

WHAT'S ON THIS WEEK

Story of Stitches: The Art of Nakshi Kantha

Exhibition celebrating 30 years of Aarong
Venue: Plaza, National Art Gallery, BSA
Date: July 16-29
Time: 11am-7pm, (Fridays 3pm-7pm)



Abdul Alim Birth Anniversary

Organiser: Bangladesh Loko Sangeet Parishad
Venue: Seminar Hall, Sufia Kamal Central Public Library, Shahbag
Date: July 25
Time: 5:30 pm



BFFS Film Award

Organiser: Bangladesh Federation of Film Societies
Venue: Shaheed Zia Auditorium, National Museum, Shahbag
Date: July 25
Time: 6pm
Antarjatra by Tareque Masud will be screened after the award giving



Anniversary Programme

28th anniversary of Nazrul Joyanti
Organiser: Benuka Institute of Fine Arts
Venue: National Theatre Stage, BSA
Date: July 27
Time: 6:45 pm



Uttam Kumar: An icon, larger than life | "Close Up 1" Track round starts tomorrow

SIHAHOOR WAHID

When I was in school I slowly became aware of the appeal of Uttam Kumar (September 3, 1926 - July 24, 1980), observing the ecstasy of the young and older ladies in my family. Their eyes used to go dreamy, their heartbeats wayward and their voices husky at the drop of his name. Not having attained the age yet when romanticism overpowers all other senses, I used to wonder why they would do such a thing for a man. I watched in amazement how the ecstasy of the ladies progressed into veritable frenzy as the day of the release of another Uttam Kumar film (preferably Uttam-Suchitra) drew nearer. They would count the days; they would read everything about the new movie in the newspapers and weeklies (*Cinema Jagoth*, *Ultorath*, *Chitrali*) with unflinching devotion. And then they would spend hours discussing those with friends, plan ahead, collect advance tickets, decide who would come along this time and which lone male member would accompany them. Yes, that used to be a festivity of sorts, going to watch an Uttam movie. Nishat, Mukul, Rupmahal, Nagar Mahal, Shabistan, Lion and Gulistan were the cinema halls in Dhaka that regularly screened Indian Bangla films of the pre-65 era.

Interestingly, Uttam Kumar was not noticed in films like *Ora Thakey Odharey* or *Sharey Chuattur*, at least not on this side of the barbed wire. But then came *Moroner Parey* and everything began to change. The spell was cast. Bengal had found its hero, the protagonist, the super-hero-in-the-making. After that film there was no turning back for Uttam. Soon, such mega-hit movies like *Shap Mochon*, *Harano Sur*, *Shilpi*, *Shobar Uporey*, *Tasher Ghor*, *Prithibi Amarey Chaye*, *Shohorer Itikotha*, *Basu Paribar*, *Chapadangan Bou*, *Agnipariksha*, *Sagarika*, *Grihaprabesh*, *Shyamoli*, *Putrabadhu*, *Pathey Holo Deri*, *Manmoyee Girls School* and *Mayamriga* were released in the then East Pakistan. Each of these movies drew large crowds to every show. In all these movies, different heroines acted with him but the films ran for months, only because

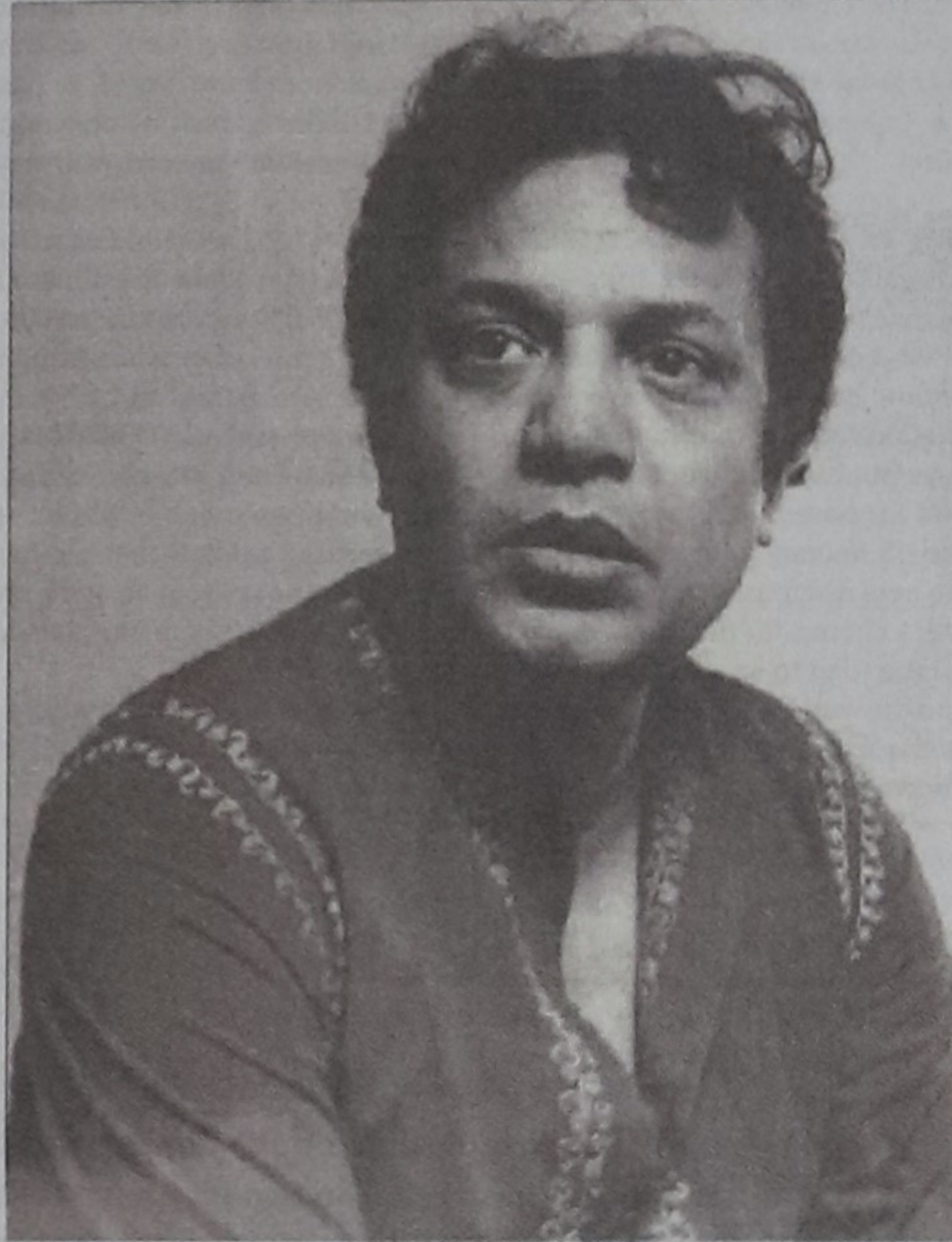
of the hero, the one and only Uttam Kumar. He had that charisma and acting ability to carry a movie through the box office all by himself.

Surprisingly, young men were equally affected by the charm of Uttam Kumar like the women of Bengal in those days. I used to watch my uncles and their friends trying with all their might to copy his hair style, clothes, smile and so on, but all in vain. No matter how many clones or copycats emerged, none could come close to Uttam Kumar.

By the late 1950s, Uttam's ability to give stunning performance was well recognised and as a result offers from producers flooded his office. But he had to decline many good offers due schedule problems. His performance in some of the movies we were lucky enough to see in cinema halls in Dhaka or in some quiet district town is still fresh in our minds.

Harano Sur is one of the great romantic movies where Uttam had to portray a difficult role. In the movie the protagonist loses his memory in an accident, his identity is wiped off his mind and he finds himself in a new surrounding. He falls in love with the girl, a junior doctor, who helps him recover his partial memory and stays back to recuperate in her house far away from Calcutta. But one day, he hurts his head in another accident and forgets his immediate past and all about the girl who has been his constant companion for the last few months. Now, gradually the memory of his original identity comes back and he remembers his mother and close kin in Calcutta. Without saying anything to the girl, he goes back to Calcutta to be with his family. The girl who gives up everything for his cure is left behind to suffer in solitude. But, somehow, she finds a job in his house and tries her best to make him remember who she is.

Melodramatic? Why not? After all, cinema is all about drama and melodrama. But this has to be said that Uttam came out with flying colours in depicting the emotions of a disturbed character as the script demanded. In all the scenes where he struggles with himself trying to remember his past, he gives a refreshingly measured



Uttam Kumar



With Suchitra Sen in *Saptapadi*

performance. There was no over-acting, no screaming, no grimacing, no crying, no long and loud dialogue so typical of Bengali cinema of the era. In the scene

where Suchitra Sen comes to live in his residence as the governess of Uttam's little niece and plays the tune of the song: "Tumi jey amara ogo tumi jey amara..." on the piano, Uttam gave a rip-roaring performance. The tune haunts him...yet he cannot remember anything and gets perturbed...the piano goes on and at one point Uttam cannot take it anymore as memories of some places...some people...begin to come back in bits and pieces. He quickly leaves the room. One may also remember *Sagarika* and the song... "Amar shopney dekha rajkanya thakey..." or how about "Jhor uthechey baul batash ajkey holo shathi..." in the film *Shapmochon*?

Uttam Kumar, in his lifetime, became an icon of Bengali cinema. He truly became larger than life and Bengali cinema has not seen the likes of him till now. Towards the end of his life he gave another brilliant performance in the film *Amanush*, both in its Bangla and Hindi versions. Though all his previous Hindi movies were great flops, he proved his mettle in *Amanush*. He had stalwarts like Sharmila Tagore, Anil Mukherjee and Utpal Dutt to support him as co-performers. The Hindi version was well accepted by the crowd in the Northern parts of India.

Early life

Uttam Kumar was born in Kolkata in his ancestral house in Girish Mukherjee Road, Bhowanipore. After studying at South Suburban School (Main), he went for higher studies in Goenka College of Commerce and Business Administration, an affiliated college of the University of Calcutta system. However, he couldn't complete his studies as he started working at the Kolkata Port as a clerk. During this period, he acted for amateur theatre groups.

Film debut

Uttam's first released film was *Drishtidan* directed by Nitin Bose, though he worked in an earlier unreleased film called *Mayador*. He came into prominence with the film *Basu Paribar* and his breakthrough film was *Sharey Chuattur* with a young actress called Suchitra Sen. This romantic comedy launched the career of the greatest romantic duo to grace the Bangla film industry.

The writer is Senior Assistant Editor, The Daily Star.

"Close Up 1" Track round starts tomorrow



Judges of the show (from left) -- Ahmed Imtiaz Bulbul, Fahmida Nabi and Partha Barua

CULTURAL CORRESPONDENT

Popular talent hunt *Close Up 1: Tomakei Khujchhey Bangladesh* is entering its most awaited part -- the track round, where the audience can directly vote for their favourite contestant through SMS. Forty-two contestants selected from the instrumental round will

perform with music tracks in this round that starts tomorrow on ntv at 9:30 pm.

The third season of *Close Up 1* organised by Unilever Bangladesh started from March 13 this year. From around 86000 contestants registered for the audition round, 540 got the much coveted "yes cards". Noted music composer Ahmed Imtiaz Bulbul, singer

Fahmida Nabi and Partha Barua were the main judges in the selection and instrumental round. The panel of judges also included music composer Shujeeo Shyam and exponent Anup Bhattacharya.

Former *Close Up 1* finalists Abid and Partha are hosting the show this season. The show is aired twice a week, on Fridays and Sundays.

Bangladeshi folk music programme in Japan

Invited by the "International Volunteer Pore Pore" of Aichi in Japan, cultural organisation "The Gram-Bangla Folk Musical Group" has made a month-long tour in Japan recently, performing at different cities, says a press release.

The performances by the group were highly appreciated by the Japanese audience and received coverage in the local newspapers including the esteemed *Asahi Shimbun*. To mark the occasion, the group has released a CD featuring 12 folk songs performed by them in Japan.

The group was formed in 2004 by Eiku Hussain, a Japanese national living in Bangladesh since 1971. The group has performed at several cultural programmes including the Ekushey Boi Mela at Bangla Academy.



The Gram-Bangla Folk Musical Group during a performance in Japan

Tarun Samprodaye turns 30

Cultural programme on the occasion

GOLAM MOSTAFA, Sirajganj

Tarun Samprodaye, a local cultural organisation celebrated its 30th anniversary in Sirajganj town amidst much festivity.

The organisation chalked out a four-day-long programme at Bhasani Milanayatan in the town, which ended on July 22.

The arrangements included a discussion, recitation, reception, songs, dances and drama.

On the first day of programme, a discussion was held at the auditorium with freedom fighter (wounded during the Liberation War), poet, lyricist and deputy director of Tarun Samprodaye, T.M. Moazzem Hossain in the chair.

At the discussion, the organisation honoured Nimai Chandra Roy, a teacher and artist of classical music.

Ashraf Ali, deputy commissioner of Sirajganj inaugurated the programme. Among others, Alamgir Rahman, Police Super; Anu Islam, resident of Natya Federation's Sirajganj Unit; singer Jannat Ara; and Joint Secretary of Sirajganj Zilla Shilpakala Academy, S.M. Dowlat Uddin, were also present as special guests.

Later, local artistes performed at cultural programme.

On the second day of programme, the organisation honoured Dinobandhu Das, a renowned music director and cultural activist. The programme was presided over by M.A. Rouf Pata, adviser of Tarun Samprodaye, while Lucky Enam, noted director and actress was present as chief guest.



Lucky Enam speaks on the second day of the programme

PHOTO: STAR

Among others, artiste and music director Timir Nandi; recitor Belayet Hossain; poet Dr. Mosaddek Masum and Asir Uddin Milon attended the programme as special guests.

Artists from Dhaka performed songs and dances at the programme.

On the third day, eminent litterateur Hassan Azizul Huq attended the event as chief guest, while Mannan Hira, director and dramatist presided over the programme.

Among others, Professor Moloy

Bhowmik; Professor Shah Azam Shantunu; Mazibor Rahman and Ahsan Habib Kabir were present as special guests. The organisers honoured drama artiste Shafiqul Islam Shafi at the programme.

Sirajganj University College Theatre staged a play called *Songbad Cartoon* at that day's programme.

On the last day of the programme, director and dramatist Aminur Rahman Mukul was honoured. M Hamid, Chairman of Bangladesh Group Theatre Federa-

tion was chief guest at the event, while Asad Uddin Pablo, convener of the 'Celebrating Parishad' of Tarun Samprodaye presided over the programme.

Among others, Jhuna Chowdhury, secretary general of Bangladesh Group Theatre Federation; Towfique Hassan Moina; Gyas Ahmed and Shah Alam Dulal attended the programme as special guests.

On the concluding day, Tarun Samprodaye staged a play titled *Bouh-nama* at the auditorium.

"Golden Girl" Estelle Getty passes away

Actress Estelle Getty, best known as sarcastic Sicilian octogenarian Sophia Petrillo in the mega-popular sitcom *The Golden Girls*, had died at the age of 84.

The star, who had advanced dementia, died last Tuesday morning at her Hollywood Boulevard home.

Her son, Carl Gettleman, said she was "one of the most talented comedic actresses who ever lived".

Apart from *The Golden Girls*, Getty's credits included films like *Manneguin* and *Stop! Or My Mom Will Shoot*.

According to her official website, the actress was born Estelle Scher in the Lower East Side of New York City after her parents emigrated to the US from Poland.

She married Arthur Gettleman at the age of 23, from whom she adapted her stage name.

But the actress faced a long struggle for success, working in poorly-paid office jobs to help support her family while she tried to make her big break.

"I knew I could be seduced by success in another field, so I'd say, 'don't promote me, please,'" she later recalled.

After trying her hand at stand-up comedy -- later calling it "her biggest mistake" -- she began to land a smattering of films and TV roles, including parts in *Tootsie* and *Deadly Force*.

But it was *The Golden Girls*, which made her a household name.

The sitcom, which focused on



Estelle Getty as Sophia Petrillo in the popular sitcom *The Golden Girls*

the lives of four older women living in a shared home in Miami, Florida, was developed by US TV network NBC after its programming chief Brandon Tartikoff decided that older viewers were being ignored.

Getty was the last actress to be

cast for the series -- having failed two auditions because producers thought she did not look old enough to play an 80-year-old.

But the wisecracking Sophia Petrillo won her an Emmy in 1988, and proved so popular that the character was brought back for

two spin-off shows -- *Empty Nest* and *The Golden Palace* -- in the 1990s.

Audiences particularly loved the verbal zingers Getty would hurl at her co-stars.

When Rue McClanahan's libidinous character Blanche once said, "I treat my body like a temple," Sophia responded: "Yeah, open to everyone, day or night."

Nonetheless, Getty said she was only "a teeny-weensy bit" like her most famous creation.

"I think people have me mixed up with my character," she said, while admitting: "I would like to be as sure and magnanimous and feisty and strong and indomitable as she is."

After *The Golden Girls*, Getty secured several memorable film roles -- in particular her grotesque comic turn as Sylvester Stallone's mother in *Stop! Or My Mom Will Shoot* -- and launched a successful exercise video for older women.

But she was unable to join a *Golden Girls* reunion in 2004 due to her failing health.

Getty died at her home three days short of her 85th birthday and is survived by her two sons, Carl and Barry.

"She was loved throughout the world in six continents," said Carl in a statement, "and if they loved sitcoms in Antarctica she would have been loved on seven continents."