



Ronger Manush



Bhober Haat



Molla Barir Bou

Revisiting A T M Shamsuzzaman's memorable roles

SHAH ALAM SHAZU & SHABABA IQBAL

We recently lost one of the most celebrated actors of the country with the demise of A T M Shamsuzzaman. Born on September 10, 1941, he started acting in films from 1965. He came into the limelight with noted filmmaker Amjad Hossain's "Noyonmoni". Over the years, the actor played an array of memorable characters on the silver screen and television.

The five-time National Film Award winner was also a prolific screenwriter. Although A T M Shamsuzzaman's importance in the world of cinema and television can be talked about for days on end, his greater legacy was that of a humble and witty artiste, whose passion for his craft was unparalleled. That being said, let us revisit a few of his notable performances.

The versatile actor won a National Film Award for his performance as Kodom Ali in Aftab Khan's film, "Dayee Ke?". The character of Kodom Ali sells his homemade medicine in trains and streets. His father, the village chairman, deceives his mother for her wealth and property. Kodom Ali became a favourite among the masses upon the film's release.

In Amjad Hossain's "Golapi Ekhon Train E" A T M Shamsuzzaman played the role of Mondol, an influential person in his village, whose son Milon (Farooque), falls in love



Golapi Ekhon Train E



Hajar Bochor Dhore

with a singer named Golapi (Babita). The actor's portrayal of Mondol earned him appreciation at both home and abroad, including the Moscow International Film Festival.

On the other hand, he played a grey character called Makbul in the film, "Hajar Bochor Dhore". Makbul is an elderly,



Ghor Kutum

greedy man, who has three wives. Based on Zahir Raihan's novel, the movie won the National Film Award in the Best Film category, and was lauded by the audience.

In "Shurjo Dighol Bari", he played the character of Jobed Fakir. The film portrays the socioeconomic conditions after the Bengal Famine of 1943.

"Molla Barir Bou" showcased A T M Shamsuzzaman's brilliant acting and writing skills. He played the negative role of Gazi Ebadot Ali, a powerful villager and landowner, who treats his daughter-in-law badly.

Moreover, he played prominent roles in films such as "Chhutir Ghonta", "Lathial",

"Chorabali", "Guerilla", and "Alpha", among others.

A T M Shamsuzzaman also charmed audiences with his roles on television. He earned appreciation for his work in the hit shows, "Ronger Manush" and "Bhober Haat", both directed by Salahuddin Lavlu. The shows were set in rural Bangladesh.

A T M Shamsuzzaman and Humayun Faridee played brothers on "Bhober Haat". Their chemistry in the series was brilliant. "Ghor Kutum", another popular village-based series directed by Salahuddin Lavlu, also featured A T M Shamsuzzaman.

In addition, the actor played a pivotal role in the comedy-drama, "Noashal", directed by Mir Sabbir. The series was about two families hailing from Noakhali and Barishal. In the comedy, "Jaygir Master", directed by S A Haque Alik, A T M Shamsuzzaman appeared in a scene, where his character goes to his own wedding, riding on an elephant. He won over the audience with his outstanding performance.

He was also appreciated for his roles in one-hour television shows such as "Goru Chor", "Ustaadji", "Patri Chai" and "Potro Milati". In "Rohmat Master", a popular show, he essayed the role of a teacher in a private school. On the other hand, he portrayed the character of an urban thief in the show, "Rotone Roton China". The show, "Bou Churi" was one of the most significant television projects of his career.

In "Sheel Bari", a comedy telefilm, A T M Shamsuzzaman played the memorable role of a barber. In "Prem Piriti Zindabaad", another popular show set in rural Bangladesh, he played the head of a family, and was required to speak in the Noakhali dialect. He was also featured in shows such as "Munshibaari", "Ai Je Duniya", "Gao Geraamer Kissa", "Ekjon Hedayat Alir Golpo", and "Joutuker Koutuk", among many others.

Babita's fond memories of ATM Shamsuzzaman

Ekushey Padak and National Film Award winning actor A T M Shamsuzzaman passed away on February 20, 2021. Celebrated actor Babita shared a great bond with him. Reminiscing on her experience of working with him, she gets candid in a conversation with The Daily Star.



MOHAMMAD AL MASUM MOLLA

I was around ten years old, when my elder sister Suchanda started her career in films. We used to live in Gendaria and A T M Shamsuzzaman used to visit our house regularly for shooting purposes – that is how we bonded with him. I have countless memories with him.

He worked with renowned director Narayan Ghosh Mita, and he was a brilliant screenwriter as well. If he liked anything I did, he would always call me and compliment me. He used to share acting tips with me. Acting was A T M Shamsuzzaman's passion, and he could fit seamlessly into any character he portrayed.

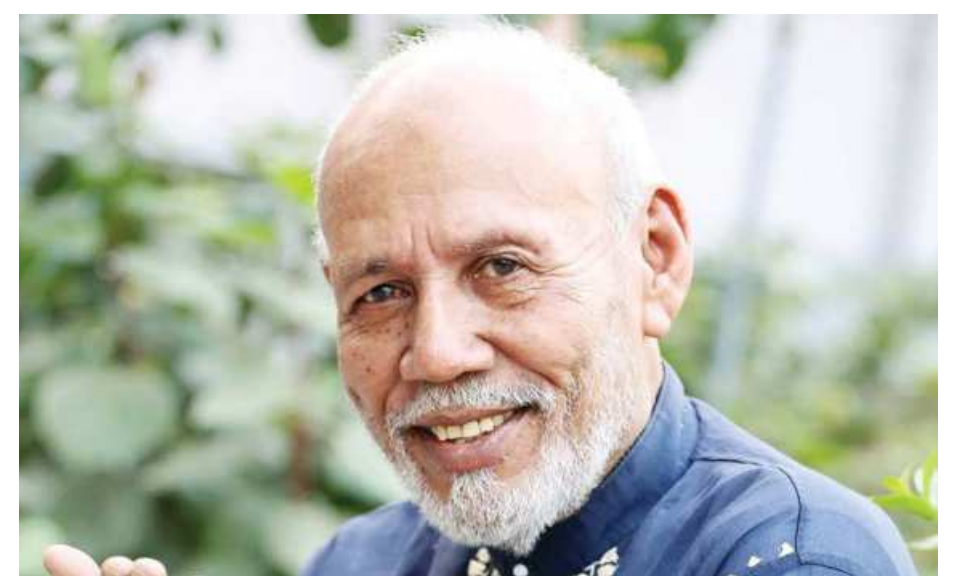


PHOTO: STAR

I have worked with him on several films, including "Noyonmoni", "Golapi Ekhon Train E", "Madam Fuli", and "Lathial", among others. I was very close to him. When he was admitted in the hospital, I, along with my sisters, went to see him and spend time with him. Those hours are just memories now.

During the shooting of "Golapi Ekhon Train E", he taught me how to smoke a cigarette. He was always present at the shooting spot, even if he was not in the scenes. He wanted to be involved with the whole story. Very few artistes have such dedication towards their work. I pray that the Almighty grants him Jannah.

Translated by Rasheek Tabassum Mondira



A legacy that never fades

JOSIM AHMED

Renowned Indian actor Irrfan Khan was reading a newspaper on the side of the road in a mid-long shot of Mira Nair's Oscar-winning movie "Salam Bombay" – this is how he appeared in the world of cinema with this short cameo appearance. How the legend began has been the least of concerns for the commoners, however, how he transformed each mere chance into an opportunity has managed to earn a rightful place in the history of this art form.

His story reminds me of A T M Shamsuzzaman, an unforgettable name in the Bangladeshi cinema who had also begun his journey with a minor role of being an assistant to a newspaper peddler in the song, "Tumi Ki Dekhecho Kobhu Jiboner Porajoy" from the film "Eituku Asha" in 1968.

Starting from the huge film industry in Mumbai, India to galloping on the international screens, Irrfan Khan has rocked the world with his impeccable presence in numerous evergreen releases, including Ang Lee's "Life of Pi" (2012) and Ritesh Batra's "Lunchbox" (2013). It is unfortunate that A T M Shamsuzzaman, who grew up in the dying film industry of Bangladesh, did not get a director and a film that would pledge his artistic excellence to the world. Nevertheless, there is no denial of the fact that he is one of the few rare actors born of his time that the world has known of.

Although I met A T M Shamsuzzaman only once, the chat we had 20 years ago about making a television series was quite

long. He had thought of a drama serial under the name "Kurban Alir Rojnamcha" for a television channel, featuring the daily activities of Kurban Ali and his family. The channel has insisted A T M Shamsuzzaman to play the titular lead role. Noted producer Abu Taher had introduced us and we were to write the screenplay of this production together.

I had worked on a few short tele-fictions before, but it was supposed to be my first TV series as a director. Sadly, the project was later dropped and I have lived with the regret of losing the opportunity of working with him till today. During our discussion that day, I had discovered an amazing harmony of sense of humour and beauty that resided within A T M Shamsuzzaman. His expertise in screenwriting, confrontation, and camera resolution was remarkable. He is not only one of the best actors of all times but also an incredible storyteller, screenwriter, and director. Working with him would have truly been the best learning experience for young aspiring filmmakers such as ourselves, an experience that I missed and still yearn for.

A legend like A T M Shamsuzzaman never dies, but resurrects every time as the audience cherishes on his characters – the village foreman in "Noyonmoni" (1976), Jobed Fakir in "Surja Dighal Bari" (1979), Kodom Ali in "Dayee Ke?" (1987), and Taslim Sardar in "Guerilla" (2011), among numerous others. His stories, characters, and scenes remain in remembrance.

The author is a producer and director. Translated by Ashley Shoptorshi Samadder