



PHOTO: COURTESY OF ARIFIN SHUVOO

Salman Shah was ahead of his time

— Arifin Shuvoo

SHARMIN JOYA

Arifin Shuvoo has carved a space for himself in films with his finesse and dedication. The actor remembers Salman Shah on his 49th birth anniversary today, and talks about his upcoming ventures with *The Daily Star*.

“I was very young when I first watched Salman Shah’s *Keyamot Theke Keyamot*,” shares Shuvoo. “Later, when I started out as a model in 2004, I realised that Salman Shah was ahead of his time.”

He often caught Salman Shah’s movies on television, and became his ardent admirer over the years. In a career of just three years, Salman Shah starred in 27 films. “He gave us some of the most memorable movies,” adds Shuvoo.

Even 24 years after his death, Salman Shah, the star, has not stopped shining. His demise is an irrevocable loss for the film industry. “Whenever I am in Sylhet, I make it a point to pay my respects at Salman Shah’s grave,” Shuvoo shares. “I think people still remember him with the same fondness even after so many years not only because he was supremely talented, but also because he was just starting out in the industry and he passed away at a young age. I think the shock is still fresh in people’s hearts, especially those who grew up in the 90s.”

Currently, Shuvoo is preparing for a web series, titled *Contract* for Zee5. The project’s shooting will begin in November. “It is a six-episode thriller, directed by Krishnendu Chattopadhyay and Tanim Noor,” he adds. “I am looking to take up another movie in November, and hopefully start shooting for it in January next year.”



PHOTO: COLLECTED

PRIYANKA CHOWDHURY

After the First World War, Major Arthur Hurst filmed shell-shocked patients who returned from the war in France. *War Neurosis* (1917) pioneered as the first medical film about the treatment of psychiatric battle casualties. In the context of Bangladesh, the Liberation War of 1971 has been addressed in a number of films, but no film portrayed the post-war symptoms of existential crisis as prominently and artistically as *Ghuddi*. Decades after its release, the critically acclaimed 1980 film remains a masterpiece of Bangladeshi alternative cinema. The path of film experimentation that was paved by predecessors like Zahir Raihan, Amzad Hossain, Alamgir Kabir and Syed Salauddin Zaki – added a sharp curb to the genre.

Although wrapped in a romantic frame, the film essentially captures the emotional nuances of post-war urban youth, offering a number of anecdotal elements for further research. Questioning the grand narrative of the Liberation War, it searches for the untold ‘truth’ of what would be called history. The audience wonders, “Is the protagonist who hides behind a faux name *Mohabbat Ali* an anomaly or a representation of the young state itself? It may not be too farfetched to draw a parallel between the two. A newly formed country and a young man in his late twenties – the common thread binding the two offers a state of confusion. In fact, the characters, Asad, Farid Ali, Tariq, Bacchu are real freedom fighters, and fall on the same cluster as that of *Mohabbat Ali*. Ironically, the youth of today may



Still from ‘Ghuddi’.

find themselves in the same loop of dilemma.

The two main female characters, Ghuddi (Suborna Mustafa) and Nupur (Nayla Azad Nupur), project opposite characteristics. While Nupur detests the city that has taken away her beloved in the war, Ghuddi’s romantic beliefs remain intact due to her ignorance. Subtly, she refers to the war time as ‘gondogol’ or unrest, which relates her to the bunch that often termed the Liberation War as a mere civil turmoil.



Still from ‘Ghuddi’.

Although there is a debate about the commencement of the Independent Film Movement in Bangladesh, the era in which *Ghuddi* brought about changes was already blowing in the wind. The film is credited for its well-crafted dialogues, conveying sociopolitical critiques and sharp commentary on the contemporary film industry. The dual meanings of the colloquial dialect of Dhaka give the film a necessary local essence of expressing rage, in a rather comic tone. The classic bell bottom pants and sophisticated looks of the characters lets the audience reimagine their beloved city through a timescape.

The film attains its modern look, perhaps in an attempt to capture the playfulness of the French New Wave concepts. The jump cuts, the handheld shots, the iconic location shooting, improvised screenplay used in the film can be considered sporadic representations of the concepts. Other techniques, like breaking the fourth wall, can be credited to a more theatrical approach, rather than a cinematic one. While the outdoor soliloquies give the film a light and natural look, the same characters took a stage format as they moved indoors. For instance, the group conversation at Ghuddi’s house reminds one of a theatrical play, including the scene blocking and the light dimming at the end of the scene. This approach, however, feels necessary to justify the heavy dialogues between Tariq and Mr Hasan. This amalgamation of techniques and dialogues contextualises the storyline, while

the addition of Pablo Picasso’s *Guernica*, known for its moving and powerful anti-war paintings, on the wall, highlights the comparisons and contrasts between the characters.

Nine years after the independence of the country, Syed Salauddin Zaki set out to make a film with a script adapted from Selim Al Deen’s *Chorkakra*. The script was stolen, allegedly with an intention. The director, adamant to go by his shooting dates, improvised the entire script and dialogues on the spot, which resulted in *Ghuddi*. This spontaneity, however, was possible because of the team’s enthusiasm and familiarity. The actors were from Dhaka Theatre, while the director, cinematographer and editor were film graduates from Pune. *Ghuddi* is a textbook example of a well-coordinated team, that worked wonders, despite their limitations.

The film is reserved in high definition format in the national archives as well as on YouTube channel of G Series. *Ghuddi* had close to no impact in the box office upon its release, but over time, it seems to have gained the status of a ‘modern’ vintage film, with timeless music by Lucky and Happy Akhand. The film’s accolades for Best Dialogue and Best Cinematography at the National Film Awards further establishes its influence. As we prepare to celebrate the golden jubilee of Bangladesh’s independence next year and forty years of *Ghuddi* in December this year, the film that indicated precursors of alternative cinema, remains one of a kind.

“Unity is the only way we will overcome these circumstances”

—Shamim Ara Nipa

ASHLEY SHOPTORSHI SAMADDAR

Celebrated danseuse and television personality Shamim Ara Nipa has enthralled the audience for decades with her elegance, poise and grace. With tutelage from renowned dance maestros such as G A Mannan and Nikunja Bihari Pal, she was also blessed with the opportunity to learn from Pandit Birju Maharaj from different workshops, especially on Kathak. The dancer also expanded her horizons and pursued versatility, receiving instruction from a North Korean dance trainer and obtaining a certificate in choreography from the China National Academy of Fine Art. Alongside dancing, the artiste also appeared in over 50 tele-fictions as an actor. In a candid chat with *The Daily Star*, the Ekushey Padak winning artiste shares how her academy Nrityanchal and students are doing in these tough times.

How have the past few months been for Nrityanchal?

When we founded the school, it became a place of worship for all of us—the students, the teachers, and the other staff members. With time, many joined our journey and together, we slowly emerged as a family. However, the coronavirus pandemic has pushed us towards dire circumstances, as we have not been doing any stage performance since March and our students are unable to come to classes.

What are the challenges you are facing with the school?

We have 30-40 individuals working under us – including dance teachers, musicians, technicians, costume designers and other administrative staff. As an institution, we have no income generating source, other than the tuition fees that comes from the students. As the classes were suspended, our only income source has stopped and we have been struggling to pay the monthly salaries of our employees. As we have always believed dance is universal and everyone has the right to learn and experience its joy, our fee structure is very non-profit and we even end up giving scholarships to many. Thus, we do not have

any savings that will keep us going on for months.

How are your employees and performers doing at the moment?

Most of them had to leave this industry and pursue other career choices to sustain. We tried to keep them going for the first couple of months with some small donations we had received from some of our well-wishers. We also contributed personally from our side to help them with food and medication, but now it seems like we are running out of options. We have started online classes, but most of our students are also in financial crisis, as their parents have become a victim of the recent job-cuts happening all around the country. There is a core team comprising

of over 80 members, which consists of technicians, who will be left unemployed if the situation does not get better soon.

Do you have any message for your fans and well-wishers?

As dancers, I believe that we are national assets. I hope that the authorities will be more supportive towards us in these tough times because if the institutions are closed, the industry will collapse and we will fail to produce quality dancers, which has always been our prime concern at Nrityanchal. Also, as human beings, we often give in to things such as envy and selfishness, but this catastrophe will make us realise that unity is the only way we will overcome these circumstances.



PHOTO: SHAHREAR KABIR HEEMEL

Javed misses ‘Javed Moholla’

Ilias Javed reminisces his golden career

ZAHID AKBAR

Born in Afghanistan’s Peshawar town in 1944, Ilias Javed’s family migrated to Punjab first, and then to Bangladesh (then East Pakistan) in 1963. The choreographer-turned-actor has worked in nearly 200 films in his career – not having to look back after his acting debut in 1964’s Urdu film, *Nayi Zindagi*. The beloved actor, who has an area in Old Dhaka named after him, talks to *The Daily Star* about his journey.

You used to live in Old Dhaka. Where are you residing now?

I have a lot of memories in the old town, especially in Siddique Bazar. For years, people have showed a lot of love and respect towards me. They even named an area after me, calling it ‘Javed Moholla’. While I was stronger and fit to travel, I cherished visiting those lanes, where my friends and family lived. However, I am physically not as strong anymore, and it has been a long time since I last saw them. Currently I reside in Uttara, sector 14, Dhaka.

We heard that you were admitted to the hospital recently. How is your health now? I am still undergoing treatment and consulting the doctor online with updates regularly. The doctor has advised me to have an ultrasonography test and also follow up with some routine check-ups every now and then, as my condition needs to be monitored regularly. My medication is showing signs of side effects on my kidneys and thus, I am unable to speak for longer periods.

Have you been doing okay with all the extra medical expenses piling up due to the treatment?

Currently, I don’t have any work at hand. I have given my entire life to cinema, and never actually gave a thought to myself. If I had, then maybe the scenario and situation would have been different. I am grateful to our Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, who has always stood by me.

Are you still connected with your peers from the entertainment industry? When I fell ill, producer Khorshed Alam



PHOTO: COLLECTED

Khosru, Bangladesh Choloচিত্র Shilpi Samiti’s President actor Misha Sawdagar and General Secretary Zayed Khan had reached out to me. There is honestly no end to your expenses once you are admitted to the hospital, but I am grateful for the moral support that I have received.

Tell us a little about your favourite film and choreography projects.

I loved choreographing the super hit track *Malka Banur Deshe Re*, in the film *Malka Banu*, directed by Foyez Chowdhury. *Moner Ei Chotto Ghor Agun Legeche Haire* and *Chakbhum Chakbhum Chandni Raate* also come to mind. Acting in films like *Malka Banu*, *Oneek Din Agay*, *Shahzadi*, *Rajkumari Chandrabhan*, *Kajol Rekha*, *Khaheb Bibi Jolam*, *Norom Gorom*, *Tin Bahadur*, *Chandan Diper Rajkonna*, *Aajo Bjulini*, *Chorer Raja* and *Jaalim Rajkonna*, among many others, was memorable. However, the character of Kalu from the film *Nishan* has been one of my favourite roles till date.

You have shared the screen with many leading ladies. Do you have a favourite? I have had the privilege to work with Shabana, Babita, Kabori, Olivia, Anju Ghosh, Rozina, Nutan and Shuchorita. Each of them were commendable in their own unique way. The Bangladesh Film and Development Corporation felt like home. As I walk down my memory lane, the glimpses of those glorious days flash right before my eyes.