

Art of Sawdust Sculpture

WHOEVER imagined that waste wood and shavings from a carpenter's table could be moulded together, chiselled, chipped and polished to take up enchanting shapes of human figures, animals and inanimate objects?

This is a fairly new art form, perfected by a little known plastic surgeon, Dr Jagdish Chandra Patnaik of Cuttack, Orissa. He calls this "sawdust sculpture", a kind of woodcraft that he has developed over the past 15 years by sheer imagination and use of simple carpenter's tools.

The technique involves constructing a crude form of the desired structure on a plywood base. This is done by chipping and cutting wooden pieces, sticking them together by means of synthetic adhesive and smoothening the rough edges by sandpaper.

It is then left for a few months to dry till cracks develop in the structure. The big cracks are plugged with a paste of sawdust and synthetic adhesive and the small ones are filled with the glue of "loan" (red earth), wax and resin powder. When these dry up, a solution of surgical spirit and French chalk powder is applied to the whole structure. This helps to protect it from damage from exposure to excessive heat, air and sunlight.

Then begins the most crucial phase of the operation. A solution of white lac and spirit is applied to the structure and the visible parts of the plywood base are covered with fine pieces of cloth.

Simultaneously molasses, tamarind seed powder, camphor, fine pieces of jute, lime, sawdust, resin powder and copper sulphate are boiled in water to form a fine pulp that is applied, layer after layer, on the basic structure.

Explains Dr Patnaik: "Molasses and lime have a binding effect. Tamarind seed powder is bactericidal and a good cementing agent. Jute pieces help in preventing large cracks and cleavages while camphor and copper sulphate have fungicidal effect. Resin powder is repellent to termites."

But that is not the end. For the sculpture to emerge in its final form one of two procedures is adopted, depending upon the appearance: stony or smooth.

For a stony appearance, a paste of zinc oxide and synthetic adhesive is splashed at regular intervals over the pulp coating, before allowing the structure to dry.

A smooth finish demands that the full structure, when dry, is scraped with sandpaper to remove all unevenness. Then a mixture of chalk powder, tamarind seed powder and synthetic adhesive is applied, followed by painting of

by Niroj Ranjan Misra

the sculpture in any chosen colour.

Dr Patnaik has also developed a variation of this technique to produce uni-dimensional wooden collages. The procedure is largely the same as that of sawdust sculptures, except that the entire piece is laid out flat on a plywood board. It is after applying the pulp on the structure that a different process is adopted.

This begins with the selection of different varieties of wood pieces, chopping, cutting and chiselling them into desired shapes and finally smoothening these out with sand paper.

"Wood pieces are generally of two shades — deep and light", explains the artists. "Those with gnarly marks are of deep shade while others are of light shade. The skill lies in juxtaposing these various pieces overmarked areas so that the collage comes to life."

Then begins the layering out of pieces. Says Dr Patnaik: "Heaping one piece over the other is done for particular parts of the human figure like the nose, forehead and hair. In other areas, single layer placing is adhered to."

Certain portions of the collage are highlighted by using a contrasting variety of wood.

For instance, Dr Patnaik uses the black wood from the locally grown sisu tree for marking out the hair, eye-brows and eyelashes of human faces while for the lips or tongue, he might use a chip from the sal tree, because of its pinkish tinge.

For one who has invented this new art form, Dr Patnaik is remarkably modest. "I do not know if this is a unique art," he confesses. "All I can claim is to have evolved my own technique. I know of a Russian artist who makes one-dimensional structures out of marble pieces. But I am not aware of his technique."

Mr Misra is a freelance writer based in Cuttack. — PTT Feature

Tasting a New Culture

by Dipak Kumar Karmaker

EVERY nation has its own culture. But culture is not something static. With the passing of time, culture also develops or even deteriorates. In order to

covering sixty kilometers a day. While riding he meets two young cyclists Young-Ho, a high school dropout due to financial reasons and Sok, who comes from a rich family but is

some Soon-Chol and they start a happy married life managing a restaurant. One evening, she goes to a night club with Soon-Chol's sister where she witnesses her having sex with a man they had met in the club. Being in a state of shock, Chung-Hee wanders about in an alley. When two strange boys appear and try to rape her, she bites off the tongue of one of them in the process of resisting. The bite victim sues her. In court, Chung-Hee, suffers insults from the plaintiff's lawyer. She is found "guilty" and though, she is placed on probation, no one is friendly to her anymore. She decides to take her own life. But she fails. A woman lawyer volunteers to help her out. The two women do their best trying to recover the honour of not only the accused but the whole society of women. Chung-Hee then regains an honourable and decent status.



A scene from The Diary of King Yonsan

heighten the standard of its culture, a nation often has to cut across its own boundaries and embrace portion of culture of other nations. In this regard, the recent Korean Film festival has a significance in the cultural dynamics of Bangladesh.

The film festival, jointly sponsored by the Department of Films and Publications and the Embassy of the Republic of Korea in Bangladesh was held at Osmany Memorial Auditorium late last month (28-30 June). Three feature films — The Diary of King Yonsan, Hold Your Head Up High and Because You Are A Woman, and two cultural films — Samulnori and Jade were screened in a span of three days.

"The Diary of King Yonsan" directed by Im Kwon Tack and produced by Yo Chung Ho is a tale from the past. It gives us chance to have a glimpse of Korean heritage: Yonsan loved and adored his mother, but sadly he was deposed and sentenced to death. Yonsan ascends the throne as the tenth King of Chosun Dynasty following his father and predecessor, King Sungjong. Almost immediately the nineteen-year old King Yonsan is driven into a state of chaos due to the pressures of his well-meaning key Vassals, plus the continued petitions filed by the civil Functionaries. He is further troubled by the discovery of some historical record about his mother. He begins to wonder about justice and filial piety. In the fourth year of his reign, Yonsan settles the discord between the Confucianists and the meritorious Vassals. In so doing he illustrates his strength as a ruler. Now he begins to indulge himself in the pleasures of life.

"Hold Your Head up High", directed and produced by Choi Won-Young is about some Korean individuals determined and desperate in their effort to success: Mr Park, a retired teacher sets out on a round-the-country bicycle trip to test his mental endurance and physical stamina. He leaves Seoul with a personal goal of

rejecting to the interference and control they are exerting over his personal life. The three cyclists now begin an interesting journey together. By the end of the trip Mr Park



A scene from Hold Your Head Up High

has helped the boys solve their personal problems and learn about courage and friendship to overcoming all their trials in silence.

"Because you are a woman"

This film festival will have important bearings on the audience here for it not only

made them familiar with a new culture, but also helped in enhancing, in its bid, the friendship between the peoples of Bangladesh and Korea. Of late Korea has emerged



A scene from Because You Are A woman

directed by Kim Yujin and produced by Go Gyu-Sub is a tale from the present day Korean society and its inmates, their agony and ecstasy, pains and pleasures. The synopsis of the story is: Chung-Hee, a divorcee barely surviving with her crippled son, meets hand-

as an industrial power in Asia after Japan. Japan has Kuro-sawa to name as India's Satyajit Ray. It is hoped, as the Korean film festival has imbued, Korea may also have some one emerging as such in not for a future.

Sex and Birth Control in Soap Operas

Population officials are now trying to get their message across through popular television soap operas, which have a loyal following among millions of women around the world. **Jaya Dayal of IPS reports from New York.**

THE soap opera, long considered an afternoon vice for a mostly female audience, is finally getting its due.

Once exclusively known for their steamy love-and-lust storylines or tearjerker plots, soap operas have now become potent media to bring across more relevant messages to their millions of viewers.

In a United Nations-organised conference here in late June, experts applauded international soap opera writers and producers for their efforts in introducing socially important issues such as family planning, the status of women and poverty into the homes of many in developing countries.

"It is unlikely that the videos and other types of media that we produce will reach as many (as the popular soap opera)", Thelma Awori, deputy director of the UN Development Fund of Women (Unifem) said, during the conference.

Attending the meeting were the writers, producers, directors and soap opera stars from Brazil, India, Mexico, Pakistan and the Philippines.

They were joined by officials from the UN Population Fund (UNFPA), the UN Children's Fund (Unicef), the UN Development Programme

(UNDP), the UN Environment Programme (UNEP) and the world Health World Health Organisation (WHO).

Mexico television programme producer Miguel Sabido first developed "Acompaname" (Accompany Me) — a soap opera promoting family planning — in 1977. Because of its popular appeal, Sabido was able to produce four more family planning "soaps" that ran from 1977 through 1986.

During this decade Mexico underwent a 34 per cent decline in its population growth rate.

According to Mexican and US demographers, the soap operas had made the single most powerful contribution to the Mexican population success story. "If applied scientifically, the soap opera can affect human behaviour," notes David Poindexter, president of the New York-based Population Communications Interna-

tional (PCI). According to Poindexter, the drama, because it extended over a sizeable time period, allowed the viewers to see the behaviour and the consequences as well.

But, Manohar Shyam Joshi, India's renowned soap opera writer thinks the contribution of the soap opera is overrated. "I personally don't think that a soap opera can cause a revolution," he told IPS.

"It's very difficult to have an agreed value framework... especially in a country like India where we are in a sense...existing in many different centuries," Joshi commented.

Joshi says the soap opera, at best, could create a community of viewers who would react and write letters stating their views on the issues being dealt with, or asking for help and advice.

His soap opera "Humraah" (Come Along with Me), viewed

by over 100 million people each week, focuses on the status of women — paying particular attention to the age of marriage, age of first pregnancy, equal education opportunity, and the right of women to choose their own husbands.

Writers and producers from Pakistan have also found that socially-relevant soaps do not always get the kind of greeting that the experts expect.

"It was a little difficult to discuss family planning in Pakistan, and it was very controversial," says Sania Saeed, a young actress from Pakistan's first family planning soap opera. "But at the same time, it had tremendous impact."

Saeed said it was only because it got support from a US university that the serial was presented at all.

The Pakistani soap opera told the story of an educated, urban middle-class couple who already have four daughters but who, because of family and social pressures, feel compelled to have a son.

"The point we were trying to make here was that it has constantly been said that education is very important for family planning," said Saeed. "But education is not academics only, education means a lot of attitudes as well...and attitudes are very difficult to change."

Safdar Hashmi and Jana Natya Mancha

by Emamul Haque Kishu

A versatile personality, Safdar Hashmi, was a playwright, a lyricist, an actor, a theatre director, a designer, and an organiser. He was a reputed columnist for "The Economic Times", an Indian national weekly. He wrote on the various aspects of culture and related issues in various journals and newspapers. His writings on for children were much acclaimed. He has also made documentaries for television. But for the past 15 years his main concern had been to develop a kind of political theatre that would effectively express the emotions and concerns of India's working class and peasantry.

Safdar Hashmi died on 2nd January 1989 as the result of a murderous attack by political goons because his troupe "Jana Natya Mancha" was performing a street play. Its politics was unacceptable to an independent hoodlum backed by the then ruling Congress Party of India. Because it (play) was demanding increased minimum wage for industrial workers, raised the issue of the right to freedom of expression as an essential feature of the struggle of the people to secure human conditions of life. Because he believed in a theatre of the people by the people for the people.

Safdar Hashmi, a founder member of JNM, was a brilliant theoretician, practitioner of political theatre, especially street theatre. He was also a member of the Communist Party of India (Marxist). His creativity and ideology were inseparable. Hashmi and his group tried to liberate the mass people from the stranglehold of colonial and imperialist culture which has

swept over entire India and which has destroyed their traditional culture also.

JNM believes in the theatre of the people by the people for the people. So they feel the need to work in the forms which are familiar to their people and which their people have been using in expressing their own hopes for centuries. JNM's theatre is consciously political and partisan. JNM believes their theatre itself is a part of, and contributing to, the growing democratic movement in the country. They have successively taken their theatre to the people in a situation where theatre is not accessible to the majority. They believe in a theatre that provides robust entertainment and promotes a democratic, secular and scientific consciousness among the people. They don't provide readymade and simplistic answers but the analysis of the problems confronting their people. Their plays often end in the call to unite and struggle.

JNM is the pioneer street theatre group in India. It has played a significant role and contributed largely to the recent development of street theatre. JNM was founded in 1973 by a group of Delhi's theatre amateurs. In the last two and a half years JNM produced one short play and two full length plays. It also experimented with street skits. In October 1978, began JNM's phase of street theatre. For ten years they wrote and produced street plays exclusively. They have scripted and produced 22 street plays in this period. Their street plays have been translated into most Indian languages and performed in

Pakistan, Bangladesh and Nepal. Almost all of their plays deal with abiding issues — the position of woman, communalism, the education system, price rise, exploitation, corruption etc. They perform in open space in a circular acting area. The audience sits at the same level as the performers. The plays are often episodic in structure. Songs and choric dialogues come often. They usually perform at factory gates, in working class slums, in schools and colleges, in office complexes, residential areas and villages. JNM's performance are not ticketed, instead they ask for contributions from their audience after each performance.

A young playwright Ramesh Upadhaya wrote a special full length play in 1973 called "The Architect of Indian Destiny" (Bharat Bhagya Vidhata) which was the 2nd proscenium play of JNM. The title is drawn from Indian National anthem. It was a ironic title and dealt with election. They produced it first in September 1973. It was a three hour play. Director of the play Mr Natpal used Brechtian device for comments on the action and through songs players also announced what was going to happen next. This play became extremely popular and was very well received by the critics. JNM started taking it to college and working class area. They also perform it in parks.

In February 1974 something very interesting happened when JNM did a tour of western Uttar Pradesh during a state election campaign. They had gone to perform their play (Bharat Bhagya Vidhata) in Amroha, a town in western Uttar Pradesh, and the first night they had an audience of 15,000. They stayed one more day as people insisted them to stay one more night and perform again. This time they decided to advertise their play. So they advertised it by putting a loudspeaker and a microphone in a rickshaw going around announcing that tonight at such and such a time and place a play would be performed. Extreme right wing political party had also put their rickshaws out into the streets to tell people not to watch the play because it was obscene and was sponsored by some communists who had brought prostitute from Delhi to Dance. But at last JNM ended up having about 35,000 people watching the show.

into inactivity. Safdar Hashmi left New Delhi, to teach English at Kashmir University. He returned in the fall of 1978 and reactivated the group. After the Emergency was lifted, organisations who used to host and finance their performances in the past, could not do so because of their impoverishment. They had no funds to pay for even a modest production. So they (JNM) needed a form of theatre which was mobile, cheap, easy to produce and had a small cast. This made them turn to street theatre.

It was in 1978 that Hashmi decided to write a play when he heard about an incident that had just happened outside Delhi in an industrial town. There is a chemical factory where the workers did not have a union. Workers had two very ordinary demands. They wanted a place where they could park their bicycle and a canteen where they could get a cup of tea and heat up their food-during recess. But the management was not willing even to grant them basic demands. So the workers went on strike. The industrialists hired gangs of anti-social elements from the area, gave them arms, and uniforms, and made them guards. So when the workers went on strike, the guards opened fire, killing six workers. Hashmi wrote "Machine" the first street play of JNM based on this incident. In "Machine" Hashmi explains the relation between workers and machine.

Since 1978 JNM made their plays on a variety of political topics. "Gaon Se Shehar Tak" (From the village to the city) deals with a farmer who loses his plot of land and is forced to become an industrial worker in the city. "DTC ki Dhandhali" (The bungling in the Delhi Transport Corporation) was specially designed to mobilize a mass protest against a 100 per cent price hike by the DTC in February 1979.

"Aurat" (Woman 1979) is one of the first plays to deal openly with issues like bride burning, dowry and wife bashing. "Apaharan Bhaichara ka" (The abduction of Brotherhood 1980) is about the complex problem of the Punjab and the Sikh extremists. "Holla Boh" (The cry of protest, 1988) is based on a seven-point demand charter of the industrial workers of Delhi. It was the last play of Hashmi. Goons made attack on Hashmi on 1st January 1989, when JNM was performing this play in support of the workers demands led by the Centre of Indian Trade Union (CITU), a left

wing trade union organisation. On January 2, 1989 Safdar Hashmi died in a New Delhi hospital following this attack.

In recognition of Hashmi's contribution to the street theatre movement and to the growth of a Democratic Culture, the Calcutta University has recently conferred on Safdar Hashmi the degree of D. Litt, posthumously. With Hashmi's death the CPI(M), the Jana Natya Mancha, the cultural movement and the democratic and secular forces of the country lost a committed political activist. However, the troupe (JNM) is promised to proceed materialising the dream of Safdar Hashmi in his absence.

WRITE TO MITA

Dear Mita,

I am a regular reader of "The Daily Star," and very fond of your column. I need your help very much.

I am a university going student. Presently, in the university, I am finding coping with my studies very tough, and I am disillusioned about myself.

A disturbing reality is my lack of knowledge in English even after 12 years of formal courses. Often I find it frustrating because I cannot speak English fluently which is essential for my career development. So, I have decided to improve my proficiency in English.

I have told some of my classmates to help me and they have agreed to converse in English with me. While former O-level and former cadet college students have showed interest and appreciated my efforts, others consider it vulgar. I have tried to make them understand but in vain. Consequently, a silent war is on between myself and some of my old friends.

Will you suggest a way out for me? What should I do now?

Richard Gomes, Dhaka-1100

Dear Richard

I am sure, with effort and determination you will learn English very well and will be able to speak it fluently soon. If your friends are insensitive to your needs then there is little you can do. Try to explain to them one more time. If it works, fine. But if it doesn't, then you can avoid them. Someday they will realize and come back for your friendship.

Dear Mita,

Last week you answered a letter from a woman who gave up singing because of discouragement from the family. This is very common in our culture. No wonder we see so many talented child artistes, especially girls, on TV but so few adult female artistes. Even now men cannot tolerate women becoming famous or well known and feel threatened. They suppress the talent and potential of their wives, sisters or daughters. What do you think?

Sultana, Nilkhet, Dhaka.

Dear Sultana,

Though you are right to a certain extent, I wouldn't like to generalize. You will have to appreciate the efforts men are making to accommodate to the new role demanded of them. It is true that they still have a long way to go but there is definitely a positive trend. Women, on the other hand, have to assert their rights and should be willing to take responsibility for the risks involved.



Dear Mita,

I lived with my in-laws for 10 years because my husband, being the eldest, felt it was our duty to do so. Though there were some problems at times but on the whole we got along fine. Recently, my husband's younger brother got married and we moved out thinking that they will look after the parents. Now, after two months, my mother in law wants us to move back because she is not getting along with the new daughter-in-law. Tell me Mita, is this fair? I have taken their responsibility for 10 years and now that we are all getting used to an independent life, why should I move back? I don't want to. But my husband thinks we should. Please advise.

Zubaida, Shegun Bagicha, Dhaka.

Dear Zubaida,

Your problem is very complex and has no easy solution. You are quite justified to say that it is somebody else's turn to take the responsibility of the family but on the other hand you cannot totally ignore your mother-in-law's request. What is needed is a family discussion. Everyone concerned should sit together and talk — only then will a compromise solution emerge. Your husband is in a difficult position being the eldest. So be as understanding as possible without giving in to all his requests.

WRITE TO MITA



Run by a trained and experienced Family and Marriage counsellor, assisted by a professional team of doctor, psychologist and lawyer, this column will answer questions relating to family, marriage, health, family laws, and social and interpersonal relationships. Please address letters to Mita, The Daily Star, GPO Box 3257 or to 28/1, Toynbee Circular Road, Motijheel, Dhaka-1000.



Norman Wisdom, the brilliant English comedian of yesterday, enjoys life in his new abode at Isle of Man where he is living for the last 14 years. He is living for the last 14 years. —Star TV photo by T. A. Khan