



RESTING IN PRIDE



Dept. of Physiology
Surendranath College (Kolkata)
B.Sc. Honours
Sem-1(2021-2022)





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INTRODUCTION

Since

Since you are gone
And we shall see you no more,
May our memory never deceive us
From your presence still galore.

—Amitrajit Manna

Narayan Debnath, Shaonli Mitra, Pandit Birju Maharaj—they don't die. Their flesh and blood selves can be mortal and corporeal, but their extensive contributions to their respective fields make them immortal. This is a very small tribute to these exceptionally great personalities.



NARAYAN DEBNATH

*"I MERELY
WANTED TO
SHOW TO
CHILDREN
THAT TO
WIN, YOU
HAVE TO BE
GOOD AND
SMART BOY
LIKE
BHONDA."*

AN EVENING WITH NARAYAN DEBNATH

*(A FICTIONAL INTERVIEW TAKEN IN AN
EQUALLY FICTIONAL LOCATION)*

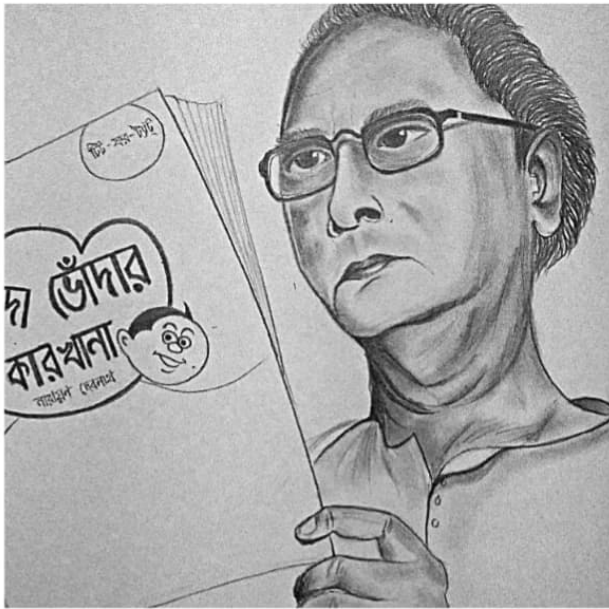
On these cold days having coffee at Cafe El Chapo feels great. From the thirtieth floor of 24 Chowrangee Road, amongst the clouds, it tastes even better. As I was taking in the espresso through every cell of my body and my tongue, he approached. Dressed in a white khadi half sleeved shirt and his classic white dhoti, there could be no mistake. I stood up much more in a childish excitement than my professional etiquette. It was Narayan Debnath in his regular humble yet captivating persona. Exactly on time, his punctuality amazed me. On the fifth anniversary of the departmental magazine of SNC, who could be a



better man to turn to ?
Born on the 25th of November 1925, in Shibpur, he belonged to an immigrant family from Bangladesh. Though his family was in the gold jewellery business, he followed his chosen path of visual art, to become the great artist he is today. Recognised by his insanely famous characters like Batul, the great (the muscleman); Nonte Fonte (the duo); Bahadur Beral (courageous cat); Hada Bhoda (the siblings); Kaushik (the spy) and many more. 'Rabi Chobi', a compilation of art on Tagore, is his lesser



known masterpiece. He won the Sahitya Academy award in 2013, the Banga Bibhusan in 2015 and the civilian award: the Padma Shri in 2021. He recognises himself as a children's artist and not a cartoonist. He served for more than 60 years—single handedly drawing, composing and setting three comic strips published monthly. Having just recovered from a long illness he was strictly prohibited from consuming outside food. "My work started at my father's shop when I was 16, as a jewelry designer. My fascination of visual arts



culminated with my joining the Art College where I received formal education", he remembers. "In an age without movies, comics were all the rage and even today they seem to be going well", he adds laughingly. Batul, one of the longest running single creator comic strip, came in the backdrop of the Indo-Pak war of 1965, where the hero was seen devastating the enemy. Since then it has been on every issue of the magazine Suktara. "He is older than you young man... and still shows no sign of ageing!", his humour still intact. He believes that most

of his characters are from boys he had seen around him. Having worked briefly in the advertisement industry, he was well aware of the public demands and desires and found happiness in depicting pieces he found hilarious. "I never had a creative block as people keep on doing stupid things", he taunted me. He regards himself as a conservative: a firm disapprover of modern ways. Unlike the famous Stan Lee, he does not want anyone but himself to work on his characters. "My creations



end with me", his sad statement, "and I shall not give any explanation for it." In the past, he had worked in collaboration with Bimal Ghosh on a depiction of the life of Swami Vivekananda.

'A seller of stories through art' would be the lamest description of him. His demure, low key profile and joyful smile increased my respect for him, not only as an artist but also as a human. He has an optimistic view about the future and expects our readers to love visual art and storytelling. His personality and humour may depict him as a great speaker but I found he spoke little and (to my surprise) he sometimes fumbled, but his paintbrush does not.

LESSER KNOWN FACTS



Narayan Debnath holds the record of one of the longest running comics by an individual artist for Handa Bhonda comics series which completed its continuous 53 years of running.

He was the first and only Comics-Artist in India who has received a D. Litt. degree.



"Abar Jawkher Dhon" by Hemendra Kumar Roy was one of his favourite books during childhood. Apart from this, he was also fond of Mustafa Siraj and Saradindu Bandopadhyay's writings.



SHAONLI MITRA

*"THEATRE
TODAY IS NO
MORE ABOUT
ART. IT'S A
PRODUCT
FOR SALE.
BUT A TRULY
COMMITTED
PERSON
WON'T WANT
TO REDUCE
THEATRE TO
A PRODUCT."*

A NON-THEATRICAL VIEW OF A THEATRICAL PERSON

*(A FICTIONAL INTERVIEW TAKEN IN AN
EQUALLY FICTIONAL LOCATION)*

I waited with coffee at our old hideout, El Chapo. Again from the thirtieth floor of 24 Chowrangee Road, amongst the clouds, there was an aromatic mystery! As I was taking in the espresso, one of the best dishes of this place, she approached in an elegant white sari. I instantly stood up in reverence. It was Shaonli Mitra in her expected modest yet captivating demeanor. For this special edition of 'Young Bengali', who else could be a better person to turn to?

Shaonli Mitra was born to
Shambhu Mitra and Tripti Mitra in our



newly independent nation. Since early childhood she showed keen interest in performing arts, especially acting, which her family greatly supported. Her mastery in the art can be traced in her stage compositions, directions and productions. She has directed and performed in numerous plays, which the people of Calcutta and all over India have loved so much. Her talent as a playwright earned her the Padma Shri in 2009 and Banga Bibhusan in 2012. Her plays include 'Jodi Ar Ek Bar', 'Chandali', 'Putulkhela' to name a few.



"My interest in writing came from Tagore, he has inspired me greatly in my acting as well as dialogue writing", she began, "Even in my books, I feel, subtle cues may be present of the same. As a child I had performed in Tagore's Dakghar. Since then he has deeply been with me." No wonder why she chaired the committee on celebrating Tagore's birth centenary. On her only film, Ritwik Ghatak's 'Jukti Tokko Aar Goppo', she alludes, "Those were days of great creative responsibilities. One duty of art is to express to the people the bigotry of the



powerful.

She has been a socialist like her father, all her life and was indirectly involved in active politics. Even now she firmly maintains her political stand. "Inequality is on the rise everywhere, if I, through what I can, contribute something to the public consciousness, I shall be grateful." She is an orthodox by choice and finds the Bengali mainstream movies of the present days tasteless, yet, admires some works done in OTT platforms for what they convey. However, she herself doesn't wish to write for OTT due to her

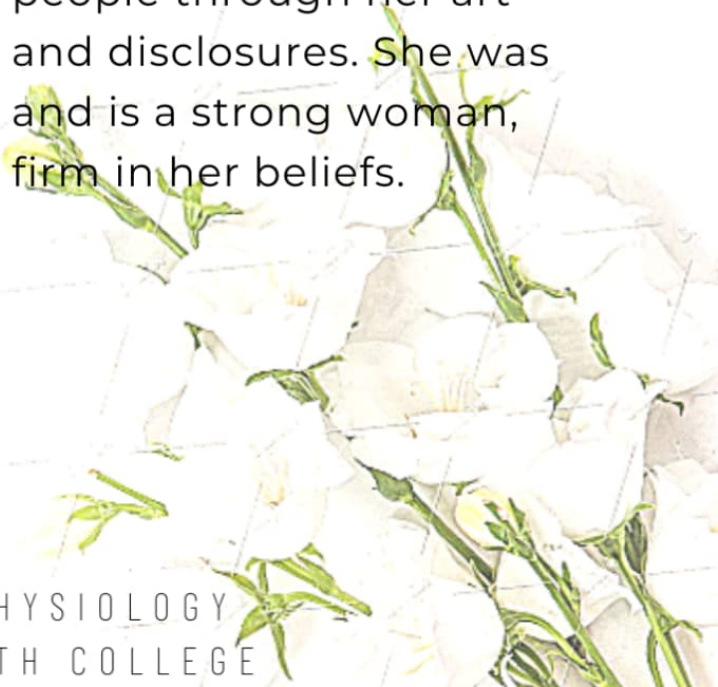
constant companion, ill health. "I don't want to see the monstrosities of hospitals!", she explained, "I am fine in the quiet and calm of my home." Sadly, it raises doubt if we will ever see her work again. She pioneered staging plays on woman emancipation and used her group 'Ponchom Baidik' for the same. Her ideology and desires remain as fresh as a youth, bursting with energy.

In spite of being such a strong person, the theatre icon expressed her melancholy when asked about her aloofness from the public eye. She said, "I



don't care if people call me an escapist for not having an opinion on every television debate. I've grown up hearing that my lineage got me favours. But I never said anything. I've learnt to choose my battles."

Yet her grace and deep knowledge steered her to limelight and she received her deserved recognition. Today she is regarded as one of the greatest literary worker, a social reformer, who worked tirelessly for the betterment of the situations of the common people through her art and disclosures. She was and is a strong woman, firm in her beliefs.

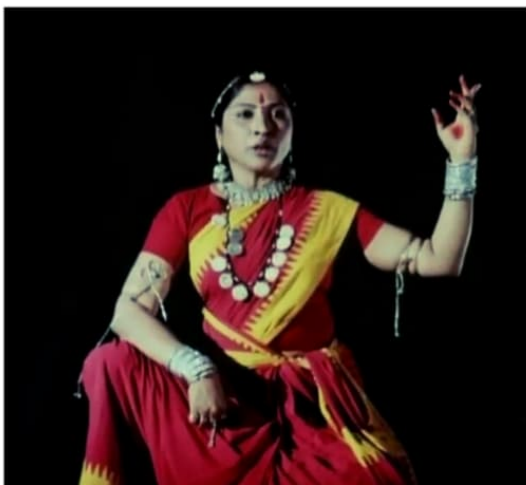


LESSER KNOWN FACTS



The eminent actress and playwright acted in Ritwik Ghatak's Jukti Takko Aar Gappo as "Bangabala".

She immensely contributed to the field of radio plays. Some of such works include "Megh Brishti Alo" "Koni", "Bindur Chhele" etc.



She founded "Pancham Baidik" which established a trailblazer repertoire by introducing widely acclaimed plays on women's emancipation.



BIRJU MAHARAJ

*"THE BIGGEST
THING THAT
CLASSICAL
DANCE AND
MUSIC DOES
TO YOU IS
HELP ATTAIN
BALANCE
BETWEEN
YOUR MIND
AND SOUL."*

A BRIEF OVERVIEW OF PANDIT BIRJU MAHARAJ

A LEGACY

Brij Mohan Nath Mishra (popularly known as Pandit Birju Maharaj), one of India's most famous and favorite artists, belonged to the Kalka-Bindadin gharana of Lucknow, a classical Kathak dance form. He was born on February 4, 1938 in Lucknow.

Birju Maharaj's father and guru Achhan Maharaj, uncle Shambhu Maharaj and Lachhu Maharaj were also famous Kathak dancers, who performed for the erstwhile Royalties of Oudh and Rajputana. Young Birju was greatly attracted by the glamour and aristocracy of performing in the royal courts. He was trained by his family and started his

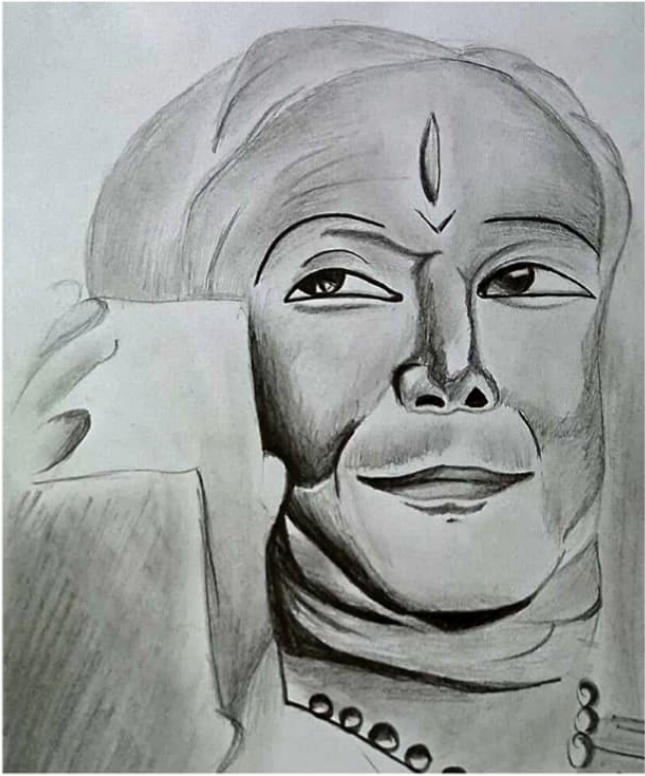


stage life at an early age of seven, at his father's concert in West Bengal.

The artistic personality of Pandit Birju Maharaj has been such, which is considered to be beyond logic. He was a guru, dancer, choreographer, singer and composer. He used to play percussion, write poetry and paint. His disciples are well-known artists and are spread all over the world. Through his art, he has touched millions of hearts and inspired generations of dancers. For his high spirited enthusiasm in performing arts, he was awarded Padma Vibhushan in 1983. Birju

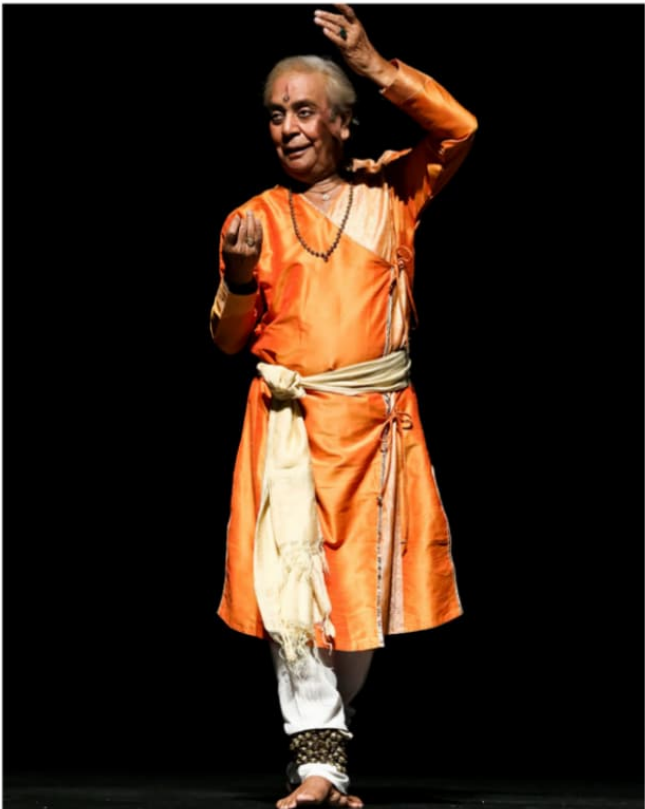


Maharaj also choreographed dance numbers in several Bollywood films, including Umrao Jaan, Dedh Ishqiya, Bajirao Mastani. Apart from Padma Vibhushan, he has also received Sangeet Natak Akademi Award and Kalidas Samman. In 2012, he was awarded the National Film Award for choreography in the film Vishwaroopam. Apart from this, he received the Filmfare Award in the year 2016 for the choreography of the song 'Mohe Rang Do Laal' in Bajirao Mastani. Along with this, he also received the honorary

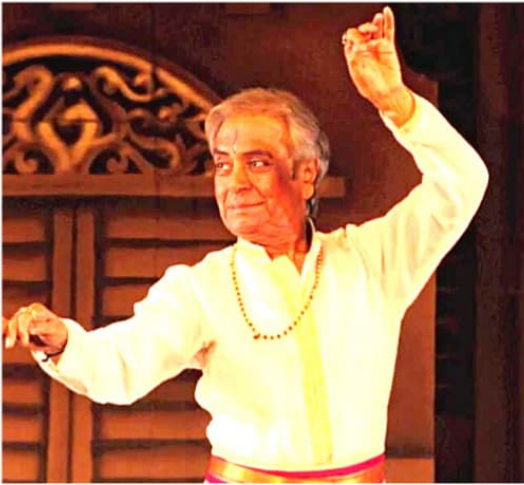


Doctorates from Banaras Hindu University and Khairagarh University.

His legacy continues to this day by the many artists he had trained, who spread his form and style throughout the world. His mudras are used by many budding artists today even after his sad demise on the 17th of January, 2022. He will stay alive in our collective consciousness through his students, the Indian traditional dance fraternity, performing artists and numerous mourning fans worldwide.



LESSER KNOWN FACTS



Pandit Birju Maharaj started performing at the tender age of seven and went on to mentor dance at the age of thirteen only.

Very few are aware that apart from Kathak, he was inclined towards music also. He was an equally exceptional singer and composer. In fact, he sang and composed music for 'Shatranj ke Khilari'.



Pandit Birju Maharaj formed new heights for Kathak as he would choreograph Kathak dance into dramas.

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