



Tejosh Halder.

PHOTOS: COURTESY

Behind Tejosh Halder Josh's powerful sculptures

FARAH KABIR

Tejosh Halder Josh is a skilled sculptor from Gopalganj, Bangladesh. Born in 1982, he had an affinity towards sculpting since childhood. It first grew in the second grade, when he was asked to create a structure out of mud. Sculpting amuses him, as he finds power in being able to physically touch his art. Tejosh is also drawn towards the materials used in his art, due to their unique properties.



Sculptures by Tejosh Halder



The sculptor has completed his bachelor's and master's from the Faculty of Fine Art, University of Dhaka in 2007 and Visva-Bharati University in Shantiniketan, India, in 2010, respectively. His muses are the works of Henry Moore, Alberto Giacometti, Michelangelo, Ramkinkar Baij, Frances Segelman, and the sculptures sold in markets of rural Bangladesh.

Tejosh connects research with his works. His sculptures are focused on a variety of topics, ranging from society, people, politics, religion, spirituality and existential questions centering on the connections between the universe and humans and who are humans. However, he does not explicitly put across his ideas as he prefers leaving his works up to the audience's interpretation, allowing them to relate to his work and find the joy in discovering on their own.

The artist recounts his student life when people liked his sculptures, but this did not necessarily guarantee their sale. He was only able to sell 2-3 pieces every year. Hence, as an artist, one needs to go through an arduous phase of time when s/he has to invest money for his/her art from a different source and stay very patient.

Such a phase of time may even extend till one's death. The sculptor says that he is still going

through the phase and will only deem himself as successful after its passing. He furthers that when he is working, he is traversing through a particular period of time, which is actually shaping his future.

Tejosh also opines that an artist's journey is more challenging in our country as it still follows an age-old curriculum, which creates lesser opportunities for skilled artists. Although the market for art is rich, people hardly know artists. There is also an absence of connection between artists and the wealthy, middle class, and a dearth of advertising facilities, art agents, media exposure and platforms such as a private art museum for showcasing their works.

Until now, Tejosh Halder Josh has had one solo exhibition, 28 group exhibitions, 6 workshops and 7 major commissions. He is also the recipient of the following awards and scholarships: Media Best Award (2006 and 2008), Honorable Mention Award (2006), Shilpacharya Zainul Abedin Gold Medal (2005), Kala Bhavana, Visva Bharati-Scholarship (2010), Bengal Group Scholarship (2008, 2009 and 2010).

Currently, he is working on a project as a commission for a certain organization. He briefly describes it as the figure of a sun, at the centre of which, the word 'Imagine' is written. Its rays extend as a chain of human figures, depicting the growth of population.

Devotion is needed to practice art:

Mosharraf Karim

SHAH ALAM SHAZU

Mosharraf Karim is a household name, having garnered respect amongst people of all age groups. His contribution to the Bangladeshi television and film industry is immense. In a recent conversation with *The Daily Star*, the actor talks about the current standard of tele-fictions, actors, OTT platforms and so on.

Can you tell us how television fictions are faring today, compared to how they used to?

Bangladeshi television fictions have evolved with time. Improvements have been made in direction, acting, plot, camera, light and makeup to suit the needs of the present day. It will be unfair to say that all the projects of the past were great. In comparison to olden days, there are more channels, content, and tools at our disposal. Through my experience, I can say that quality television fictions only stand out at the end of the day, which makes me believe that good work is being done.

The audience of our country has been watching tele-fictions even before independence. Once upon a time, there were package dramas, and currently, we have OTT platforms. What is your perspective towards this new medium?

I have taken OTT platforms positively as I believe that change is inevitable. More emphasis is to be given to scripts, as audiences enjoy good stories. If there is a powerful story, people will watch it regardless of what medium it belongs to. We have to welcome what is new, because change is certain.

Many argue about the variation in quality found in OTT projects. How do you feel about that?

How is that any different from television? We need to give the platforms more time for its development and wait patiently. However, many wonderful series have been released till, and the audience has accepted them. We have to keep in mind that the story must be ours to tell and thus, belong to our roots. Most importantly, a lot of money, time and dedication is being spent on creating these series, which will always attract an audience.

There is a strange urge for newcomers to become 'famous' by any means possible. Why do you think that is?

I wholeheartedly believe that devotion is needed to practice art. Acting is not an easy job. One needs to practice it for years before mastering. However, the matter of establishing oneself as a star is different. Some people want to gain instant popularity as an actor, but this does not suffice in the long run. An actor needs to nourish a said character within him before delivering his performance. The process also provides him enough joy. I do not understand why people feel the need to rise instantly. They must come out of it.

You are also known as a 'chameleon' actor. How do you adapt so well to any role?

I learn acting by observing my surroundings. When I go out, I observe the people around me. Similarly, I also make note of people in the fields, river banks and markets of villages during shooting. Their daily roles in life serve as lessons in acting.

Do you miss any aspect of your former life as an aspiring actor?

I miss much of the times I have already spent, especially in theatre. I reminisce about conversations my comrades at Baily road, and my work in Natya Kendra. I had spent quite a lot of my childhood at my village in Barishal, during which I used to ride on boats, get drenched in rain during the rainy season, visit the village market and bathe in the river after returning from school. Those are moments that I cherish.

Your recent work in the Ashfaq Nipun directorial, 'Mohanagar', has become the subject of discussion in both Bangladesh and West Bengal. How do you feel about that?

When any of my work is well-received by the audience, I like being a part of it. It thrills me that "Mohanagar" was instantly accepted. I was elated when Prosenjit Chatterjee himself called to congratulate me on it. Much of the credit goes to the director, Ashfaq Nipun, and the entire crew. Good work will always bear fruit.

Translated by Farah Kabir



PHOTO: STAR

The bleak future of filmmaking in Afghanistan under Taliban rule

FARAH KABIR

Following the repositioning of Afghanistan by the Taliban, various filmmakers took to explaining the plight of Afghan artists, particularly that of females.

Diana Saqeb Jamal, the director of the Afghan-Bangladeshi short film, *Roqia*, told *Variety* that she had left her friends and family in Kabul, and her belongings in her apartment. She compared her grief to the weight of the Hindu Kush mountains.

Sahraa Karimi, director and Head of the government-run company known as Afghan Film, reasoned that the Taliban is afraid of free-thinking, which especially threatens the lives of artists. She has safely escaped the country with her family and two assistants to Ukraine.



Mohsen Makhmalbaf's 'Kandahar'

More recently, director Hassan Fazili, who is now in Germany, told the *Times of India* that art, cultural activities, and filmmaking are destined for destruction under the Taliban. Shahrbanoo Sadat, the



Sahraa Karimi's 'Hava, Maryam, Ayesha'.

PHOTOS: COLLECTED

Afghan filmmaker whose credits include the 2019 Cannes Directors' Fortnight movie, "The Orphanage", recently fled Kabul successfully.

According to *Variety*, artists and civil society workers in Afghanistan are refraining from sleeping in their homes, as they are now being located by Taliban militants with address intelligence technology. Sahra Mani, the founder of Documentary House said that intellectuals, filmmakers, and artists are only left with two options: to flee the country or get executed by the Taliban. It is very easy for them to track down female filmmakers, whose numbers are as low as 10.

The Taliban is a fundamentalist Islamic group, whose members were originally Mujahideen guerrillas, who fought against the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan in the 1980s. The group gained momentum in the early 1990s in the backdrop of a civil war against the Mujahideens.

By 1996, they had captured Kabul, declared Afghanistan as an Islamic emirate and imposed extreme measures such as widely banning women's education and employment, music, and television, and abusing ethnic and religious minorities.

In 2001, the US accused the Taliban for collaborating in the 9/11 attacks by hiding Osama Bin Laden, who was believed to be

its master plotter. Upon asking for proof, the US denied, and in a matter of months, the Taliban was reduced to shreds by a US bombing campaign. A new constitution based on the 1960s reformed constitution under Afghanistan's last king was formed, which granted rights to women and ethnic minorities.

However, by 2006, the Taliban had reestablished itself, with a mission to expunge the US. They became successful in 2021, which led to the withdrawal of the US troops.

The Afghan film industry rejuvenated in the last decade with the help of a few women who worked tirelessly and fought against obstacles. Their films mainly portray the lives and daily struggles of Afghan citizens, especially women, in a war-stricken



Diana Saqeb Jamal's 'Roqia'

country under the Taliban regime.

There are also many notable documentaries based on the US-Afghan war such as *Zero Dark Thirty* and the Oscar-winning *Taxi to the Dark Side*. Filmmaker

and social activist Mariam Ghani, daughter of former Afghan President Ashraf Ghani directed *What We Left Unfinished*, which studies the relationship between the Afghan film industry and the country's national identity, from the abolition of monarchy in the 70s to the Taliban in the 90s.

The efforts of Afghan directors yielded fruits as films won accolades at international platforms. *Osama*, directed by Siddiq Barmak won a Golden Globe in 2003. In 2019, Karimi's *Hava, Maryam, Ayesha* premiered at the Horizons section of the Venice International Film Festival.

On the other hand, Afghans produced movies like *Kandahar* (2001), a film that tells the story of an Afghan-Canadian who returns to her homeland to save her sister from committing suicide. It didn't get much attention when it premiered at the Cannes Film Festival, but then came the 9/11 attacks, and the world wanted to find out more about the hardships faced by women in Afghanistan.

It is in the making and perceiving of our own art that time and again reminds us of our roots. On the other hand, art acts as a vessel for knowledge of foreign cultures, and its restriction leaves us marooned. It now seems that the years of hard work by Afghan filmmakers and artists have become futile.

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