

Nrityanchal Dance Festival begins

Sukalyan Bhattacharya: Giving an age-old art form a fresh look

NADIA SARWAT

RENOWNED international dancer and choreographer Sukalyan Bhattacharya is now in Dhaka for the Nrityanchal Dance Festival --beginning today -- at the National Theatre stage, Bangladesh Shilpakala Academy (BSA).

Sukalyan, a Toronto-based choreographer recently had a chat with *The Daily Star* at the BSA plaza in between rehearsals with his troupe. Directors of Nrityanchal, artistes Shibli Mohammed and Shamim Ara Nipa, were also present there, both busy working for the festival.

Born and raised in Kolkata, Sukalyan had to face all the prejudices against a man who wants to take up dance as a profession. "Dance is my passion and I was ready to break the so-called 'effeminate male dancer' image. My family was surprised when I declared that I wanted to be a dancer. However, they have always been very supportive."

Sukalyan's USP is fusion -- combining the Indian classical dance forms with Western styles and some particular martial arts moves. The artiste says that he applies the professionalism and technical skills he learnt during his stay in Canada.

"I was inspired by my guru, Dr. Manjushree Chaki Sircar. Extremely innovative, he combined the classical form with two other dance forms -- *Kkalar* (indigenous to Kerala, India) and *Thangta* (indigenous to Manipur, India). He includes moves from different martial arts forms in his compositions. I think audiences who want to see something new will find my compositions intriguing."

Calling the classical dance forms "the root", the artiste says, "Indian classical dance forms will continue to exist on their own merit. It is the root without which a dancer is nothing. It takes years of devotion to acquire a skill. But I feel the classical



Sukalyan Bhattacharya

forms somehow lack the vigour that is often related to the idea of masculinity. My style tries to highlight the masculine energy. Moreover, the themes of classical dance forms are often archaic and difficult to convey to the masses. Like every art form, dance also needs evolution."

'Sukalyan and the Entourage' -- Sukalyan's troupe which includes a music director, instrumentalists and dancers -- has performed at several international dance festivals in USA, England, Scotland, Canada, Australia and India. The troupe will perform the dance-drama *Parijaee* on the third day of Nrityanchal Dance Festival (January 27).

Sukalyan conducted a two-week workshop where 140 Bangladeshi dancers from different age groups participated. He is also the choreographer and director of the multimedia production *Tin Konyar Daan* that will open the festival. Shamim Ara Nipa will enact three legendary female characters -- Draupadi, Behula and Birangana Sakina. A team of 30 dancers will accompany Nipa in the production.

"I was bored doing the same dance routines year after year. I wanted a break through. *Tin Konyar Daan* is quite different from the other productions. Sukalyan's style is very innovative and unique. I took it as a challenge," said Nipa.

"Nrityanchal has been arranging dance festivals with a wide perspective. We are glad to have Sukalyan here. I think the audience will witness some grand performances at this year's festival," Shibli Mohammed added.

Besides *Tin Konyar Daan* and *Parijaee*, the festival includes dance-dramas *Bhanusingher Podaboli* directed by Samina Hossain Prema on the second day (January 26) and *Mohua* by Nrityanchal on the closing day (January 28). Nrityanchal will also honour two dance gurus, Kartik Singh and Kunjolal Sarkar.

Wahidul Haque remembered

MAINUL HASSAN

The first death anniversary of Wahidul Haque is only a few days away. It was on January 27, 2007 when the cultural icon left this world, leaving the nation in tears.

To mark his first death anniversary, recitation organisation Konthoshilon held a special programme at the Shawkat Osman Memorial Auditorium, Central Public on January 23. Titled "Chetona Dharaye Esho", the event featured discussion and recitation.

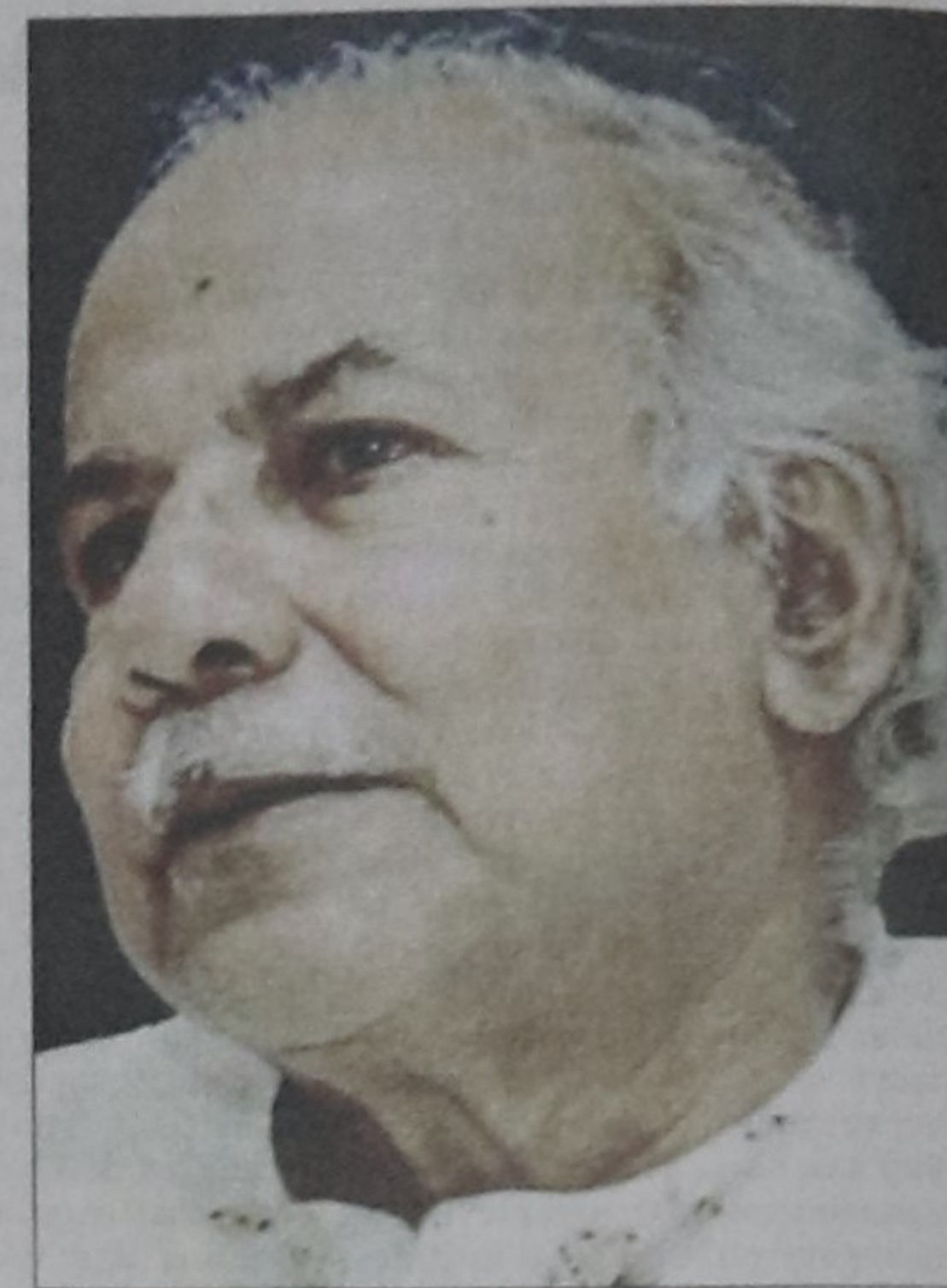
Cultural personality Aly Zaker, Meer Barkat and Golam Sarwar -- both teachers of Konthoshilon -- participated in the discussion.

Speaking on Wahidul Haque, Aly Zaker said, "Many knew Wahidul Haque mainly as a Tagore exponent but he was also equally skilled in other subjects including physics and chemistry. He was a highly knowledgeable person." He added, "In my life I have never come across anyone whose recitation skills matched his. He was also an exceptional teacher."

Speaking on their last encounter Zaker said, "I met him for the last time at the inauguration of the Chhayanat Shangkriti Bhaban and his speech at the event was profound."

"At our last meeting he said to me that we don't get to meet any more," said an emotional Zaker.

Other speakers also recalled their memories of Haque. Through breaks in between the speeches, members of Konthoshilon performed solo recitations. Kazi Arif, Hassan Arif, Santa Sraboni, Mahidul Islam, Ahkam Ullah, Naila Tarannum Chowdhury, Rafiqul Islam, Jhorna Sarkar, Laila Afroz and others performed at the event.



Wahidul Haque

"Aha" screened at the Pune International Film Festival

CULTURAL CORRESPONDENT

Architect turned filmmaker Enamul Karim Nirjhar's debut feature film *Aha* participated at the 6th Pune International Film Festival, India. The festival continued from January 10 to 17 in Pune, which was inaugurated by Indian Information and Broadcasting Minister Priya Ranjan Dasmuni.

Aha was screened on January 15 at the festival. About the festival, Nirjhar said, "As the film institute is located in the city, several

renowned film actors, directors, technicians, film students and critics were present at the festival. They seemed to have enjoyed the film."

Aha has been screened at three international festivals recently. The film's tour began in late November and continued till mid December last year. Earlier *Aha* participated at several international film festivals including the Munich Film Festival, Cairo International Film Festival, Silk Road Film Festival and Dubai International Film Festival.

Featuring the story of a family living in Old Dhaka, *Aha* zooms in on the different issues city-dwellers face everyday, like unplanned urbanisation, generation gap and more. Apart from direction, Nirjhar has written the story and developed the screenplay.

The cast includes Humayun Faridee, Tariq Anam Khan, Fazlur Rahman Babu, Shathi Yasmin, Ferdous and Khaled Khan. Songs used in the film have been written by Nirjhar and set to tune by Indian music director Deviyoti Misra.

Theatre Festival '08 ends

"Ekti Obastob Galpo" staged



Actors of Anyapasha Natya Neshia in the play *Ekti Obastob Galpo*

ERSHAD KAMOL

The six-day Theatre Festival '08, arranged by the troupe Theatre (Natok Sarani), ended on January 23 at the Mahila Samity Stage. Apart from two productions -- *Shat Ghatir Kanakori* and *Ruphan* -- by Theatre, two troupes from India staged three plays at the festival.

On the closing day, Kolkata based troupe Anyapasha Natya Neshia staged *Ekti Obastob Galpo* by Bimal Bandyopadhyay. Through an unusual incident at the gallows in a jail, *Ekti Obastob Galpo* features the flaws in the system. According to Bimal's play, it is often difficult to distinguish between a 'murder' and an 'accident' and

people sometimes are wrongly accused.

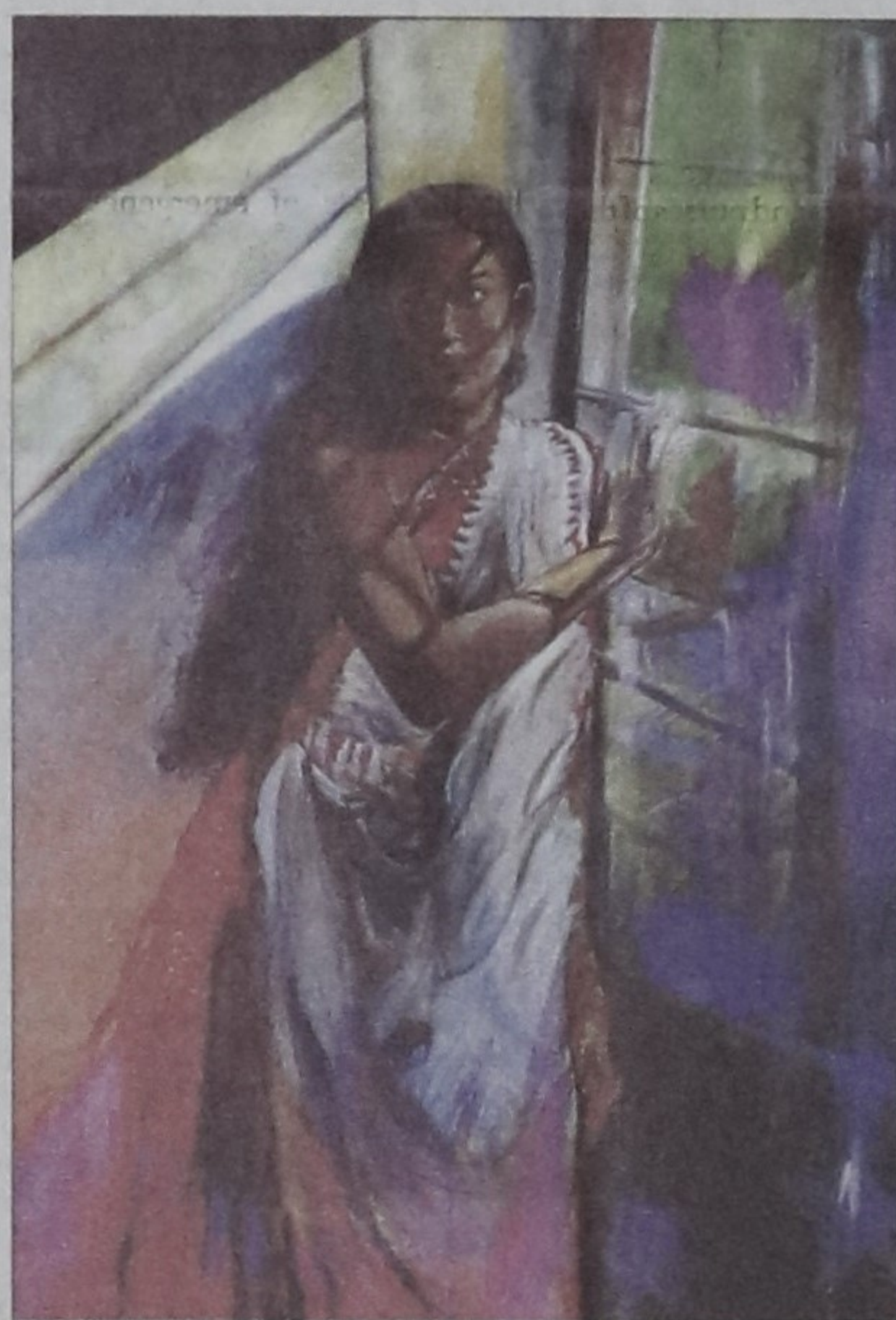
K. Mondal (Dev Kumar Ghosh), a convict who is being executed for killing his wife, does not die, rather loses his consciousness. To revive him, so that the execution can be performed, the jailer and the other attendants re-enact the incident for which Mondal has been sentenced to death.

Director Dr. Sameer Banerjee's treatment of the 'play within a play' is quite interesting. The audience seemed to enjoy the farcical efforts to resuscitate Mondal by the jailer and his comrades.

After regaining consciousness, Mondal in a soliloquy narrates that he did not kill his wife; rather it had been an accident.

Dev Kumar Ghosh gave a brilliant performance, in particular during the soliloquy. Throughout the play, Bishwajit Chakroborti as the moronic jailer with too much power, performed boldly on the stage. Chakroborti's treatment of diverse aesthetic sentiments as per the demands of the actions was impressive.

Kuhu's amazing pastel portraits



Artworks by Kuhu

FAYZA HAQ

Kuhu is currently having a solo exhibition at Gallery Chitrah after some years. Her present delineation of sensuous, dusky women, peeping through curtains of Dhaka rickshaws, are memories of her student days at the Institute of Fine Arts, years back. Through the image of the attractive women with

flowing hair, cherub lips, luminous eyes and eager looks, she recalls her trips through Dhaka before she went to study at Dieppe, France.

Although Kuhu had to undergo the rituals of outdoor academic training in her student years, it was portraiture that she enjoyed most, being guided by the now Spain-based Shahid Kabir and Rafiqun Nabi. Her colleagues like Jamal Ahmed and Nasreen Begum gave her more incentive and competition. Today her drawings in marvelous vermilion, blues and earthy hues are unique indeed, and they follow the features of her muse Fatima, her favourite model in Dhaka.

Kuhu brings in the motifs of the rickshaw painters with exotic flowers and vines, suggestion of rickshaw curtains and other integral parts, and then fits in her nebulous models. She sometimes adds other flora and fauna too to her main subjects, in order to lend interest and variation.

In her earlier series Kuhu had brought in the enticing *burqa* clad women and the other sensuous female characters from the streets. Now, her women are clad in stark white *sari* with red border that is the epitome of the Bengali womanhood in Kuhu's mind.

Though done in chalk, the merging of the medium is such that the artworks appear like scintillating painted images -- which one cannot help but marvel at. The Bangladeshi flag is included in one piece.

As one progresses to the other rooms of the exhibit, one comes across buoyant collage artwork, done with fabrics, which would make any art collector intrigued. The textiles originated from discarded *saris*, now torn, recycled and put on the canvas in layers and appearing like quilts at times. These are dyed and retain their original motifs.

The printed materials are again painted over with water-colour, and also stamped with imprints of blocks, paints and needlework that contain *kantha* stitches. These are again adorned with in-vogue shells and buttons. One particular piece contains reproductions of Michelangelo, a favourite artist of Kuhu, as also of most painters the world over.

The haute couture expert of excellent repute, Kuhu, is naturally inclined to creations such as these to lend variety to her exhibit of 50 amazing pieces which art lovers flocked to examine for hours on the opening day at the weekend. The buzzing viewers included both expatriates and locals,



who sipped raw tea under the open evening sky, after their numerous trips to the several rooms of the gallery. The exhibition is indeed another mark of success for both Kuhu and Chitrah.

Destined to draw, Kuhu has held five solo exhibitions and over 40 joint displays. She was awarded the Shaheed Nonah Miah prize for drawing.

The exhibition ends on February 15.

"Smile Show" on ATN Bangla tonight

CULTURAL CORRESPONDENT

ATN Bangla will air the ninth episode of the variety programme *Smile Show* tonight at 8 pm. Directed and hosted by Khandaker Ismail, this episode will feature performances by several popular singers.

Dilruba Khan, Ferdous Ara, Shuvro Dev, Rabi Choudhury, Anki Alamgir, Alam Ara Minu and Shafin Ahmed will perform in the show. Besides singing, the artistes will also be taking part in several entertaining segments on the show. *Smile Show* is aired on the last Friday of every month.



A scene from *Smile Show*

"Baazimat Shorashori" on Channel-i



Farzana Brownia hosts the show

CULTURAL CORRESPONDENT

The second episode of *Baazimat Shorashori*, hosted and directed by Farzana Brownia, will be aired tonight at 11:30 pm. The programme is the first of its kind in the country where people can participate live both in TV and radio, through Channel i and Radio Today, and win exciting prizes. The audience has to answer simple questions and can win gift vouchers from Habib@persona, The Westin Dhaka and so on, worth Tk 3000 to 5000. The participant to send most number of SMS will get air tickets for Dhaka-Kolkata-Dhaka, sponsored by GMG airlines.

His story was very close to *Do Bigha Zameen*. After his father's death, the relatives said the land did not belong to Roy, as his father had a lot of debt.

Roy's ancestral house is still in Dhaka, Bangladesh. When he came to Calcutta, he stayed with his brother. This brother worked with Rabindranath Tagore, and had given Roy a camera. They began their struggle from a rented house.

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A Dhakaitte who made it big in Bombay

Remembering Bimal Roy

Next year, master director Bimal Roy would have turned 100. He was a director, a spotter of talent and a visionary.

Before Roy became a cinematographer, he was a publicity photographer at New Theatres Pvt Ltd in Calcutta. It was a known studio at the time, like Bombay Talkies and Prabhat Studios in Mumbai. He worked with (actor-filmmaker) PC Barua. His work was so well appreciated that the heroines would line up to be photographed by him. Kanan Devi apparently once said, "Bimal Roy made me look like a goddess."

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After working with PC Barua, Bimal Roy thought of making his own film. He made the Bengali film, *Udayar Pathay* (1944). Even though everyone -- the actor, actress and director -- were newcomers, the film

became a phenomenal hit. It ran for more than a year. Later, he dubbed it in Hindi, calling it *Hum Rahi*.

The film's title song was *Jana Gana Mana*. This was way before the song became the Indian National Anthem.

Roy became a star overnight, and everyone wanted to work with him. Even Mrinal Sen and Satyajit Ray. Ritwik Ghatak was Roy's assistant at one point.

After New Theatres closed down, Roy went to Bombay (now Mumbai) as Ashok Kumar invited him to work with him in Bombay Talkies. He was very much in demand. In those days, around 1949-50, he was paid Rs 50,000 per film.

His first film in Mumbai was *Maa*. Bimal Roy knew how to play the emotions. He would make his characters emotive but he also knew

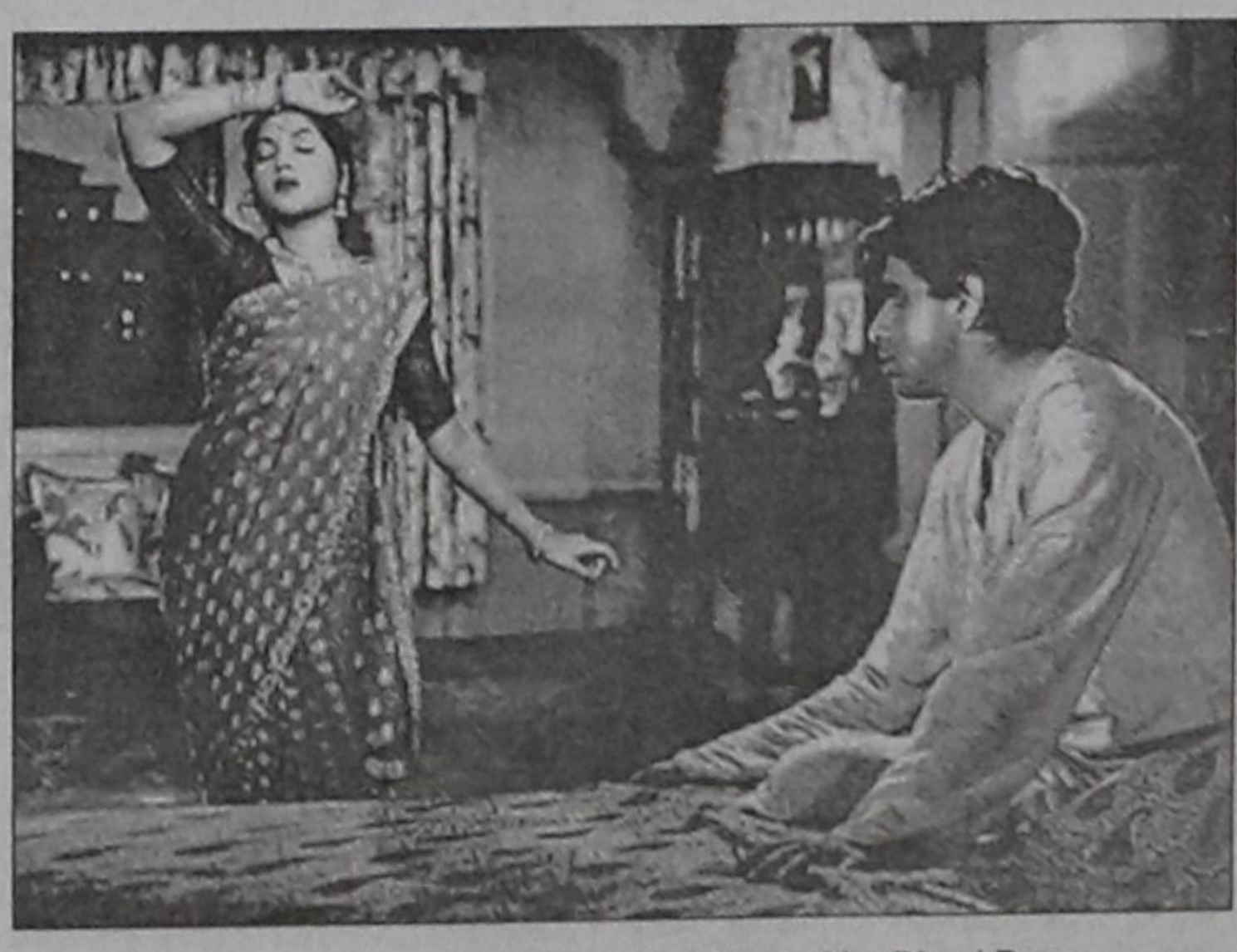
where to stop.

Bimal Roy's adaptation of *Devdas* was true to the novel, except for the titular character. He toned down this character because *Devdas* was very arrogant and violent.

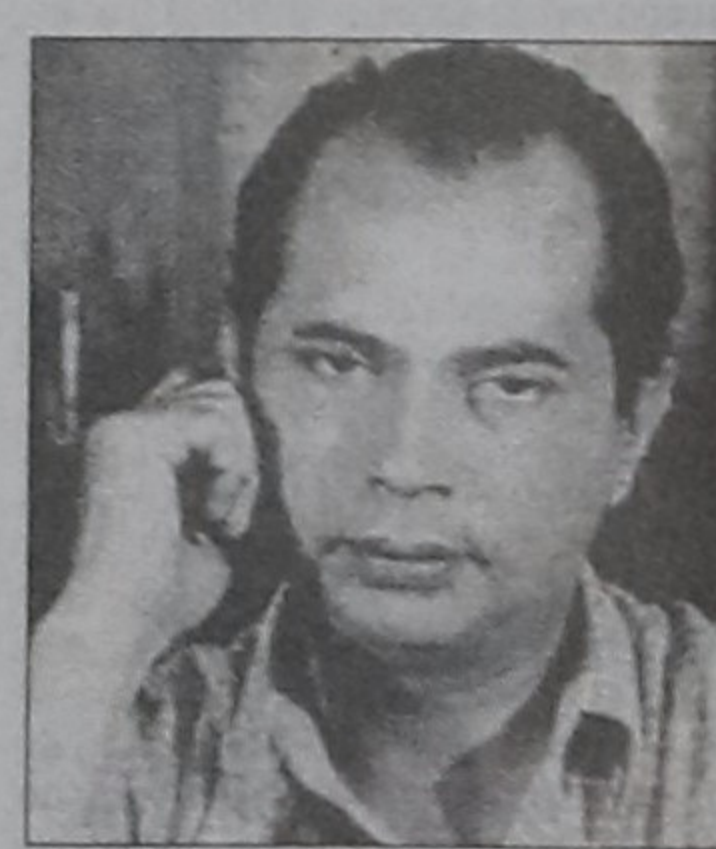
Do Bigha Zameen was produced by Bimal Roy. He was inspired to make this film after he saw (Vittorio De Sica's Italian masterpiece) *Bicycle Thieves*. He watched the film with his colleagues: Hrishikesh Mukherjee, Salil Choudhury and Asit Sen.

After watching the film, Roy asked why they could not make films like this. The effusive Hrishikesh Mukherjee said, "Why not?" Roy then asked who would write a film like that, and Mukherjee volunteered. The film was compared to *Bicycle Thieves*, got an award at the Cannes film festival and was recognised at the Karlovy Vary Festival.

Roy was the only director to make a documentary on the Bengal famine. It was difficult for him to shoot it because it was so gruesome. He also made a documentary on Swami Vivekananda and Gautama Buddha called *Life and Message of Swami Vivekananda* and *Gautama the*



Vijayantimala and Dilip Kumar in *Devdas*, directed by Bimal Roy



Bimal Roy

Buddha respectively. He wanted to make a film with the Kumbh Mela as backdrop, and shoot the *me la* live. It was a complicated story. But before he could start with the film, he died of cancer. Chain smoking took its toll on his health. Roy passed away on January 7, 1966.

Bimal Roy always worked with actors on two-film contracts. With Nutan, he made *Bandini* and *Sujata*; Vijayantimala did *Madhumati* and *Devdas*; Sadhna did *Parakh* and *Prem Patra*; Balraj Sahni did *Do Bigha Zameen* and *Kabuliwala*.

He gave a break to many directors, who were working with him, like Tapan Sinha, Shubendu Roy, Hrishikesh Mukherjee, Ritwik Ghatak, Gulzar, Basu Bhattacharya and Asit Sen.

Compiled by Cultural Correspondent