Twould be far too sim-

plistic to think of Gunter

Grass and the develop-

ment of his creative genius in a

merelinear scheme : from a poet

and writer, who seeks poetic

isolation - over an election

propagandist Grass, who looks

for public involvement — up to

a slum dweller Grass in

Calcutta, who desires to

experience the alien in its

immediacy. Gunter Grass has

lived - consciously or uncon-

sciously - a chequered life.

These manifold experiences of

his life, which he internalised

during the turbulent span of re-

cent German history, are com-

plexly interwoven in his literary

German parents on 16th

October 1927, in Danzig, in to-

day's Poland. He spent his for-

mative years in the same town.

One can easily trace his early

biography from his literary

works, particularly his two im-

portant novels: "The Tin

Drum" and "Dog Years".

Towards the end of the Second

World War in 1944 he was

Nonsense and

Grotesque

oner of war by the American

army. After his release he

worked as a labourer on a farm

and in a potash mine, and later

became an apprentice to a

stone-mason. Occasionally he

also worked in a jazz band.

After an unsuccessful attempt

to finish his high school educa-

tion after the war-torn days, he

studied fine arts in Dusseldorf

and in Berlin. In 1956 he

shifted to Paris, where he

started his literary career, ini-

tially with nonsense poems and

grotesque plays. If we see the

great structures of his entire

work, we can see diverse chang-

ing interests reflected in his

creative career. All these

changes have contributed to the

development of his literary per-

novels, short stories, and even

makes etchings and sculptures.

In 1987 he displayed his etch-

ings and lithographs in Delhi.

He has participated in election

campaigns, and reacted to the

political issues of the day. This

versatility of his interests has

given rise to the complex struc-

The Literary

Phenomenon

novel "The Tin Drum" appeared

on the literary scene and be-

came an immediate commercial

success. It has been translated

into many languages. He went

on to produce two more signifi-

Mouse" (1961) and "Dog Years"

cant prose works, "Cat and

(1963). All these three novels

deal with his early life in

Danzig, which experiences the

fateful emergence of the Third

Reich. The three-volume new

edition of these novels has

rightly been subtitled as the

"Danzig Trilogy". This work was

regarded a literary phe-

nomenon, which broke away

from all literary conventions.

Here writes Oskar Matzrath, the

dwarf, his own life history, in

which his individual develop-

ment is shown against the

background of every day life,

which is affected by the political

events of the time. He is physi-

cally retarded, but intellectually

He can shatter glass with his

voice, when the grown-ups try

to snatch the Tin Drum away,

which he has got as a gift on his

third birthday. With fantasy

and trony Oskar writes his his-

tory against the grain. This

alert and possesses almost su-

pernatural powers.

In 1959, his highly original

tures of his literary works.

Grass writes lyrics, plays,

sonality.

In 1945 he was taken pris-

drafted in the German army.

He was born of Polish-

works.

over the landing on the moon,

to the problems of the foreign

"guest workers" in the Federal

Republic of Germany and thus

became in a sense the con-

science of the nation. As the

horizon of his creative con-

sciousness widened. Grass has

of late been rather distillusioned

about the literary and social

climate in Germany in particu-

lar and in the Western society

in general. This has preceded

his monumental work "The

Flounder" (1977), which covers

2,000 years of history experi-

enced by his birth place Danzig,

where he examines the issue of

food and tries to acquire insight

in the process of social trans-

formation through the struc-

tural changes in agricultural

system rather than through

politics, hinting at the futility of

His Disillusionment

realised that simple changes in

agricultural system have more

power to change the society

than the politics". His distillu-

sionment in the eighties over

the social and political situation

in his country has given birth to

another book "The She-Rat"

("Die Rattin", 1986), which was

received in Germany with mixed

reactions, because, as he says,

"It is a dark book. And there are

reasons to write dark books. So

many people are involved in the

business of hope-making, but

they have nothing to support

"new sensibility", which may

open up a differentiated per-

spective of looking at one's own

society from an intercultural

equidistance. In August 1986

he decided to shift to Calcutta,

where he stayed up to January

1987. He wished to live in a so-

cial milieu, far away from the

social elite and experience the

alien way of life with a

"consciousness of rupture". He

compiled his experiences of his

second visit to Calcutta in his

controversial narrative Tongue

Showing" ("Zunge Zeigen",

1988), in which he tried to show

the social contradictions of a

"Third World" reality. But at the

same time he was hinting at the

contradictions of his own soci-

Tongue Showing

of Kali

Showing" of Kali he now goes

over to listen to a portentous

"Toad Creaking" - a German

metaphor for the ominous

Cassandra cries - which is the

title ("Unkenrufe", 1992Lof his

recent book and also the con-

tent of a simple love story be-

tween a German and a Polish

couple. Grass knows how to

transform it into an ironical

dramaturgy, which attacks the

logic of West-East relations be-

tween the Germans after the fall

of Berlin Wall in 1989. It ex-

poses the absurdities of the

changing realities in Europe

through a satirical debunking of

vulgarisation of free market

In all his works Grass has

been incessantly trying to keep

the critical conscience of the so-

ciety awake, in that he contin-

ues to warn - like toad croak-

ing — that the new forces in

Europe unleashed through the

collapse of socialism and resur-

gence of market economy have

given rise to a consumerism.

which is creating its social un-

conscious. Grass never gets

tired of advocating the task of

the writer, which lies in pene-

trating the facile reality and ex-

posing the outdated modes of

social and political behaviour,

hearing the ominous croaking

of the toad in the midst of the

After watching this "Tongue

Grass is thus looking for a

their action.

While examining this issue I

political exercise.

## The Merchant of Venice: Dhaka Little Theater's Spectacular Presentation

Il that glitters is gold an oft quoted Shakes pearean verse has been enlivened again by Dhaka Little Theater with a tinge of Bengalce taste in it. The presentation of three cascades - Gold, Silver, and Lead, is unique in its own style and bears dramatic excellence. The music and dance through which the director Ataur Rahman presented three cascades gave life to seemingly inert scenes. It was as if the audience woke up, moved and sat erect; their attention drawn to what the little performers were doing on the stage. This was my feeling while I was seeing "Venice Saudagar" a translated version of Shakespeare's "The Merchant of Venice." Frankly speaking, this

velous presentation indeed! Dhaka Little Theater has been on the stage for about sifteen years. It is a juvenile organization formed by a group of challenging youth who see into the future. They dream for new society, for a new life.

lyrical presentation of the cas-

cades kept us spellbound till

the end of the play - a mar-

Translation of Shakespeare, be it tragedy or comedy, is really difficult considering Shakespearean philology, style of presentation, continuity, humour and meaning. Mr Abdus Selim has done this work so easily that it can be an example to those who venture to translate foreign plays into

by Ulfat Hussain

On seeing the drama one would agree that the translation has been very lucid, smooth and easy for the little actors to play their part. Translation has been in prose, not in poetry. One must give credit to him for choosing common diction and speech of our language. Some dialogues of the play have been deliberately omitted to suit the little actors' mouth. However, these omissions did not hinder the play's continuity and

Mr Ataur Rahman, the direc-

meaning.

tor of the play, is a very popular name in the country's drama circle. He has about 20 years experience in staging plays. However, he had to work more on his genius in the production of this play because most of his troupe members - actors, technicians, etc. are young and novice. As a director, Mr Rahman has shown his excellence in the spectacular presentation of the three cascades, and in the choice of other songs and music that followed. The character's performances were enlivened with music, dances and songs attuned to the Bengalee culture. Mr Rahman demands credit in the selection of songs and music. Viewed in perspective, he through his superb direction of the play held together in harmony a variety of subjects - acting, lighting, set

Though most of the performers were amateurs, their perfordecoration, music and dance. mance with little flaws and am-An in depth analysis of the play reveals a conflict between biguity of expression here and there, went beyond the circummajority and minority; subjugation and persecution of miference of amateurism; they nority by the majority. In this acted like professionals. case Shylock, the Jew, belongs Costuming was also amazingly to the minority while the rest of Bengalee and not like what a the characters belongs to the sixteen century venetian would wear - Punjabi and Pyjama for majority. In the court scene, male and Sari for female char-Shylock was forced to accept acters. Shylock's costume has the Holy Cross — a hint at the been like that of a Kabuliwalla's subjugation of minority jews by powerful majority Christians. dress - a popular figure of a With shame and humiliation usurer in our country. A little mention about the stage is nec-Shylock (Abid) walked out of the stage and gave a shrill cry. essary here. The stage (Mahila What happened to him? Did he Samiti Mancha) is not equipped kill himself out of frustration with sound system so the actors on the stage had to speak at the and humiliation? Perhaps yes, perhaps no. The matter was left top of their voice for being for the audience to think, ponheard by all specially those in der and research. Here Mr. the back. The acoustic defi-Rahman has shown his mastery ciency of the auditorium really as an efficient director. hindered a more subtle performance of the actors. It has become increasingly necessary for Shylock is the most complex us to have a permanent theater and intricate character of the play. Ahmed Abid played stage with all modern facilities. Shylock perfectly, specially, in Will the authority and those characterizing a shrewd, miser, concerned with culture look

> into this? Through all the changes of fashion and taste in these hundred years. Shakespeare has never lost his appeal. I feel Dhaka Little Theater's \*Venice Saudagar" will ever remain appealing and entertaining to a Bengalee audience in the days to come. Thanks to Dhaka Little Theater for a beautiful presen-

and others performed well.



have everything - my al luring glamour, a rich husband and our loving son Tutul - all combine to let flow a beautiful serenity in our family. There is no turmoil in my life. You will probably wonder how I have been living my life in a carefree paradise; but you will understand when I give you my daily routine.

I rise very late in the morning. While sipping a steaming cup of tea I dictate the cook the menu for breakfast, ask the boy-servant to wash Tutul's face and change his outfit. And I fix the towel and toothbrush myself for my husband. Sushovan. Then we sit for

breakfast together. send the cook to the market after Sushovan is gone out for his office. And me - oh yes. got something to do like playing with Tutul on the veranda, bathing in the morning sun, sometimes playing music on the cassette player or telephone friends or relations just for casual talks to while away my time. At noon I bathe Tutul, then run water for my shower long and relax. At midday Sushovan and I sprawl on the bed together. But Sushovan has got the habit of sleeping at this hour and he sleeps and snores, while I turn the pages of various magazines and journals. Sometimes Sushovan and I go out after the afternoon tea. But mostly we cannot, because Sushovan has his own world and he works in a government office too. He has a lot of works to do there. He is a government officer as well as a noted litterateur and TV-Radio personality. No wonder that he is also involved with a number of cultural organisations and has already become a popular figure in society. And no wonder he is surrounded by sycophants all

Lots of girls do come to him too - some of them are his fans, some need him, and some others visit him just as a social formality. That is why l can hardly manage to go out with Sushovan. But I move out - sometimes with Tutul, sometimes alone. Besides spending my time in visiting friends and relations at their houses and going to theatre, my time is passed mostly in the saree shops of New Market and other super markets.

This is my everyday life. So now you tell me if I am not living in the paradise of happi ness! And happiness fills all of my life like a lawnfull of morning sunlight. My world seems to be continually drenched with affluence, hap piness and peace, like the in cessant rain in the month of August. 1 am happy - 1 am really happy. Shouldn't i be?

But coes not the morning sun sometimes burn your skin like the scorching sun of the summer? Does not torrential rain sometimes cause floods? You know, happiness has be-

come an unbearable burden in my life like the scorching sunlight. Happiness has also appeared to me as dangerous as flood water. I do not want this affluence — a handsome, rich and famous husband — a child as immaculate as flower. This child is the very cause of my agony; he has got me roped and tied with the family like an octopus. I want often desper-

ately to be free. Yet you know, what a strong desire I had once in my life to get me deeply involved in family ties. There are so many pieces of dreams filled in the album of my mind. And Sumit came into my life right at that age of my dreaming. He was then teaching at Rajshahi college and I just entered the college. He being twenty-eight and me eighteen was a big difference between us. I felt awfully attracted towards him and

it bridged the gap of all dis-

not properly understand him. Was it due to our age gap or because of his manners and character - I do not know. I was very much surprised the day he touched me. He made me understand "Darling, please don't misunderstand me. We can toget closer without having it," he said looking at my eyes full of questions," It's not sin. The body is a harp; it sings when the music is played on the strings of heart. It's impossible for one to exist without the other".

usurer, and a revengeful char-

acter. Abid's skinny health has

been a plus point in this re-

spect. Musarrat Hossain

Chandan has been remarkable

in portraying prince of Morocco.

Sultana Afroze played Portia

nicely, specially her role as a

lawyer in the court scene is

commendable. Abdus Sattar

(Antonio), Shakil (Bassanio),

I do not know myself how much I realised the meaning of his words. But he touched me

I know, you will now blame me. But love is said to be such a trap, you can not retreat once you put your foot there. I was only drowning. But believe me, my love was as pure as gold. My views towards physical aspect of love was very

## Life is too Big, Dear!

A Short Story by Khurshida Haq

tance between us. My elder brother was a professor of philosophy and Sumit was of history. I had taken none of those subjects. He used to drop in our house to see my brother. Seldom did we talk and I had not yet woven my dreams, around him.

One day he walked in when my brother was not at home. I was wearing a saree that day and trying all the time to wear it in a perfect way. As I was fixing its border, the cloth around my bosom nearly fell off. And he came right then. He looked enchanted as opened the door. I said, Bhaiya is not home may be he'll be right back. Will you wait?" He did not reply but gazed at me with unblinking eyes and said, "Why don't you always wear saree? Wear it all the time, won't you?"

He said nothing more that day And I started thinking of him since that time. I cannot tell you exactly in my inadequate language what his little words meant to me that day. But you will surely understand as you all have the experience that sometimes a small words or subtle expression, even a look can bring a deeper and profound meaning in our lives. That was how Sumit became the dream man with the few words he had spoken on that memorable day The rest of the story was very quick He came to know about my feelings, and understood him Sumit was very romantic no doubt, but his words and manners seemed to

be mysterious to me. I could

much orthodox. Hesitation, fear, barrier all were there in me. Inspite of these - could I retreat? Was I capable of rejecting wild Sumit? No. 1 could not Sumit was crazy and he made me crazy too My craziness, restlessness, briskness all seemed to have suddenly disappeared for the first time the day I felt my second-self appear. Instead of being impa tient, very calmly I let him know the fact Sumit was a teacher by profession — I was the eldest girl in my family, studying BA. Both the families were somewhat solvent and nice; there was no barrier from either side. But do you know, what Sumit said? "I have a friend who is also my rela tions. He is a doctor. I know there will be no problem though it's for the first time. It's a matter of just a day. No one will ever know anything about it.

My head grew heavy and my sight grew dim I almost fainted on him. He held me But I managed to control my self. He said. "Fix a time within a day or two. The thing could be done on the plea of visiting our house

I just hated to ask him any question. Without saying a word I moved out of his room with firm footsteps. If I had to bow down my head to someone then why should it be he? My parents, my brothers and sis ters were closer to me. And I let them settle down my sor row and shame. My mother cries, my father wiped his tears, and my brother only

shouted -not to me but to an unknown enemy, "Who's that scoundrel? please tell me. Let me do something."

I know what my brother wanted to do. He wanted to beg if he could know his name. Because you cannot force anyone when it comes to marriage. Moreover, there was no witness or proof. I realised that the mistakes that I could make was already committed. would only aggravate my sorrow and shame.

I left for Dhaka on a plea of visiting my maternal grandfather's house. Once again, my soul searched salvation and was purified. I gave up my study. My mother's love and care made me still standing on my ground again regaining my basic sanity and physical beauty. I got married in Dhaka to a well-established officer. noted litterateur and a TV-Radio personality. I still do not know why Sumit avoided me. He was highly ambitious. Last time I heard of him he was busy trying for a scholarship to go abroad.

Was that the reason why he neglected me? Or was it that his idea of marriage and ex pectation of bride was higher? Or why he did not accept a sinner like me - could it be like that - men are basically strict regarding their marriage although they are promiscuous in love. I do not know, what the real cause of his eluding me was. But you might under-

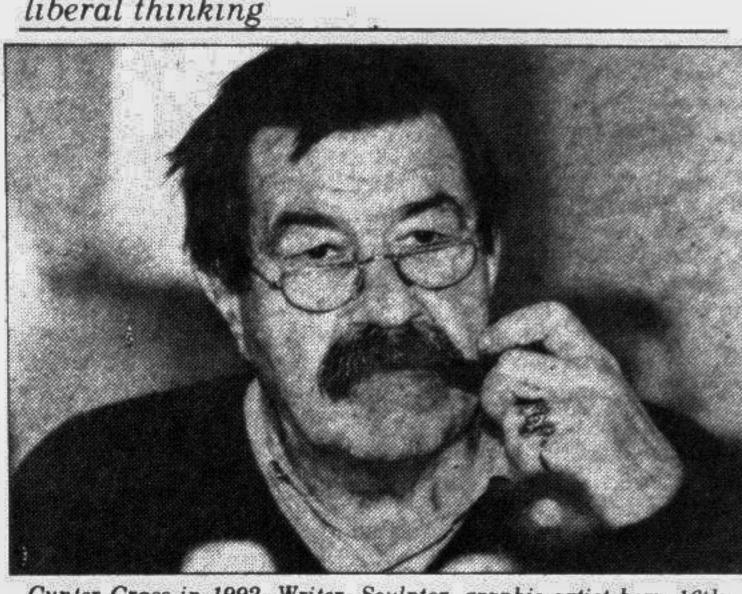
After my marriage I did not cherish any impossible dreams. However, I hoped I would be happy. My husband would love me. I would be the mother of a baby as calmly as a doll in our solvent family. You have already seen that I have get everything. But happiness? - which is the first and last goal of everything - did I get it? My husband has given me everything - child, an affluent family - he has handed me the key of happiness. But the door of my happiness is locked and elusive as ever.

The reason is, my husband has given everything excepting himself. I told you, earlier, he is surrounded by fans - many of them are girls. He participates in programmes on TV and Radio, where plenty of girls take part. He gets quite a few programmes as he also dwells on literature. Since he works in an office he cannot find time to prepare the materials in the day time. So he can budget only his night time. He remains awake long at night to prepare his scripts while I search for happiness and toss on my milk white bed, in the warmth of Tutul. In the day-time I forget myself amidst work and people. But my real self appears on the mirror of my eyes as the day rolls into night. There is only a note of weariness and emptiness in my eyes. The day quickly passes by - yet every

Pramod Talgeri profiles Gunter Grass, the most known German literary figure and thinker who has influenced other writers with his bold style, and society at large with his liberal thinking

Gunter Grass: Keeping the Critical

Conscience of Society Awake



Gunter Grass in 1992. Writer, Sculptor, graphic artist born 16th Oct 1927

writing against the grain is totally new in the post-war German literature, which was till then replete with objectivistic linear narrative works. The new stylistic and structural innovation of this novel has influenced many a young writer including Salman Rushdie, who wrote his "Midnight's Children" under the stylistic impact of the "Tin Drum". Three definate trends are immediately perceptible in the long literary spell of Grass.

Debunking with the Trilogy

Towards the end of the fifties, when he established himself as a writer, his main concern was to find out his relation with his own past and retrace it against the grain. The "Danzig Trilogy" bears testimony to it, which debunks the entire German socio-political reality of the first half of the twentieth century as the outcome of a imminent nationalistic extremism in Europe as a

In the seventies, Grass actively participated in the political life of the Federal Republic of Germany and tried to relate the political ideas to religious ethics and upheld the social commitment of the writer. During this period, which had given rise to the well-known students' protest movement in Europe (1968), Grass intensely analysed and discussed the West German reality and attempted to infer the legitimation of the writer from this socio-political interaction: "For the writer is called upon to raise his voice, if in our country the injustice would once again become prescriptive law. For the place of the writer is in the midst of the society."

With his liberal political attitude, his almost provocative insistence on rationality, the aggressive style of his speeches and the moral judgement, he

spared neither the rightists nor the leftists. Against this background of the turbulent days of the "Extra-Parliamentary Opposition" (APO) towards the



The latest book of Grass, titled "Toad-Croaking"

Grass is looking for a "new sensibility" which may open up a new perspeclive on one's own society

end of the sixties he wrote "Local Anaesthetic" ("Ortlich Betaubt", 1969).

Grass devoted his attention to diverse socio-political events and problems and extended the scope and the area of his varied literary interests, right from the German Assembly elections,



Grass with his "She-Rat"

these to Bulu".

moment of the night seems longer and never ending. I can feel every second of the passing of time. I wonder when this slow, unending road will end? When will this untold agony of my mind will cease?

It was her physical hunger that drove Basanti to the street in 1974, she wanted to sell her body. But can you tell me where should I go to ease my mental sufferings? Who will I turn to for the satisfaction of the hunger of my mind? Believe me, the door of my happiness still remains closed despite the fact that Sushovan has provided me with almost everything. This is my story a story of many Basantis, like me Well, you have not liked this story? Right! For it sounds a very common and ordinary. All of you will say the same thing like Hasu Bhai?

Hasu is my cousin. You are yet to know another episode of Hasu Bhai chapter in my life story. To tell you briefly - Hasu Bhai had weakness for me. But never realised it in our talks or conversation, chats or singing He took me for a walk along the bank of the river Padma in a February evening. He bought me gifts - a costly perfume, a long chain of red stone and a ring wrapped in a paper. I got the message of his

gifts quite clear in the soli-

tudes of that evening. That was why I could not accept his gifts. While returning the wrapped packet to Hasu Bhai, I only said, "give all

Bulu was the younger sister of Hasu Bhai and she was of my age. Hasu Bhai threw away that wrapped gift on the river in the darkness of night. Since then Hasu Bhai tried once more to send me the message of his heart. He sent me a letter on which was written form the torn page of a diary.

Has J Bhai wrote - "My Tajmahal may not be built if I don't get you. But the Jamuna will flow till eternity." Probably it was a quotation from some noted writer. I cried after reading that letter. Because Hasu Bhai was very simple and naive. It was paining me too to cause him pain.

Hasu Bhai understood my silent rejection. He got married somewhere else. It has been only a few days back that I told Hasu Bhai about my life story when he came to visit my house in Dhaka. I said, "I never wrote any story Hasu Bhat. But I'm planning to write one about my own life. This could be the story of many other girls like me.

I told him exactly the story of my life adding some emotion and pathos with it. But

Hasu Bhai seemed to have laughed over it after I finished the story. "Is it a story? It contains on y love and cheap sentiment." I raised my eyes, "You mean

life is separate from love?" "Not exactly so. Love is a part of life no doubt; but it occupies only a small portion of life which is too large."

"May be it occupies only a small pertion, but its place in life is of no small importance," retorted.

There are many more im-

Courtesy: The German News portant :natters in our lives our economic problem, social inconsistency and maladjustment, critical global situation

...", Hasu Bhai laughed and said,

"Life is too great my dear!" I do not know if you will say the same thing. Maybe you will agree with Hasu Bhai that there is no philosophy of life in my story. Well, it could be true. But the only thing that I could say is: although our sorrows differ only in patterns, the pain of Easanti and my sorrows and pangs are the same.

## Original Inhabitants

Continued from Page 9 ing, with the participation of indigenous peoples, their rights and integrity. The ILO has also launched a number of technicalassistance programmes.

What is the purpose of the International Year?

The 1993 International Year for the World's Indigenous People was proclaimed by the United Nations General Assembly 'to strengthen international cooperation for the soution of problems faced by indigenous communities in areas such as human rights, the environment, development, education and health".

The Year requested by indigenous organizations and is the result of their efforts to secure their cultural integrity and status into the twenty-first century. It aims above all to encourage a new relationship between States and indigenous peoples, and between the international community and indigenous peoples.

To assist with the Year's programmers and activities, and to foster educational and cultural events, the Secretary General of the United Nations opened the Voluntary Fund for the International Year for the World's Indigenous People, to which Governments are invited to contribute. UNDPI Features