

154th birth anniversary of Rabindranath Tagore

Tagore the Traveller

"Kobiguru", "Gurudev", "Bishwa-kobi" – the many fondly-given names of Rabindranath Tagore tell us three things: he was a 'kobi' (poet), he was the 'guru' (master), and he was of the 'bishwa' (world). And while there were many other poets in the Bangla literature, and a few masters of the language, in terms of being global, no one is even close to the Bard, over a century after he won the Nobel Prize. And the prime reason for that was his world view – not just the social and political kind, but how he saw the world.

FAHMIH FERDOUS

Tagore first crossed the 'kalapani' (the ocean, crossing which was considered inauspicious by Hindus) in 1878 for higher studies to London via Paris, and stayed there for a year and a half (September 1878-February 1880). Although he studied at the London University for just four months, he wrote a column for his family magazine under the title "Uropey Probashi'r Potro" ("Letters of an expatriate from Urope"). His lonely, homesick stay there kept him deterred from travelling for nearly a decade, when he visited London again in 1890. Tagore was scheduled to visit London in early 1912, but he fell sick and spent a lot of time on the river Padma for recovery. It is then when he translated his works from "Gitanjali" in English. When he visited London later that year, Gandhi-disciple missionary priest Charles F Andrews, Irish poet William Butler Yeats and English poet-artist Thomas Sturge Moore became fans of his works. The translations were published as "Gitanjali: Song Offerings", the foreword of which was written by Yeats. Tagore's Nobel win for the literary world, and he visited the US that year, where he stayed for a nearly a year. In 1916-17, he gave a series of lectures in USA and Japan, many of which were on anti-nationalism.

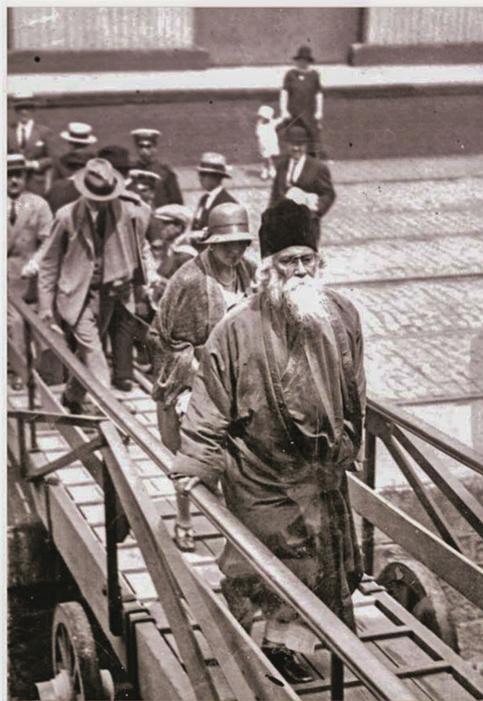
On invitation from the respective governments, Tagore next visited Peru and Mexico. His visit to Argentina in 1924 saw him fall ill, where his famous encounter with stalwart

Argentine writer Victoria Ocampo happened. After coming back to India in 1925, he visited Italy the next year, where he met their fascist leader Benito Mussolini. Although the two shared cordial relations at first, they fell out later when Tagore spoke against him in lectures.

In his late sixties, Tagore went on a four-month trip across Asia, where he toured Bali, Java, Kuala Lumpur, Malacca, Penang, Siam and Singapore – that can be found in his travelogue "Jatri".

In 1930, at the age of 69, Tagore again visited Europe and USA, where he had exhibitions of his artworks in London and Paris, and wrote his Hibbert Lecture "The Religion of Man" in Birmingham (UK). That same year, he visited Germany, Switzerland, Denmark and the erstwhile Soviet Union. Tagore's last travel was to Iran, the land of Persian poet Hafiz – of who he was an ardent fan, followed by Iraq and Singhal (now Sri Lanka).

All his life, Tagore wanted to delve into the society and politics, and had an unyielding interest and curiosity about the lives of people in different parts of the world – that made him the globetrotter he was. His thoughts and philosophies were shaped by his experiences and the luminaries he met, while he had his own share of impact on those he met. Jawaharlal Nehru, in his book "The Discovery of India", termed Tagore as India's international personality, who believed in cooperative works with world powers. He reached the messages of India to the world, and brought the messages.



Tagore in Buenos Aires, Argentina (1924).

Shahzadpur Kachharibari wears a festive look

AHMED HUMAYUN KABIR TOPU, back from Shahzadpur Kachharibari, Sirajganj

Shahzadpur Kachharibari, located at Shahzadpur upazila of Sirajganj district, wears a festive look ahead of the Prime Minister's visit today (May 8). The Prime Minister is likely to inaugurate a three-day festival marking the 154th birth anniversary of Nobel Laureate poet Kabiguru Rabindranath Tagore.

Even as the museum is being embellished ahead of the Prime Minister's visit, there are glitches. "Cracks were found on the roof of the ground floor of the museum. The recent earthquake widened the cracks so visitors are strictly prohibited from visiting the first floor of the two storied museum," Halima Afroz, custodian of Shahzadpur Kachharibari told The Daily Star.

"The long cherished demand of the people has come true as the Prime Minister will inaugurate the university here in Shahzadpur officially," said Nasim Uddin Malitha, a Tagore researcher.

Tagore's grandfather Prince Dwarakanath had bought the estate in Shahzadpur from

Zamindar Rani Bhabani of Natore in 1840, long before the poet's birth. The poet was given the responsibility to look after the estate so he visited Shahzadpur several times over. His last visit to Shahzadpur was in 1901.

Tagore had a deep love for Shahzadpur. "Here (Shahzadpur) I am more inspired to write than anywhere else," Tagore wrote in a letter to his niece Indira Debi.

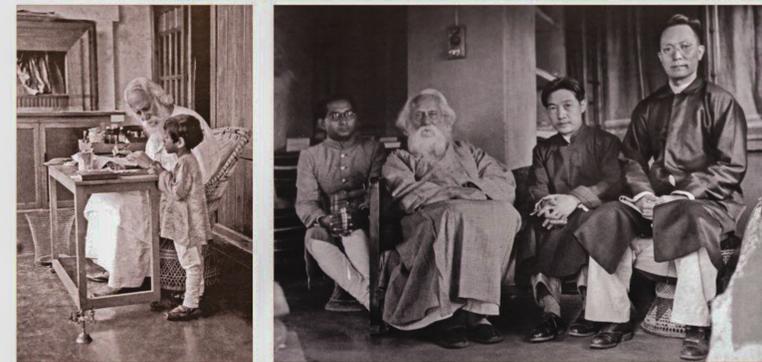
The Shahzadpur Kachharibari museum has lost much of Tagore memorabilia but there still remain such reminders of the poet like his couch, chairs, tables, mirror, piano and palanquin.

The museum also houses 20 rare paintings of Tagore. The paintings "Tree", "Nature" "Women" reveal the poet's aesthetic affinity, Kachharibari officials said. Around 3,000 precious books are kept in the museum.

Tagore wrote part of his play "Bishorjon", "Sonar Tori", "Chitra", "Chaitali", "Golapguchchho", "Chhinnapatra", "Panchabhootee Diary" and "Meyeli Chhara" in Shahzadpur.



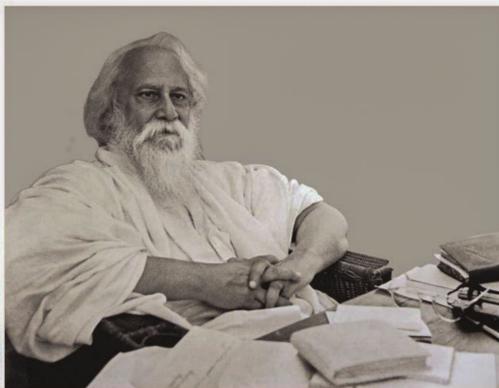
The Shahzadpur Kachharibari



HIS TWILIGHT YEARS

From 1935 till Tagore's death in 1941, Shambhu Shaha (1905-1988) made frequent visits to Santiniketan and tirelessly photographed the poet, the creator and presiding diety of Santiniketan. Here are a select few images of the bard at his niche, surrounded by his disciples and other luminaries of his time.

PHOTO COURTESY: SHAMBU SHAHA

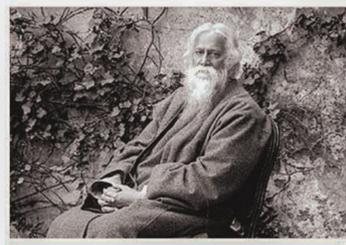


KOBIGURU'S KANIKA



IT'S TRUE!

Rabindranath Tagore began writing poetry when he was eight years old. He was 16-years-old when he released his first collection of poems under the penname Bhanusingha. Later at the age of 60, he took up drawing and painting and held many successful exhibitions of his works. His works – mostly inspired by the works of scrimshaw from northern New Ireland, Haida carvings from British Columbia and Max Pechstein's woodcuts – usually had strange colour schemes and off-beat aesthetics that led to the belief that he was probably red-green colour blind.



NEWS bytes

Asiatic Mindshare wins Bronze Award in Goafest 2015

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

South Asia's one of the biggest advertising festivals "Goafest 2015" was held in Goa, India from April 9-11 with participation of advertising agencies from the region. In this year's Goafest, Bangladesh agency Asiatic Mindshare won Bronze Award in "Best use of integrated campaign in South Asia" category for their "Ankbo Amra, Dekhbe Bishwa" Baishakhi Alpona campaign.

The Baishakhi Alpona festival was broadcasted in Radio, TV, Daily Newspaper and Social Media simultaneously.



SADYA AFREEN MALICK

Little did 'Onima' know that her life would be transformed forever when she ventured out after a Bishakhi storm in search of luscious green mangoes. The setting was none other than Shantiniketan and that day, by a stroke of luck she caught the eye of Kobiguru Rabindranath Tagore.

Onima, nicknamed Mohor was brought up and educated in the serene atmosphere of Rabindranath's Ashram, at Shantiniketan. Even at her tender age, no one failed to realise that she was gifted with an inimitable voice.

Later on, the world would know her by a different name, a name lovingly given to her by Rabindranath after one of his poetry books – "Kanika".

Kanika Bandyopadhyay, the legendary singer of Rabindra Sangeet, was born in Bankura in the year 1924. From that day at the orchard, a special bond started to develop between Rabindranath and her. For well over the next 50 years, she immersed herself completely in music and in the rich artistic surroundings of the Ashram. Among her teachers were stalwarts such as Dinendranath Tagore, Indira Devi Chowdhurani, Sailajaranjan Majumdar and Santidev Ghosh. But most importantly, she was one of the rare protégées to come under the tutelage of the Gurudev himself; she blossomed under his training and guidance.

Many of the leading artistes of Bangladesh, such as Papaya Sarwar, Rezwana Chowdhury Bonny, Sadi Mohammad, Aminur Rahman Nijhu and Lilly Islam had the rare experience of training under Kanika at Shantiniketan. "Shantiniketan had many great ar-

tists as tutors who had been the direct disciples of Tagore, such as Arati Basu, Subinoy Ray, Nimai Chand Boral, Nilima Sen, Alok Chattopadhyay and of course Kanika Bandyopadhyay. The guru-parampara method of teaching was followed exactly as they were taught by Tagore himself," says Bonny.

"It was like a dream come true," says a wide-eyed Lilly. In 1981, when Lilly

gather all around her on the ground. She always started by explaining the background of the song, and even in her simple dialogue one could sense how passionately she felt about music. Even when we failed to sing the proper notes, she had always a word of praise for us. She would say, that our voice was similar to the sarangi notes and that we should try to be more accurate," says

who in her words sang the song 'better'!"

"There was so much more to learn from these stalwarts besides music," says Sadi.

The most fascinating thing about her was that no one had ever heard her practice songs. "Mohor di would always be humming a tune. That was her unique style of rewar. That way she could be one with her music at all time," adds Lilly. Little wonder that Rabindranath specially wrote songs for Kanika to perform including "Keno Noyon Apni Bheshey Jai", for the play Tasher Desh. Kanika had come to Dhaka for the first time in 1956. She visited Dhaka at least twice after Liberation.

When she came in 1972, she was quite unwell and was not able to continue for long. With only the snow-white Rojgonigondha on her hair, she was an image from the Golden Age of music, as the packed hall listened enthralled.

I remember listening to her renditions of "Durey kothaye durey durey", "Roop shagore dub diyechi", "Aami nupoy tomay bholba na", "Anondo dhara bohichey bhuboney" and many more. To her, songs were nothing short of 'offerings'. "I have learnt so much from nature all around us, and I always try to be completely attuned to it," Kanika would often say.



joined the diploma course she didn't initially get the opportunity to train under Kanika. Fortunately in her second year, she was chosen in a group of 10, to perform at Doordarshan TV of Kolkata; it was then that she trained under Kanika.

"We often used to have classes at her house. As she sat on a chair, we would

Lilly. In the world of music she was royalty. "We would watch in awe as she entered the campus. Her personality, her bearing all bore an unmistakable regality. On the other hand, she was modest to a fault. When we requested her to teach us a particular song, she would unhesitatingly suggest Bachchu di (Nilima Sen)