

## Introduction

This is the third issue of *Crossings: ULAB Journal of English Studies*, and is dedicated to Rabindranath Tagore on the occasion of his sesquicentennial birth anniversary. In honour of him eight essays have been published, which address many aspects of his works and which are placed in the first section, titled "Tagore." The second section consists of ten essays on various authors, and is named as "Literature," while the third group of essays, titled "Language," consists of six essays that explore the theories of language and suggest ways to implement English with greater efficacy at the institutional level in Bangladesh. The fourth group includes the book reviews, four of them.

The first two essays on Tagore are translated from Bangla, one being written by Rafiqul Islam, the Professor Emeritus at ULAB and Nazrul Professor, who discusses the personal relationship between Tagore and Kazi Nazrul Islam, the national poet of Bangladesh, who was thirty-eight years junior to Tagore, but whom the former acknowledged with great affection for his rebellious poetic soul, and would always welcome him whenever they met. Tagore dedicated his play, *Bashanta* (The Spring) to Nazrul and urged him to withdraw his hunger strike by a telegram sent to Alipore Jail, where the latter was interned. The second translated essay is by Serajul Islam Chowdhury, a UGC Professor and frontline intellectual of the country, who discusses the plays by Tagore from a Marxist point of view and opines that through his plays Tagore showed he rightly identified the problems of a class-ridden society, where exploitation by the rich of the poor is the embarrassing fact, but because of his class allegiance it was not possible for him to suggest drastic measures that could bring about actual social changes. Both the essays have been translated by Golam Sarwar Chowdhury, Professor of English at ULAB and a member of the editorial board of *Crossings*. In the third essay, Syed Manzoorul Islam, a renowned litterateur and cultural personality, comments on Tagore's paintings as being predominantly romantic, which was the result of Tagore's adopting a synthetic approach between traditionalism and modernism. Kaiser Haq, the internationally renowned poet of Bangladesh writing in English, and who has now joined ULAB fulltime on lien from Dhaka University, in the next essay, compares several translators of Tagore who worked at the time when his reputation in the world was flagging, but says that it was William Radice who could be given the major honours for pioneering the job of restoring Tagore to the world readership. In the fifth essay, Fakrul Alam, a great exponent of Tagore who has recently co-edited with Radha Chakravarty, *The Essential Tagore*, the prestigious translated Tagore omnibus published by the Belknap Press for Harvard University Press (2011), explores Tagore's missionary zeal in preaching humanism by delivering speeches worldwide, and in doing so, Alam says, Tagore mastered the English Language

through much labour and ultimately achieved an acceptable standard in that language. Alam therefore claims that Tagore's prose writings in English deserve greater attention than they have been given. Mohit Ul Alam compares Tagore with Shakespeare in respect of their treatment of young marriageable daughters in their works and opines that both writers deal with the theme of dowry as a questionable social practice. In the next two essays, Mohammad Shahidul Islam Chowdhury and Abdullah Al Mamun both discuss almost the same theme as was drawn upon by Mohit Ul Alam in the previous essay, which is the portrayal by Tagore of the abject condition of women. Chowdhury discusses the potential similarity between Ibsen and Tagore in feeling the need for liberating women from male dominance, while Mamun depicts the eternal humanity that resonates through Tagore's short stories and cuts across the gender-division.

The next group of essays, under the caption "Literature," introduces Arun Gupto's essay first, in which Gupto discusses the internal dislocation in R. K. Narayan's novel, *Untouchable*, in which the central character, Bakha, seems to be discarded by the novel's elitist language itself. In the next essay, Nuzhat Amin deliberates the important point whether Arundhati Roy is more a writer than an activist or vice versa, and concludes that in Roy's case the question is impertinent as both identities cross-fertilize each other. Mah-E-Nur Qudsi Islam, the next essayist, writes on *Hamlet* from a feminist critical paradigm in order to point out Shakespeare's tentative approach towards his female characters, thus allowing them to come to the centre at times and then sending them off to periphery, almost like an ebb and flow. The next essayist, Rajyashree Khusru-Lahiri focuses on the literature of Kashmir proving the fact that the translation of that literature done by non-Indians shouldn't be viewed as an act of imperialistic patronage but rather as a trend that has actually helped Kashmiri literature to survive. Milan Kundera's masterpiece, *The Unbearable Lightness of Being*, has been analyzed by Shahnewaz Kabir from a Nietzschean perspective and the conclusion he makes is that Kundera, like Nietzsche, has allowed the positive value of life (Tomas: weight) to have edge over the irresponsibility (Sabina: lightness), while Nasrin Islam, the next essayist, discusses Kafka's *Metamorphosis* as to claim that it is not only Gregor who is metamorphosed but also his sister, Grete, who undergoes a psychological metamorphosis. In a way, the following essay, that of Musarrat Shamim on Coetzee's *Disgrace*, can be linked thematically with the essays on Tagore published in the earlier section of this volume so far as it shows the role of Lucy as a feminist protester against the traditional aesthetic role of women drawn and assigned by a male hegemonic discourse. The next essayist, Asif Iqbal, raises the question whether Bangladeshi writers writing in English are able to deflate the criticism commonly raised against the subcontinental English writers that they write from an elitist position, and opines that the Bangladeshi writers in English have not come out of that stigma except for poet Kaiser Haq. Shakil Rabbi, in the next essay, discusses three postcolonialist novelists by

putting them in a theoretical framework of travel writings and says that the writers—Pico Iyer, Bikram Seth and Amitav Ghosh respectively—have historicized the ‘contact zones’ by not subscribing to the imperial tropes but rather by erecting their own scaffolding of resistance. Syed Waliullah, one of the famed modernist novelists of Bangladesh has been celebrated in the next essay by Md. Shafiu Alam Khan Chwodhury for his novel, *Tree Without Roots*, where Majid, the protagonist, is portrayed as an existentialist, who does not suffer from the traditional hangover of having to be ethically accountable for his action.

The next section appears with the heading, “Language,” in which six essays deal with several problems of teaching English in Bangladesh. While Shayeekh-Us-Saleheen emphasizes the need for improving the current methods of communicative teaching at the university level, ATM Sazedul Huq discusses the importance of introducing the ESP (English for Specific Purposes) method in English teaching at Bangladesh universities so that English learning truly becomes needs-based. Mehnaz Tazin Chowdhury, in the next essay, highlights the significance of using the thesaurus in creative writing classroom, while Md. Minhazul Abedin in his essay, probes the problem presented by the mother tongue interference in learning pronunciation of the English words. Nadia Rahman poses the valid question of whether the English pedagogy followed in Bangladesh is imposing an indirect cultural hegemony of neo-imperialism, and suggests ways to come out of it. The last essayist of this group, Nasreen Sultana does an empirical study of the B. Ed syllabus and finds the pitfalls and then suggests solutions.

In the Book Review section there are four reviews. Farida Sheikh, Sadat Zaman Khan, Md. Bin Khaled and Muhammad Rafiqul Islam are the contributors. We are grateful to all contributors of articles and reviews and keen on retaining their support and cooperation in future.

We take this opportunity to express our deep gratitude and regards to Mr Kazi Shahed Ahmed, President of the Board of Trustees, whose patriotic zeal spreads over everything happening at ULAB, and who is ever so inspiring for us. Dr Kazi Anis Ahmed, Vice President of BoT, ULAB, has always motivated us with the right vision and it is because of his unflagging support that we could bring out the third issue of *Crossings*. Heartly thanks to him. We also heartily thank Professor Imran Rahman, the Acting Vice-Chancellor of ULAB, Dr. Jahirul Haque, DAA, and Juditha Olmacher, DC for helping us at every phase of the publication of this volume. Mr. Foyzul Islam, the Registrar of ULAB, is also thanked heartily for publishing it, and along with him we also want to thank the relevant ULAB administrative staff who supported us.

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wouldn't have been possible to undertake the editorial job without the generous support, ideas and suggestions forwarded by them in and off the editorial meetings.

My thanks also go to Mr Nurmohammad of Momin Offset Press for composing and formatting the journal to our liking. I also greatly want to thank Mr Rahat of Papyrus who gave us the original cover. We also want to heartily thank Afroza Breti for helping us with the selection of Tagore's pictures and paintings from the websites.

As is still relevant, let me repeat the last paragraph of my Introduction to the first issue of *Crossings* (2008) here: "The science of bibliography says that the ideal text never exists. Therefore, it's possibly impossible to avoid typos, syntactical infelicities, and perceptual lapses in publishing an academic journal, and I'm sure that there might be many a fault like this to annoy a sensitive reader. My only pleading to that reader when such an occurrence catches his/her eyesight is to consider that it was either unintentional or, as Samuel Johnson once said when a friend pointed out a mistake in his writing, that it was due to pure ignorance. I would like to earnestly invite all readers and well wishers to forward suggestions of improvement so that our next issue will become reasonably closer to the ideal text.

"Let me finish my editorial with the Shakespearean adage that all is well that ends well."

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