

SHANKHACHIL

BORDERS' BRIDGE

After much political debate, "Shankhachil" was the successful breakthrough the audience had been waiting for. Unique from the predecessors of the joint Indo-Bangla genre, this film is more balanced in its ingredients. The story touches on the sensitive issues and tribulations that the residents of the border are forced to tolerate. It is a thought provoking piece, on how two nations, sharing such strong cultural ties, can be "barbed" with a mere wire. In a world where "together we achieve" is the motto, the everlasting border related tragedies, shake the foundations of humanity and raises the question as to how much more to endure? To talk about this and more, Showbiz spoke to the actor Prosenjit Chatterjee for an inside peek into "Shankhachil."



How has the experience been for you while shooting "Shankhachil" in Bangladesh?

When I reached the Indian border at the crack of dawn, I was astonished by the sheer amount of residents, queued out of curiosity. Accompanying them were the border guards and securities of both the countries at their respective ends, divided by a small bridge. I got down from the car and literally walked my way into Bangladesh. Can you believe that? It was unlike anything I've ever done in my lifetime!

You have worked with Goutam Ghose in "Moner Manush" and now in "Shankhachil". As an actor, how would you rank these films in your career?

People are well aware of the kind of films I choose. Undoubtedly, I will place "Moner Manush" and "Shankhachil" in my list of favourites. I have desired to work for Goutam Ghose for quite a while, but he never beckoned me until "Moner Manush", which is a film very dear to me and for which I have gone the extra mile. Five years later, I was offered the role as 'Badol' for "Shankhachil"; both the films have played a vital part in my career.

Could you share your views on the dual characters you have depicted individually as 'Lalon' and 'Badol'?

In order to portray the character of 'Lalon', I had to immerse myself into the lifestyle of the "Fakir". I had to pay attention to details such as the handling of the "Ektara" and the movements involved. It took me a month to "get out" of the character. As for "Shankhachil", I played the role of 'Badol', who is an ordinary school teacher. The role demanded rigorous recitations of poetry. The director also referred to me many books on the partition of the nation, in order to better comprehend my character.

"Shankhachil" has won an award at the 63rd Indian National Film Awards. How excited are you?

A. So far, the appraisal from the audience in Kolkata has been nothing short of phenomenal. I am hoping it will be likewise from the audience in Bangladesh as well. Overall, I am thrilled. **We have heard that at times, Shajbati would give you gifts. Could you enlighten us on what they were?**

Recently, she has bought me a striking panjabi and I gave her a chocolate bar. Shajbati would

often scribble "For dad" on the gifts. Over the shooting period, our relation had strengthened affectionately. Thus, on the last day of the shoot, I had to depart before she woke up from bed, or else the "good-byes" would've brought her to tears.

What can you tell us about Kushum Shikder, your wife 'Laila' from the film?

In the beginning she was somewhat uncomfortable, but gladly, it all changed very soon. She acted fabulously and blended impressively with

is intriguing enough to leave an imprint on all the audience.

So Mr. Habibur Rahman Khan, you're the producer of the film and this is not your first joint venture with Goutam Ghose, how has the experience been for you?

The mutual work that we do is solely the outcome of our passion towards films. Others may be discouraged because at this stage, there might not be any promising profits. We still continue to encourage it and the experience and knowledge



Kushum Shikder



Habibur Rahman Khan

'Laila'. Kushum Shikder did justice to her character, which deserves much appreciation.

The story of "Shankhachil" revolves around the 1947 Partition. Do you feel it will be of any interest to the younger generations?

"Shankhachil" is the story of hundreds of thousands of Bengalis. If the new generation cannot embrace it, I'm sure their predecessors very much will. The story does not focus only on the partition, but also on the turmoil between India and Bangladesh. Regardless of age, I believe the film

gained through the interaction is rather valuable. There are many new talents brewing in Bangladesh, which the audience from the West Bengal do not recognize as much. On the other hand, Bangladeshis recognize Tollywood stars quite well and that too mostly because of the television channels. We can only hope that the ties strengthen equally for the betterment of cinema.

Interviewed by Rafi Hossain
and Narrated by Minam Haque

