

Illustrious career of a filmmaker

In conversation with Shibly Sadick



Shibly Sadick

ERSHAD KAMOL

ONE of the leading mainstream filmmakers of the country Shibly Sadick has won appreciation for several of his movies such as *Tin Konya*, *Achena*, *Nitibaan*, *Bheja Chokh*, *Dangshon*, *Ma Mati Desh* and others. All 34 movies directed by Sadick are box-office hits. Winner of a National Award for the movie *Achena*, his movies were screened at festivals in Canada and India.

The seasoned filmmaker began his career in 1964 as an assistant director. To quote Sadick, "As a student of Art College (now Institute of Fine Arts), I was fascinated by Satyajit Ray's *Pather Panchali*. The movie ignited my passion for films and filmmaking. Subsequently, I started working as an assistant to filmmaker Mustafizur Rahman in the movie *Talash* in 1964. I also assisted Soovas Dutt until early '70s. I learnt the technicalities of filmmaking from him."

The first movie directed by Shibly Sadick was *Sheeth Bashanto* (1969).

His first movie after the Liberation War was *Jibon Niye Jua*. Till 1977, he could not decide what his approach to the medium should be. To quote him, "I was undecided whether to make commercial or alternative movies. Aesthetically rich movies only seem to attract a handful of urban enthusiasts. Commercial movies become blockbusters and they are not for the intellectuals. In the history of Bangladeshi film, no director has made aesthetically rich blockbusters. At the initial stage of my career I have made alternative films

such as *Nolok* for which my peers lampooned me labelling 'atet' (pretentious intellectual). After that I decided to make mainstream films targeted towards the masses."

Shibly Sadick was elected the President of Bangladesh Film Director's Association. Referring to the current Dhaliwood scenario, Sadick said, "The standard of our movie industry has been deteriorating. The main reason behind the fall is lack of resources. Nowadays, producers offer around Tk 30-40 lakh for a movie, an amount with which directors cannot make quality movies. To fill the vacuum, uneducated and incompetent 'filmmakers' are infiltrating our film arena with below standard, obscene movies. These people don't even have the capability to copy a foreign film, let alone work on original movies. Before and after Independence, several directors have worked on projects inspired by foreign films. But, they maintained minimum standard to attract the viewers. Moreover, there is a major dearth of efficient technical hands in the film industry."

With young talents showing interest for the film the industry, Shibly Sadick believes, "good days are ahead". To quote him, "I'm an instructor of a film certificate course organised by NIMCO (National Institute of Mass Communication). I've noticed that quite a few talented individuals with good educational background are interested in films. Reason enough to be optimistic."

Sadick believes that an institute providing extensive education on films - emphasising technicalities -- must be established immediately.

PHOTO: STAR

Photo exhibition

'Bangladesh Matters': European Union's development cooperation in frames

KARIM WAHEED

To celebrate the European Union's (EU) golden jubilee, the European Commission (EC) to Bangladesh has organised a photo exhibition -- titled *Bangladesh Matters: Capturing the EU's Development Cooperation* -- focusing on the contribution of EU-funded NGOs to the development of Bangladesh.

The exhibition at Drik Gallery, Dhanmondi, was inaugurated on May 8 by Dr. Stefan Frowein, EC Ambassador to Bangladesh.

The exhibition is a part of a series of cultural events, which the EC has organised on the occasion of Europe Day (May 9). Through these events, the EC intends to focus on the links between Bangladesh and Europe. Relations between the EC and Bangladesh date from 1973. Since 1982, the EC has been represented in Bangladesh, and has had a full-fledged delegation in the country since 1989. The two major aspects of the EC-Bangladesh bond are development

cooperation and trade.

The Ambassador's message says, "The EU's success can be put down to several factors. The key factor has been a shared set of values: democracy, rule of law, fundamental rights, social justice, respect for cultural difference and minorities and tolerance."

"Considering the relationship between the EU and Bangladesh, I am happy to note that we do share values such as those just mentioned. It is on the basis of these common values that we should continue to build our cooperation and enhance our trust and support for each other."

In Bangladesh, the EC finances a multitude of NGO projects -- from access to clean water to fighting human trafficking and supporting landless farmers or minority groups. Most of the projects target the most vulnerable and poorest members of society.

The purpose of the photo exhibition is to showcase examples of the work that the NGO partners of the EC

are carrying out to improve the living standards of the less fortunate in Bangladesh.

Thirty-six photographs at the exhibition highlight the impact of 12 NGOs' activities on the underprivileged and marginalized. The participating organisations are: CAFOD (Catholic Agency for Overseas Development), NGO Forum for Drinking Water Supply and Sanitation, Groupe Developpement, RDRS (Rangpur Dinajpur Rural Service), Handicap International, ARBAN (Association for Realisation of Basic Needs), Intervida, Concern Universal, CHARM - Chittagong Hill Tracts Improved Natural Resources Management Project, Koionia, Unicef and Caritas.

The image of an Orao child by S H Suza (for RDRS) is sure to grab one's attention. Dust and mud all over -- the young one is sporting a headgear with bright purple flowers and a smile all the money in the world can't buy.

In another photo by Shafiqul Alam Kiron (for Handicap International), a young batsman is focused on the ball, ready to strike. Looking closely, one would notice the ardent sportsman is balanced on one leg.

Close shot of a rural woman with her fishing net by Marcella Haddad (for CAFOD) zooms in on the subject's eyes -- the gaze exudes self-confidence.

Groupe Developpement's photos address the issue of gender inequality. One of Unicef's photos (by Sujana) show a mother signing a birth registration form during a health campaign by the organisation in Dhaka.

The exhibition also features posters, leaflets and other publications by the NGOs.

The show will continue till May 12.



Photographs on display at the exhibition

Iffat Ara: A passionate follower of Tagore

KAJITA CHARANJII

Entering the spacious and airy home in Gulshan of singer and painter Iffat Ara Dewan one's sights turn to a colourful array of pottery, subjects often seen on her canvases.

With Tagore's birth anniversary taking place recently, it was fitting to talk to Iffat about her passion for Rabindra Sangeet. The singer has performed at home as well as in Kolkata, Delhi, US, France, Canada, Belgium and UK over the years. Likewise she has been a regular performer on TV and radio.

Iffat's first record by EMI, 45 rpm featured two Tagore songs from Dhaka and Kolkata in 1970 *Ami Rupey tomai bholabo na* and *Probbu bolo kobey*. In 1981, she came out with an LP of Tagore songs by Srotar Ashar, Dhaka. Then followed three LPs, six CDs and cassettes of Tagore songs, six CDs and cassettes of old Bengali songs by Bengal Foundation, Dhaka (1986-2004). These works were followed by a cassette and CD of songs by Atul Prasad and Rajanikanta Sen by P & M, Kolkata in 2003. Also in the ranks of her works is a cassette of Tagore songs by HMV, Kolkata.

"I am greatly drawn to Rabindra Sangeet," says the serene Iffat, explaining that it moves her with its rich lyrics and themes such as devotion, love, patriotism, a celebration of nature and the seasons of Bangladesh."

Iffat began to learn singing at the



Iffat Ara Dewan during a performance

tender age of seven. Her mother, Sakina Dewan was a great source of encouragement. Her formal training at Chhayana where she did a five-year course in music (1963-1968) was a major milestone for the upcoming artiste. Her guru was the late Waheedul Haque, who she says continued to be a major influence until he died in January this year.

Another teacher she cites is Sanjida Khatun. Bengal Foundation too has promoted her greatly, she adds.

Why is Tagore's birth anniversary important for Iffat? In her words, "On this day we remember Tagore, pay homage to him and renew our pledge to continue singing his songs. The great poet continues to take us back to our

roots and familiarises us with our rich Bengali culture and identity."

And Iffat is optimistic about the future of Tagore songs. The younger generation, she points out, now has access to many music schools even in small towns. Also the genre has not lost its appeal. "One feels proud to be a Bengali when one listens to Tagore," says Iffat.

Small Screen

'Locket': Special play on ATN Bangla on Mother's day



Afsana Mimi (R) and a child artiste in the play

Mother's Day-special TV play *Locket* will be aired tonight at 8:50pm on ATN Bangla.

The story unfolds after the sudden death of Afsana's husband. She has to struggle to ensure that her daughter Tushi's needs are met. On her birthday, Tushi invites all her friends but no one turns up. Tushi's grandmother comes over with a 'magic' locket. She

asks her to follow three instructions that will turn Tushi's wishes into reality. Years later when Tushi visits her mother's grave, she realises that the magic locket did its part.

Afsana Mimi, Apurbo, Noboni and Sharmila Ahmed play the main roles in the play. Written by Arun Chowdhury, the play is directed by Chayanika Chowdhury.

Drama 'Neel Nirjon-e' premieres today

Drama serial *Neel Nirjon-e* will be premiered today at the Russian Centre for Science and Culture at 6pm. The serial is written and directed by Sumon Anwar.

The TV series highlights the fighting spirit present in all humans. The protagonist of the story, Neel, a young girl from an affluent family, is abducted and taken to a jungle. *Neel Nirjon-e* is

the story of Neel's journey back home. Throughout the journey she is surprised at the trust complete strangers bestow her with and is also devastated when her trusts are played with.

Richi Solaiman, Jayanta Chattopadhyay, Fazlur Rahman Babu, Wahida Mallick Jolly, Ahmed Rubel and Azad Abul Kalam play the central roles in the serial.



(L-R) Wahida Mallick Jolly and Richi Solaiman in *Neel Nirjon-e*

"I've become a spokesperson for the rural women"

-- Nandita Das on her movie roles and conviction

A favourite with serious filmmakers, Nandita Das' most recent role is Kamakshi, a spinster, in *Nitya Kanyaka*, a film based on the novel by Jnanpith Award winner Thakazhi Sivasankara Pillai.

In a recent interview Nandita shared her experience of working in an Adoor Gopalakrishnan film and her motivations behind being an actress. Excerpts:

Why do you think there is no interest in good and different cinema today unlike the '70s?

Nandita: "It has become the chicken and egg situation. Media says people want to know who is getting married to whom, who is eating where and things like that. But people say this is what they give us! We don't know when this started but it has to stop. I am personally not for banning or anything like that but I feel we have to create alternatives. When we create an alternative, there will be people who will seek that. In fact, I did a Marathi film by Chitra Palekar called *Maati Maay*, which was screened in the Toronto, London, Goa and Kerala film festivals. It was also released in Maharashtra. We had a special screening in Delhi and I had told my driver to see it. Even though it was in Marathi with English subtitles - both languages he does not understand -- he was completely moved by the film."

You've worked for women's and human rights issues. Were you reminded of real life characters while acting in the film?

Nandita: "Absolutely. Because of your experiences, you know a woman like Kamakshi does exist. You also know what she goes through. You are not just playing the character, you are going through the psyche of a person like Kamakshi. I don't think about the character beforehand. Even during the rehearsal, I do only the broad action. Then, in the action and cut, I try and be that person."

Do you feel like an outsider while acting in languages you don't understand?

Nandita: "I don't know where I belong. If you ask me where I am from, I would say, everywhere. What I am today is because of all the experiences I had from different parts of India and the world. I feel fairly comfortable whether I am in Kerala or Bengal or Tamil Nadu. Though I grew up completely in an urban area, I feel very comfortable in rural areas too."

Surprisingly, most of your films are based in



Nandita Das in the Marathi film *Maati Maay* (A Grave-keeper's Tale), based on a short story *Baayen* by Mahasweta Devi

rural India...

Nandita: "Yes, they say I have become a spokesperson for the rural woman. I feel happy about it. You know I am just back after acting as a rural Pakistani woman for a Pakistani film!"

You look like a Malayali in a Malayalam film, and a Tamilian in a Tamil film and Bengali in a Bengali film...

Nandita: "I know. Mrinalda (Mrinal Sen) used to say something like this: 'You are ordinarily extraordinary! Your face is ordinary enough to be extraordinary everywhere. I take it as a big compliment. My father is from Orissa, and my mother from Gujarat and I have learnt many languages from childhood. Perhaps that shows on my face. I think you have to be open-minded

and less judgmental to relate to these believable characters, and I do relate to their experiences."

Why do you act?

Nandita: "I began acting because it was another medium to convey what I feel strongly about. Films gave me an opportunity to talk about things that are close to my heart. I realise there is a kind of connection between real life and films. Acting is still an interest for me, and not a profession. As and when I get something interesting, I do it. For months, when I don't get anything interesting, I do something else. So, there is no method in my madness!"

Compiled by Cultural Correspondent