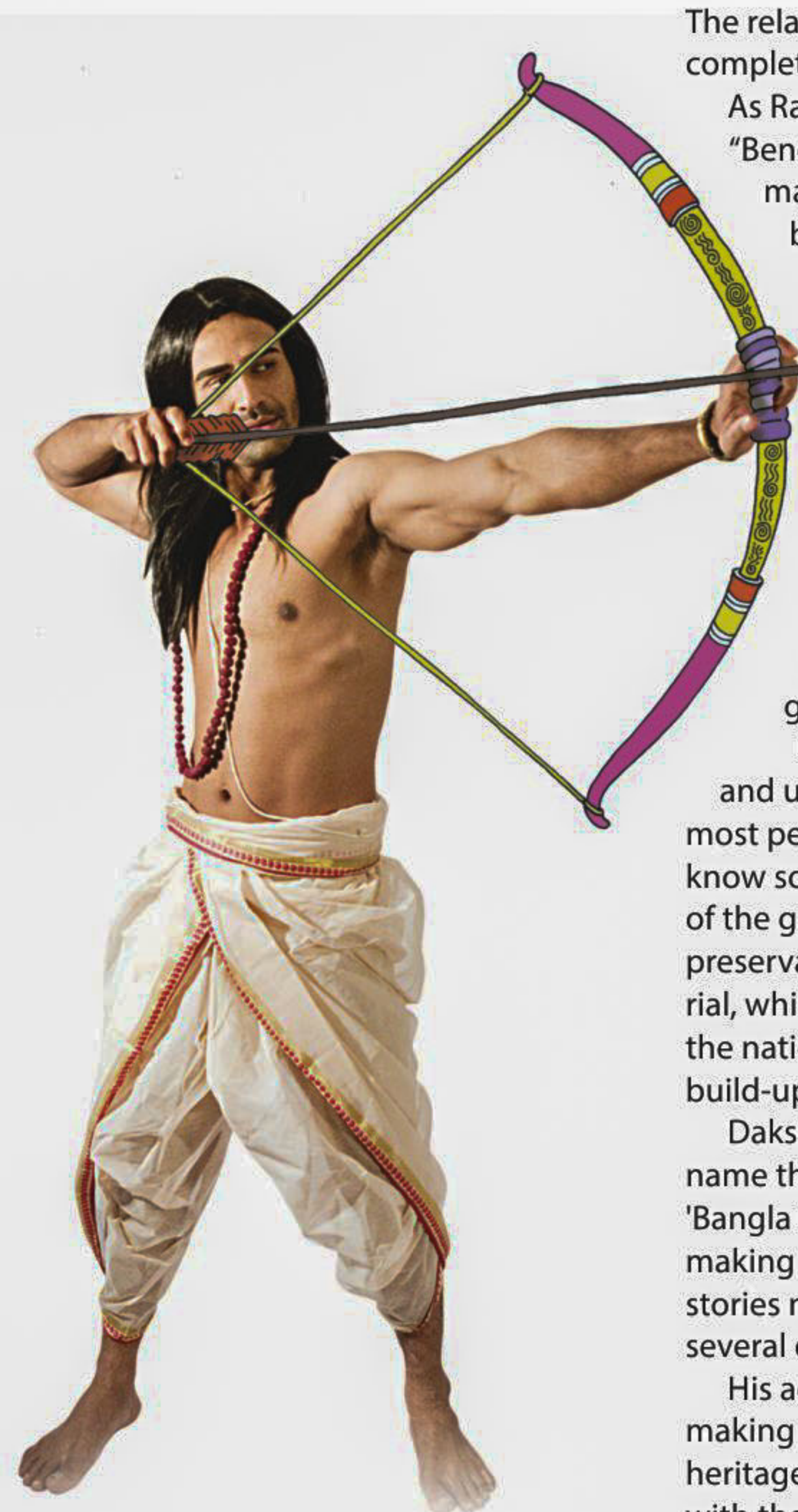


# Far-far-away in the lands of SUO RANI AND DUO RANI



“Across the seven seas lies the treasure of seven kingdoms!”

Most of us remember these lines quite fondly; for many of our nights were filled to the brim with incredible stories that began with these amazing lines. Yes, I am reminiscing of the colourful 'Thakurmar Jhuli' days and our beloved grandparents narrating the stories to us with all the passion and intensity existent in the world.



The relationship with one never seems to be complete without the other.

As Rabindranath Tagore had once said, “Bengal has fought so many wars, so many empires have changed hands but the love for folktales remain deeply-rooted into the soul of the youngsters, only because there is profound association between folktales and motherly affection. This very warmth, the fondness, unceasingly took care of great kings to the most docile farmers. From this fantastic affinity, the passion for folktales grows everyday.”

Folktales are legendary, aeonian, and unadulterated; these are facts that most people are well aware of. But sadly, we know so little about the unfaltering labour of the great minds working behind the preservation of the valuable heritage material, which has had an immense effect on the nation's value system and character build-up.

Dakshinaranjan Mitra Majumdar is one name that is celebrated in the world of 'Bangla Rupkotha.' He has been a pioneer in making a remarkable compilation of folk stories narrated by the native women from several different districts of Bengal.

His adamant character and willfulness in making a difference and preserving the rich heritage of Bengal motivated him to get on with the publishing of his compilation of

regional folktales even when eminent litterateurs of the country were labelling it as a futile attempt.

Rabindranath Tagore was also sceptical of his attempts, because Tagore believed the stories could be best told, narrated and scripted by women writers, since 'women' were the original storytellers!

Proving Tagore wrong and with the encouragement of Dineshchandra Sen, a



renowned writer and also a fellow folklorist, he was able to publish the ever famous Thakurmar Jhuli, Thakur Dadar Jhuli, Thandidir Thole, Dadamoshayer Thole and a lot more.

That was only one man's story. The inquisitive saga sustained amongst many more writers including Reverend Lal Behari Dey and Dr Ashraf Siddiqui.

Rev Dey is widely known for his stern

views and protests against the ruling class and their unfair discriminations.

He is also known for being the creator of 'Folk Tales of Bengal', an interesting set of 'deshi' folk stories, written impeccably in English. All his stories have been passed down many generations.

Dr Ashraf Siddiqui is another name that enriched Bangla literature of the 20th century. In the beginning of 1940s he emerged as a promising young poet, earning the blessings of the great Tagore himself.

The writer has been often heard admitting that the only reason he went to Shantiniketan for his higher studies was the blessings of the guru himself.

Dr Siddiqui has composed more than 500 poems, of which 'Taleb Master' may be the most famous, depicting the struggling life of a rural teacher.

Later in his life, he went to the US for his Master's and PhD and during that time he ventured into further study and preservation of folktales, while also writing his own collection of fables.

He introduced Bengal to the rest of the world with his charming characters like Bhombal Dass and Toontony – subsequently translating his stories into eleven different languages.

An intimate interview with the living legend will definitely help us in recognising and understanding the significance of folktales in all our lives.

**By Mehrin Mubdi Chowdhury**  
**Photo: LS Archive**