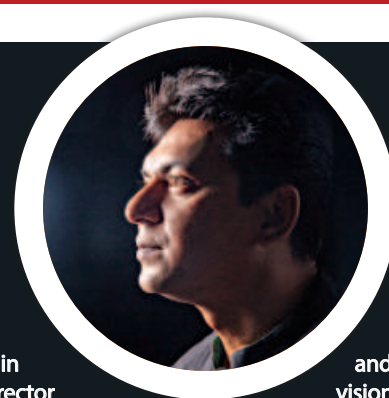




Chanchal Chowdhury on his fame, acting, and projects



He is a maestro of an actor, giving hit after hit. Monpura, Aynabaji, Debi, Taqdeer, and more recently, Hawa and Karagar, are some of the exemplary works where Chanchal Chowdhury's roles have been highly praised, taking us all by storm.

"Doesn't stardom or pride go to your head? How do you remain so down-to-earth?" I awkwardly asked him. The question was perhaps too direct to throw at the celebrated actor in the middle of the night, over the phone for a brief interview while he was wrapping up his work for the day, and attending a meeting.

But I had to ask, given his height of success and fame!

Chanchal Chowdhury replied, "Hawa got released this year on 29 July. I was with Hawa till 30 July."

After that, when the movie was creating hype all around, its craze sweeping over the country, the actor was away — "working on other projects, say, for example, at a dingy room sweating and struggling and acting."

Chanchal Chowdhury is someone who doesn't like to lengthen his sense of achievement. He'd rather move on. "I always try to forget about my success. It will be problematic for me if I retain in my mind the level of buzz Hawa or Karagar has created, for example, or the love the audience has shown me," he explained. "Hawa is over. Karagar is over. My concern now is whether the performances I am going to present to the audience next is of that quality or not."

That's quite a responsibility, though. "It's a challenge. It's a struggle," he admits. Since the previous projects created a lot of buzz, I now have to do something which should be of that standard or even better. If I fall from this point, I will be lost. It is a pressure that I have to overcome."

And he does overcome, every time! Arguably, it all begins with choosing the right roles. Chanchal looks for a number of things: story and script, director, co-artist, budget, and technical soundness. Before saying yes to a major project, he

keeps these elements in mind. "Let's say, the director is good, but the script is not; or that the story is good but the budget is not. Then it'll not work. Only when I see that all these factors are satisfactory will I embark upon a big project," he explained.

And then, once on board, he really gives his all.

Just see his electrifying performance in Karagar, the mysterious prisoner who suddenly appears in an abandoned cell one day. Chanchal's character apparently cannot speak. And yet, with sign language, facial expressions, and his eyes, he delivers an awe-inspiring performance. "If you throw someone in deep sea unaided, he will grab on to whatever he finds in order to survive. Such was my case in Karagar, since I practically had no dialogue," he said.

Be it the enigmatic prisoner in Karagar, or a boatman in Hawa, or a driver of a freezer van carrying dead bodies in Taqdeer, Chanchal Chowdhury dives deep into his characters.

By applying observation, imagination,

and of course, the director's vision of the character, he creates magic on screen. "There are of course professional technicalities to the craft of acting. Perhaps, the general audience does not even need to know that. At the end of the day, what matters is whether my performance is convincing enough to the audience or not," Chanchal explained, when asked how he prepares for a role.

His stellar performance in Taqdeer shows just how magnificent he can be in convincing the audience about his character. The result is a thoroughly gripping web series on the OTT platform, Hoichoi. This performance earned him the Best Actor (male) award in the popular category, in the **Blender's Choice-The Daily Star OTT & Digital Content Awards 2021**.

Congratulations to him, although, Chanchal Chowdhury probably by now has sailed past Taqdeer's achievements too!

By M H Haider

Tama Mirza's *winning* streak

There comes a time when you come across a story that is riveting enough to leave you pondering how brutal life can be. Khachar Bhitor Ochin Pakhi is one such film that sends chills down the spine of viewers, while staying true to its story and characters.

Speaking of the characters, the protagonist of the story is played by Tama Mirza, a national award winner. Being a versatile artist from the get-go, Tama breaks down her process on how she knocked it out of the part through her character of Pakhi.

You have won the Critic's Choice award in Blender's Choice-The Daily Star OTT & Digital Content Awards 2021. How does it feel to get recognition for such a popular role?

I feel overwhelmed with joy whenever one of my works is recognised for an award.

This was particularly joyful because it's the first ever OTT award hosted by The Daily Star, and winning an award makes me feel overwhelmed. Getting nominated for an award with some of

the most renowned artists is a massive deal for me on its own; simply being here fills my heart with joy as I get to see amazing people doing fantastic things and get to learn so much.

What was the production phase like for Khachar Bhitor Ochin Pakhi?

It's a film we had to prepare very thoroughly. There was a lot of rehearsal work involved. We did not rush; we took our time to ensure everything went perfectly. Everything had a very authentic feel, from the scene in Karwan Bazar, to the rail station, and the factory in Rangpur.

The locals helped us a lot, and the crowd was pretty helpful too. Usually, I feel distracted by the crowds, but not this time; they actually helped us out. **What was your process for preparing for such a demanding role?**

We had to work under challenging conditions. The factory in Rangpur had been shut down for a long time. It didn't have any fan, nor did it have any ventilation, and there was a lot of dust. We had to shoot in dirty conditions, but it was done to add a layer of authenticity to it. My clothes were genuinely dirty; I had to drink actual dirty water during a scene, and towards the end of the movie, we starved ourselves throughout the day because our characters were starving to death in the film. The director left no stones unturned to make

everything look real.

How much do you identify with your character as a person?

You hear about garment workers and their struggles all the time; how they get mistreated, and how they are denied fundamental rights. How they fight for survival, risk their lives and work in terrible conditions. Yet, they keep on persevering so that the economy can move forward, so it was an honour to be able to play someone like that. I felt this role on a very personal level.

What roles do you get intrigued by? I enjoy taking on challenging roles and exploring the industry's non-commercial and non-glamorous side. I remember taking a role similar to this in Nodijon. We were out by the sea in the cold all day. We ate on the floor and only ate what the locals offered us. We only spoke in the local dialect, and it was pretty intriguing.

What's next for Tama Mirza?

I want to keep working and keep pushing myself as far as possible as a professional. Women-centric roles are not that prevalent in our industries yet. I want to add to that by supporting strong, true and real stories that have the potential to be shown worldwide.

By K Tanzeel Zaman

