

A thespian on his illustrious career

In conversation with ATM Shamsuzzaman

ERSHAD KAMOL

VIEWERS 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, Shmsuzzaman 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 *Greehgalpo*, 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 *Bhob-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

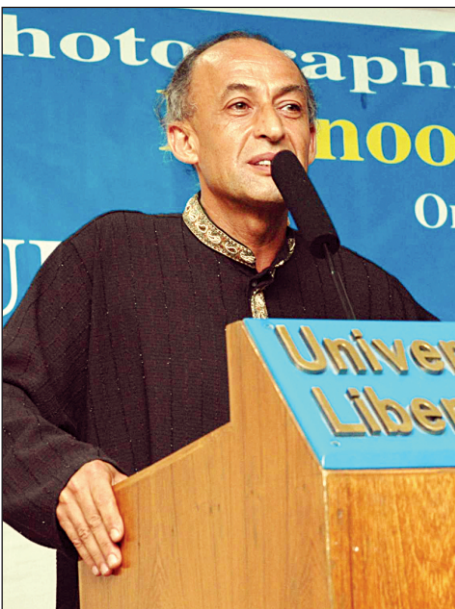


PHOTO: STAR

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 Benderheim 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 Dhanmondi 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 photographs 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



Commercial release of "Matir Moina" in Kolkata



Jayanto Chattyopadhyay (2nd from left), Rokeya Prachy (R) and child actors in *Matir Moina*

CULTURAL CORRESPONDENT

Matir Moina, the internationally acclaimed film directed by Tareque Masud and produced by Catherine Masud, is due to have its commercial release in Kolkata on July 31.

For the last 42 years, cultural exchange in the field of cinema

between the two Bengals, has been at a virtual standstill. The release of *Matir Moina* in West Bengal will hopefully open a window of opportunity for further cultural exchange between Bangladesh and India, particularly between the two Bengals.

Matir Moina received the Indian

government's censor certificate last month. Major Kolkata art theatre Nandan has formally confirmed the film's release date. In addition, the film will later run at several other theatres in Kolkata as well as other parts of greater West Bengal. In this connection a press conference will be held in

Kolkata on July 21. Eminent filmmakers Mrinal Sen, Gautam Ghose, and Anjan Dutta, among others are scheduled to attend the event. Kolkata-based distributor Digimagic Films will be handling the release of *Matir Moina* in West Bengal. Discussions are currently underway with distributors for a wider Indian release of the film in major Indian cities including Delhi, Mumbai and Bangalore.

Although since 1965 there has been virtually no official exchange of films between India and Bangladesh, no government ordinance, gazette or law bars this exchange. Pakistan and India have recently relaxed restrictions on cross-border cinema exchange, and last year Pakistan's award-winning film *Khamosh Pani* had a successful commercial release in India.

In connection with the release of a Bangladeshi film for the first time in India, filmmaker Tareque Masud said, "As an alternative to the one-sided dominance of Hollywood-Bollywood cinema, this effort will hopefully initiate a healthy competition in regional cinema, particularly between the two Bengals." Tareque Masud also emphasised the importance of expanding cultural ties between West Bengal and Bangladesh, as an extension of the greater economic and geographic connectivity that the Moitree train link will soon introduce.

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

Sweetey). 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.

Citycell-Mahakal Theatre Festival '07

"Rupoboti" to be staged today

CULTURAL CORRESPONDENT

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

Mahakal Theatre Festival '07, at the Experimental Theatre Stage. Nasrin Jahan's play *Rupoboti* highlights the scourge of poverty in the rural areas, where

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.



Actors of Shubochan Natya Sangsad in *Rupoboti*



"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.

Not aware of the reality, Prantika is hurt and decides to move on through marrying someone else. On her birthday, Prantika expects Aumi to show up but what turns up is a letter from him.

The play is written and directed by Shafiqul Islam. Arman Parvez Murad and Aupi Karim play the lead roles.



Arman Parvez Murad and Aupi Karim in the play

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 Laal 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,

who has been feeling repressed and marginalized for the last 60 years. Our film emphasises the importance of the victim getting a platform to discuss and debate the burning issues within him, instead of retreating into a ghetto of the mind and the heart and allowing his bitterness to fester continuously. Only when the wound is left open to the elements can it heal. A society, which does not allow the pent up angers and frustrations of its people to be expressed through its performing arts, takes the great risk of being devoured by this unexpressed rage.

In the 60th year of Indian independence, *Dhoka* dares to take the first step towards achieving this end. The war of terrorism cannot be won by governments that have no support from their people. It is crucial that its people support it in this war against the faceless enemy which sadly enough could be one their own. The real Jihad, as a devout Muslim friend of mine said, is the Jihad that is fought with ones self.

The writer is a noted Indian Filmmaker