

# 118th Birth Anniversary of Our National Poet TREASURE TROVE OF NAZRUL SANGEET

Chhayanaut artistes' vibrant adda at The Daily Star

**ZAHANGIR ALOM**  
Leading cultural school Chhayanaut plays a significant role in dispersing the rich heritage of our music, dance, education and culture. In a vibrant adda with The Daily Star, promising Nazrul Sangeet artistes and teachers of Chhayanaut -- Bizon Chandra Mistry, Mahmudul Hasan, Afsana Runa, Shrabanti Dhar, Mohit Khan, Susmita Debnath Suchi and Nahiyana Durdana Shuchi – shared their views on the rich legacy of Nazrul Sangeet, its practice among the young artistes, and the prospects and existing problems of diffusing the musical gifts created by our National Poet Kazi Nazrul Islam.



PHOTO: SHEIKH MEHEDI MORSHED

"Practising and performing the musical creations of Kazi Nazrul Islam is our daily affair. From the essence of dhruwad to the songs of the labourers, Kazi Nazrul Islam enriched all the genres of Bangla music. Say for example, the song "Dao Shourjo Dao Dhoirjo" evokes feelings of peace while also portraying the basics of dhruwad. Again, his folk songs like the bhattiali number "Poddar Dheu Rey" transports us to riverine Bengal. Kazi Nazrul Islam composed raga-based songs, created distinctive raga and taal, and he is the most successful composer of Bangla ghazal. Once he was requested to compose a song on indigenous people after which he was not found for a week. Later, he came with a new composition after his experience of closely observing the culture of the indigenous people. He developed all the aspects of Bangla songs

hinting love, melancholy, devotion, Islamic songs, Hindu mythology, kirtan and what not. Who dares to order Lord Shiva saying "Bagh Chhal Porihero, Dhoro Notoboro Besh, Poro Nipo Mala"? I cannot find another song like "Matir Protima Pujish Tora, Maa Ke Tora Pujish Na" in Bangla music," said Bizon Chandra Mistry.  
Nazrul singer Mahmudul Hasan is optimistic about the practice of Nazrul Sangeet amongst the young artistes. "We are teaching them at Chhayanaut. Apart from that we conduct district-level Nazrul Sangeet workshops. Young artistes and their teachers are very glad to be a part of our initiative. They are interested in learning the lesser-known songs. We hope young singers will be enriched enough after the workshops, as we follow the proper melodies and swaralipi under

our tutelage," said Hasan.  
Susmita Debnath Suchi mentioned, "If a learner is equipped with the lesson of Raga sangeet, s/he can render the raga-based songs properly. The students are equally interested in learning classical music."  
On popularising Nazruls' timeless compositions, Afsana Runa said, "Proper training and research has enabled young singers to take music seriously."  
"We are holding a countrywide Nazrul Sangeet competition on behalf of Chhayanaut and Bangladesh Nazrul Sangeet Sangstha. We will bring out CDs for the best singers. This will hopefully encourage them to focus on the genre," added Mahmudul Hasan.  
"There are so many talents scattered across Bangladesh. I think the mass-media has an important role to promote them, as well as popularise Nazrul

Sangeet through proper exposure," asserted Bizon Mistry.  
The learning of music follows guru-shishya parampara. Mohit Khan, who believes self-confidence is the secret to perform well, said, "Without proper practice, confidence cannot be attained. Performing well requires consecutive rehearsals with instrumentalists. With regard to maintaining guru-shishya parampara and giving space and platform for the young artistes, Chhayanaut plays a pivotal role. We were students at Chhayanaut, and now we are teachers, giving our students the same lessons. Chhayanaut teaches us not only music, but also the culture of country, and emphasises on how to become a good, well-rounded human being."  
Nahiyana Durdana Shuchi said, "We regard our responsibilities with diligence, but solemnly. Many of our teachers don't accept remuneration from Chhayanaut as it is not a commercial institution. While we are enlisted singers in BTV and Bangladesh Betar (Radio), but we seldom receive calls to perform on BTV."  
"Nepotism is a problem in the media. Producers are not musically sound, so deserving artistes rarely find platforms," said Bizon Mistry.  
On releasing Nazrul Sangeet albums through record labels, Shrabanti Dhar said, "Popular music labels are not interested to bring out Nazrul Sangeet albums due to profitability. Chhayanaut is releasing Nazrul Sangeet albums sung by promising artistes."

## IFIC BANK-CHANNEL i NAZRUL MELA SHAHEEN SAMAD awarded for Lifetime Achievement



**A CORRESPONDENT**  
At this year's IFIC Bank- Channel i Nazrul Festival, eminent Nazrul singer Shaheen Samad, will be awarded the Lifetime Achievement award. On with the 118th birth anniversary of National Poet Kazi Nazrul Islam, Shaheen Samad will receive the award on May 25 at the festival, at Channel i premises. The announcement was made yesterday at a press conference by Channel i's managing director Faridur Reza Sagar.  
At the event, cultural personality Syed Hasan Imam, CEO and Managing Director of IFIC-Bank Shah Alam Sarowar, Nazrul Sangeet exponent Sadya Afreen Mallick were present. Upon the announcement of the award, Shaheen Samad said, "This award will increase my responsibility towards my craft and my country."  
The festival begins today at 4:30pm and will be attended by noted cultural personalities, researchers, Nazrul enthusiasts, Nazrul singers, Channel i personnel, and others.

### TV WATCH

## "Anjali Loho Mor" on Gazi TV

To commemorate the National Poet's 118th birth anniversary, GTV will air a special programme today at 7:45pm titled "Anjali Loho Mor". The programme will feature Nazrul songs, poetry recitation, discussions and more. Special guests on the show will include Shimul Mustafa, Nashid Kamal and Yusuf Ahmed Khan.  
The programme is produced by Nazrul Islam Khan, and will be hosted by Shimul Mustafa.



# Homage to Nazrul

## BHABNA'S SHAKUNTALA



PHOTO: SHEIKH MEHEDI MORSHED

**NAZIBA BASHER**  
At the end of last year, Bhabna's director and choreographer, Samina Hussain Prema, launched a dance-drama based on Kalidasa's Abhigyan Shakuntalam- the first of its kind in the country. While everyone anticipated what they were about to witness, the expectation for music, even for Alomay Biswas who crafted the script for the dance-drama, lay in the hands of Rabindranath.  
But Prema had other ideas. Born on the same day as Kazi Nazrul Islam himself, Prema had wanted to work with Nazrul Sangeet for a very long time. "I grew up around Nazrul Sangeet. My sister is a Nazrul singer, and through her my affinity for his melodies kept growing," she says.  
Unlike Rabindranath Tagore, Kazi Nazrul Islam did not have his own dance-dramas, where each song would represent the situation in the play. Prema went far and beyond to find the perfect song for each situation in Kalidasa's Abhigyan Shakuntalam. "I wanted to direct and choreograph my own version of Shakuntala as a dance-drama, after I had performed it

once in Kolkata under someone else's direction. That was when I thought, 'Why not Nazrul's music?' It just made a lot of sense to me. I feel Nazrul's music could add more depth in the story through his lyrics," she said. With the help of Khairul Anam Shakil and others from Chhayanaut, Prema began her journey to find the perfect songs for the right moments. She also made sure to use the lesser popular songs of Nazrul through the sole intention of passing on the passion for his music from her to the audience.  
After finding the ideal songs to fit into the story—songs such as "Dao Shourjo", "Dola Lagilo", "Shey Chole Gechhe Bole", "Aadhkhana Chaand" and "Mora Chhinu Ekela" among others, Prema travelled to Kolkata to craft the background score and music for the dance-drama. "We used Suman Sarker's studio in Kolkata for our recording. We depended mostly on Indian Classical instruments. But I wanted to make sure the voices are from our own land. I feel only Bangladeshis can represent Nazrul in the most authentic and traditional manner. We had excellent singers from Chhayanaut, with

Khairul Anam Shakil and Priyanka Gope singing the lead roles. With their undying support and rich musical sense, 'Shakuntala' started becoming a reality for me." While a risky move, Prema now knows that she could not have made a better decision than to rely on the wondrous melodies of our Rebel Poet. After the first show, one of the biggest successful aspects had turned out to be the music, and it was on the tip of every tongue.  
"Nazrul is such an integral part of our culture. Nazrul is a rebel, a lover, a revolutionary. There is no situation he did not comprehend, no leaf he left unturned. He made music for every instance, every circumstance. So, there was no doubt that using his music to tell one of the greatest love stories was a decision I would never regret," she says.  
According to her, and everyone who has encountered the blissful tunes of Nazrul, his greatest role in our nation was the healthy leadership he had given just through the use of his words and melodies—a leadership he still offers, even years after his departure. All we have to do is switch off the world, and switch on his music.

Every piece, a Masterpiece

**Hazaaril**  
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