Rabindranath is forever, he is indispensable: Anima Roy

"We need to study him more consciously, think about him more deeply and continue researching his work," she said. "There is hardly any aspect of human life that he did not write about."

SHAH ALAM SHAZU

For acclaimed Rabindra Sangeet exponent Anima Roy, Rabindranath Tagore is neither a literary icon preserved in textbooks nor a composer remembered only on commemorative occasions. He is, she says, a way of understanding life itself.

As the world marks the 85th death anniversary of the Nobel laureate on *Baishe Srabon* (August 6), the singer reflects on a lifelong relationship with the poet whose songs, she believes, continue to illuminate the moral and emotional landscape of Bengali life.

"Everything that I am is shaped by Rabindranath," she told The Daily Star. "If I think of my life as a whole, every part of it has been touched and influenced by him."

Raised in Keraniganj and the first in her family to study at the University of Dhaka, Roy chose Rabindra Sangeet not simply as a profession but as a lifelong discipline.



PHOTO: COLLECTED



VISUAL: DOWEL BISWAS

"I stayed with it, practised it and continue to practise it every day," she said. "Whatever I have achieved—whether as an artiste or as a human being—has come because I chose to walk the path of Rabindranath."

For the singer, Tagore's legacy extends far beyond music. "His creations make my days more beautiful," she said. "They shape the way I see life. Through his songs I have learned to recognise beauty in the simplest things—a paddy field, a patch of grass, the changing seasons. They teach us how to live."

That, she argues, is precisely why Tagore remains indispensable more than eight decades after his death.

"We often speak of celebrating Bengali identity," she said. "But young people need to know Rabindranath for a deeper reason. Through him, we learn to know ourselves."

The Rabindra Sangeet exponent believes Tagore should not be confined to ceremonial remembrance or annual observances.

"We need to study him more consciously, think about him more deeply and continue researching his work," she said. "There is hardly any aspect of human life that he did not write about."

She likens his place in society to something fundamental rather than ornamental. "Just as the body needs nourishment, the mind does too," she said. "For me, Rabindranath is that nourishment. Without him, our cultural life cannot remain healthy."

Among thousands of Rabindra Sangeet compositions, one continues to accompany her through every stage of life. "***Amar Mukti Aloy Aloy*** is especially close to my heart," she said. "Whenever I sing or listen to it, it fills me with strength. It is one of the most powerful songs I know."

As another *Srabon* rolls around, Roy returns to the thought that has sustained her through decades of music. For her, the truest tribute lies not in commemorating him once a year, but in continuing to read, sing, and live with his work.



After Venice milestone, Rubaiyat Hossain's 'The Difficult Bride' heads for TIFF

After making history as the first Bangladeshi feature film to be selected for the Orizzonti section of the 83rd Venice International Film Festival, National Film Award-winning director Rubaiyat Hossain's ***The Difficult Bride*** has achieved another major milestone, earning a place in the official selection of the Toronto International Film Festival (TIFF).

The psychological horror film is set in contemporary Dhaka and explores beauty, womanhood, marriage, and social expectations through a supernatural lens. It stars newcomer Zaineen Chowdhury Karim in the lead role, alongside Azmeri Haque Badhan, Reekita Nondine Shimu, Sunerah Binte Kamal, Shatabdi Wadud, Saberi Alam, and Mohammed Bari.

The film will screen on September 16, 17, and 19. The 51st edition of TIFF runs from September 10 to 20.

WHAT'S THE HAPS?

'Poetic Echoes with Monsoon Melodies'



Farhana Trina and Samia Ahsan bring together Bangla and French poetry and songs in a monsoon-themed recital at Alliance Française de Dhaka. Featuring works by Rabindranath Tagore, Kazi Nazrul Islam, Atul Prasad Sen, Charles Baudelaire, Paul Verlaine and Victor Hugo, the programme celebrates two literary traditions in conversation.

Date: **Saturday | August 8, 2026**
Time: **6:30 pm onwards**
Venue: **Alliance Française de Dhaka, Dhanmondi**

NEWS

'Another revolution is approaching'

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within months of taking office.

Shafiqur alleged that his party and its allies were facing pressure, intimidation and inducements to compromise on their demand for implementation of the public mandate expressed through the referendum.

He said his party would not abandon the demand under any circumstances and would go to any length, even sacrificing their lives, to achieve it.

Expressing concern over recent developments in educational institutions, he said there were signs that the culture of fear and campus domination was returning to schools and universities, and urged students, teachers and staff members to remain vigilant.

Referring to the economy and public suffering, he alleged that the government was creating artificial gas shortages to justify price hikes, calling it a deception against the people.

Speaking at the rally, National Citizen Party Chief Coordinator Nasiruddin Patwari said, "History bears witness that Tarique Rahman will not remain in power. Tarique Rahman will not stay in power; his downfall has already begun."

Patwari said the "soldiers of July" could not be bought with "positions or money".

He urged party activists and supporters to remain alert and ensure their own safety.

"Make sure that Jubo Dal and Chhatra Dal are not able to carry out any oppression against the people. If there is no electricity or gas anywhere, take your pots and pans and come out onto the streets," he said.

Speaking as a special guest, Liberal Democratic Party President Col (retd) Oli Ahmad said he had repeatedly urged the prime minister over the past several months not to create divisions.

"Do not create a situation that could mark the beginning of your downfall," he said.

The rally was presided over by Bangladesh Khelafat Majlish Ameer Mamunul Haque, who urged political parties to refrain from violence and warned that people would resist any return to "terror-based politics".

NCP leaders walk out of state event on July

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one-point and nine-point demands.

NCP Joint Member Secretary Mahin Sarkar, a former coordinator of the Students Against Discrimination, wrote on Facebook that the documentary portrayed Tarique as the person who announced the one-point demand.

He said Nahid, who had announced the demand despite grave risk, and Asif Mahmud, who had declared the "Long March to Dhaka", were not properly reflected in the documentary.

During the chaos, Minister Azam took the stage, appealed for calm and said any mistakes in the documentary would be corrected.

As order still could not be restored, State Minister for Liberation War Affairs Ishraque Hossain took the microphone and rebuked the protesters, saying, "Have you come here to project yourselves?"

Addressing the slogans, Ishraque added, "What are you doing? What have you done for the martyrs' families? You have done nothing."

Azam then tried to calm Ishraque, while Home Minister Salahuddin Ahmed took the microphone and asked those who wanted to speak to come to the stage and raise their objections.

NCP Member Secretary and MP Akhter Hossen then took the stage, urged the audience to remain calm, before announcing the party's decision to leave the programme.

After leaving the venue, Akhter told The Daily Star that the documentary deliberately failed to present a complete account of the uprising.

"There was no mention of the huge rally at the Central Shaheed Minar on August 3 or the announcement made there. Instead, an online speech by Tarique Rahman was shown as the declaration of the one-point demand.

"I was trying to restrain them when State Minister Ishraque Hossain made hostile remarks and his followers began behaving aggressively. I then announced our decision to walk out, and we left the event.

"Liberation War Affairs Minister Ahmed Azam Khan expressed regret over the documentary. However, I believe those responsible did this quite deliberately."

Tariqul Islam, president of Jatiya Jubo Shakti, NCP's youth wing, alleged that signs of the BNP's influence were evident throughout the programme.

He said neither the NCP nor any frontline leader of the uprising was shown in the documentary. Instead, an online speech by Tarique was used to represent him as the person who declared the one-point demand, he alleged.

"You may or may not give us space, but you cannot distort the history of July in this manner," he said.

Tariqul also claimed that supporters of Ishraque assaulted NCP leaders and tried to push Mahin away.

The allegations could not be independently verified. Ishraque could not be reached for comments.

In his formal address later at the programme, Ishraque said July belongs to the people and is not the property of any individual, party or group.

Minister Azam said, "Mistakes may be made -- by me, by the ministry or by you. We will correct those mistakes together."

Speaking at the event, acting president Hafiz said the disorder at a national programme organised to honour July fighters was unexpected, especially in front of foreign guests. "The way we were humiliated in front of foreign guests has deeply hurt me.

"There was no image of Abu Sayed, who is the image and symbol of this revolution. Without his image, this cannot be called a documentary."

He also criticised the documentary for not including BNP chairperson Khaleda Zia, saying that some mistakes had certainly been made.

Apparently referring to ousted prime minister Sheikh Hasina, Hafiz said the person in the neighbouring country would be the happiest about the incident.

He also criticised the walkout, saying that everyone should have calmed down after the minister acknowledged the mistakes and apologised.

Salahuddin said no party or group could claim exclusive ownership of the uprising. "Why should we politicise July? If we start asking, 'Whose July is it?', then July will belong to none of us," he said.

"This path to liberation was not built in a day. It was built from 2009 to 2024. July belongs to all of us."

Inside the museum of resistance

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memories preserved there would allow future generations to remember the sacrifices that reshaped the nation's history.

Among the exhibits is the blood-soaked jersey worn by Abu Sayed, who stood before armed police moments before he was shot dead on July 16, 2024. Preserved beside it is the jersey of Wasim Akram, who was also killed the same day.

Abu Sayed's defiant stand before the police became the first spark that inspired the uprising and ultimately brought down the regime.

Nearby lies the wristwatch of Mir Mahfuzur Rahman Mugdha. Although its hands no longer move, it seems to preserve the memory of the young man whose final words -- "Does anyone need water? Water?" -- became one of the defining moments of the July uprising.

Not far away stands the small bicycle of six-year-old Jabir Ibrahim. Beside it are photographs of Nafis's lifeless body hanging from a rickshaw and the blood-stained sleeveless vest worn by Sheikh Fahmin Jafar on the day he was killed.

According to the United Nations, over 1,400 people were killed and several thousand others injured during the July-August 2024 uprising that ended Sheikh Hasina's 15-year rule.

The museum attempts to tell that story not through statistics alone, but through the possessions left behind by those who never came home.

Photographs of martyrs line the galleries, while outside, a memorial plaque bears the names of those who lost their lives during the movement.

Among the exhibits is perhaps the museum's most heartbreaking possession -- a handwritten letter left by martyr Anas before joining a protest march.

It reads, "Mother, I'm going to the procession. I could no longer hold myself back. I'm sorry, Abbu. I disobeyed you and left home. I couldn't remain indoors like a selfish person. If I don't return alive, don't grieve -- be proud. Please forgive me for every mistake I have made in my life. I love you all very much."

In one gallery, the mother of martyr Rajeeb stood silently before a glass case containing her son's treasured belongings before breaking down in tears.

Rajeeb, a young man from Lalmonirhat who was killed on August 5, had received the President's Scout Award in 2021. His flute, tabla, mobile phone, Scout scarf, crest, badges and personal cards are now preserved in the museum.

"My Rajeeb could play the flute and the tabla beautifully. He also recited the Holy Quran so well," she said through tears, struggling to look at the belongings she had once seen scattered around their home.

Elsewhere in the museum, Nusrat Jahan Laboni found herself reliving another painful chapter.

Her brother disappeared after he was allegedly picked up on December 4, 2013, and never returned.

Walking through Sheikh Hasina's bedroom, preserved largely as it was, Laboni struggled to reconcile the room's comfort with the suffering she associates with the ousted Awami League government's rule.

"Lying in this bed, sitting in this room, with a sane mind, deciding who to abduct today... she used to give those orders over the phone right from here, lying in this bed, in this room," she said after completing the tour.

She said the museum also displays menus used during Hasina's tenure, highlighting what she described as a stark contrast between the lifestyle inside Gono Bhaban and the hardships faced by ordinary people.

"She used to tell us to eat burgers made with jackfruit, but her own food list was enormous. Even the afternoon snacks filled pages," she said.

Laboni said she had earlier visited Aynaghar, the alleged secret detention facility whose existence came to light after the fall of the AL government.

"I tried to stay inside one of those tiny cells to understand what the victims had endured, but I could remain there for only a few minutes. Seeing the Aynaghar replica inside the museum brought all those memories back," she said.

Inside the museum, a replica of Aynaghar recreates the cramped, windowless cells where victims of enforced disappearance were allegedly held for months or even years, often blindfolded and subjected to torture.

Inside another display case sits a leather whip recovered from one of the alleged secret detention facilities run by the Rapid Action Battalion (Rab).

Large photographs depict blindfolded detainees with their hands and feet bound.

Busts of retired Major General Tarique Ahmed Siddique, former defence adviser to Sheikh Hasina, and relieved Major General Ziaul Ahsan are displayed alongside notes describing allegations surrounding enforced disappearances and extrajudicial killings during the AL regime.

On the compound walls, colourful graffiti, slogans and murals painted by protesters after Gono Bhaban was stormed on August 5, 2024, remain largely untouched.

Inside the building, broken furniture, shattered glass and damaged walls have deliberately been left unrepaired, preserving the anger that swept through the residence after Hasina fled the country.

Visitors paused before the red telephones once used inside the prime minister's office and residence. As many lifted the receivers, they got to listen to various call records of Sheikh Hasina.

A large portrait of Buet student Abrar Fahad, who was beaten to death by Chhatra League activists in 2019, greets visitors near the entrance, while sculptures recall the 2009 BDR carnage and other painful chapters in the nation's history.

Tagore's 85th death anniv today

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He also wrote eight novels, 84 short stories, and numerous poems in his prolific literary career that spanned over almost seven decades.

Gitanjali, Gora, and Ghare-Baire are his best-known works.

Rabindranath became the first non-European to win the Nobel Prize in Literature in 1913.

His compositions were chosen by two countries as national anthems: Bangladesh's "Amar Shonar Bangla" and India's "Jana Gana Mana".