

**FILM REVIEW**

# BHUBAN MAJHI: A personal narrative of a nation's struggle

FAHMIM FERDOUS

A War is written in history in terms of numbers and dates and political leaders, and even the stories that come out of it are often of valor and struggle and sacrifice. Our Liberation War has been captured by many creative endeavours across a spectrum of artistic expressions – be it music, theatre, TV or film. The latest in that line – “Bhuban Majhi” – premiered on Wednesday at the Star Cineplex, and releases countrywide today. Here is the first impression of the film, without any spoilers.

The previous credits of Fakhru Arefeen Khan, the writer-director of the film, are three documentaries: “Haq-er Ghar”, about the eviction of Lalon Shai’s followers from his shrine in Kushtia; “Al-

Badar”, a documentary about collaborators of the Pakistani Army during the Liberation War; and “The Speech”, about Bangabandhu’s historic March 7 address. And in a way, in this film Arefeen brings all of that experience and research full circle.

There are many things the film gets absolutely right. The scene setting of a small town in 1971 is done impeccably and the cinematography has numerous moments of brilliance, especially the low-light night shots. Parambrata is one of the most bankable actors working in Bangla-language cinema right now, and he sits into his character and drives the story. Aparna Ghosh, another centerpiece of the film, is steady in her role, as is Maznun Mizan in his supporting character. Most other actors (includ-

ing the seasoned Mamunur Rashid) deliver a solid performance, the most surprising of them probably Waqel Ahad. Cast opposite an experienced actor like Nawshaba, he looks fairly comfortable in front of a camera. The background score and sound design of the film, by Kalikprasad Bhattacharjee from Kolkata, is a revelation. Molding familiar melodies on folk instruments into beautiful scores, the music elevates the story at numerous junctures, and the use of sound design to set the mood is also done very well.

Being a documentary filmmaker gives Arefeen a certain edge: the historically-accurate nature of the story inherently makes it more believable, his attention to telling the story is clearly evident, and the element of sensitivity he brings to the story is remarkable.

However, that same mindset also sets him back a little in a few places. Some parts of the film feel like they sounded much better as an idea than it looks on the big screen. The complex timeline that the film switches between – 1971 and 2013, with a small set of little flashbacks to 2004 – is probably the biggest of them. While it is necessary in this specific telling of the story, it takes far too long to clearly tie up. Near the end as well, the story feels a little abrupt, and not done with nearly as much care as the earlier parts.

Overall, “Bhuban Majhi” is not a flawless masterpiece, despite having many of its ingredients. But is it a must-watch? Yes. In a day and age when filmmakers are often forced to choose between being commercially successful or making rounds at the international festival circuit, “Bhuban Majhi” has every reason to do a bit of both. It’s a beautiful story, and for most parts told really well. In no way should this be a waste of two hours or the price of a cinema ticket.



**WEEKENDER**

# “Spending quality time at home has become a luxury...”

Orchita Sporshia



PHOTO: STAR

ROBINA RASHID BHUIYAN

Since embarking on her career as a model, Orchita Sporshia has made a strong stand as an actor, appearing in numerous TV plays over the years. Her career has now expanded to films as well, appearing in “Under Construction” and “Bondhon.” In a recent conversation with The Daily Star, the busy actor shares some details about her life outside the spotlight.

**What do you do on your days off?**

**Sporshia:** I love staying home with my family. My busy schedule keeps me away on film sets, so spending quality time at home has become a luxury to me. I am also an introvert, and so I don't like to spend my time off in the typical fashion by hanging out with people.

**Is there a role that made an impact on you, or your viewers?**

**Sporshia:** I have felt a connection in varying degrees with all the characters I have played, but one I can highlight is Anika from “Ujan Ganger Naiya”. The role was not only the most challenging I've had to play till date, but it also received much acclaim and I continue to hear positive responses even today. Anika was also the most well-rounded character out of all the characters I have donned. I would not say it made a heavy personal impact on me, but it is a great favourite.

**Are you more a cat person or dog?**

**Sporshia:** I love dogs. I have a pet dog at home, and I feel that dogs are better at understanding their owners than other people.

**What is your favourite perfume?**

**Sporshia:** I love Hugo Boss' Deep Red. I don't really use any other perfume, and so it's my signature fragrance!

**What is the last movie you have seen?**

**Sporshia:** I don't get to watch TV shows, but I love watching movies on a regular basis. The last I've watched was an Indian film titled “Parched”, directed by Leena Yadav. Not only was it an outstanding story, but it is a film I would implore all women to watch.

**What are you working on now?**

**Sporshia:** Right now I am in Pabna shooting for a film, for which I am not at a liberty to disclose the title and details. But this is my latest venture, and all I can say is that there is something for my fans and viewers to look forward to soon.

# Confluence of heritage, tradition and art

Crafts fair at Bengal Sangskriti Utshab

FAHMIM FERDOUS, back from Sylhet

At the 10-day Bengal Sangskriti Utshab that ends today in Sylhet, a vital yet oft-forgotten element of Bangladesh's rich heritage and culture has the attention of festival-goers. Traditional crafts of 15 district regions of Bangladesh are on display at the Karu Mela (crafts fair) at the Gurusaday Dutt Chattar of the festival venue, showing a wide range of products that reflect Bangalees' natural sense of art and aesthetics, and showcase the immense skill it takes to bring that to life.

Long-time inhabitants of the Sylhet, the Manipuri people have a signature style of fabric-weaving, and that Manipuri weaving products are on display at one of the central stalls. Along with that are shitol pati (hand-woven floor mats with folk motifs), another specialty of the Manipuri people. TaaNt handloom - particularly lungi, gamchha and sarees - are on display at the Sirajganj stall, while right next to it are the traditional 'khadi' fabric, belonging to the Comilla region.

Dhaka may today be a concrete jungle of big buildings, industrial factories and bottleneck traffic congestion, but it too has its share of crafts – mainly with metal, wool, jute and shaNkha (conch and sea-shells). Products with intricate handmade designs are on display at the stall, much to the spectator's interest. Just adjacent to Dhaka is Narayanganj, and the traditional wooden dolls and haat-pakha (hand-fans), that are not seen nearly as often in households as it used to, are also on show at the stall. Jamdani, the descendant of the famous muslin fabric, has also had a long heritage in the Narayanganj region, and sarees displayed at the stall bear testament to that.

Mymensingh, the region of rich culture and heritage, has a craft form quite niche to the region: paper crafts. Handmade paper and papier-mâché



Visitors at the crafts fair at the clay handicrafts of Rajshahi.

PHOTO: SHEIKH MEHEDI MORSHED

work in a variety of forms – from notebooks to sculpture-like figures are a treat to see.

Going through the stalls – Jessore's Nakshi KaNtha (hand-embroidered blankets); Tangail's bamboo craft; flutes andsholacrasts of Jhenaidah; the ever-recognisable taaNt handlooms by the indigenous people of the hills from Rangamati-Khagrachori; jute, wool and metal-smiths' works from Savar; jute products of Rangpur; coloured pots, small tepa putul clay dolls and the gorgeous lohari kaNtha (blankets with frills around the edges) of Rajshahi; terracotta products from Barisal andsholacrasts from Magura – is like a long walk through the country, getting a glimpse of the sim-

ple rural people who have inherited these crafts through generations, and are continuing it in the face of mechanical production industries.

Bengal Foundation has been working with the National Crafts Council of Bangladesh (NCCB) for the Master-craftperson's award in recognition of artisans and craftpersons since 2010, and their commitment to the sector is evident from the fantastic crafts fair here. It is the trifecta of heritage, traditional skills and art, and such exhibits deserve a bigger space, maybe in the form of a grand fair in the capital whose residents are the furthest aware from this important part of Bangladesh and Bangalees' identity.

# “I'm going back to my roots a little bit”

Avril Lavigne plans new album

Ten years to the week after the release of “Girlfriend”, her first ever Billboard Hot 100 No. 1 single, Avril Lavigne has some big news for fans. The pop singer-songwriter has signed with a new record label, BMG, and plans to have a new album out before the end of 2017 – her sixth, and first since 2013's self-titled effort.

“I challenged myself as a songwriter and I wanted to write about topics I hadn't hit on before,” Lavigne told Billboard of her process behind the upcoming record. “There's the love topic, but a lot of these songs are about life. I've experienced a lot over the past few years, and some of the songs just came to me. Concepts and lyrics were flowing and I would have to grab my phone to sing into voice memo and write out my lyrics.”

Asked if she has a release date in mind for the album, the 32-year-old Ontario native responded “When it's ready. Which will be soon.” Progress, however, is good so far: “I'm working on the final few tracks. BMG and I are now choosing the right

producer for this project.”

Many may still associate Lavigne with the pop-punk of the early '00s, but the artists Lavigne currently cites as inspirations couldn't be much further from that scene: “I enjoy listening to Ed Sheeran and Shawn Mendes – artists that showcase their vocals and songwriting skills. I listen to a lot of Billie Holiday, Frank Sinatra and jazz.” She says that the new album will see her “going back to my roots a little bit... I got my start in church and at country fairs when I was a young child, and I think those earlier influences are definitely coming out now.”

Though no music is available from the still-untitled record yet, Lavigne thinks she has a song in mind for the first single – one that came to her “when I was in bed and literally felt like I was dying... in the midst of feeling so close to death, I came up with one of my most true and moving songs.”

Source: Billboard



After tying the knot in an intimate ceremony last year on September 21, a wedding reception was held last Sunday with great pomp and celebrations for popular singer Somnur Monir Konal and journalist Monzur Kader. The celebrations took place at the courtyards of MP Hostel, where numerous celebrities and members of the press were present.