

# Mamunur Rashid's Oeuvre

PROFESSOR SHAFI AHMED

Concluding part

Many of the theatre persons of Bangladesh left the country in 1971 for Calcutta and had an active exposure to the stage productions of the city. They came back with that experience to bring in some new rhythm and vibrancy in theatre of free Bangladesh. And Mamun was no exception. Mamun reaped as much benefits as he could while he was in Calcutta. He met persons like Utpal Dutt, enjoyed productions made by him and other stalwarts like Sombhu Mitra, Ajitash Banerjee, Arun Mukhopadhyay and others. It is very heartening that Mamun is still in touch with those who are living. And his theatre is at the root of this linkage. Theatre has taken Mamun to many places of the world, East and West. His visits stretch from Japan and People's China in the Far East to Venezuela in South America. In between, he had been to Canada, Germany, Scotland and many other places, not to speak of the almost all the corners of his own country, Bangladesh. In all such visits, Mamunur Rashid has always worked hard to uphold the cause of theatre and in the process he himself has been a tireless learner. This pictorial biographical sketch presents before us such glimpses of his life.

The book, as I have noted earlier, is sketchy in its character. I do understand the reasons behind that. The authors were, quite reasonably, attentive to focus a little bit more on the visual presentation. So what we get is a kind of a tour of Mamun's life and work. I must say the photographs that are included within the two covers of the book are a feast to the eyes of the readers. I thank the authors for the diligence that they have shown to collect some of the rare images of theatre productions. And such images serve multiple purposes. Well, we get to know some biographical detail of the

artist. Then, the pictures also present not only the theatrical productions with which he was connected, but we are also able to read the history of contemporary Bangladesh theatre. At the same time, some of the pictures reflect many important occasions of the history of our theatre. For example, Mamun accomplished a kind of a historic duty with the production of Munier Chowdhury's *Kabar* just after our liberation in which many of the illustrious actors including the renowned film director Subhas Dutta also took part. Very unfortunately though, no photograph of that production could be retrieved, again for understandable reasons. However, on the auspicious occasion of 40th anniversary of *Aronoyak Natyadal*, the group that Mamun heads, the actors could be assembled and they took part in an auditory re-performance of the maiden production of this group. I must hail all the pains that Faiz Zahir and Hasan Shahriar took to collect these invaluable photographs.

The book once again brings before us some of Mamun's committed vocation in the arena of theatre. I can remember, in the eighties, Mamun's experiment with what he called *Muktonatak* (Free Theatre) gave birth to sundry kinds of reactions amongst the people connected with theatre. We found more people to criticize it than those who voiced some sort of appreciation or welcome. Done a little in imitation of what the great Indian theatre person Badal Sircar initiated in what was known as *Third Theatre*, Mamun's experiment of inducting the common down to earth people into theatre in places where they live was something very fresh of its kind. In later days, we find some deviation in similar productions undertaken by another group. *Muktonatak* also initiated the theatre for development in our country. Some light has been thrown on Mamun's another venture

Bangla Theatre.

The book further specially upholds Mamun's concern for and close association with the indigenous peoples of Bangladesh. Not only does the book present a short pictorial commentary on the production of *Rarang*, a play which was conceived and delivered on some real contemporary suppression on one of the indigenous groups in the north of Bangladesh, but we also get to know that Mamun is a very popular person with people in the Chittagong Hill Tracts. The book also furnishes information about Mamun's role as a theatre director for some other groups too. It also reports about Mamun's work on Shakespeare but somehow omits his redoing of one Ibsen play.

I have thoroughly enjoyed reading the book primarily for its comprehensive character, which is applicable not only for the presentation of one important cultural personality of our country but for the documentation of present-day Bangladesh even reporting on the breakaway of some theatre groups including Mamunur Rashid's. And then I like the book for the focus it gives to project Mamunur Rashid as an artist dedicated both to people and theatre. However, I am not happy with the fact that Mamun's refusal of Bangla Academy prize is covered in two sentences.

The pictures in the book are a treasury. The authors, I can understand, have been somehow in a problem about how to use them. The chronology has not been maintained. That takes away the reading as well as the visual pleasure at some places. The water colours used in the earlier pages to substitute the photographs are lovely. While I appreciate the enormous job that two young important theatre workers of our country has done, I must note that some errors have crept in, and it is not just typos. I feel



prompted to locate at least one which disappointed me. In page 49, the caption of the picture says it is 'Kolon' radio, which it is not. In fact, this is Deutsche Welle, Koln (not Kolon) station. The word radio has not been spelt in the correct way. To make a precise comment, I have all words of

praise for Bangla Publications, which has done a marvelous job. I have specially liked the cover photograph. It does immaculately presents Mamun with the blazing spirit of ancient Greek architecture with some pleasing effects of painting. I wish Mamun a long and active life.

## The Allusion

AINON N

My paradise is regained  
in understanding  
as in confession  
Where future and past  
are not in torment  
Where there are  
No epic defenders  
No 'isms'  
No temptation

Where love is  
Sweet clover, bluebells.  
The rain-band  
The silence of night  
The longing  
Where  
There is no arrogant interruption  
of set beliefs  
Or sidelined spirituality.



## IMMORTAL RABINDRANATH

KAZI NAZRUL ISLAM

Translated by MOHAMMAD SHAFIQUIL ISLAM



Rabindranath keeps awake by you every day  
Youths, adolescents and children, don't feel sad for him  
Only his body departed, but his love and affection persist  
Whenever you read him, you see the light of hope  
With the music of his poetry.  
Fear flees with his fearless words  
If powerless, you consider yourself feeble  
But you're reborn with strength and courage reading his work  
Whenever the world is dull for poverty, diseases and sorrows  
Read Rabi's 'Geetali' and 'Geetanjali' - you'll attain strength  
Hearing of Rabi's fame, don't show only respects  
Read his work over and over, you'll be famous and erudite  
In his works, Rabindranath says - youths, listen -  
One who doesn't dream to be great remains little  
Think every day, now and then - I won't be little  
My Creator pervades everywhere in the universe  
With His blessings there won't be want, I'll achieve perfection  
And earn ample knowledge and strength, and go to Him contemplating  
One who dreams big this way realises, in imagination,  
The blessings of God come and stay with him forever  
Fortunate, he becomes great and heroic in this world  
Even at death, he's immortal and revered by all nations  
Have thirst to be great, you'll certainly become one  
Even if not Rabindranath, you'll be many other lights  
You'll be Napoleon, Hitler, or Gandhi, the Indian leader  
You don't know you might be the conqueror of the world  
'Not slaves, we'll be free and the sons of the immortals'  
Pray, I say, God will listen to you  
This is the poet laureate's magic - if you follow,  
You'll always be showered with his grace.

“ব্যঙ্গ-সৃষ্টিতে অসাধারণ প্রতিভার প্রয়োজন। ... বন্ধু আবুল মনসুরের হাত-সাফাই দেখে বিস্মিত হলাম। ভাষার কান মলে রস সৃষ্টির ক্ষমতা আবুল মনসুরের অসাধারণ। এ যেন পাকা গুস্তাদী হাত।”

-কাজী নজরুল ইসলাম



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