rette packet from the pavement, tore it open and on its clean side, and obliged the fame hunter.

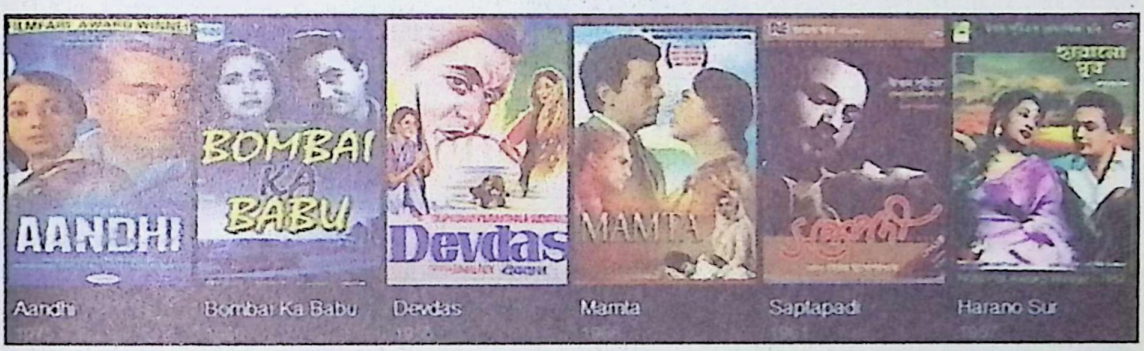
Rarely is the name Suchitra mentioned without legendary Uttam Kumar, the pair making Bangla silver screen's Juliet and Romeo, unsurpassed in fame and appeal in the last six decades. Together with thirty films they reached the hearts of millions with remarkable films that have overcome the test of time, '*Agniparkisha*' (1954), '*Sagarika*' (1956), '*Harano Sur*' (1957), '*Indrani*' (1958), '*Saptapadi*' (1961), '*Saat Pake Bandha*' (1963), '*Grihadaho*' (1967), '*Kamal Lata*' (1969), '*Alo Amar Alo*' (1972), '*Har Mana Har*' (1972) and '*Priyo Bandhabi*' (1975). 'Hospital'

Was she Uttam's *priyo bandhabi* in real life? Suchitra said, they were 'just good friends'. Their fanatic fans would like to believe that is what they all say.

"the role of 'Vishnupriya' in the fifties, 'Rina Brown' in the sixties and 'Bijaya' in the seventies".

'*Saat Pakey Bandha*' won her the Best Actress award at the Moscow film festival 1963, and she bagged Padma Shri (India's fourth-highest civilian honour) in 1972. West Bengal government's highest award Banga Bibhushanon was graced by her name in 2012, by which time she was already a seasoned loner, and she did not leave her cocoon to receive the honour. That was not the case with Dadasaheb Phalke Award, Indian cinema's highest honour, for which she was named in 2005, but as she would not leave her heavenly abode to grant audience to the president of India, she had to turn down the proposal.

What has intrigued her followers since her long self-imposed isolation is the simple question



Aandhi | Bombai Ka Babu | Devdas | Mamta | Saptapadi | Harano Sur

Not many actors have carved a niche at both Tollywood and Bollywood. Suchitra did just that in 1955 with Bimal Roy's Hindi superhit '*Devdas*', played by iconic Dilip Kumar and she as the obvious Paro went on to receive a National Award. Suchitra in fact appeared in seven Hindi films, among which notable also were '*Aandhi*' with Sanveev Kumar, '*Champakali*' with Bharat Bhushan, '*Sarhhaad*' and '*Bommbai Ka Babu*' with Dev Anand. Her leading men in Bangla hits included Soumitra Chatterjee (*Saat Pakey Bandha*), Ashok Kumar (*Hospital*), and Basanto Chowdhury (*Deep Jeley Jai*).

All these may never have happened because housewife and already mother of actress Moonmoon Sen, Suchitra auditioned in 1951 as a playback singer. In one of the swiftest career switches director Sukumar Dasgupta offered her a role in a film. That too was destiny as Dasgupta's assistant director Nitish Roy named her Suchitra; Sen she already was. Ironically, her first film '*Shesh Kothay*' (literally, where is the end) (1952) was never completed, but she launched a 25-year long career in search of the end; she went on to act in 52 Bangla films after debuting in 1953 with '*Sat Number Kayedi*' with leading man Samar Roy.

Her versatility as "a quintessential romantic heroine" spanning three decades came alive in 'Why?' The best that mortals could assume is that she was shell shocked after the flop of her 1978 movie *Pranaye Pasha* opposite Soumitra Chatterjee. She then "went to Belur Math, the headquarters of the Ram Krishna Mission just outside Kolkata". Her religious guru Bharat Maharaj gave her a patient hearing.

Her friend and biographer, journalist Roy narrated: "I later heard she sat at his feet and wept and wept, and Bharat Maharaj told her, '*Ma, ghridho, lobh koro na*, don't be greedy. And that, I think, Mrs. Sen translated into her own life by becoming a recluse."

Away from public limelight she was continuing to occasionally meet up with friends and relatives at her home when she was not meditating as a member of the Ram Krishna Mission. But that too stopped in the late 1980s, when she totally shut the door. The public got a rare view of her, and the last, in 1989, when after Bharat Maharaj passed away, Suchitra walked all the way to the crematorium from Belur Math.

Suchitra Sen, Rama Sen, and Krishna have once again taught the world two important lessons: One, whatever accolades a person may receive, the perfectionist is never truly satisfied, and secondly, in spite of all the glitter and gold, a person is in the end a lonely planet.