The Lonely Planet

CHINTITO

Amidst her comatose situation, despite the ceding concern of a worldwide Bangalee following, and possibly beyond, a news item did brighten up her Bangladeshi following; that Rama Dasgupta, Krishna to her Pabna schoolmates, desired to have her last rites performed at her birthplace, the playground of her childhood, the ancestral home of her parents school headmaster Karunamoy Dasgupta and Indira Devi.

As Pabna at the other end of the umbilical chord went agog with the prospect of her enigmatic daughter returning home, and people from Dhaka and elsewhere started making travel plans to witness the sandalwood pyre in flames, the rumour fizzled out almost as soon as it broke; and it lacked credibility. She had no cause or history to return, for she did only once visit the north Bangladesh town after she and her family left Pabna quietly, as perhaps was necessary in the time of India being divided along Muslim and Hindu lines.

Suchitra Sen breathed her last at her adopted city's Belle Vue Clinic Friday 17 January at 8.25am, drawing the curtain on a truly illustrious career that spanned 25 years and a life that for no known cause remained sheathed in the meditative comfort and voluntary recluse of her Ballygunge mansion for another 35 years.

For a person who has not before a camera since her 1978 movie 'Pronoy Pasha' with Soumitra Chatterjee flopped, has not maintained any sort of social circle even with her friends and family, whose last public photograph dates back over 35 years, for that person to be tagged with teenage lovers of today certifies the greatness of the actress, the unfathomable depth of her personality, and her lasting memory. She lives on as the 40 year-old who remained a damsel all her life. She died at 82.

Not many married actresses have attained celluloid success as Suchitra. Whisked away to then Calcutta by her Calcatian marine engineer husband Dibanath Sen 1947, she launched her film career 1953 with the film 'Sat Number Kayedi' opposite Samar Roy.

No actor in any 'wood' would perhaps shun the great filmmaker Satyajit Ray, but as she delivered one hit movie after another, a busy Suchitra could not give schedule for shooting Ray's *Devi Chaudhurani*. And perhaps as a tribute from one film noble to another, Ray never sought a Devi in any other; the film was never made.

Said Suchitra, "In men, I don't look for beauty. I look for intelligence and sharp conversations. I had refused (Bombay's maestro showman filmmaker) Raj Kapoor's offer almost immediately. He came to my residence offering a lead role and, as I took my seat, he suddenly sat near my foot and offered me a bouquet of roses while offering the role. I rejected the offer. I did not like his personality. The way he behaved – sitting near my foot – did not befit a man." (in Amitabha Choudhury's book *Aamar Bondhu Suchitra Sen*) Not every Bangalee is charmed by blatant camaraderie.

Not many have had the opportunity to know the softer side of Suchitra's personality. It has been reported that during one of her clandestine evening walks a passer-by recognised her and wanted her autograph. There was no paper at hand, and so as the tale goes, she picked up a discarded ciga-





PHOTO: STAR

The family house of Suchitra Sen, undoubtedly the most popular actress Bangla cinema has ever seen, is now occupied by Jamaat-backed Imam Gazzali Institute.