

NAZRUL IS LIKE A PRISM

...Mujibar Rahman

MAJOR DOCUMENTARY ON REBEL POET SET FOR RELEASE

FAHMIM FERDOUS

Kazi Nazrul Islam, arguably one of the greatest artistic polymaths in the world, had a life as diverse and happening as his works were. From being the muezzin at a mosque to a soldier to a masterful writer-editor-composer-political voice and in his last decades spent in dreadful physical and mental conditions, the course of his life and works is utterly fascinating to say the least. Which makes it appalling that a complete picture of his life in documented audiovisual medium has not yet been done, even 40 years after his death. But one meticulous documentary filmmaker, Kolkata-based Mujibar Rahman, is set to change all that. The brilliant life of Bangladesh's National Poet has been brought together in an elaborate, two-hour documentary that is expected to launch this August, marking his death anniversary (August 29).

Mujibar, who has previously made the much-acclaimed documentary on Rabindranath "Rabindranath Tagore: Jibon O Somoy" and a number of other documentaries on Bangalee luminaries, spoke to The Daily Star about his venture in a recent conversation. Excerpts:

"My interest in Kazi Nazrul grew while working on the Tagore documentary, when I found how highly Tagore regarded him. And after I started reading and researching on him, I found that Nazrul is something else. And the general people



A working still from the documentary.

probably know 15% of his life. One of the most striking finding was that in Bangladesh and India, the perception of Nazrul was quite different. In West Bengal, he is considered an 'almost Hindu' poet, thus alienating him from the Muslim community there, while in Bangladesh, he has been portrayed as many different things over the years. I felt that Nazrul is a prism who has many dimensions,

and some of those dimensions were explored individually. So I decided to explore Nazrul in his multidimensional forms, even if that makes my film a bit lengthy.

"Through the work, I came to the conclusion that Nazrul was the only poet, and the only Bangalee after Raja Rammohan Roy, who understood Bangalee's mixed culture and diversity, and he could express it. This

mixed culture is greater India's heritage, and it came about in his works –with Hindu mythology on one side of it and Muslim philosophies on the other. Nazrul was also a close witness of many cultural initiations of the Indian subcontinent. He wrote the first Ishtihar of the Shramik-Proja Party, which is termed the nucleus of the Communist Party of India. Then you see, until Rabindranath, Bangla

poetry was for the upper class of society; Nazrul was the first to reach the mass people, in his poetry as in his journalism. He was a brave man; he was the only poet who served jail time for eleven months for writing poetry, and went on a 39-day hunger strike. Five of his books were seized. There are also things that many people don't know, and I have put them in my documentary: Nazrul had written a poetic translation of the Quran, and wrote our Prophet's (PBUH) biography in poetic form, in "Moru Bhashkor".

"For the research, I read pretty much all the books available on Nazrul. I got a lot of support from eminent Bangladeshi Nazrul researcher Emeritus Professor Rafiqul Islam, who guided me greatly in the work, and is an advisor on this documentary. I also found resources at various libraries in Kolkata, and here in Dhaka, as well as the Nazrul Institute. I am also grateful to his family, Khilkhil Kazi, for her support.

"I found out a lot more than I had sought out looking on Nazrul, but I couldn't apply it all within the limitations of a documentary's framework. For example, his musical side is vast, and it mesmerized. He created 19 Indian classical Ragas, and 11 taals. His musical world is so vast that you can make a five-hour documentary on that alone. I have shown some of it, but it was beyond the scope of the film to explore it at depth. He was involved greatly in film and theatre; I put synopses of these in the film, but



I could not bring it all together. His involvement in radio is another great chapter. He was involved with Akashbani since its inception till the end of his active days, and there is nothing he didn't do! It's impossible to encapsulate all of Nazrul in a film.

"How people will watch the film is a big question. It is more important now than ever to have Nazrul's non-communal, humanistic philosophies spread among people. I got in touch with Bangladesh's Cultural Affairs Ministry, and with their help I plan to showcase the film to the Bangladeshi audience. Nazrul Institute is also working with it. Simultaneously, in West Bengal we are trying to reach the people through the state institutes," Mujibar concludes.

Eid shoots are on in top gear

SHAH ALAM SHAZU

As Eid fever takes over, directors, artists, actors and actresses are busy with shoots for special TV plays. Several acclaimed TV directors have already wrapped up shooting for one or two Eid plays ahead of the festival while others are beginning new ventures.

Over the last few years, many directors have gone in for six-episode Eid plays, besides one-hour drama and telefilms for the occasion. Salahuddin Lavlu is a case in point. Every year he comes up with a six-episode Eid play for a private television channel and this year is no exception. Shooting will begin this month for a six-episode Eid play.

Besides director and actor Shamim Zaman, Masud Sejan is doing a six-episode Eid play starring Chanchal Chowdhury.

Animesh Aich has recently completed shooting for an Eid play casting Bhabna and Shazu Khadem. The play was shot in Cox's Bazar. Besides him, director Shamim Zaman did another yet to be titled Eid play with Mosharraf Karim and Bhabna in the cast.

Chayanika Chowdhury does



PHOTO: SHEIKH MEHEDI MORSHED

several plays every Eid. She has already wrapped up shooting for "Talpatar Pakha", casting Mahfuz Ahmed and Purnima. She also did another Eid drama with Afzal Hossain.

On the other hand, Zahid Hasan makes and acts in many Eid plays. He will shoot a play in Sirajganj this month revealed the actor-director.

Director Raihan Khan has already wrapped up shooting two Eid plays. One of them casts Noble, Mosharraf Karim and Purnima while Tarik Anam Khan and Abul Hayat act in another venture.

Besides acting, Shahiduzzaman

Selim has been a director for the last few years. He shoots one-hour Eid play every year and is gearing up again.

Noted actor Mahfuz Ahmed directs TV plays occasionally. He is now staying put in Bandarban to make an Eid drama with his shooting unit.

Actor-turned-director Mir Sabbir has also been doing Eid plays for the last four years. He has a plan to direct three or four TV dramas this year on the occasion of Eid-ul-Fitr.

TV directors Ferdous Hasan, Arif Khan, SA Haque Alik, Sakal Ahmed, Redwan Roni and Mostofa Kamal Raj will start shooting Eid plays this



month.

Now let's have a look at the busy shooting schedule of actors ahead of Eid.

"I have already completed shooting for two Eid plays," said Sumaiya Shimu adding that there are several other assignments on the cards.

Apurbo acts in eight to ten Eid plays every year. He has already wrapped up shooting for two TV plays.

"As the audiences watch Eid plays avidly, we do some more special dramas on the occasion," he said.

Mosharraf Karim and Sajal are

very busy with Eid plays every year. Mosharraf has already completed shooting for three Eid plays. Of them, one was shot in Dhaka while the rest were filmed in Cox's Bazar.

"As Eid is a big festival, we become very busy two months ahead of the occasion," said the TV and film actor.

Sajal has already completed shooting for four Eid plays.

"As I don't do drama serials, my plays are aired in a big way," said Sajal.

Playwright Masum Reza said "I write drama serial round the year but I get special offers for Eid plays. I have already got offers."

Wonder Woman saves DC Extended Universe

And changes the superhero game

KARIM WAHEED

That heading is not an overstatement by any means. DC fans are still not over the disasters that were Batman v Superman: Dawn of Justice and Suicide Squad as the onslaught of Marvel's tried and tested blockbuster formula continues. With Wonder Woman's standalone big screen debut, DCEU took a major gamble. Patty Jenkins is the first female director of a studio superhero movie. The result is a vehicle truly worthy of a demigod.

Would I call this a refreshing, feminist take on a genre that's usually associated with hyper-masculinity? Sure. Diana is a warrior princess from Themyscira, raised by a fierce all-women clan. The action sequences featuring the Amazons training against the lush landscape of the mystical island hidden from the world are a thing of beauty. Connie Nielsen as Diana's mother, Queen Hippolyta, and Robin Wright as her mentor and aunt, General Antiope deserve special mention for their stellar performances.

The tranquility of this feminist utopia is broken by the crash landing of American pilot/spy Steve Trevor, played by Chris Pine, being chased by the Germans. From him, Diana and the Amazons learn that a "Great War" [World War I] is underway and millions are dying. Persuaded by the creation



story of her people, Diana believes that the god Ares is responsible for this war and accompanies Steve to Europe to put an end to this.

Jenkins masterfully puts a male empire under the female gaze without taking anything away from masculinity. Steve doesn't get turned into an emasculated dude in distress. Sure, Diana saves his life and he insists on being "above average" a couple of times, but he's no Lois Lane. Kudos to Chris Pine, Jenkins and the screenplay by Allan Heinberg

for creating a male character who casually demonstrates the difference between masculinity and toxic masculinity.

What I particularly enjoyed about this movie are the light moments, as compared to the previous joyless DCEU adventures. The protagonists have great chemistry and all the jokes land perfectly.

Diana's coming of age is portrayed with a lot of sincerity. Through her curiosity, disbelief and outrage, the fact that wars are always started by men and women are left to suffer

and pick up the pieces despite having no say in it is once again established.

If I had to nitpick, this movie would still be epic without the CGI battle towards the end.

Gal Gadot as Diana/Wonder Woman is flawless. It took only over 75 years for Wonder Woman to have her own live-action movie and I'd say as an actor, Gadot has lived up to that immense expectation. Off-screen, however, it's difficult for me to associate her with Wonder Woman, a pro-peace icon and a symbol of truth. Watching Gadot, as Wonder Woman, passionately trying to convince her band to march into a town under siege and free its people, I was baffled by the irony. I kept wondering what was going through the pro-IDF actor's mind when she had to enact this scene; how does she feel about Gaza, considered to be the "world's largest open-air prison"? FYI, Gadot had served for two years as an enlisted soldier in the Israel Defense Forces, serving as a combat instructor.

That said, fans and critics worldwide have given their verdict. Rotten Tomatoes has given it a 96 percent rating and the film has had one of the biggest opening weekends. DCEU can breathe a sigh of relief. For now.

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NEWS bytes

WOODSTOCK location named historic site

The location of the 1969 Woodstock festival is now an official historic site. New York Governor Andrew Cuomo announced Tuesday that Bethel Woods Center for the Arts – a cultural nonprofit in Bethel, New York – is listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

Cuomo called the festival a "pivotal moment in both New York and American history."

The Woodstock Music & Art Fair was described by the promoters as "An Aquarian Exposition: 3 Days of Peace & Music". It took place August 15-17, 1969 at the 600-acre dairy farm. The iconic festival was famously documented in Michael Wadleigh's 1970 documentary, "Woodstock".

The landmark event drew nearly half-million attendees with its genre-blurring musical line-up, which included Santana, Joan Baez, Grateful Dead, Janis Joplin, the Who, Jefferson Airplane and Crosby, Stills, Nash & Young. Most famously, Jimi Hendrix's set with short-lived band Gypsy Sun and Rainbows included his psychedelic electric guitar rendition of "The Star-Spangled Banner".

Source: Rolling Stone

