St Xavier's Collegiate school in Kolkata has set up a club to help students to immerse themselves in the culture and traditions of West Bengal.

According to Jesuit Fr. Sebastian James, the school’s vice principal, one of its aims is to train them to be “agents of cultural traditions.”

“Most people think there is no scope for nurturing cultural traditions in Church-run English schools and we wanted to break this myth,” said Fr James, adding that “60 percent of the students now belong to the group.”

The school’s most famous alumnus is the Nobel laureate Rabindranath Tagore. The students and teachers recently paid tribute to him by bringing out an album entitled “Xavier’s to Tagore: Muktapushpa (Gemflower).”

“We wanted to give something back to our celebrated alumnus on the 150th anniversary of his birth, by singing some of the songs he had written,” Fr James said. “Exactly 100 years ago, in his autobiography Jivan Smitri, Tagore reminisced on his days at the school. So it is fitting that the present students should honor the poet with this album.” “It is part of a larger project to help students cherish their culture and literature, through music, art, recital, poetry and one act plays.”

The album, released on February 2, is being marketed by one of Kolkata’s leading audio production and marketing firms. Students from grades four to 12 performed on it. Eighth grade student Aditya Bhattacharya said: “we are not professionals, so we had to work hard to get the renditions as perfect as we could.”

Sudha Jaiswal, the teacher who coordinated the project, said it was a wonderful opportunity to pay homage to their renowned former student.

“Through the album, which contains 10 songs and six of Tagore’s most famous poems, we tried to pay an adequate tribute to the great poet, author, dramatist, actor, novelist and short story writer,” she said.

The Bengali Club, set up four years ago, organizes day-long cultural festivals that include literary, music and dance competitions. “Last year, students from 15 schools participated in the festival,” said Fr James. “Our students should be proud of being Bengalis and our little efforts to inculcate these values are slowly working wonders.”