

World Cup mania

Bipasha and Tauquir on their favourite teams



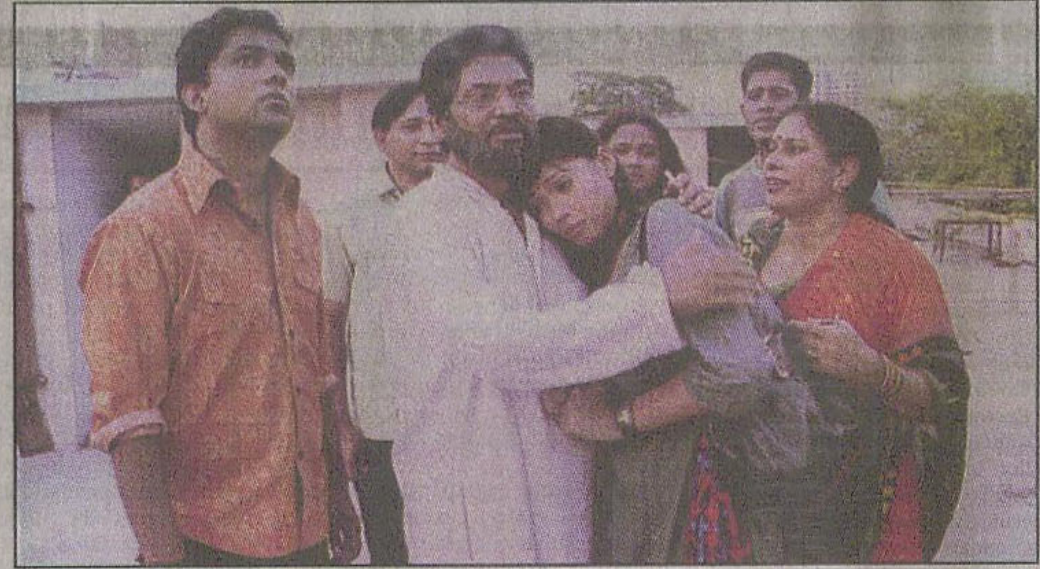
CULTURAL CORRESPONDENT

"I am such a football illiterate that when the last World Cup took place in 2002 I actually asked my husband which team would be playing first!" confesses Bipasha. At her comment her husband Tauquir Ahmed laughed his head off and answered that this was not cricket and that the rules were actually different, where both teams would start at the same time. However, though not the most knowledgeable person on the rules of football, Bipasha does have a favourite team which happens to be Italy. Once again her reason happens to be interesting to say the least. The glamorous actress supports Italy because of its ancient civilisation and rich culture. She feels that the players will also be very cultured and have a mystic element. Her husband Tauquir usually roots for the underdogs. He always empathises with them and hence generally starts off by supporting the African nations.

TV play: Aah Football Bahh Football

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World Cup football is the most watched event all over the world. *Aah Football Bahh Football* is the title of a single episode TV play based on human triumph in the backdrop of the game of football. The story revolves around a retired schoolteacher (played by Amjad Hossain). While returning from his daughter's house he finds football fans hoisting flags of different countries on their roof tops. Taking a cue from there, he buys several flags of Bangladesh and distributes them among the public. He also requests people to hoist the Bangladeshi flag along with their favourite teams' flags. Amjad Hossain, Joy, Shamu, Parvin Mahbuba, Farzana Zaman Rumpa and others are the major cast members of the play. Produced by Anando Alo the play will be aired tonight at 7:50 pm on Channel-i.



Amjad Hossain (C) with co-actors in the play

On the learning curve

The many facets of Farhana Mithu

KARIM WAHEED

"At an age when kids are surrounded with toys, my constant companions were books," says actress Farhana Mithu. A familiar face on the small screen, Mithu has attained much acclaim for the role she plays in the popular TV serial *Kachher Manush*.

Mithu's passion for reading seems to be inherent. Her uncle, noted journalist-writer Fayeze Ahmed used to take her to the book depositories in Banglabazar and let her go to town, as she fondly remembers. "I used to make a list of books I wanted and I'd eagerly wait for the day. It was the proverbial 'kid in a candy store' situation for me." She was also fortunate enough to witness *Moddhoraat-er Ashuwarohi* (by Fayeze Ahmed) in the making.

Mithu became a radio host with the programme *Uttaran*. Her TV career started with a commercial (in 1998) that she did upon insistence of Geeti Ara Chowdhury. Following that she appeared in a major role in a single-episode TV play *Shangshar Shakhi* written by the late actress Najma Anwar. The play followed the bitter-sweet relationship of a young woman (played by Mithu) who has just moved to the big city from a village and her mother-in-law. Neither woman leaves a single chance to take a shot at the other but when they have company, they put up a show of tender-love and care. The play was aired on Ekushey TV in 2000.

Though *Shangshar...* was her first TV play, *Jeje Jeje Obosheshey* (A TV serial by Ahsan Habib) was Mithu's first work to air. Soon, Mithu found several offers in single episode TV plays and TV serials for her at-ease subtle expressions and impeccable diction.

Mithu's role in *Kachher Manush*, Chhanda, is of a housewife who often



finds herself in discord with her husband. However, Chhanda is one of those women, who for the sake of their family, their familiar identity in the society and above all, their children, never confront the situation. They are used to cope with unfavourable circumstances without any indication of discomfort, even when they are dying inside little by little.

Rawshan, the character Mithu plays on another TV serial, *Labonya Probha* that has grabbed the audi-

ence's interest, is poles apart. Rawshan is not the coy, subdued kind. When she finds her husband's actions and words offensive, she flat out tells him off. When the circumstances become intolerable, she gets a job and leaves her husband.

Mithu is a regular in the theatre scene as well. In 2004, she became a member of Nagorik Natya Shamprodaya. In *Karno Kunti Sangbad*, one of the three stories narrated in Aatur Rahman's play

Natyotroyee, she plays the role of Kunti. She plays one of the major roles in *Chhayanas* as well.

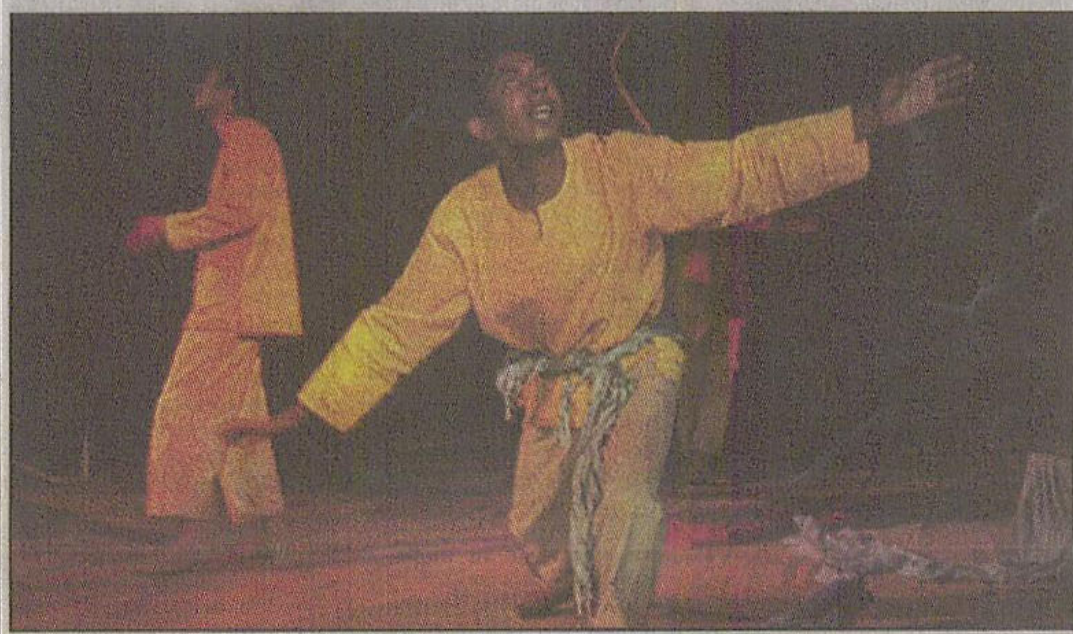
Mithu is also the researcher and presenter of a show titled *Japito Jibon*, aired on Rtv. The show highlights life sketches of veteran personalities who have made immense contribution in different fields -- politics, journalism, acting, music and more. Mithu finds the research and studying requisite for the programme rewarding.

According to her, "I believe a human being reaches his/her full potential after the age of 40. Education and wisdom through invaluable experiences do not reach their peak at the age of 20 or even 30. While doing episodes on these personalities, when I get to hear them narrate their vivid lives and experiences, I feel insignificant. I still have so much to learn."

"The overly used saying--'no end to learning'--is not implemented enough. Actors must go through a learning process. When a Subarana Mustafa play is on TV, I drop everything and watch it minutely. Every expression, every delivery of dialogue can provide volumes one can learn from. Sadly enough, our TV channels don't re-run the classic TV plays from '70s, '80s and early '90s, featuring ace performances by noted actors. To an emerging actor, these performances can be as effective as textbooks."

Besides reading, the actress also enjoys painting. Works by renowned artistes--Hashem Khan and Qayyum Chowdhury--in her living room indicate she collects paintings. Mithu has another penchant--masks. Why masks? The articulate artiste smilingly says, "Masks represent an enigmatic human behaviour. We all put on different 'masks' when dealing with different people or situations."

Theatre Festival in Chittagong begins today



A scene from *Ahorkandol*

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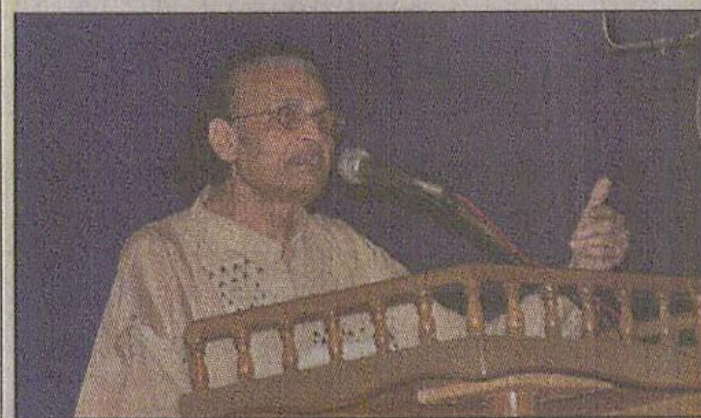
An eight-day theatre festival begins today at the Shilpakala Academy, Chittagong. To observe its 15th anniversary, Chittagong-based theatre troupe Nandimukh has arranged the festival, which will be inaugurated today by Professor Zia Hyder. Theatre troupes from Chittagong, Dhaka, and Barisal are participating in the festival.

After the opening ceremony, Janmasutra, a Dhaka-based troupe stages their current production *Ahorkandol*. Featuring a discussion of three unemployed youths at a *char*, Badruzzaman Alamgir's theatre of the absurd portrays the inherent cruelty of human beings. Kamaluddin Kabir directs the play. Ratan Dev, Dilip Chakrabarti and Anwarul Haque are the major cast members.

Ahorkandol will be staged today at 7 pm.

In conversation

"A dance critic should be sympathetic to an artiste" --Dr Sunil Kothari



Dr Sunil Kothari

Dr Sunil Kothari is a leading dance historian, scholar, author, and critic of Indian classical dance. He has to his credit several books on Indian classical dance forms. Kothari was a dance critic of *The Times of India* group of publications and wrote for *The Times of India* for 40 years as a dance critic.

He is also a full-fledged chartered accountant. He is at present the vice president of World Dance Alliance and will be in charge of the Bangladesh chapter of the Alliance. Kothari had come to Dhaka recently at the invitation of the Indian High Commission. While here, he gave a lecture demonstration on dance followed by six dance performances by eminent Bangladeshi choreographers and dancers.

Sharmila Banerjee, a prominent dancer of Bangladesh, recently spoke to Kothari on a gamut of issues revolving around dance. Excerpts:

How do you visualise the role of a dance critic?

As a starting point, a dance critic should be sympathetic to an artiste. He can very gently point out where the aesthetic standards have not met but otherwise he should be very careful. This is necessary because artistes are very sensitive and if they are discouraged their creativity would suffer.

How do you view the connection between the Bangladeshi dancers and the World Dance Alliance?

The World Dance Alliance is an international body. To become a

dancers as well, Bangladeshi is indeed rich in terms of dance.

Is it necessary for a dancer to learn classical dance?

Learning classical dance gives a dancer a sound grounding. With a strong foundation in classical dance, the dancer comes to know all about taal-chhanda, laya, jathi and praman. This helps a lot and then according to your thoughts and imagination you can choreograph and dance beautifully.

Can the same person learn two classical dance forms?

Yes, for instance I can speak Spanish as well as French. Both are similar but the beauty of Spanish should be kept separate from that of French. Similarly if a person has learned both Bharatanatyam and Kuchipudi, the movements of the two dance forms should not merge into each other.

In Bangladesh, dancers are not encouraged to perform after a certain age but dancers like Madhavi Mudgal and Alarnel Valli are still going strong. Your view?

Dancers, like all other performers gain maturity with age. Indian and

Bangladeshi classical dance is based more on bhava, emotions and expressions. People who are not interested to watch mature dancers perform should be discouraged because this is a wrong notion.

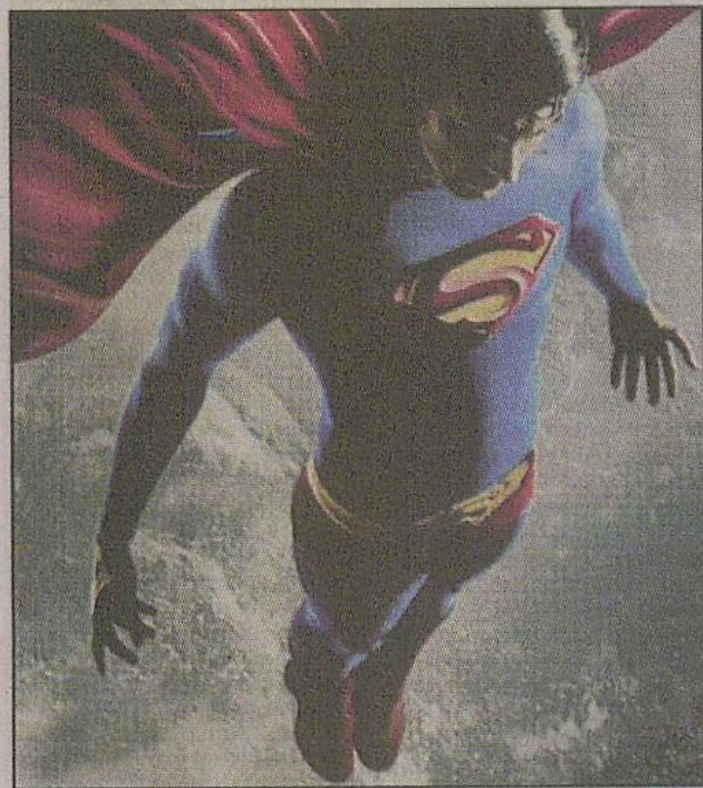
What is your opinion about Tagore and Uday Shankar dance styles?

Tagore brought Manipuri and Kathakali and combined them beautifully according to the *taal*, *chanda*, *bhava* etc. As he was a great poet he had a clear vision. Uday Shankar created his own dance form. He knew the movement of the body and his original approach towards the movement evolved as an individual dance style. He learned all the dance forms but formally studied only Kathakali. He gave scope to his imagination. The creative dance is very well established now. So it is good to have one dance tradition of Tagore and another of Uday Shankar. They are the contribution of two geniuses.

BY SHARMILA BANERJEE, Noted dancer and choreographer

Photograph of classical dance, part of Dr Kothari's lecture demonstration at the Indian Cultural Centre

Compiled by Cultural Correspondent.



Brandon Routh as Superman

Way back in 1976, when director Richard Donner began work on *Superman: The Movie*, casting for the lead role was a tough choice: Robert Redford, Arnold Schwarzenegger and Paul Newman were among those tested, and considered for the part.

Donner, however, insisted on casting a cinema virgin--and picked relatively unknown stage actor Christopher Reeve to wear the cape. Contemplating the dilemma facing his successor, director Bryan Singer, today, Donner explains the rationale: "Whoever plays Superman has to bring reality and purity to the character. If in any way he is tainted with past references, that would be a major mistake. To make a man fly and to make you believe he can, it had to be an unknown then, and I

think today it is even more true."

The daunting task of bringing the 'Man of Steel' back on the big screen after almost two decades made the proverbial line from DC comics echo in Singer's head: "Where are you Superman?"

Months after the search began in US, Britain, Canada and Australia, someone stumbled on an audition tape of a virtually unknown actor from Iowa and Singer saw what he was looking for.

Brandon Routh became an overnight sensation since it was announced that he was to wear the 'red and blue' iconic costume in *Superman Returns*.

Excerpts from an interview with the actor:

How did it feel the first time you got into costume?

Movie Watch

The Man of Steel returns

The first time I was in the suit, versus the first time I did some work in it, was different--it was a fitting, and there were people standing around and, I felt, judging me. That felt very awkward because, at that point, I hadn't really done any training for the role itself. I felt a lot more comfortable wearing the suit for the first time for actual filming, because by then I had a sense of who I was inside it.

Most superheroes have different facets to their characters, whereas with *Superman*, what you see is what you get. Does that make it harder to perform the role?

Superman does have a character arc--which, I trust, is present in the film. He may not have vices or be a dark character, but he is not uni-dimensional either. He has to learn things for himself; he has to grow. There are certain things you can only learn by hands on experience and that is his growth and that is what we see in the film.

Was Christopher Reeve on your mind while playing this part?

Yes, he was on my mind. It is difficult to forget him, to forget the character he played so brilliantly.

Do you believe the *Superman* curse, that bad things happen to the people who play the part (Christopher Reeve had an accident that paralysed him, George Reeves who played him on television shot himself)?

I don't really believe in the curse. I think it is a media construct. There are certainly worse things in life than getting to play this character, in a film of this size.

What does *Superman* mean to you?

He is inspirational, positive and open. He doesn't care who you are or

what you believe, he will help you out anyway. The fact that the whole world is united under *Superman*, that the character has transcended America, where he was created by the children of immigrants, I think that's great--*Superman* is really the ultimate immigrant.

The film follows the return of the superhero after a mysterious absence of several years. While he was gone, crime has risen in the city of Metropolis and beyond. Lois Lane (Kate Bosworth), star reporter for the *Daily Planet* and the love of *Superman's* life, has apparently moved on. She has even won a Pulitzer Prize for her essay, "Why the World Doesn't Need *Superman*."

Lois has other issues to contend with--she is now in a relationship and has a young son. But is she really over *Superman*? Meanwhile arch-enemy Lex Luthor (Kevin Spacey) plots to render *Superman* powerless once and for all. In an attempt to protect the world he loves from cataclysmic destruction, *Superman* embarks on an epic journey of redemption that takes him from the depths of the ocean to the far reaches of outer space.

Set for its big screen release worldwide, the movie already seems to have cast a spell on movie critics.

Newsweek said Singer, who left the popular *X-Men* franchise to make *Superman Returns*, did the right thing from the start of "this gorgeously crafted epic" by showing respect for the most foursquare comic superhero of them all.

The magazine added, "Routh may or may not be a real actor, but he effortlessly lays claim to the iconic role, just as Reeve did."

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