

# A thespian on his illustrious career

In conversation with ATM Shamsuzzaman

ERSHAD KAMOL

**V**IEWERS are accustomed to watch him in negative roles. For his unique presence in diverse roles, ATM Shamsuzzaman has won several national awards. But many do not know that Shamsuzzaman is a screen-playwright as well. The busy film actor is frequent in TV plays these days. Currently he is acting in three mega-serials.

ATM Shamsuzzaman began his career as an assistant filmmaker. He has worked with many renowned directors including Khan Ataur Rahman, Kazi Zahir and Soovas Dutt. Reminiscing his introduction to acting, Shamsuzzaman says, "Amjad Hossain first offered me a role in his film, *Nayanmoni*, released in the early 1970s. After watching my performance in the TV serial *Shongshoptak*, Amjad wanted me to play the antagonist in *Nayanmoni*. In *Shongshoptak*, which was aired in late 1960s, I played the role of Ramzan."

Following *Nayanmoni*, Amjad Hossain selected Shamsuzzaman as the baddie for his movie *Golapi Ekhon Train-e*. His portrayal as the villain, in Dilip Biswas' movie *Ashami*, earned him nationwide



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popularity. From then on the powerful actor did not need to look back. To quote him, "The audience likes my natural way of acting and my comic expressions. I've developed my own unique style."

ATM Shamsuzzaman has also worked as a character actor in some films. However, since 1990s, he has not been frequent on the silver screen. According to the thespian, "I've rejected many offers as most of the current movies are vulgar and substandard."

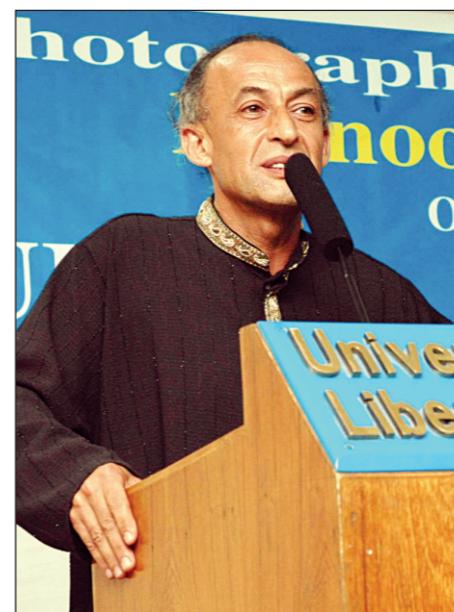
The actor has now become busy with TV serials. After being absent from the small screen for several years, the seasoned film actor performed in a TV serial titled *Greehogalpo*, directed by Afsana Mimi. Soon after, offers from TV serial-makers poured in. Shamsuzzaman's role in *Rang-er Manush* was hugely popular. Currently, he is seen in several serials, including *Bhab-er Haat*. Shamsuzzaman says, "I enjoy working in TV serials, my co-actors and the crew. But, still I consider myself a film actor."

ATM Shamsuzzaman is optimistic about the future of Bangladeshi cinema. "A good number of educated individuals are now interested in films, which is a very positive sign. I believe Bangladeshi cinema will regain its popularity in the near future."

For his contribution to cinema ATM Shamsuzzaman has won several honours, including four national awards. He received the award for Best Actor in 1987 for the film *Dayi Ke*, as well as the award for Best Story and Dialogue Writer for the same movie. He also won awards for Best Supporting Actor on two occasions -- for *Madam Phuli* (1999) and *Churiwala* (2002), an Indo-Bangla joint production.

Photographic presentation

## Manoocher Deghati: Chronicling the absurdity of war



Manoocher Deghati speaks at ULAB

KARIM WAHEED

As renowned Iranian-French photojournalist Manoocher Deghati puts it: "Photography is one of the youngest art forms but in the last few decades it has established its significance as an instrument to document history in a way no other medium can."

Deghati, who has worked for Sipa Press Agency and Agence France-Presse (AFP), is currently the head of IRIN Photo, The United Nation's News Agency. His career, spanning over three decades, has been adorned with prestigious awards including Special Achievement Prize from American Deadline Press Club (1980), 1st and 3rd Prize from World Press Photo (1983 and 1986 respectively), 1st prize at the 11th International Festival of SCOOP and Journalism in Angers (1996), Georges Boderheim Prize (2001) and more.

At a photographic presentation organised by Drik Picture Library, Pathshala and University of Liberal Arts Bangladesh (ULAB), Deghati went over his memorable works. The presentation was held at the ULAB auditorium in Dhannamdi on July 18.

Shahidul Alam, director of Drik, and Dr. Kazi Anis Ahmed, director of Academic Affairs, ULAB, spoke briefly prior to the presentation.

Deghati's introduction to photography has all the elements to make a sensational story. Educated as a cinematographer, he returned to Iran from Italy in 1978. The first major demonstrations against the regime of the Shah were breaking out. He decided to photograph those events. According to Deghati, "I remember going out with a camera in hand. A truckload of soldiers was passing me by. One of them loaded his rifle and fired at me. The burst of bullets passed on either side of my head. I was alive. I was shocked. But above all, I realised that I was a target because I was taking pictures. That reinforced my determination to take pictures."

The presentation started with images of people in the Iranian city of Qom, mourning on 'Ashura'. A photo of a former political prisoner demonstrating how he was tortured by the Shah's forces was followed by shots of demonstrations against the tyranny. Deghati also photographed all the major events during the new Khomeini regime, the hostage crisis at the

American embassy and the Iran-Iraq war. Images of Iranian soldiers stoutly marching over a US flag painted on the street and people opposing the authority, tearing Khomeini's posters apart, indicated the troubled times.

A photo captures a scene of a mass execution, which according to Deghati took place quite often following the Iranian Revolution. Faces appear in a sea of black veils at a prison for women. Images of children carrying weapons to demonstrate the unwavering morale of the nation, during the Iran-Iraq war that lasted 8 years, witness the absurdity of war.

In 1985, the Iranian government put restraints on Deghati's photography. He went into exile in France. In 1987, Agence France-Presse asked him to assume the direction of the agency's first regional bureau in Central America. Deghati followed the guerrilla war in El Salvador, the conflict between Contras and Sandinistas in Nicaragua, the civil war in Guatemala, and the American incursion in Panama.

In 1990, Deghati covered the Gulf War. A

photo of a US tank, with "Camel Killer" spray-painted on its turret, reveals the American attitude towards Arabs. A shot of a US warship entering the Suez Canal is made to look like the vessel is resting right in the middle of the desert.

Deghati also photographed the rise of Islamist militancy in Egypt, the war and famine in Sudan and Somalia.

In September 1996, he was gravely wounded in Ramallah, West Bank, during a confrontation between Israelis and Palestinians. He spent two years in physical therapy at a hospital for war veterans in France. Since December 1998, Deghati has worked for the AFP bureau in Paris.

The photojournalist went to Afghanistan in 2002 and formed Aina Photo, which has become the first and most important supplier of photo-graphs from that country.

Following the presentation, Deghati responded to questions from the audience that included students and teachers of ULAB, photo-enthusiasts and photographers.



Photographs by Deghati displayed at the presentation



## Abu Sayeed completes filming of "Banshi"



A scene from Banshi

CULTURAL CORRESPONDENT

Filmmaker Abu Sayeed has finished shooting his forth film *Banshi*. Funded by Visions Sud Est, a renowned Swiss organisation, the film is going to be submitted to the Censor Board possibly in the next week.

The film revolves around urban characters at a traditional rural mela. Arif (Mamunul Haque), an aspiring filmmaker, goes to a remote village to see a mela. There he meets Shaila (Tanveen

Sweety). Both of them are taken in as guests by two influential families of the village. They become distressed when the two families get involved in a brawl. The situation reminds him of Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet* or Tolstoy's *Little Girls Wiser than Men*. The experience however, inspires him to envision a scene for his film.

Apart from direction, Abu Sayeed has also written the script. Mujibul Haque is the cinematographer of the film. S.I. Tutul has composed the songs for the film.

## Giving a voice to moderate Muslims

MAHESH BHATT

On July 12 2007, after two days of intense fighting, which left 73 extremists and 9 soldiers killed, silence finally descended over Lal Masjid in Islamabad, Pakistan. From this deadly silence emanated one clear voice -- the voice of moderate Islam, which urged the people of Pakistan to stand apart from radical elements that have distorted and hijacked the spirit of Islam to soothe their perverse interests.

When hours later, a sombre looking General Pervez Musharraf appeared on PTV and begged the nation to speak out loud and clear and oppose through action the growing radicalisation of youngsters in the name of Islam, it became clear that the leader of the so called "terrorist state" was obviously disassociating himself from those who advocate and perpetrate violence under the name of their faith.

Ever since the Indian link to the recent UK terror plot has been uncovered, Muslims here in India more than ever before are beginning to realise the need to prop up

the moderate profile of its community. It is this very fact, which leads me to realise that our film *Dhoka* does just that.

*Dhoka* is a tale of a moderate Indian Muslim cop, who wakes up and to his horror, discovers that his



wife, who had recently been killed in a bomb blast, was now being accused of being a perpetrator as opposed to a victim of that very crime. This film gives a voice to the grievances of the Indian Muslim,

The writer is a noted Indian Filmmaker

## Citycell-Mahakal Theatre Festival '07

### "Rupoboti" to be staged today

CULTURAL CORRESPONDENT

Shubochan Natya Sangsads will stage its production *Rupoboti* today, as part of ongoing Citycell-



### "Aumir Shesh Chithi" on Channel-i today

CULTURAL CORRESPONDENT

Single-episode play, *Aumir Shesh Chithi* will be aired today on Channel-i at 3:05 pm.

*Aumir Shesh Chithi* follows the story of Prantika and Aumi -- two University students in love. Aumi becomes terminally ill and starts distancing himself from Prantika.



Arman Parvez Murad and Aupi Karim in the play

people are often compelled to leave their dearest ones, seeking a better life. The play features the conflict between love and destitution. A flutist in the play wanders from village to village in search of the killer of his beloved Rupoboti. Who is the killer? Is he an individual or a faceless enemy? At the end of the play one comes to the realisation that it is poverty that makes the flutist and Rupoboti suffer.

Directed by Khaled Khan, Ahsan Habib Nasim is the music composer and Anisul Haque Barun is the choreographer of the play. Enamul Karim Nirjhar is the set designer and Abu Daud Ashrafee is the light designer.