

We shouldn't let anyone distort Nazrul's legacy

KHAIRUL ANAM SHAKIL

“During his lifetime, Kazi Nazrul Islam expressed grief over the modification of his music to modern tunes, in his own words,” addressed renowned Nazrul Sangeet exponent Khairul Anam Shakil, who is the Chairman of Nazrul Institute and General Secretary of Bangladesh Nazrul Sangeet Sangstha.



I understand that Coke Studio Bangla’s intention is positive. They want to spread Nazrul’s artistry to the younger generation—but in a modern manner. However, changing the original form and distorting his works is disrespectful.

PHOTO: SHEIKH MEHEDI MORSHED

SHARMIN JOYA

It has been 47 years, since our National Poet left us for good. Bangladesh Nazrul Sangeet Sangstha intends to preserve the heritage of Nazrul and promote awareness about the depth of his work. The organisation aims to inspire the younger generation of artistes to carry Nazrul's legacy forward.

Observing the Poet's death anniversary (August 27), The Daily Star spoke to Khairul Anam Shakil, to know more about their works and arrangements commemorating the rebel poet.

Could you share about the arrangements which will take place on the National Poet's death anniversary, today?

Nazrul was known for his portrayal of love, freedom and revolution. He opposed religious bigotry through his works.

Every year, Nazrul Sangeet Sangstha chooses new themes to observe this day. Since it is his death anniversary, we always try to keep the solemnity, thus selecting to perform Nazrul's devotional songs, that speak about solidarity amongst all religions.

The event will take place at Chhayanaut's auditorium in the evening, at 7pm today.

Can you please highlight the preservation process that the institute has initiated?

It is a lengthy process, yet we have already archived 250 songs under strict supervision of Nazrul Institute, which is being performed under exact accordance with authentic lyrics and compositions. These are performed by seasoned veterans and emerging artistes from Bangladesh and West Bengal.

Besides, we have been holding

workshops quarterly in a year, where we discover young talents from all over the country. These talents are primarily students, who are quite eager to learn accurate lyrics, notations and compositions of Nazrul Sangeet.

Furthermore, Bangladesh Shilpakala Academy has accommodated all the logistic aid and the Cultural Ministry has been a great support for us in this project. We have covered 40 districts already and continue to cover more.

During this process, what seemed to be the biggest challenge?

Although we are trying, people still

that goes beyond this instruction, we send them an official notice.

Recently Coke Studio Bangla has released two of Nazrul's songs—'Bagichay Bulbuli Tui' in the first season and 'Darale Duare Mor Ke Tumi' in the second. These compositions and arrangements were entirely designed in a modern way. Did Nazrul Institute take any step against this?

We have sent an official letter to Coke Studio Bangla, objecting to the matter. We have requested them to discuss with us before doing anything similar

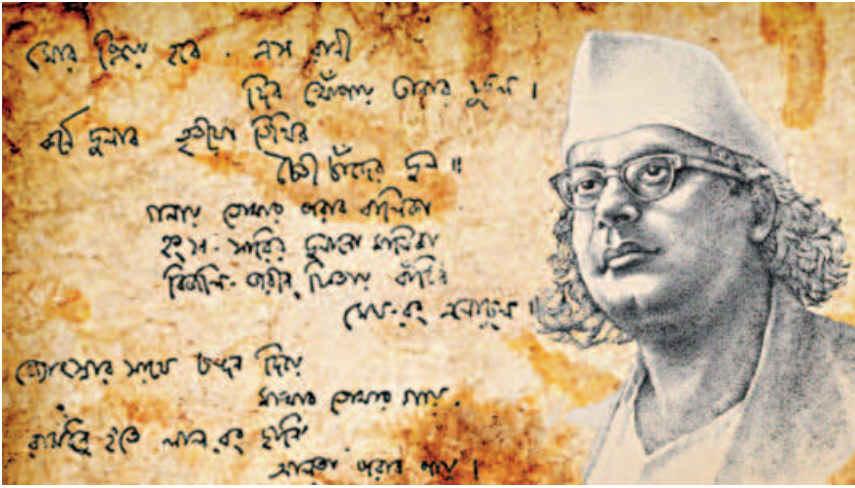


ILLUSTRATION DESIGN: ANTARA RAISA

perform Nazrul's songs in modified forms. The Nazrul Institute is being strict about upholding the correct form now. An official government notice has been imposed which ordered that no one can distort the original form of Nazrul Sangeet, and the lyrics have to be authentic. At the same time, the notice also mentioned that we cannot use Nazrul Geeti anymore, it should be Nazrul Sangeet.

Whenever we encounter anything

in the future, I am not sure if they will follow this, but we are following the rules strictly.

I understand that their intention is positive. They want to spread Nazrul's artistry to the younger generation—but in a modern manner. However, changing the original form and distorting his works is disrespectful. These songs were popular on the internet as well. Anything that is popular is not necessarily of a high standard.

Since the National Poet himself was not happy about his works being modified, we should not do it as well. Have you ever heard of Ludwig van Beethoven's works being modernised so that the younger generation can relate? True connoisseurs will find the artiste's work and carry out his legacy anyway.

Every year, Nazrul Utsav brings together all the eminent and emerging singers from both sides of the border. When is the festival's next instalment taking place?

Each time, we share updates of our preservation at the festival. The next edition will be held around the first quarter of 2024. You will be happy to know that noted singers like Haimanti Shukla and Srikanto Acharya among others, have already lent their voices to the original tunes of Nazrul.

Haimanti Shukla also congratulated us for taking the preservation initiative. She shared that if we can carry this out successfully, then they can attempt to preserve Rabindranath Tagore's works as well. We have also done workshops in Agartala, and plan to have more in Kolkata.

What further plans do you have regarding Nazrul's works, other than his music?

The institute has already given us the responsibility to translate Nazrul's literary works in English, for international exposure. Although it is quite tough to translate his philosophy, we've got some reworks which are really good. We plan to spread these translated works through embassies outside Bangladesh.

Moreover, an online archive titled Nazrul Sangeet Kosh, where the backstory of a song, its meaning and original tune all are available. It will be entirely supervised by Nazrul Sangeet Sangstha.

COUNTRYWIDE

