



An old minivan takes ecstatic passengers towards their destination.



Sheikh Mujibur Rahman at the Claridges Hotel in London in 1972.



The Birmingham protest against Pakistani brutality and genocide in Bangladesh in 1971.



Roger Gwynn attends prayers with locals in Eidgah

ROGER GWYNN

The British photographer who fell in love with Bangladesh

An old, wrecked car with children sitting on top, an old minivan crammed with ecstatic passengers, and children engrossed in watching movies in bioscopes—the rustic beauty of Bangladesh was captured in frames by British photographer Roger Gwynn, who arrived to Bangladesh as a volunteer, but fell in love with the country's simple and stunning landscape. He was so taken with Bangladesh, that he can still speak and write in Bangla flawlessly.

RAKSHANDA RAHMAN MISHA

Roger Gwynn immortalised some of the most awe-inspiring images of the Birmingham protest against Pakistani brutality and genocide in Bangladesh in 1971. Additionally, he had the opportunity to meet the Father of the Nation, Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, in 1972 at the Claridges Hotel in London. He again came back to Bangladesh after the independence to help reform the country after the disastrous Cyclone in 1974.

In an interview with the Daily Star, the British photographer shared insights into his deep affection for Bangladesh and reflected on how his images continue to resonate in people's hearts, standing the test of time.

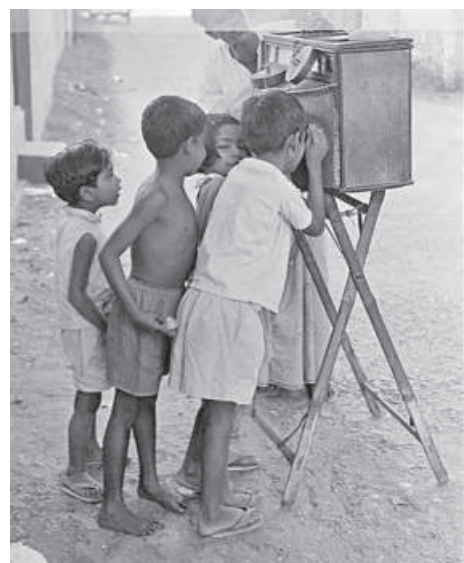
Edward Roger Gwynn, affectionately known amongst his Bangladeshi friends as Roger master, holds a special place as a close family friend of ours. My father narrated numerous stories about Roger, recounting his adventurous tales in our country. In the past, he used to send letters to my uncle in Bangla, inquiring about his whereabouts. As I went through these letters, I was genuinely struck by Roger's unwavering love for Bangladesh.

Feeling inspired by his enduring affection, I reached out to him via email and have a conversation with the man who fell in love with our country. In my emails, I addressed him as Roger uncle, and much to my delight, he responded affectionately, referring to me as his dear *Bhatiji*.

Born in 1941 in London, Roger Gwynn saw the brutality of war-torn countries, the pouring of bombs, the scarcity of food and the insurgent of refugees from the Nazi regime pouring in Britain.

After finishing his college, he earned a degree from Cambridge University in Social Anthropology.

Although he was a good student, Roger was quite confused about his aim in life, but he knew one thing for sure – he wanted to travel and explore the world. At that time, the only two reasonable ways to travel was to either hitchhike or join a work camp. Through hitchhiking, he could move around, but with work camp, he had to stay in one place and meet people of various cultures.



Children enjoy show in a bioscope in 1960.

Soon, the British photographer became part of long-term voluntary work and he was sent to East Pakistan to help out the people.



Roger Gwynn.

PHOTOS: COURTESY

"From November 1964 to December 1965, I worked under Service Civil International and I was stationed in different locations of Dhaka, Chattogram, Rajshahi and Barisal districts. During my brief period in Bangladesh, I became friends with some of my Bangladeshi colleagues and I got to adapt the Bangla language. After that I came to Bangladesh a few more times as I considered Bangladesh as my second motherland."

Roger Gwynn was not a professional photographer, neither did he study the art of photography.

"During my initial visit to Bangladesh in 1964-1965, I found myself captivated by the surroundings, prompting me to start capturing moments through photography. This newfound passion led me to document the authentic essence of Bangladesh—its beautiful landscapes and the unfiltered beauty of its people—through the lens of my camera."

In 1971, Roger Gwynn, then working as a teacher in Birmingham, learned about the atrocities committed by the Pakistani regime against the people of Bangladesh. In

response, he joined the Birmingham Action Community, mobilising British individuals to participate in protests against the brutal genocide. His active involvement included tasks, such as drafting press releases, fundraising, and designing logos for the protests.

"I took pictures of the Birmingham protests and my pictures were showcased in an exhibition in 2017, called the *London 1971: Unsung Heroes of Bangladesh's Liberation War*, convened by Ujjal Das. The exhibition was showcased at the British



A beautiful capture of the rural beauty of Bangladesh.

Council Library."

Roger *uncle* became emotional while talking about his meeting with Sheikh Mujibur Rahman in 1972, at the Claridges Hotel in London.

"On December 16, 1971, I heard the news that Bangladesh finally gained victory against the Pakistani government through my radio. I was completely ecstatic, I started to shout 'Joy Bangla! Joy Bangla!'"

Later on, he heard the news that Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman was freed from the jail and that he was coming to London for a short visit. He, along with his friends from Birmingham Action community, decided to meet the Father of the Nation.

"I couldn't believe that I was able to hold his hand. I can still remember Bangabandhu telling me that he had heard that we have worked passionately to ensure that Bangladesh can gain independence. 'Thank you for all your hard work,' he said. Meeting the great leader still remains one of my most cherished memories in my life."

In 1972, Roger Gwynn came back to Bangladesh, and stayed here for three years.

"During my brief stay in Bangladesh, I collaborated with Dr Zafrullah Chowdhury at his Ganashasthya Kendra and participated in two three healthcare projects," mentioned the photographer.

Gwynn also created a documentary, titled *The Year of the Killing*, shedding light on the staggering death toll resulting from the 1974 famine in Bangladesh.

In 1975, Gwynn returned to England and began working with the Birmingham Bangladeshi community. During this time, he translated Humayun Ahmed's *Jochona O Jononir Golpo*, aiming to impart the true history of the Liberation War to the next generation of the Bangladeshi community.

Currently, Roger Gwynn enjoys a retired life in a quaint location in Gloucestershire. His photos from the 1960s have gained widespread attention on social media, capturing the essence of Bangladesh during that era. Gwynn remains steadfast in his love for Bangladesh, believing that his passion for the country will endure as deep and fervent as it was when he first arrived.



The house feels empty without Honey: Tama Mirza

SHAH ALAM SHAZU

Although there have been many achievements in Tama Mirza's career throughout the year, the sudden loss of her beloved pet, Honey, left her heartbroken.

"Honey was exceptionally special to me. A few days ago, she passed away. I still cannot believe this," grieved the actress. "Honey was with me for ten years. Unfortunately, a year ago, we got to know that she was suffering from cancer. Although she underwent treatment, she lost her battle."

Tama further shared about her bond with Honey, saying, "When I used to go for shoots, she would understand that I was going outside. Even when I was by the doorbell, she would know that it was me, and excitedly jump to my lap."

The actress also shared that Honey used to like wearing *bindi*, and she loved getting dressed.

"Now, without Honey, the house feels empty. Her absence is deeply felt. I feel lonely without her, and I miss spending time with her," expressed Tama.

Hall owners want local premiere of 'Dunki' with global debut

ZAHID AKBAR

Shah Rukh Khan's *Jawan* premiered in Bangladesh simultaneously with its global release through an import arrangement. Following its debut, the movie gained a positive reception from the audience, contributing to its successful run-in theatres. The simultaneous release played a pivotal role in the film's commercial success.

It is understood that for a Tk300 ticket to a multiplex showing a Hindi cinema, Tk 69 is allocated to the government. Whenever Shah Rukh Khan's or any Bollywood film is released, a significant number of Bangladeshi viewers opt to travel to India to watch the movie. Hall owners believe that releasing these films simultaneously in Bangladesh would be beneficial for our country.

As the year comes to an end, SRK will be seen in Rajkumar Hirani's latest film *Dunki*, which will be released worldwide on December 21. Importers are hopeful of releasing the movie in Bangladesh on the same day as the film has already been submitted to the Ministry of

Information. If it gets clearance, then the film will be sent to the censor board for screening.

One of the most highly anticipated films of this year, *Dunki*,



boasts an ensemble cast featuring Shah Rukh Khan, Boman Irani, Taapsee Pannu, Vicky Kaushal, Vikram Kochhar, and Anil

Grover.

Mesbah Uddin Ahmed, senior marketing officer at Star Cineplex, shared with The Daily Star, "We are hopeful that *Dunki* will see a simultaneous release in Bangladesh alongside its global premiere, which could significantly boost its performance in local theatres.

The success of *Jawan*, for instance, was attributed to its same-day release. If the movie arrives in our hall, after it is screened in India, then the audience loses interest in watching the film in cinema halls."

Iftekhar Uddin Noushad, the owner of Madhumita Cinema Hall and former president of the Hall Owners Association, also shared, "Of course, it is good for us if it is released on the same day. Earlier *Jawan* released on the same day, which was good for our hall owners."

"Having watched the trailer for the movie *Dunki*, I'm hopeful that it will do well. Unfortunately, *Animal* which is thriving in India, couldn't do well in our country as it was released later in our country," added Iftekhar.

MAHFUZ AHMED

comments on potential film opposite Shabnur



ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT DESK

The news of National Award-winning stars Shabnur and Mahfuz Ahmed teaming up for an exciting new film caused a stir in the entertainment industry. On account of the speculation, Mahfuz shared that they are only in the initial discussion phase about the duo being featured together in a film.

Mahfuz Ahmed, in a conversation with The Daily Star, provided insights into the upcoming film featuring the two renowned showbiz stars, stating, "Yes. We had an initial discussion on a film. We just shared our plans and aspirations on the movie with each other but that is pretty much it. Nothing has been confirmed, not even the name of the project."

"It is too soon to announce anything. We will surely let the media know after we finalise everything," Mahfuz assured.

Speculations about this new film emerged on the occasion of Shabnur's birthday on Sunday, marking her return to home after three years.