SUCHITRA SEN

(Adopting poet Jibanananda Dash's 'Bonolata Sen')



For many years I'd been seeing movies in sort of nickelodeons
Which were in old Dacca, namely Lion, Mukul and Shabistan
Where I saw many a movie, drowning in romances and rebellions.
I also saw foreign films in the theatres named Naaz and Gulistan;
My favourite heroines were Audrey Hepburn, Sophia Lauren
And, it goes without saying, her birthplace being Pabna, Suchitra Sen.

Her typical smile was in 'Sagarika' where she was enamoured.
She epitomised Bengal's artistry; though black and white did adorn
Her images, they gave the illusion of being vividly coloured.
While Uttamkumar, her partner in the duo, was acutely lovelorn,
That was when in his chest she let her face be hidden
With her bird-nestlike eyes closed. This was Pabna's Suchitra Sen.

Like the lost melody after the end of a song's duration
Evening falls; the earth makes yet another day expire.
Traffic-jams show the downfall of the selfish civilisation.
In the last wish someone burns in distant birthplace in funeral pyre.
Images float on the memory screen, life all around is anxiety laden;
But in the darkness glows a bright star named Suchitra Sen.

MASIHUDDIN SHAKER
Director, 'Surja Dighal Bari'
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Sandhya had a deep and mellifluous voice. There are so many Sandhya gems to choose from:" Kichokhon Aro Nahoy Rahete Kache" ("Pothey Holo Deri"), "Ke Tumi Amare Dako" ("Agni Parikkha"), "Eai To Aamar Prothom Phaguno Bela" ("Shagorika") to name a few. Then there are immortal Suchitra-Uttam duets courtesy Hemanta-Sandhya, such as, "Eii Poth Jodi Na Sesh Hoi" ("Saptapadi"). After we bought our first VCR in the 1980s, the first movie we watched was Suchitra-Uttam's "Shagorika"!

As time robbed them of their physical charm, and the last Suchitra-Uttam movie "Priyo Bandhobi" flopped at the box office in 1975, Suchitra realised that it was time to relinquish her throne. After making her last movie, "Pronoy Pasha," in 1978, Suchitra chose the life of a recluse. The premature death of Mahanayak Uttam Kumar in July, 1980 (he was only 53) was a severe blow to Suchitra. Suchitra-Uttam were great friends. Uttam, five years senior, was Suchitra's mentor. Always the first to arrive at Suchitra's birthday party, Uttam used to address her as an intimate "Tui." To Suchitra, Uttam's demise was a severe blow and an irreplaceable loss.

After Uttam's passing, Suchitra's inner circle dwindled down to four: her daughter Moon Moon Sen and her husband Bharat Dev Varma, and her two grandchildren, Raima and Riya. Her industrialist husband Dibanath Sen was originally supportive of Suchitra's film career. However, by some account, later he became envious of Suchitra's fame, and was particularly hostile to Uttam Kumar. Dibanath Sen passed away in 1970, leaving Suchitra alone for the last 43 years of her life.

In death Suchitra Sen has done something hitherto considered impossible. She has unified all the cantankerous factions of the Bangladeshi society into mourning her death!

Now that Suchitra is gone, let us not only mourn her death, but also celebrate her life. She will live forever in the hearts of millions of Bengalis. Eulogizing Suchitra Sen, Lata Mangeshkar called her "one of the finest actors I've seen." Lata added that she has a collection all of Suchitra's movies, and has watched "Devdas" (with Suchitra and Dilip Kumar, 1955) 10 to 15 times! Lataji also reiterated that one of her favorite songs is picturised on Suchitra Sen is the Hindi movie "Mamta" (1966). The lyrics, composed by Majrooh Sultanpuri captures Suchitra's eternal appeal perfectly: "Rahe naa rahe hum, Maheka Karenge, Ban ke kali, Ban ke sabaa, Baag-ye-Wafaan mein..."(Whether I am around or not, I shall be like a fragrance in the air, amongst the flower buds, in the garden of faithfulness..)

Let us say goodbye to Mahanaika Suchitra Sen by borrowing a line from "Hamlet": "Good night sweet princess. And flights of angels sing thee to thy rest."

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