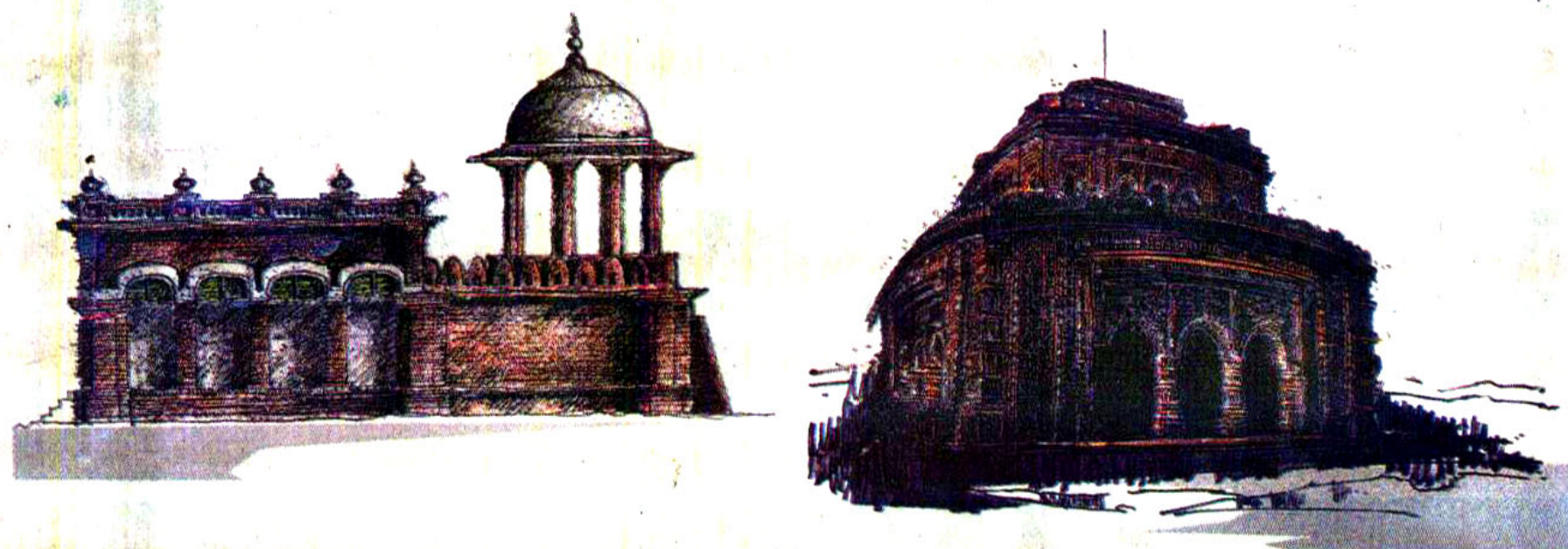


# Reviving a spectacular past through pen-and-ink

Sajid's sketches of heritage sites



(Clockwise from top-left) Sketches of Gateway Rani Bhawani Palace in Natore, Lord Curzon Hall in Dhaka and Kantajee Temple in Dinajpur

CULTURAL CORRESPONDENT

**S**AJID-BIN-DOZA, 34, an architect by profession who is also studying at BUET, is having his remarkable exhibition of sketches titled "Entity" at Gallery Zoom and Café Veranda of Alliance Francaise, Dhaka. The exhibition is drawing crowds of art and history enthusiasts. Preservation of our rich historical monuments is Sajid's aim.

Sajid not only brings out the beauty of the historical buildings of the Hindu, Mughal and Colonial times, but has researched in India and Bangladesh, as well as in Malaysia to promote the wealth of our architectural heritage. Thus he draws his inspiration from drawings and manuscripts of the past plus photographs. Asked if he only sketches what he sees, Sajid says that at times he makes photographs, and then works on them at his leisure in his studio. In this way he combines the past with the present, reality with imagination.

The exhibition, says Sajid, is not only to highlight his passion for



sketching, something at which he has excelled since his school days, but to make the viewers see the wealth of our past. At times he has added nature and human figures to lend interest and reality. This includes the overwhelming flooding which today persists even outside the monsoon season. Sajid has added washes of water-colour in browns, reds and other pastel shades. On the whole the effect is dramatic.

"Our historical monuments are being ruined due to exposure to the unmitigated rain, floods and heat. The buildings are being affected by the adverse climatic changes and conventional downpour. That is why my drawings have such a dark hue. If restored with care, these edifices should boost the tourism business in our country," Sajid adds with enthusiasm.

Sajid has visited many historical sights -- in Natore where he was initially educated, in Rajshahi and in Dhaka, where he currently resides. For his inspiration he has his mother, who is also artistically inclined and his wife, who too is a practicing architect. His other family members

too are supportive. His Masters thesis is based on the preservation of our historical sites and his solo exhibition is an extension of that project.

"Old Dhaka brings in monuments of historical interests like Lalbagh Fort, with the tomb of Pari Bibi featuring the Mughal style, while Curzon Hall is a blend of the Raj and Mughal styles. Rose Garden has the high renaissance of the Raj times. Hindu temples and palaces in Rajshahi and Dhaka, along with other places, also reflect our rich heritage. All these should leave an indelible mark on the mind of the viewer, along with the footnote tags that I've added," Sajid says.

"What you see in the 42 pieces is a combination of historical, architectural and personal interest. It took me three years to complete this work, apart from my seven-year research. I've seen successful restorations of heritage sites in India, Malaysia and Myanmar, and we should be able to do likewise," concludes Sajid.

# Lifetime achievement award for Shahanaz Rahmatullah

PTV honours the diva

FAYZA HAQ

Graceful songstress Shahanaz Rahmatullah recently received a lifetime achievement award from PTV. At her Baridhara residence Shahanaz spoke to *The Daily Star* on her experiences and views. The internationally acclaimed celebrity spoke with triumph and bright-eyed enthusiasm.

This award for Shahanaz, as she put it, is the culmination of her singing career spanning over decades. The diva started singing at the age of eight, in 1963, when she was recruited for children's performances in PTV. Since then she has travelled over South Asia, Europe, USA and China, following her idols Lata Mangeshkar, Asha Bhosle and Mehdi Hassan, among other music icons, Shahanaz says.

In her grandparents' home in Sirajganj, with its idyllic surroundings, the passion for music was nurtured by her parents, specially her mother. Her elder brothers were into music too in a big way. It was a foregone conclusion that

Shahanaz too would one day excel in the field of songs with her voice like tinkling silver bells, when she speaks. She had basic training in Indian classical music, and had four more years of music lessons at a college, she says.

All through the years, she kept up her *rewaz* whether with her *ustads* or by herself, with a few accompanying musicians. Now this practicing is all the more so under the insistence of her husband, a retired army personnel. She now takes pride in her renditions of patriotic and popular songs along with *ghazals*, which have made her famous in Bangladesh, Pakistan, and other places overseas.

Songs like *Prothom Bangladesh, Ekbar jetye dey na amar chhotto shonar gaye* and *Ektara tui desher kotha* have made her the eponymous patriotic singer in Bangladesh. *Sohni dharti* made her a household name in Pakistan. The song is still aired on occasions on PTV.

On her days with PTV, Shahnaz

says, "In my two years in Pakistan (prior to 1971), I was involved with TV, films and live performances. Getting the award today with personalities like Zia Mahiuddin and Sohail Rana, makes me feel that my days in Pakistan were surely ones to treasure."

My experiences in different places are all worth mentioning. Adulation from listeners throughout the last four decades has truly been special.

Here in Bangladesh, she performs not only on TV but also at live shows. She takes great pride in mastering languages -- Bangla, Hindi, Urdu, Punjabi, Arabic, Nepalese, Burmese, Chinese and more.

Says the diva, "Words are an integral part of songs, where the pronunciation and intonation patterns have to be mastered to please the target audience."

Basically, Shahnaz says, she is a classical singer and has veered into other genres, as they are more in demand. Her voice, today, is in the hearts of millions of listeners both at home and abroad.



Shahanaz Rahmatullah during a performance

# Film show for a cause

'Aparajito' at TSC ends

CULTURAL CORRESPONDENT

Dhaka University Film Society arranged a three-day charity film show that ended yesterday. Proceeds from the show titled 'Aparajito' will be donated to the Sidr victims.

On December 4, with a brief inauguration, Imran Firdaus, President of DUFFS, opened the show at the TSC auditorium. Renowned filmmaker Tareque Masud along with Professor Syed Abul Kalam Azad, treasurer, Dhaka University and Professor AAMS Arefin Siddique, moderator of DUFFS were present at the event. The guests thanked DUFFS for taking this noble initiative.

Tareque Masud recalled the making of the film *Muktir Gaan* in his speech: "Footages used in the film were actually shot by an American cinematographer during 1971. We found it 20 years later; the footages were in a basement. More footages taken during the war are in different countries all over the world. If we can compile them, the epic-like span of our Liberation War could be known more extensively."

*Muktir Gaan* was shown after the inauguration. Nine other critically acclaimed films from different countries were screened at the show. Gaanchil Media Limited was the sponsor of the show.



A scene from *Muktir Gaan*, screened at the film show

# "Sheishob Dinratri": Programme on Liberation War on ATN Bangla

CULTURAL CORRESPONDENT

ATN Bangla will air the seventh episode of *Sheishob Dinratri*, a programme based on the Liberation War tonight at 6:40 pm. Hosted by Nusrat Rumana, the programme is directed by Biplob Rahman.

In the last 36 years, the history and essence of the Liberation War have often been distorted. The

post-Liberation War generations should know the true history including all the struggles, combats, sacrifices, horrors and victory, starting from the Language Movement to the birth of Bangladesh.

Every episode of *Sheishob Dinratri* intends to focus on these events and the history. The show includes interviews of Freedom Fighters, reports and more.



The host of *Sheishob Dinratri*

# Looking back

# Satyajit Ray: The route to making "Pather Panchali"

SHANTANU BISWAS

Satyajit Ray is widely regarded as one of the greatest auteurs of 20th century cinema. Akira Kurosawa, the great Japanese filmmaker declared, "Not to have seen Cinema of Ray means existing in the world without seeing the Sun or the Moon."

The great artiste like all of us had a childhood, which was not so smooth. He lost his father when he was barely three. He was born on May 2, 1921 in an intellectual and affluent family in Kolkata. Though their ancestry can be traced back at least 10 generations, (originating from Mymensingh) the family history took a decisive turn with his grandfather Upendra Kishore Ray Chowdhury. He was a writer, illustrator, philosopher, musician and publisher -- a true Renaissance's man, a pioneer in half-tone block making and had one of the finest presses in the subcontinent. He published a children's magazine called *Sandesh* -- a curious duality in name meaning both "news" and a particular kind of "sweet". Satyajit later revived *Sandesh*, set the tone of the magazine both educational and entertaining and engaged himself in illustrating the magazine, and writing stories and essays for children.

Sukumar Ray, son of Upendra Kishore, had been sent to England to study printing technology. He passed with flying colours, returned home, got married and joined his father's business. He was

amongst the most renowned Bengali writers of children's literature, an able illustrator and a critic. Sukumar Ray died at the age of 36. The printing press changed hands and Satyajit and his mother Suprabha Ray (Das) had to leave their spacious house and move in with Satyajit's maternal uncle. His mother taught needlework at a widow's school to supplement the household income and until eight years of age, Satyajit was tutored by his mother.

While at school he became a film enthusiast, regularly reading Hollywood trivia and magazines like *Pictuuregoer* and *Photoplay*. Deanna Durbin of Hollywood became his favourite not only because of her looks and her gift as an actress but of her lovely soprano voice. Western classical music was another of his interests. When in College his interest from actors shifted to the filmmakers. Russian filmmaker Podovkin's two books on films changed his vision.

Besides films, he passionately loved music. He grew up in an atmosphere of Indian music. He graduated at the age of eighteen. He became a subscriber of *Sight and Sound* and sought after film magazines published in England. As he had a natural flair for drawing he was planning to become a commercial artist. On his mother's insistence and his respect for Tagore he enrolled in Shantiniketan in 1940. He spent three years there. The experience



A scene from *Pather Panchali*

was an eye-opener for him, as it exposed the magnificence of Oriental art. He learnt much from the famous painter Nandalal Bose and Binode Behari Mukherjee.

Another important aspect in Shantiniketan for the city-bred Satyajit was getting to know the charms of rural Bengal very closely for the first time.

Ray left Shantiniketan in 1943 and took a job with a British adver-

tising agency DJ Keymer. While at Keymer, Satyajit became involved with Signet Press, a new publishing house started by DK Gupta. The books published from Signet created sensation in the publishing world. Satyajit was given the job to design book covers. In 1944, for the young readers, DK decided to bring out an abridged edition of *Pather Panchali* by Bibhuti Bhushan Banerjee. DK gave Satyajit the

original book of *Pather Panchali* to read because he was assigned to illustrate for the abridged version.

The book was an eye opener for Satyajit. He discovered with admiration that the book was like an encyclopaedia on life in rural Bengal. The life-like portrayals, the vivid details of day-to-day existence, the humanism, the warmth, everything together seemed like a classic to young Satyajit. It was DK who told him that it would make a very good film. In addition to designing the cover, he illustrated the book, many of his illustrations ultimately found their place as shots in his ground breaking film.

Satyajit along with some of his friends founded the Calcutta Film Society in 1947. In 1949 he married his cousin (maternal) and longtime sweetheart Bijoya Das. One of the most dramatic events in his life was meeting Jean Renoir in 1949 who came to Kolkata to shoot *The River*. He helped Renoir to find locations in the countryside. It was then that Satyajit told Renoir about his idea of making *Pather Panchali*. During this time, Satyajit was carrying a notebook filled with sketches, dialogue and the treatment of making a film on *Pather Panchali*. He wanted the film to be shot in actual locations with new faces without any make-up. The reaction to this from his friends was negative. Shooting in locations with unknown actors was thought to be a totally unfeasible idea.

In the following six months

while he was staying abroad, Satyajit saw about a hundred films including Vittorio De Sica's *Bicycle Thieves*. This film made a profound impact on Satyajit. The film had reconfirmed his conviction that it was possible to make realistic cinema with and an almost entirely amateur cast and shooting at actual locations. On his return journey to Kolkata by ship he had completed his treatment of *Pather Panchali*. The script was ready at last.

Satyajit started shooting for the film in late 1952 using his personal savings and taking loan from his relatives as none of the producers came forward to fund the film. He had to sell his wife's jewellery to continue with the shooting. Thanks to a loan from the West Bengal Government, the film was finally completed. *Pather Panchali* was shot over an unusually long period of three years because shooting progressed only when Satyajit could arrange fund.

The film was released in 1955 to great critical and popular success sweeping up numerous prizes and having long runs in both India and abroad. The film had been recognised by the critics and filmmakers all over the world as the "Best Human Document." *Pather Panchali* won 11 International prizes and established Satyajit as one of the greatest filmmakers of the world.

The writer is a freelance contributor

# Drama serial "Byasto Doctor" tonight on Banglavisision

CULTURAL CORRESPONDENT

Drama serial *Byasto Doctor* will be aired tonight at 8:25 pm on Banglavisision. Written by Prasanta Hawlader, the serial is directed by Debashish Barua.

The story of the comedy circles a rural physician, who is known as the "byasto" (busy) doctor in the locality because of his constantly "on the run" attitude. *Byasto*



A scene from the serial

doctor treats both humans and animals. The doctor always checks up his patients in a rush. He owns a bike, which has no headlight, guard or looking glass. He always hangs a bag behind his bike as he accepts things like fruits, vegetable or anything else offered to him as remuneration. His handwriting is so incomprehensible that no one can decipher it except the dispensary-owner.

Salahuddin Lavlu, Tisha and Fazlur Rahman Babu play the lead roles in the serial.

# Buzz

# "Kite Runner" prepares for takeoff

REUTERS, Los Angeles

The young stars of *The Kite Runner* may have been moved to a secret location after receiving death threats, but now the tricky part really begins for the film's distributor: Packaging a foreign-language movie with weighty themes and no stars as a mainstream release.

The DreamWorks production, which is being released through Paramount Vantage, the Afghanistan- and U.S.-set tale opens this week in limited release before expanding during the coming weeks. And it poses one of the most fraught challenges of any movie this fall as Paramount Pictures' specialty division tries to turn what was an unlikely best-seller about friendship and ethnic strife into a big-screen blockbuster.

Hovering over it is a Vantage release from earlier in the year, *A Mighty Heart*, which took on a similar part of the world with more obvious commercial elements (Angelina Jolie as Mariane Pearl) but earned just \$15 million at the box office.

The result has been to make *Kite Runner* a marketing anomaly, with the company taking a grassroots approach that has focused on ele-



A scene from *The Kite Runner*

ments most major rollouts ignore.

It has hosted dozens of screenings for book clubs and in the heartland (literally, in the case of the Heartland Film Festival in Indianapolis); has embraced an unusual publicity figure in Khaled Hosseini, who wrote the book on which the movie is based; and thrown fundraisers with Afghan expats.

Vantage has embarked on its campaign with a dearth of TV spots and trailers. "The English-language portions of the film don't lend themselves to clips, and the Dari (language) will put some people off, so word-of-mouth is all you have," said one executive with knowledge of the campaign.

In a way, Vantage was put in this position because of circumstances beyond its control. Eager to avoid the wide release of *Mighty Heart*, the company planned a slow burn for the Marc Forster picture, with *Kite Runner* slated for an early November opening and then carefully rolling out through year's end.

But concerns developed that four of the movie's young Afghan stars could find themselves in danger from the surrounding community because of sexually suggestive elements in the film's plot line. So the company pushed the release back six weeks in order to move the boys out of Afghanistan and set them up with new lives somewhere in the United Arab Emirates.

The result was to put *Kite Runner* into a crowded and awards-crazed December, which forced the movie to jostle against such big-buzz releases as *Sweeney Todd*, *Atanarjuat*, and even Vantage's own *There Will Be Blood*.