



KAZI NAZRUL ISLAM'S 36TH DEATH ANNIVERSARY

Melody across time

Nazrul's flute eternal

SADYA AFREEN MALlick

It is said that sometimes when nature plays its own mysterious tune, poets sense it first.

Kazi Nazrul Islam was no exception. Someone who marvelled at nature's everyday beauty, Nazrul was insatiable when it came to capturing nature's magnificence with his pen. As if penning poetry was not paying enough homage to nature, Nazrul was also an avid lover of the bamboo flute -- one of the simplest musical instruments, seemingly born pure from nature's midst itself.

Nazrul was often seen walking the brick red road in Raniganj (now in West Bengal, India), his bamboo flute on his lips, playing a Santal tune. A boy of hardly 11, he would lead a *leto* group -- of poet musicians. The genre was very popular among the village folk. With a *basher banshi* clasped in his hand, the young genius would sing verses of myths or even a light-hearted tune that would quickly draw a crowd.

In fact there are numerous instances where Nazrul uses flutes in his songs and poems. In his work, he often refers to the flute as *bashori, banshi, benu, benuka, murali, bongshi* and more. The flute came to represent a symbol not only of love and grief but a full spectrum of emotions in between.

In the concluding stanza of the popular folk song "Padmar dheu re", the words "O shey premer ghatay ghatay banshi bajaye" draw an image of Krishna on a riverbank playing the tune of eternal love on his flute. Even the elusive Radha cannot resist asking: "Ke bideshi bon udashi / Banshero banshi bajao bon-e".

Again, in "Ke duronto bajao jhorer byakul banshi" in raga Hindol, the melody from the flute reflects an uncontrollable desire awakening to the sound of cracking thunder.

Hum to yourself the Santali song, "Orey deke

de, de lo, mohua bone-e phul phutato bajaye banshi ke", and you can imagine yourself gliding across the hilly area surrounded by wild flora and fauna. A vision takes shape in your eyes -- a boy, mischievous at heart, playing a rhythmic tune on his flute while his soulmate desperately searches for him among the Mohua fields in full bloom.

"Kar bashori baaje Multani shurey", in Raga Multani presents the grandeur of the raga sung between afternoon and evening. This is a *sandhi-prakash raag* or evening raga; a smooth transition from afternoon to an evening raga. Imagine listening to the flute played by a stranger beside a river as evening descends. Here the flute beckons the splendours of a dark and lonely night.

"Okey udashi benu bajaye" is Nazrul's creation of the raga Udashi Bhairav. Here the raga epitomises an emotional tune by a grief-struck lover.

In the *thumri aang* "Beshur binaye" hum the line "Byadhero haathe shunbo shadher bongshi shur", the poet elaborates on the flute, *bongshi*, played by the hunter, as he is on the lookout for a prey and yet plays a melodious tune on his flute.

"Bashi bajaye ke kodom tolaye ogo lolite", another Santali song, expresses Radha's longing for Krishna, as she catches whispers on Krishna's flute and casts her eyes over the distant hills.

In the raga-based song, "Dur benu kunje murali baaje", Nazrul uses the synonym *murali* for flute. The *benu kunje* signifies the bamboo grove from which the flute is crafted.

Now move on to raga Nirjhorini created by Nazrul in "Rum jhum rumjhum ke bajaye"...Nazrul uses the word "banshi rakhaliya" or the flute of the shepherd. The monsoon song blends with the *bhajan*, "Tumi benuka bajao", recorded by Mina

Bandyopadhyay in August 1941.

"Mohua bon-e bon papiya, ekela jhurey nishi jagiya", creates a vision of the Papiya bird who awaits her mate at night, deep in the Mohua forest.

The list could go on. In all the songs, the flute seems to draw out emotions both familiar and unknown. A gentle blow of air onto the flute, and it is as if one's deepest emotion is conjured up along the flute's stalk to be carried by the wind to all corners of the world.

Nazrul, in his last speech said, "Jodi ar banshi na baje" meaning (translated by Sajed Kamal) -- "The Power from the joyful crimson sky which nourished me, as I have told you, also periodically turned in Mahashshweta, deeply absorbed in meditation. With it, I too turn silent, my flute doesn't play any more, my blood flow freezes into ice, my spirited body turns into a statue of stone. It's not death, but it's more joyless than death. I say this to you now, the Power has once again risen, but it's still not out of its meditative trance. If the power of Anandamoyee in me does not go back to its meditative state, does not dissolve me by carrying me away into the Supreme Void, then I will once again sing the songs of love, songs of equality, of the kind that this world has not heard for a long time. But if I do not get this love from my Eternal Lover, then I'll have to understand that my play has ended for this time. I will leave behind my flute on the bank of the river of separation. If someone picks up the flute from the dry sandy beach and can play it again, then my flute will be blessed."

With such emotive words, one can almost sense on the eve of his 36th death anniversary, Nazrul looking down longingly, almost willing his flute to rise from the sandy riverbank, so it can join him once more beyond the clouds and far away...

SYED BADRUL AHSAN

Nazrul takes you back to the valley of songs. You wander across the deserts of time, images of the beloved creating a festival of light in your mind; and you sing *amar aponar cheye apor je jon / khunji tare aami aporae*. That is where romance comes rushing back into your life. Or you might well ask if the romantic soul in you had ever deserted you at any point in your life. Nazrul, he who gave us *Bidrohi* and electrified us with *chol chol chol*, does not quite forget to inform us that beyond politics, beyond that historically underpinned spirit of rebellion in the heart, comes tenderness bathed in melody. And melody is but another expression, at once simple and potent, for the calling of the heart.

In Nazrul, you spot an entirety of feminine beauty encapsulated in song. Dwell, a little, on *mor priya hobee esho rani / debo khonpae tarar phool*. Move through the lyrics, take in the words and what you then have before you is a comprehensive definition of the beauty of woman. It is the woman you wait for, even as the rain falls in silence on an autumnal night. Perhaps she will come? Then again, perhaps she will not, cannot? And then the sadness flows from you: *shaono raate jodi / shorone aashe morey / bahire jhorh bohe noyone baari jhore*. Your sadness at the absence of the loved one crosses the frontier between light and dark, to recall the evening of the tears which flowed down the cheeks of the woman you kept waiting for. *Amaro ghore moleen dipaloke / jol dekhechhi jeno tomaro chokhe*. You speak of her long ago

tears, even as your eyes glisten in tears about to break free of imprisonment, to course down your weather-beaten face.

The poet in Nazrul speaks of the glorification of woman in passion. The pristine comes into play as you exult in the beauty of the one who lights up your world. As you sing, in the rising light of the moon, *tumi shundor tai cheye thaki priyo / shey ki mor oporadh*, that certain blush on her cheeks rises from the roots of her being... to give you cause for an enhanced showering of love. But love must pass through baptismal pain; and anguish must under-line the desire for the company of the one you cannot do without. And therefore does Laily sing of the tortuous path she has travelled for union to bind her to Majnu: *boner horeen horeeni kaandiya / poth dekhaecheh morey*. Laily has returned. Majnu only needs to rise from sleep, from torpor, even from the shadows of death, to know she has come home to his heart.

But then comes autumn, with nary a sign of the lover on the horizon. The waiting has gone too long, will move into winter and past it and yet the longing soul will wait on the banks of the river or along a mud path cutting across a hamlet. You feel the sadness knifing through the air as the lover, Majnu-like, narrates his tale of woe in song: *shaon aashilo phire / shey phire elo na*. And yet the lover often turns inward, almost into seclusion, with *tumi shunite cheyo na / amar monero kotha*. Nothing can be more tragically poignant than the sadness of separation... of the lover from his woman, of the parent from the child. Emotions get to be in a constricted state and the only sounds you hear flow from

the broken strings of the violin playing *shunno e buuke / pakhi mor aaye phire aaye*.

Songmakers give a lilt to the throbbing heart in you. They light you up somewhere inside of you as a woman in blue swishes past. Small wonder, then, that the soul breaks forth into *nilambori sharee porhe / neel jamuna-e ke jaaye*. Or ask the damsel dancing her way through the pastoral paths even as she goes nowhere why she lets a thousand flowers bloom in her being. *Jaani na jaani na jaani na*, she blows the answer at you. Hear the melody waiting across from her and through the rainbow colours of the woods... *keno mono boney maloti bollore*. You watch her, for life has energised her inasmuch as it has electrified the world she inhabits.

The silence of passion, a softness borne on the wings of desire, sends a woman into indefinable rapture as the faraway strains of a flute reach her yard and move on to caress the heaving bosom of her rising passion. The breeze sweeps gently by, the ripples in the pond circle away from one another in widening circumferences.

The night gathers pace. Somewhere in the spaces of the timeless, she waits under the stars for you. She tiptoes into your dreams, bends low to watch you sleep, startling you into frenzied awakening. The dreams are no more. But a sudden song brings you tidings of her, she in whose tears you have spotted monsoon cloud-bursts of explosive romance. In *gobhir nishithe ghuum bhenge jaee / ke jeno amare daake / shey ki tumi* you reach out to her. Your Nirvana is here.

SELIM AL DEEN FESTIVAL '12

'Seeking Roots' begins with two European adaptations

JAMIL MAHMUD

Throughout his life, Selim Al Deen (1949-2008) had a vision, which was to see the practice of theatre in Bangladesh get recognition - both at home and abroad. When the 200-year-old (in terms of its practice in this sub-continent) European proscenium theatre was considered the stepping stone, Al Deen opposed it, explored our roots and wanted to prove that the history of our theatre is not just 200 years old, rather it was initiated a thousand years earlier or more.

The iconic playwright's thoughts have been transmitted into texts, most of which he wrote during his days with Dhaka Theatre.

At the inaugural of Selim Al Deen Festival 2012, Dhaka Theatre chief, Al Deen's friend and convenor of the festival committee Nasiruddin Yousuff firmly announced the ambition of exploring roots through plays, an exclusive terracotta exhibition and a seminar on the recently found archaeological elements at Wari and Bateswar.

The sixth such festival since Al Deen's death, to celebrate his genius, commenced through staging of adaptations of two European classics -- William Shakespeare's "The Tempest" and Sophocles' "Oedipus" -- at the Bangladesh Shilpakala Academy, on August 25. The exhibition is being held at the lobby of the National Theatre Hall and the seminar will take place tomorrow.

Selim Al Deen Foundation and Bangladesh Shilpakala Academy (BSA) have jointly arranged the festival, while Dhaka Theatre and Bangladesh Gram Theatre are assisting them.

Former Chief Justice Muhammad Habibur Rahman formally announced the inaugural of the festival, while ITI Worldwide President Ramendu Majumdar, Director of the Film and Theatre Department of BSA, Sara Ara Mahmud, archaeologist and Professor Sufi Mostafizur Rahman were the special guests.

"Shekorer Shondhane" or "Seeking Roots" is the motto of the festival. Featuring Manipuri cultural elements and keeping the



A scene from Dristipat's "Raja Himadri".

storyline intact, "Tempest" was ideal for such venture. In the play, Al Deen's concept 'Daitadaitabadita' that says any medium of art form can be transformed into another, was apparent.

Directed by Nasiruddin Yousuff, "Tempest" was staged at the National Theatre Hall.

Earlier this year, the play participated at the Global Shakespeare Festival in London, UK. Now it has another target -- to showcase the heritage and brilliance of Bangladeshi theatre.

Al Deen's student Rubayet Ahmed translated the play into Bangla and created an idiom that he saw as "combination of words" borrowing from Rabindranath Tagore and Selim Al Deen.

Two Manipuri artistes Nil Moni Singha and Bidhan Chandra Singha, who themselves were part of the play, trained the Dhaka Theatre members to master the mudras (stances) of Manipuri dance.

Guest artist Rubol Noor Lodi (of Bogra Theatre) played the role of Prospero, while the troupe's most experienced artist Shimul Yousuff enacted the endearing spirit Ariel. One

of the youngest members of the troupe Esha Yousuff enacted the role of Miranda.

While "Tempest" incorporates local elements, Dristipat's adaptation of "Oedipus" gives the Greek tragedy an oriental touch, as the adapted version, "Raja Himadri", zooms in on the misfortune of a Himalayan king.

The troupe staged the play at the Experimental Theatre Hall, Khandakar Tazmi Noor, as a guest artiste, has adapted, directed the play and plays the protagonist. The storyline is more or less the same. King Himadri and his wife Himrani live happily together until a stranger arrives one day and discloses Himadri's dark secret. The secret opens a darker chapter in their lives and finally separates them.

Throughout the next five days, the audience will see a diverse range of plays, including a couple of Indian productions, featuring different forms and contents. There will be Al Deen's "Dhaboman" (by Dhaka Theatre) to highlight his ideas, and of course his presence in the subconscious to seek for our roots in each play.

The festival will continue till August 31.

Devotion Unbound

Suman Chowdhury on Nazrul's spiritual songs

ZAHANGIR ALAM

National Poet of Bangladesh Kazi Nazrul Islam made extraordinary contributions to devotional genres of Bangla songs -- Kirtan, Shayama Sangeet, Bhajan, Islamic, Hamd, Naat etc. Unlike most lyricists/composers, he was thoroughly familiar with both Islamic and Hindu traditions and cultures and he also deeply cared about the communal harmony between Muslims and Hindus.

Noted singer and a Chhayannaut teacher, Suman Chowdhury, talked about Nazrul's devotional songs:

Kazi Nazrul Islam's Kirtan or Shyama

Sangeet are so opulent that they are considered among the best. A unique feature of Nazrul's Shyama Sangeet is the focus on *Shiva Vandana* (Eulogising Lord Shiva).

Bengali songs often combine two predominant trends -- devotion and love. We find the basics of this trend in *Geet Govinda*, composed by Jaidev. It is worth mentioning that prior to the emergence of Nazrul in Bengali literature, Rabindranath Tagore added rhythm, melody and a special language to *Padabali Kirtan* while depicting a humanist Krishna, unlike the image of the deity as perceived by the Vaishnav poets.

The language and expression of Nazrul's Kirtan is entirely different from *Padabali Kirtan*. Nazrul merged the followers of two contrary Hindu sects -- Shakya (worshippers of power) and Vaishnav (worshippers of love) -- through composing many songs including "Amar Shyama Mayer Kol-e Boshey Jopi Ami Shyam-e Naam".

"Arunkanti Ke Go Jogi Bhikhari" features reverse images: "Hey Shiv sundar, bagh chhal poriharo / Dhoro Notohor besh poro neep-o mala". May be Nazrul considered the existence of Lord Shiva and Lord Krishna as identical.

Nazrul not only depicted Krishna in the way He is found in *Veda* or later in *Mahabharata*, but also he (Nazrul) portrayed two completely opposite features -- destruction and divine beauty.

Nazrul's devotional songs beckon the urge to awaken the inner self. Based on this theme, the poet composed songs like "Allah Te Jaar Purno Iman", "Islam-eri Sawda Loye Elo Nabin Savdagar", "Ma Go Chinmoyi Roop Dhorey" and several poems of "Anandamoyir Agomone".

Nazrul dared to deconstruct the convention in many of his compositions. One such song is "Aaye Ma Uma". Nazrul wrote "Aaye Koilash-e Tui Phiribi Nechhey Brindaban-er Noopur Porey". Koilash is an emblem of death whereas Brindaban is a symbol of life. Here, Nazrul sings the celebrations of life even in each play.



(Clockwise-from left) Memorabilia: Pen, harmonium, radio, gramophone and pocket watch used by Nazrul.

COURTESY: NAZRUL THE POET REMEMBERED BY KALYANI KAZI

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ATN BANGLA	12:05	Musical Programme
11:20	Business and Finance	
12:15	Onjoli	
01:25	Ognibina	
03:05	Bangla Feature Film: Rakhhoshi	
10:55	Drama: Shulimala	
CHANNEL i	09:45	Cinema Express
02:35	Nazrul (Live)	
06:00	Jodi Ar Bashi Na Bajey	
07:50	Drama: Ami Aponar Priya	
09:45	Priyotom Hey Biday	
ntv	11:00	Musical Programme
08:45	Bangla Feature Film	
05:30	Aponar Jiggasha	
06:45	Bidrahi Nazrul	
09:00	Maggi Taste n Balance	
	Kitcher	
09:45	Drama Serial: Oshena Protibimbo	
ETV	11:15	Hits & Bits

abc radio FM 89.2	10:00	Morning Express
06:00	Bhorer Janjaly	
09:00	Mukherjee Bhoney	
12:00	Born Dapney	
03:00	Duranto Boney	
05:00	Shondhata	
07:00	Shajher Maya	
09:00	Raat-er Akashey	
11:00	Golpo Shesh Nei	
07:30	Hello Dhaka	
RADIO	12:00	My Time
06:00	My Time	
09:00	No Lesson	
04:00	Dhaka Calling	
06:00	Night Rider	
01:00	Back to Back music	
RADIO TODAY FM 89.6	12:00	Good Morning Dhaka
08:00	Good Morning Dhaka	
12:00	Roddy's Adda	
04:00	U Tum	
07:00	Tobey Tai Hok	

Ranga Shokal On Maasranga Television at 07:00am Special Talk Show Guest: Feroza Begum

Obhimanini On BANGLAVISION at 09:05pm Single Episode TV Play Cast: Anisur Rahman Milon, Sumaiya Shimu

Tumi Ele Oi On Boishakhi TV at 08:35pm Geeti Nitryalekhyia Host: Farhana Mithu

11:30	Ekushey-er Business	
05:25	Ichhey Ghuri	
07:50	Musical Programme	
08:20	Drama Serial: Ohongkar	
10:10	Cine Hits	
Boishakhi TV	10:20	Perfect Catch
04:15	Shorashori Doctor	
05:30	Chalchitra Nazrul-er Gaan	
08:00	Drama Serial: Istikum	
11:00	Reporters Daily	
11:30	Drama Serial: Out of Control	
BANGLAVISION	11:05	Final Destination 2
01:05	Drama Serial: Long March	
06:15	Bangla Feature Film	
06:15	Front Line	
08:15	Kotha Kou, Kotha Kou	
09:05	Drama: Obhimanini	
Rtv	12:35	Caught in the Act
05:00	Bangla Feature Film	
09:05	Cinema R Gaan	
09:05	Drama Serial: Boyra	
	Poribar	
09:50	Bridal Show	
Gtv	07:30	Special Programme
11:30	Bangla Feature Film	
08:30	Cinder Extra	
08:30	Sri Lankan Premier League (Live)	
Fox Movies	02:00	Cars 2
03:50	Robots	
07:00	Prom	
08:45	Monster House	
10:20	Perfect Catch	
HBO	03:50	Final Destination 2
05:40	Tekken	
07:35	The Lost Future	
09:30	2 Fast 2 Furious	
11:45	Swordfish	
National Geographic Channel	02:30	Caught in the Act
03:30	Deadliest Predators	
09:30	Wild at	
10:30	Banged Up Abroad	

DRAMA SERIAL		
ATN BANGLA	08:15pm	Side Effect
09:20pm	Jhulanta Babura	Desh TV
ntv	07:45pm	Sat Kahon
08:15pm	Kagojer Bari	CHANNEL 9
ETV	08:40pm	Opashe Baraf
09:30pm	Tattu Ghora	Dana
Boishakhi TV		CHANNEL 24
09:20pm	Ognipoth	09:30pm
Rtv		Jadur Shahar
		Gtv

RTV	08:40pm	Special Talk Show
12:30am	Lead News	
CHANNEL i	09:45pm	Tinto Matta
12:30pm	Tanaka Kothon	
12:00am	Ei Shomoy	
12:05am	Ekushey-er Raat	
Boishakhi TV	12:00am	Zero Hour
11:25pm	Probashi Mukh	
BANGLAVISION	11:30pm	Our Democracy
12:00am	Modhyasater Multabak	
12:00am	Shongbad Shonglap	