anthem. Special guest, veteran journalist and cultural personality Kamal Lohani formally inaugurated the festival.

Pointing to the history of Ganosangeet in the country, Lohani said, 'Ganosangeet has uplifted the spirit of the nation during different socio-political movements'. Led by Shadhin Bangla Betar Kendra artiste Kalyani Ghosh, a group of artistes rendered the song 'Turbo Digante

Photo exhibition on Liberation War at RU



PHOTO: MUMMIT M.

A two-day photo exhibition, titled 'Bangabandhu, Bhasha Andolon and Muktiuddho' was held at Rajshahi University (RU). The exhibition ended on Thursday.

Muktijoddha Shontan Command, an organisation of sons and daughters of freedom fighters, organised the exhibition at the central library premises.

About 750 photographs and cartoons on Language Movement, Liberation War and Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman were on display at the exhibition. Coverage of Liberation War on international newspapers and journals was also displayed.

At a discussion held on the opening day (Wednesday), speakers said that Rajshahi University campus had witnessed the war. Many teachers and students of the university were directly involved in the war.

News Bulletin

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