

PREACHING LOVE THROUGH LALON

Baul Shafi Mondol

Ever since his journey to self-discovery began, Baul Shafi Mondol has found himself enthralled by the teachings of the prominent Baul philosopher Fakir Lalon Shah. Through cheerful music he has preached the message of love and tolerance, steadily establishing himself as one of the most well-known Lalon singers of the country. In this exclusive interview, Shafi Mondol talks about his spiritual journey and shares his opinions on the future of Lalon music.

What are the main elements you focus on in your music?

I sing Lalon songs inspired from Fakir Lalon Shah. His philosophy falls more towards the topic of humanity. Outside the realms of religion and nationality, human is truly the greatest living being. Fakir Lalon Shah wished for a united society; a society where people from all walk of life can exist together. He always preached that we should be willing to harmonize with each other despite any religious differences among us.

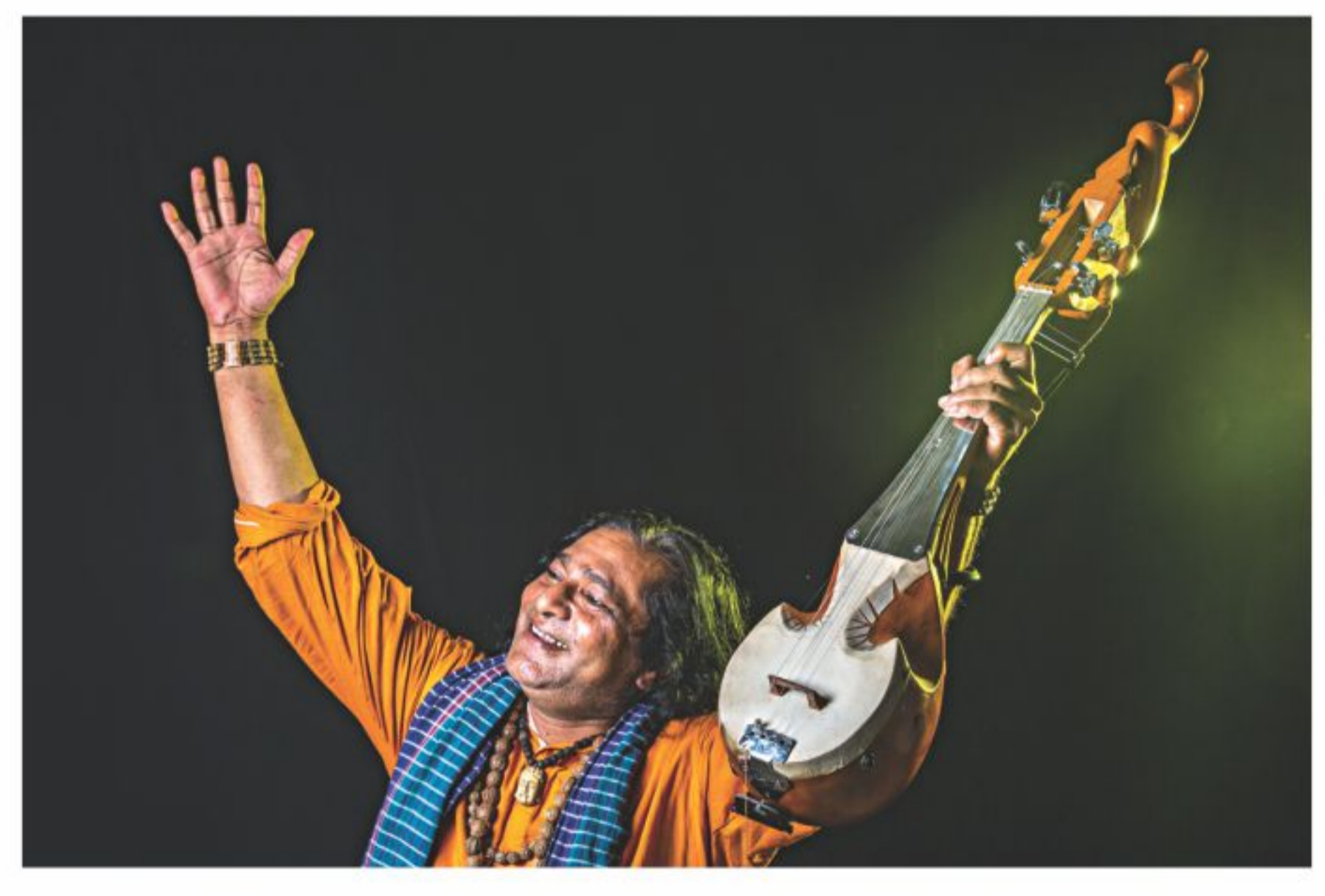
When did you start singing?

Ever since a young age, I found music very enjoyable. I used to sing the songs of Abbasuddin Ahmed and Abdul Alim, and learned singing from my cousin when I was around nine years old.

How did you get into Lalon?

My venture into Lalon was much later. At 1988, without any passport, I walked from Bangladesh to India hoping to find a Guru. In my journey I came across my mentor Shadhon Mukherjee and learned singing from him for four years. When my lessons were done, he told me that my voice is suitable for singing the songs of Fakir Lalon Shah, which was my first push towards being a professional Lalon

COVER STORY



singer. I never looked back from there.

Many older Lalon singers tend to disagree with the method the newer singers are using to play Lalon music. What is your opinion on that?

The younger generation is certainly more talented than the older singers. We the older singers should certainly not discourage them in any way. I personally find nothing wrong with a younger singer attempting to sing Baul with a guitar. Technology is there to help

us, and endeavoring to modernize Lalon isn't disrespecting the songs in any way. We can't be stuck with the belief that Lalon can only be played with an ektara.

Do you think the younger singers are contributing to Lalon?

Definitely! The fusion with the old and the new is what's keeping Lalon alive. We should be more appreciative of the younger generation in still having interest in Lalon. We need to support their talent and efforts and offer advice in improvement whenever we can. If we criticize someone

without seeing what they are truly worth, we aren't helping them in any way. It needs to be remembered that the songs of Fakir Lalon Shah aren't heard by the ears, but felt by the heart.

Is it necessary to adopt the lifestyle of Fakir Lalon Shah for singing Lalon?

Anyone can sing Lalon. While there are people who dedicate their lives to it, there are also those who choose to be educated about it through books and publications. As long as the main philosophy of love and tolerance is maintained, Lalon can be practiced.

Is there anything you would like to add?

I will admit this; I feel like I haven't found myself yet. I started the journey to find myself many years ago, and I am still walking on that path. But one realization that I have made through Lalon is that I am walking on the right path. Until the day I die, I want to preach the words of Fakir Lalon Shah.

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Transcribed from
Uncensored with Rafi Hossain

