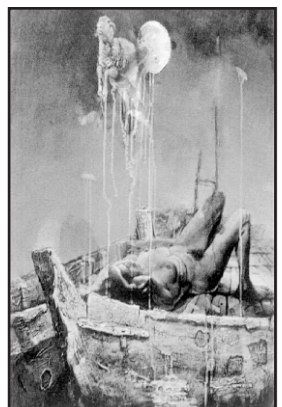


RECOMMENDATIONS



15th National Fine Arts Exhibition 2002

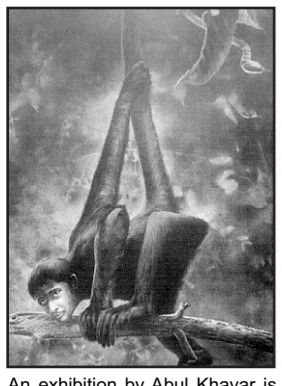
The 15th National Fine Arts Exhibition 2002 is being held at the Bangladesh Shilpakala Academy. The exhibition will run through January 27 everyday from 11 a.m. to 7 p.m. and from 3 p.m. to 7 p.m. on Fridays.

Concert

Antar Showbiz in collaboration with Close Up has organised a concert titled 'Rock Brigade' on January 17 at Army Stadium, Dhaka. Leading bands and solo artists such as LRB, dhAKA, Chime, NOVA, Banglar Baul, Prometheus, Edges, Aurthoin, Pantha Kanal, Conopy, Dalchhut, Tishma, Shumon and Sub Conscious will perform at the concert.

Exhibition

'The Ruin', solo exhibition by Nahid Niaz Nipu has begun on January 10th at 'La Galerie', Alliance Francaise



An exhibition by Abul Khayir is being held at the Russian Culture Centre. It will continue till January 18th.

Personality

From "Othello" to "Fair & Lovely"

A Shakespeare authority speaks about his loves -- old and new

FAYZA HAQ

ALYQUE Padamsee, who was recently on a visit to Dhaka, asked about how he originally got into the theatre world and then later moved into the ad field, said, "I was born into a theatrical family. When I was about seven, my elder brother, Bobby, was about ten years older than me and he was already doing Shakespeare. I grew up to the sounds of swords clashing, swishing of cloaks and all sorts of exciting things happening around me in my parents' living room; my sisters Rowshan, Jerry and Bee were busy sewing stage costumes and pasting posters. How I got into the advertising world was because I couldn't make a living in the theatre. I got married and I needed to make a living."

Talking about his experiences in "Romeo and Juliet", "Othello", and "Evita", his best known productions, Padamsee, in his sixties, said, that he was always fascinated with Shakespeare, being born in a household where Shakespeare was an everyday affair. At present he is doing "Romeo and Juliet" in Bombay running in full houses, and according to him, the most interesting part of it is that fifty per cent of the audience are young. Normally you would think that young people would run away from Shakespeare but his Romeo is a Muslim while his Juliet is a Hindu heroine. This is an attempt to say that you can have communal harmony in the Subcontinent, stressed Padamsee, and the action remains an exciting one. He said that with "Othello" he had a fine actor, Kabir Bedi, with whom he had begun his earlier production "Tughlak" which was Kabir's first real acting role and he eventually became a star and went to Hollywood. Padamsee added that working with Kabir was like working with a total professional who knows what he is doing. He said, "He plumbed to the depths of 'Othello' and his jealousy: he found out that he was a black man in a white man's army and he was a stranger in a strange place; he was suspicious of anything and everything; I traced Othello back to his Islamic origins as he was a Moor who came from Morocco and as he gets more jealous and insecure he goes more

and more back to his roots which were Islamic and he had once been sold to slavery.

"With 'Evita' I saw was 'Evita' not a personality from Argentina but as 'Evita' based on Indira Gandhi. The

from anybody else's 'Othello' anywhere in the world."

Talking about his musical background essential for doing musicals, Padamsee said, "I've been exposed to Indian classical music to a certain



Alyque Padamsee PHOTO:STAR

music and the words were from the original play. The interpretation, as with 'Romeo and Juliet', was original and different, and above all, all my plays are relevant, not to people sitting in England or America but to those sitting in the theatre in Bombay, India and throughout the Subcontinent."

Stressing on the twist that he brought in the Shakespeare productions, Padamsee said, "The 'Romeo and Juliet' is set during the time of the Bombay riots so that the play begins with danger which the audience can sympathize with. Romeo enters the stage on a motor bike while Juliet discovers Romeo in a discotheque. Thus it is all about Bombay youth today who are seen carrying on with their grandfather's prejudices and what they want to think about the world. Thus there is a clash of ideas of the fate of the female child and arranged marriages for Shakespeare says that his Juliet was being forced into a marriage with someone who had already been chosen for her and whom she didn't particularly like. Therefore, we get a situation which is very common in the Subcontinent. Similarly my 'Othello' was different

extent, as my father used to love 'qawwalis' and attend 'ghazal' concerts. More importantly, because of Hollywood films I'm exposed to pop music. I love pop music whereas I'm not that fond of western classical music. I'm fond of everything that Jagjit Singh does and in Indian music I'm also a fan of Hari Prasad Chaurasia for whom the flute is magical wand in his hand with which he weaves a spell over the audience."

Dwelling once again on what made him shift to the world of advertising, and whether he found Indian advertising mundane and stereotyped in producing items like 'Fair and Lovely' and 'Liril' as compared to that of the west, after all the amazing work that he has done with Shakespeare, Padamsee said, "In the beginning, I joined advertising because he had to and not because he wanted to. I lived in my parents' home and fell in love with a young woman, Pearl, who had been divorced and already had two children. Incidentally, she was more or less the same age as me. My parents said 'no-no' while I said 'yes-yes'. They said that if you want to you 'go-go'. I had to get a job as I

earlier worked with my father's company. I obtained a job in advertising as everyone said that there was great future in it. There is a similarity between advertising and the theatre because in both of them you have to act many roles, for instance when you are the 'Liril' girl you have to think that you are a sixteen year-old dancing under a waterfall. When you are selling a tractor to a farmer you have to imagine that you work in the farms. Thus imagination works in both professions and the reason why I went into advertising was purely money as I had to support my wife and two children.

"As I went on I fell in love with advertising. I have a habit of falling in love: I've been married three times, in turn, to Pearl, Dolly, and currently I'm married to Sharon; I have three wonderful children, one from each wife (I believe in family planning). I find advertising fascinating because of its variety: one day you are dealing with family planning, the next day with airplanes and the third with bicycles in villages."

Dwelling on advertising in India, whether it can compete with that in the west and Australia, and why the Indian agencies were selling out to the multinational ones, Padamsee said, "The top trendy Indian TV commercials are as good if not better than those in UK, Australia and certainly better than those in USA (ninety-nine percent of US commercials are boring, hammering you over the head saying only one thing: buy this and give you a toll free number every three seconds)."

"From Bombay, which is the Madison Avenue of India, ads have come of age and you no longer have a boring straightforward message. There's a tantalizing ad for 'Hevi quick', as a sticking ingredient; it begins with an old gentleman fishing with a rod which breaks into four pieces. Along comes a villager who puts six dots of the item is fixed and then draws six fishes which results in laughter as the fish come out stuck to the stick. This commercial has won a lot of awards in 2002. We won several Gold Lions at the Cannes Film Festival so that for the first time India was really competing in strength. I've won quite a few certificates and medals over the years. All of Indian advertising is up there with the world."

"What has happened to creativity due to the multinational bias, these foreign agencies only understand that advertising is created only at the head office in New York, London or Paris. They give you readymade advertising and tell you to adapt the models and this makes Indian advertising very dull because in our Subcontinent we have a totally different culture. We are Indus

Speaking about his experiences with Chandrababu Naidu, Padamsee said that Naidu, the Chief Minister of Andhrapradesh, has already done a plan for his state called "Vision 2020" to get his state to a tremendous stage of development, basing his ideas on the Singapore model. He added that he has come to power and is now into IT in a big way and he's developing the villages with wonderful programmes. Padamsee said, furthermore, that when Bill Clinton was visiting India, he got a message from him, as he was a communication expert, and could he come and help him with his presentation to Bill Clinton. We got together, the presentation was a success; Bill Clinton was extremely impressed; and he said, 'Will you be my communication consultant?' so that I went down for the Tony Blair visit, and now I've been working for programmes on family planning, AIDS control, tourism with Chandrababu Naidu and his ministers."

Touching on the reason why the Indian ad agencies are selling out to the multinational ones and asked if the Indian agencies are inferior and have they run out of ideas, Padamsee said, "I don't think that Indians have run out of talent: the Americans, British and Europeans have come in and they've begun buying agencies for their agencies which may be located in Europe or America to have a foothold in what could be one of the largest markets in the whole world after China, as India has one billion people. The question arises as to why the Indians sold out: the answer is money as incredible amounts of money were being offered. The agencies were bought on the conditions that they run it and they paid the Indians millions of dollars. The selling out was due to sheer greed or sheer temptation, which led Indian agencies to have foreign masters specially American ones."

"What has happened to creativity due to the multinational bias, these foreign agencies only understand that advertising is created only at the head office in New York, London or Paris. They give you readymade advertising and tell you to adapt the models and this makes Indian advertising very dull because in our Subcontinent we have a totally different culture. We are Indus

Valley centric. Hollywood is nothing compared to Bollywood, which produces three times the amount of films that Hollywood does. In Indian and Bangladesh TV you will find a lot of soap operas which has an entire Subcontinent cast, whereas on European TV there is a lot of American TV being rerun. We have very little reruns of American TV. The blockbusters in India are always from Bollywood, which stands form Bombay's version of Hollywood."

Asked if the Internet has helped in the world of advertising in future, and discussing its advantages and disadvantages, Padamsee said, "Internet is a slim stream of the people's future unless you have video streaming on Internet. People are used to television and used to seeing people's faces that they don't want boring text coming in the Internet. They want a pictorial net and not just still pictures. They want the Internet to be as human as possible. What is going faster in the Internet in India, in fact, is the mobile phone usage: not just phoning people but passing short message services, which is an incredible medium that has now begun advertising. It is coming into your cell phone that there is a special offer at Macdonald's this week, for instance, and if you go before 12 noon you will get a special offer of free French fries. When I got such a message I thought that this had come from my wife or some friend from somewhere or even a business acquaintance. So, the Internet has lost its sheen. As for your question of pornography they must log in."

Dwelling on how he got to writing his autobiography, "A double life" and did this arise from the desire to be even more well-known, Padamsee said, "Every person, they say, has a book inside them. This book is about my life in the theatre which I started with and advertising, which I have now: I continue both streams of my life, as I said, as I'm now doing 'Romeo and Juliet' and I hope to bring it to Bangladesh if I have some sponsors. I still continue with both lives -- both of which have been very exciting. Penguin Books approached me asked me if I would write a book on advertising and I said 'No, my life is not only advertising: it is two streamed.' So they said, 'Fine! Why

don't you call it 'A double life?' and I wrote the first four chapters in a matter of two weeks, and then for seven years, I got a writer's block and eventually I got a collaborator, who with his tape recorder came along, asked me questions, I answered them and finally the book was written. When you read the book it is more like me speaking rather than someone sitting down and writing. It's a spoken book."

Giving his impressions of Bangladesh, and asked if there was a vast difference between the culture of that of India and that of Bangladesh, Padamsee said in conclusion, "I think that the whole idea of the Partition of the Subcontinent is a British invention. I believe that all the people in India, Pakistan, Bangladesh and even to some extent Sri Lanka, are all one and the same. Basically, the cultural heritage of all of us is exactly the same. Hindus will listen to Urdu 'mushaira' and I'm sure Bangladeshis will listen to Hindustani classical music and enjoy people like Hari Prasad Chaurasia as well as Bollywood films, which are made about Subcontinental people. They look alike, they speak alike and in North India, Hindustani, which is a mixture of Urdu and Hindi. is spoken and so one shares this language cultural heritage. I think it is one of those things that happened in history and having played Mohammed Ali Jinnah in Sir Richard Attenborough's film 'Gandhi', I read a lot about that time, and having crossed the border, and having come from Kolkata to Dhaka, I find no differences. In Kolkata there is the 'aazan' in the morning and here there must be less Hindu culture. I'm an agnostic but my ancestors were Parsee. As far as religion is concerned, I find it sad that we are forced to inherit our father's genes but not forced to inherit our father's religion. Yet all of us seem to assume we are. But I am not and neither are my children Raheel, Quasar or Shazah. We do not believe in organised religion."

TV GUIDE

Table with TV channel listings for BTV, HBO, and CHANNEL-i, including show titles and times.

Table with TV channel listings for HBO, including show titles and times.

Table with TV channel listings for AXN, including show titles and times.

TODAY'S HIGHLIGHTS section featuring Star Movies (Brotherhood of the Wolf) and HBO (Disturbing Behaviour) with descriptions and cast details.

PICK OF THE DAY section featuring Hard Rain (HBO, 10.00 p.m.) with a detailed plot summary and cast list.

Table with TV channel listings for STAR WORLD, including show titles and times.

Table with TV channel listings for HALLMARK, including show titles and times.

Table with TV channel listings for STAR SPORTS, including show titles and times.