

In search of meaningful roles

In conversation with Champa

CULTURAL CORRESPONDENT

"I want to remain in the hearts and minds of people." Champa Khan alias Champa is a household name in Bangla cinema. However she is rarely seen these days on the silver screen. One of the reasons being she wants to do meaningful roles in parallel movies. People today want good movies. They will remember an actress for the quality roles she has played and not for the number of roles, opines a more matured Champa. Having gotten the flavour from a movie (*Abar Oronney*) completed in India two years ago, she wants to give the audience her best which she feels is not being offered in regular commercial movies in Bangladesh.

Abar Oronney (In the Forest Again) by Gautam Ghose is a continuation of Satyajit Ray's *Oronney Dinatri (Days and Night in the Forest)*. While the earlier movie depicted three young friends out on a picnic in the forest, the latter revolves around the same three friends who are now old and with families. Once again they venture out to the forest where various kinds of incidents take place. The cast includes Sharmila Tagore, Shoumitro Chatterjee, Rupa Ganguly, Shomit Bhanjan, Shumendro and Champa. Tabu is also seen in the movie, acting as Sharmila's daughter who has just returned from abroad.

On the current trend of Bangla movies, Champa is of the opinion that the country's film industry has taken a nosedive in terms of quality. No longer can a family go out and watch a movie and be sure it will be decent. The quality of movies has deteriorated to such an extent that one feels embarrassed to sit in the same row as one's



Champa

parents, elaborates Champa.

According to Champa, one of the major drawbacks of our cinema is the lack of technical expertise, particularly in comparison with Indian films. She welcomes the trend of upcoming talents—but adds that they don't have

a platform to experiment and express that talent. Talent is not enough, it needs overall support from the movie industry. Bangladesh also needs producers who will support parallel movies instead of always backing commercial movies. She appreciates

the effort taken by TV channels. However there is still a lacuna which needs to be filled, opines this multi talented actress.

Talking about her film, *Bidrohi Padma*, Champa expressed extreme disappointment in the final version. As she said, "For the first time in my movie career someone dubbed my voice without my permission and I was extremely dissatisfied. I was also unhappy with the way my role shaped out."

Given a chance, she would love to work again in Indian movies. "It definitely was a proud moment being selected for a movie of such a high standard, when there were plenty of good Indian actors who could have done the role". Such is her commitment to good roles that when asked to choose between an Indian and a Bangladeshi movie being shot at the same time, Champa said she would select the movie which offered the better role irrespective of the country. Her Indian movie, *Lal Darja (Red Door)* by Buddhadeb Dasgupta was nominated for the Oscars.

Champa has completed over 300 movies. "I have dedicated most of my adult life to movies; I want to have the flavour of normal life again." She felt it was about time she moved on and spent more time with her family and close friends. She lives in her new avatar today, selecting her roles carefully whether in the film industry or on television. She will be seen very soon on Zahid Hassan's *Lal Neel Beguni*. A worshipper of beauty, this evergreen actress spends her time decorating her house, maintaining her exotic garden and keeping herself fit and beautiful.

Rezwana Chowdhury Banya

A voice with passion and perfection

My friend Rummana Chowdhury, a well-known poet and compere was hosting a show in Canada. The next participant was Rezwana Chowdhury Banya, whom she was about to beckon. Suddenly Banya said to her, "Rummana, I was in Holy Cross College with you". Caught off guard, Rummana said, "I should be the one saying that, Banya!"

Rummana and I both recalled Banya as a quiet, simple and modest girl with two plaits firmly set in place, hardly venturing out of her own world. Today Banya, despite her success, remains unchanged. This is a major achievement and her compatriots look upon her with great pride.

On January 21, I had the privilege of witnessing Banya's performance in Mumbai, India. The show was organised by a Tagore-based organisation, titled *Sadhona* who marked their 30th year with renderings from Tagore.

The programme began with Rezwana's song, *Anondodhara bohichhey bhuboney*. It was a unique rendition and when she presented songs in succession, each song was like a complete offering to Tagore. She had learnt the last song from her guru, Konika Bandyopadhyay. Clearly her relationship with *Mohordi*, as she called her, was marked by a close friendship and exemplified the traditional *guru-shishya* practice. This song, Banya says, is set to *Teora taal* in the notation, yet Konika had taught her without any *taal* and maintained

that it was better without one. She also performed a song that eloquently epitomises the rainy season, *Emon dine tare bola jay*. The rendering was one of the best that I have ever heard.

Banya has opened new vistas by recording with recitations by veteran actor Shoumitro in one of her CDs. She also recorded the songs of *Ponchokobi* (Tagore, Nazrul, Atul Prasad, Rajnikant and DL Roy). She has been working towards attaining mastery in Atul Prasad songs. Her most recent tribute to Konika, jointly presented with recitor Brototi Bondhopadhyay, is another landmark in her life. The recordings narrate the life and work of Konika and Banya punctuates it with her songs. One of the songs from *Kalmrigoya, Jao re onontodhamey* is sung with such passion and perfection that I felt even this song alone could be a good example of Banya's achievements.

She has imbibed Tagore's philosophies in her life and it was as if she was able to internalise these thoughts while singing. This was exactly her message in the popular chat show *Aloye Bhubon Bhora* on channeli.

Rezwana's family wanted her to study economics. She in turn had no inkling that she would be a singer, nor that Tagore songs were going to be her forte. Shantiniketan, the heaven, in her own words showed her the way and enabled Rezwana to hold the lamp so that others could



Rezwana Chowdhury Banya

follow her. She has her own school 'Surer Dhara' where the students learn not only the Tagore songs but also develop an ear for music and aesthetics.

Despite Rezwana's success, her mission is not over. In the footsteps of Konika, she wants to involve herself with a grassroots organisation titled Elmhurst Foundation. In the make up room of S channel in London, she confided to me, "Nashid, my songs have only reached those with

CD/cassette players. I want to do something for those who have none, the teeming millions must be benefited through my songs."

I could see that the humble Banya is not only a singer or a Tagore exponent, she is much more, and many more times than my words can express.

By Dr Nashid Kamal - eminent artist and academician.

Photography exhibition

Perceiving extraordinary in the ordinary



KARIM WAHEED

An exhibition of photographs by eight students of Dhaka Photographic Institute is on at Zainul Art Gallery, Institute of Fine Arts. The exhibition titled *Borno O Biborno* was inaugurated by noted photographer Dr Noazesh Ahmed on May 2.

Dr Noazesh Ahmed aptly pointed out the makings of a skilled photographer: "Basic education on the art form (photography) at institutes is necessary. However, one must have a keen eye and see the 'extra ordinary' in the ordinary."

Diversity and individuality are evident in the works by the young photographers. Certain patterns and traits become apparent as one follows several works by each of the photographers.

Shampa Ahmed's works feature the mystique of nature. *Anneshan* by Shampa shows an indigenous young woman dressed in red, with a small basket on her head. *Mayabrikhko*, another work by her, features a pine tree. Technically, it's just a regular pine tree like any other. But the clear azure sky in the background and radiating light gives the pine tree an enigmatic



Photographs at the exhibition

appear.

Tawhiduzzamana Jitu's photographs seem to have the appearance of abstract arts. The interesting approach is displayed in the photograph titled *Bimurto Jibon*, where the photographer has closely framed part of a tree trunk; patterns of mold create a facade of a painting.

Ashiq Alam's *Ananto Jatra* shows cables on electric poles stretching to infinity. *Jibon Chakro*, another work by

him features a youngster chasing a wheel on a village meadow; intense yellow of the mustard field next to him adds to the verve.

Sohail Rana's *Shanti* looks at pigeons resting on sacks through a peephole. *Trishnarto*, another photograph by him shows ducks on a spring, having a sip of water.

Badrul Alam Rial's photographs highlight the sense of touch. *Sparsho* by him shows a hand reaching for the rain outside and getting wet while *Sparsho 1*

features a finger going for the flame of a candle in a dark room.

AS Ahmed Shantu's *Bhangan* captures a river eroding land. An elderly man sitting alarmingly close to the water, watches the process in a jaded manner.

Atiqur Rahman's *Shudhdho* featuring a child smiling at the viewer becomes the manifestation of 'purity'. *Jalbalok*, another work by him, shows a young boy gleefully swimming in a pond. He looks at ease with just his head emerging from the water -- as if the mythical tales of mermen (aquatic creatures who are part human) just

came true.

Khandokar Jannatul Ferdous' *Abisranto Aporanho* displays labourers slogging in the dusk. One cannot really see their faces; they almost look like shadows in the fainting light. *Agroni*, also by Ferdous, shows a shriveled elderly man supporting himself with a *lathi* at the Shaheed Minar.

The exhibition will continue till May 8 and will wrap up with the screening of a documentary film, *Folk festival* by Shahiduzzaman Badal.



Sudeshna Swayamprabha

Soaring hopes and talent to match



Sudeshna in a graceful stance

KAVITA CHARANJI

The 15-year-old Sudeshna Swayamprabha's young age belies her remarkable achievements in the sphere of dance—particularly Bharatnatyam and Manipuri. Her latest milestone is her enactment of the heroine in Tagore's dance drama, titled *Chitrangada*, staged by Sunnnydale School. "The part appealed to me greatly as I was supposed to lure Arjuna from his *brahmacharya* and get him to fall in love with my beauty," reminisces Sudeshna.

It is a tightrope walk to balance dance with academics. On one occasion she recalls missing classes for almost one month because she had gone for a performance to India. "Even during my exams I keep dancing and performing," recalls Sudeshna, asserting that she has to squeeze in time to study as best as she can.

The daughter of well-known Bharatnatyam, Manipuri and Odissi exponent, Sharmila Bandyopadhyay, Sudeshna has a firm grounding in dance. It is not easy all the way; as she says her mother is a hard taskmaster and makes no compromises on practice time—which could range from 45 minutes to an hour-and-a-half per day.

Apart from her mother, Sudeshna has trained in Manipuri from Manipuri Nartanalaya (under Guru Bipin Singh and Kalawati Devi). Likewise she has picked up the elements of creative dance from Amala Shankar of the Uday Shankar India Cultural Centre in Kolkata. A student of the well-known Chhayantan, she has also studied under Belayet Hossain Khan (Bharatnatyam) and Tamanna Rahman (Manipuri). Another of her teachers is Professor CV Chandrashekar, in Bharatnatyam.

"My motto is to keep going so that you can achieve your goal," says Sudeshna, who is a student and member of the dance group Nriyannandan, run by Sharmila. She certainly practices what she preaches. At the age of four, she went along with her mother to US. At the Fobanna Conference (an organisation of Bangladeshi expatriates) in New Jersey in 1994, Sudeshna along with other children danced in *Dhono Dhanne Pushpe Bhora*, her first performance. Since then her passion for dance is undimmed, with overseas performances in Ujjain, Delhi, Sagar and Kolkata in India.

As for the future, she entertains the thought of becoming an interior designer. However, whether this plan materialises or not, dance she says will remain a constant in her life. Meanwhile, her hopes soar skyward—"I want to be a good dancer and human being. While dwelling in the present, I want to keep an eye on the future," says Sudeshna.

MOVIE WATCH

Mission Impossible III: The spy saga continues

So, who do you think would win in a fight: Tom Cruise or Philip Seymour Hoffman? Sure, Cruise looks like he's in better shape, but Hoffman seems undeniably sneakier.

When Cruise's secret-agent Ethan Hunt and Hoffman's villain Owen Davian do battle against each other in *Mission: Impossible III*, it's an intriguing match up, no matter whom you're rooting for. Cruise is, of course, always Cruise, but you're never quite sure who Hoffman's going to be.

That tension helps to propel JJ Abrams' *Mission: Impossible III* into the guilty-pleasure category. Just when you're getting a little tired of Cruise's heroic grimacing, out shambles Hoffman in a rumpled tuxedo, with a creepy leer in his eye and a demonic drone in his voice -- and things get interesting.

The *Capote* star is nobody's idea of an action-movie guy, and that's why the casting works so well; he brings a whole different rhythm to the movie, slowing it down to his own deliberate, almost playful pace.

This is the franchise's third film (each with a different director), and it may well be the most successful of the bunch. The screenplay -- by Abrams, Alex Kurtzman and Roberto Orci -- has an unnecessarily oddball structure that starts near the end, goes back to the beginning and then works its way up to the now-familiar end again. But even at that, it's less convoluted than the first two movies, and it's got plenty of opportunities for trademark globetrotting *M.I.* stunts.

Among the crowded supporting cast, Ving Rhames stands out as the computer expert Luther Strickell, who's agreeable even when serving only as a device for the screenwriters to explain things to the audience. "Magnetic means encrypted,"

Hunt tells his colleague earnestly. "Yeah, I know," grunts the ever-patient Strickell.

And Cruise? Well, he's gotten quite enough press lately; suffice to say he delivers precisely the performance expected, no more and no less. But as

a producer of this film, he gets credit for bringing this cast and director (known for TV's *Alias* and *Lost*) together.

Source: Internet



Tom Cruise and co-actor in *Mission Impossible III*