



PHOTO: SHEIKH MEHEDI MORSHEED

Nazrul Award 2015 winner Sadya Afreen Mallick

Her mission is a dissemination of Nazrul thoughts

APORAJITA MUSTAFA

This year's Nazrul Award goes to Sadya Afreen Mallick, a multi-dimensional cultural personality who balances her prodigious talent as Nazrul singer with her professional persona as the well known editor of the Arts Entertainment page of The Daily Star. On the occasion of Kazi Nazrul Islam's 40th death anniversary, we took the opportunity to engage Sadya Afreen Mallick in a conversation about her evolution as a Nazrul singer.

Hailed as a child prodigy, Sadya Afreen Mallick had a meteoric rise in the realm of music. Talking about her formal training as a Nazrul singer, she recalls, "I was ushered into the world of Nazrul's works/music by Sudhin Das, one of the eminent Nazrul exponents of our country. One of my earliest memories was of his teaching my elder brother and me—all of eight years—the finer nuances of the song 'Jhiler Jole Ke Bhashale Neel Shaluker Bhela, Meghla Shokal Bela'.

The lyrics were a bit bewildering to me at that age but the tune appealed to me. A year later, I started my journey at Chhayanaut. At Chhayanaut, I had the opportunity to receive training from names such as Sohrab Hossain and Sheikh Lutfur Rahman, amongst others, which was quite an achievement. However, I was too young to comprehend the depth of Nazrul's works back then. I may have learnt the lyrics and melodies of many of his songs, but it wasn't till much later in life that I was able to grasp the true essence of his music."

It was the music institution Chhayanaut that truly gave her wings to fly. As Sadya states,

"Chhayanaut played an extraordinary role in transforming us into talented performers. Their training combined with performance opportunities helped us overcome stage fright quite early on. I remember, for my first performance at Chhayanaut, Sohrab Hossain taught me the song 'Bishwo Dulali Nobi Nondini Khatun-e-Jannat Fatema Jononi', but as he was late for the show, Sheikh Lutfur Rahman accompanied me on the harmonium. He set the scale to D-sharp. Everyone was worried whether I would be able to pull off the piece. Fortunately, I sang with absolute ease and joy and I feel blessed to say that it has been a similar experience staging Nazrul's songs over the years."

Another milestone in Sadya's singing career was the "incredible experience" of accompanying legendary Nazrul singer Feroza Begum on a tour of America for three months back in 1990. "We performed at various shows across a number of states over the three months, including the first North American Nazrul Conference, which was held on the 25 May 1990, in New Jersey. This tour was infinitely rewarding for me as I constantly got

to learn from the legend herself through observation as well as her constructive suggestions. Upon returning from the tour, Feroza Apa asked me to be ready to create a record which she would compose herself. The record was eventually released in 1991, and was yet another major accomplishment for me."

Sadya is not happy about the direction in which Nazrul Sangeet is headed. "The past fascination for Nazrul and his creative contributions is somewhat missing today. It is true that there is an arsenal of young musicians in the industry at present, but they are not necessarily delving into our National Poet's songs. Unfortunately, even as a nation we are failing to pass on the wisdom and philosophy he has left behind in his words to the next generation."

Sadya along with other Nazrul exponents is doing more than her bit to rekindle interest in the creative personality of Kazi Nazrul Islam. In the pipeline are productions of records and music videos on select Nazrul songs to inspire and motivate the younger generation as well as disseminate Nazrul's message of humanity and peace contained in his songs.

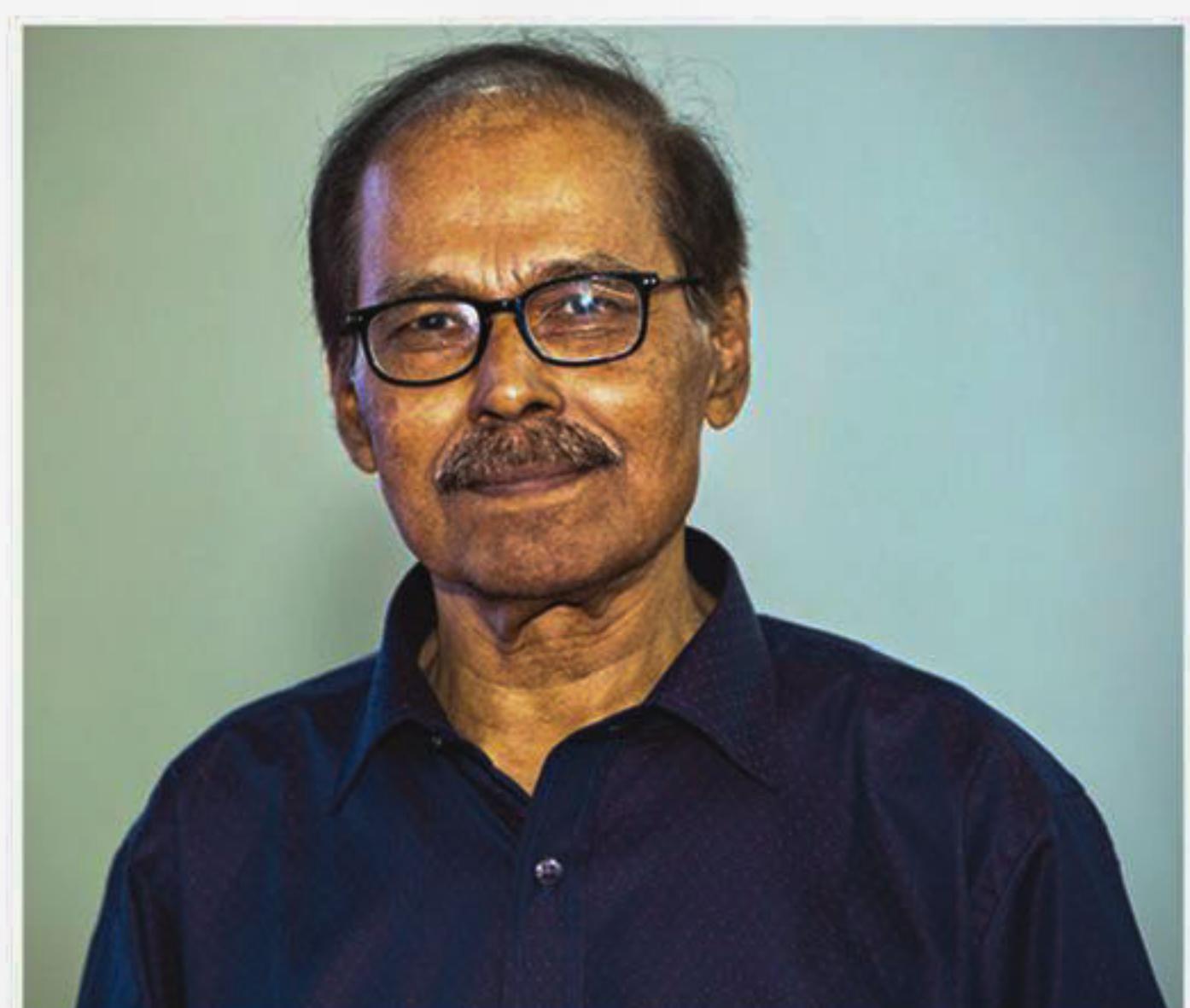
Syed Abdul Hadi's love for Nazrul Sangeet

SHAH ALAM SHAZU

Towering figure of the music industry Syed Abdul Hadi has been captivating audiences with his melodic voice for over decades. Although he is widely known as an adhunik and a playback singer, he has much experience in Nazrul Sangeet and released a Nazrul Sangeet album several years ago. In a recent conversation with The Daily Star, he spoke about Nazrul Sangeet and more. Excerpts:

Tell us how the release of the Nazrul Sangeet album came about?

Hadi: That was a long time ago. So far as I can recall, Kamal Dasgupta came to Dhaka in 1965, when HMV opened its office in Dhaka. I started my career in HMV under his guidance. Kalim Sharifa



"Nazrul is still to be discovered"

...Salahuddin Ahmed

ZAIMA ZAHRA

Renowned Nazrul Sangeet artiste Salahuddin Ahmed started his musical journey by learning classical music. His love for classical music developed further as he started exploring the vast variety of Nazrul Sangeet. Eventually he established himself as one of the popular Nazrul Sangeet artistes by nurturing and nourishing his skills. In conversation with The Daily Star, on the upcoming occasion of National Poet's death anniversary, the renowned singer talks about our National Poet fondly.

What makes Nazrul Sangeet special?

Salahuddin: For a classical singer learning Nazrul Sangeet is a must, because it is the hub of every variety of classical songs. The emotion, lyrics and the essence; that Nazrul Sangeet delivers is spectacular. This is what makes it one of its kinds.

What is your view of the ongoing research on Nazrul's work?

Salahuddin: Nazrul is still to be discovered. The research is still going on and we have a long way to go. The poet composed many songs, of which around 3,100 have been discovered. Plus Nazrul Institute has preserved around 1,500 authentic songs and among them, we have sung 300. So, to accelerate the ongoing research a lot of contributors and enthusiasts are required.

What kind of idea would you like to add to the research methodology?

Salahuddin: We need more young artistes to join the research, but the negative point is—Nazrul Sangeet has always been promoted as a tough genre. Plus most of the singers often practise tough songs and this has created a lack of confidence among the young singers. So if we manage to promote both easy and tough songs along with its versatility, then we can definitely get more youngsters to join as researchers. In this case we need media, government and every cultural organisation to work as a team.

How can we inspire singers from other cities to practise Nazrul?

Salahuddin: Nazrul Institute sends trainers out of Dhaka to train singers. Even I have participated in it. However, it is not enough as it is hard to run training sessions by one institute. What we need is co-operation of organisations like Bangladesh Shilpakala Academy to organise proper training sessions time to time and also provide a platform to perform.

Do you have any suggestions for the newcomers?

Salahuddin: Practising classical music and being affiliated with Nazrul Institute can help a singer to develop as a Nazrul Sangeet artiste. There is also an assumption, that by learning classical music one can sing Nazrul Sangeet, which is not true. One should receive training from someone who can explain the depth of Poet's melodies to enable them to embrace the lyrical beauty and strength of Nazrul's songs.



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