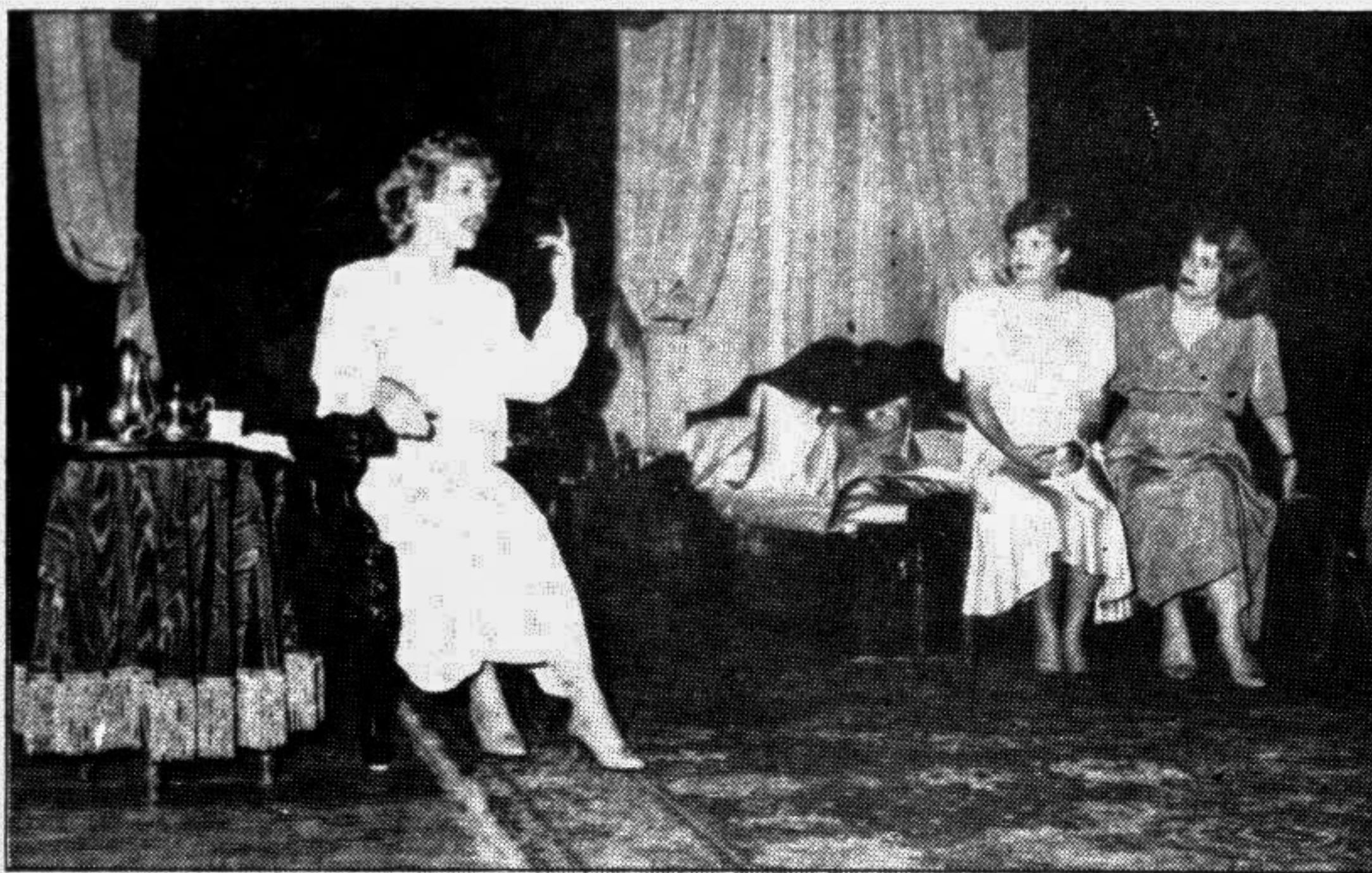


A Play with a Penetrating Psychological Insight

by Fayza Haq

"THREE Tall Women," a play, which won a Pulitzer Prize, by Edward Albee, was performed before a packed audience on Wednesday at the National Museum, Dhaka. Despite the natural waves of insecurity that pervaded the city that evening, even genuine ticket holders had to be sent away since the seats had been filled by 7 p.m. This was no wonder. After a fairly long time, there has been a serious play in English in the city, which has been written by a playwright, who had won three Pulitzer prizes in all; who is forthright, and has little concern for commercial success. Lawrence Malson, the Arena Stage director in Washington D.C., commented about Edward Albee, as "going about his work with philanthropic zeal and trying to get the best of the production."



The play was acted by a caste of four of the Artist's Repertory Theatre of Portland, Oregon. This play had been presented before, in Sri Lanka, cities in India, and is scheduled to be performed next at Kathmandu, cities in Pakistan and the Middle East.

The plot brought in three women, who represented the same individual, talking about various things — about the rise and fall in the graph of a woman's existence. The play wished to give insight into an individual's life, such as do the plays of Eugene O'Neil, the novels of William Faulkner, Virginia Woolf, and James Joyce, T. S. Ellos, "The Lovesong of J. Alfred Prufrock" and such impeccable works. A woman's simplicity of youth, the understanding that comes with middle age, and the peace and harmony of the following years are brought in. This had been done through the character "A", who was a lively and raucous woman, who could not remember if she was 71 or 72, 91 or 92 — and who constantly harked back to her early days and next to sheer senility. There were also the other two women who played "B", the simple looking and patient bespectacled secretary of the ailing character "A", and finally the smart and chic personality "C".

In the play, Albee had delineated his mother, Frances Cotter Albee, who adopted the playwright, when he had been two weeks old. Albee commented on his work "Three Tall Women," that in it one was confronted the problems of "being alive and how to behave with the awareness of death". Each of the female characters were said to represent different stages in the main character "A's" life. The author himself was seen in the silent character of the fashionable son, from the upper echelons, who came in, at the end of the First Act.

The recurrent themes of death, aging, sex, and self-awareness were shown in

dramatic fragmented sequences. There was not much "action," as such, in the play. The beauty and originality of "Three Tall Women" were in the portrayal of life through dramatic monologues. When the character of Albee came onto the stage — he was thrown away by the defiant women. From the time the characters got on the stage, set (with its blue curtains, a large ornate bed with silk cushions, and two beautifully carved chairs, along with a silver tea set) one was spellbound with the marvellous portrayal of man's obsessions and fears expressed so frankly and boldly, that even in USA the play remained a controversial one — due its frank discussion of sex, youthful gallivanting and senility. Along with the depressive waves of the theme of the play, there was also abundant intermittent humour, along with hopes and dreams of individuals of different ages. Flashbacks and reminiscences of individuals of different ages, but with similar experiences, were held before the audience.

Speaking at a press conference of Thursday, at the USIS Dhaka, the members of the Artists Repertory Theatre said, when questioned about how they felt about the audience rapport, "It is difficult to know all the reaction of the audience unless you have the opportunity to integrate with them later. Apparently the people responded to the humorous parts and were quiet when the situation arose."

They admitted that it was not easy to follow the play unless one had some inkling of the playwright's work, but they felt that they wished to produce something serious, so that the Bangladeshis would feel that as an American theatre group, they had something to offer that would boggle the mind; make the audience think analyse life themselves; and enjoy a modern

work with its psychological insight. It is said that Edward Albee has been greatly admired in the Middle East. Yet even if "Three Tall Women" has been appreciated in the Middle East, with success, going by the conservative Muslim audience reaction of the front benches, who felt it was too serious a play for the circumstances prevailing in Bangladesh currently, it was perhaps a play which might have gone down better with those more exposed to western cultures — such as the diplomats, theatre critiques, and the foreign viewers pre-



Top to bottom: Vana O'Brien, JoAnn Johnson and Raissa Fleming. Photo: Owen Cary

sent. About this, Allen Nause, the ART's artistic director said that the group is aiming at presenting controversial topics.

The visiting American group was told by the journalists present that what the audience wished for at the performance at the National Museum was a comic relief and not further perplexities to work out. "We would not do anything that would offend anyone in any part of the world. Yet we must deal with topics of difficulties and challenges of human beings," Nause commented.

The group members added

that adjustments had to be made at the performance, and this particular show was designed for the tour of the sub-continent and Middle East, as the theatre halls where they usually performed in USA, tended to be intimate ones, with 55 seats, at times. "The actors need to feel each member of the audience in the hall," explained Nause. "The hall required amplification in Dhaka and the actors are aware that people in Dhaka are not acquainted with American English. This is a play which cannot be performed in New York, even though it has just won the Pulitzer Prize. This is 'hot property' and the agents are jealous about their rights. We hope this will have success during the tour and may sometimes even be presented as a film."

Commenting on the workshop that had been held on Wednesday, before the performance, Nause said that he was only superficially satisfied with it, as the ART were only allowed to "scratch the surface". He added that this was his third trip to Dhaka and this time he had less time to meet people one a "one to one basis."

The group added that the play has attempted at presenting the cultural diversities in Portland, such as the Asians, African American and the Hispanics. All these are an integral part of US community. Nause elaborated, "The play attempts at reflecting the entire community in USA," he said.

Asked if the group hoped to deal with works by authors other than US ones, Nause continued, "It will be a challenge to deal with another culture. It is our goal to reach out to people of other cultures. We hope to introduce Indians plays in USA and branch out to other playwrights such as the Nigerian and Indian ones. Our interests are on an international basis."

When questioned if the performers were making a living by being professional actors only the members smiled and said that 98% of the "Actor's Equity Union" had other jobs such as teaching, doing "voices" for commercials, and even waiting at tables.

Johnson, replying to yet another question from the journalists in the hour long conference said, "We had earlier seen different groups of Bangladeshi theatre performers and enjoyed the dances that sometimes accompany them."

The caste of the play comprised Jo Anne Johnson, a director and actress, in Bangladesh for the third time; Allen Nause, who has performed leading roles with many theatres throughout USA and Canada; Raissa Fleming, who has done a good number of Shakespearean plays, and Van O'Brian, who has appeared in over 50 plays,

Nature in Perfect Harmony

by Aasha Mehreen Amin

NATURE may be the most common of themes in painting yet it is the eyes of the particular artist that make it so unusual and unique. Asma Kibria, who has been painting all her life has used her brush and easel to depict Nature's beauty the way she sees it: simple and joyous. Working in oil, water colour, pastel or acrylic, she has created a collection of semi abstracts that seem to exist for the sole purpose of delighting the viewer and lifting his spirits.

What stands out in Kibria's work which is characterized by complicated collages, is her use of colours. Most of her paintings have vibrant shades that are toned down by muted colours as if in an attempt to pacify what would have otherwise been too stark or too shocking.

Autumn sunset, for example, is a beautiful piece showing a crimson sun that has melted into the sky, spreading over a meadow of yellow flowers creating a saffron hue. The artist explains that the painting has been inspired by Australian landscape in autumn which she is very familiar with and she captures the sultry mood of a typical Australian outbreak.

"Lily Pond in the Morning" is another eye-catching piece showing a delicate turquoise stream with sprays of lotus in different shades of purple — lilac, mauve, indigo, amongst blades of blue grass. The entire picture has a dream-like quality that is at the same time not totally unreal.

piece, shows slender young women enjoying the glory of the Krishnachura tree, their mood playful and carefree as they pick the red flowers and place them in their hair. The backdrop is of a dense forest in shades of deep blue and violet, colours that the artist insists are not her only favourites.

"Autumn Melody", another piece inspired by the artist's weakness for this season, has the unusual quality of seeming to be upside down. Again there is the collage of colours, saffron, green and red muted by a background of black.

These are only a few of the works to be presented at Kibria's ninth solo exhibition from September 18th to the 23rd at La Galerie in Banani. Many of her previous exhibitions have been held in places

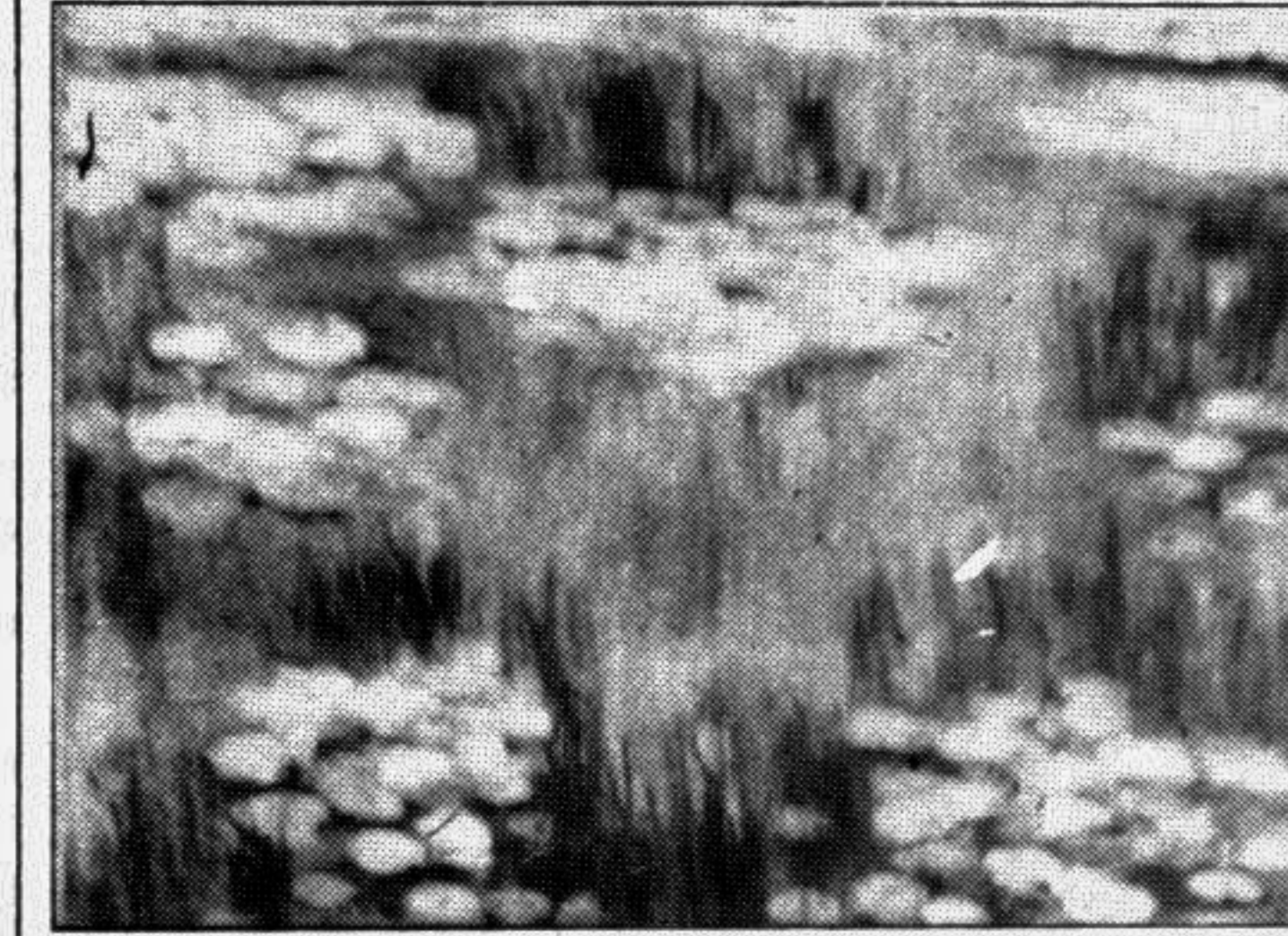
tending the Art School at the UN in New York in the early '60s and later the Corcoran School of Art in Washington DC where she began to develop a style of her own. Influenced by her French art teacher and inspired by artists such as Van Gogh, Cezanne and Monet, Kibria soon developed an impressionist style that has stayed with her ever since. Among her favourite Bangladeshi artists are Zaimul Abedin and Quamrul Hassan.

"At first," says the soft spoken artist, "I began with realistic art such as still life and normal landscape, gradually I went into impressionism and semi-abstracts."

Kibria admits that she does not like to do one thing for too long. Recently she has been dabbling with acrylic, a medium that she finds especially versatile as it can be used to do collages, on paper or



Asma Kibria - Always something on the easel.



Lily Pond

Another striking piece in turquoise blue, a colour that seems to dominate a lot of her work, is "Moon over Changmai" which shows a moon in a haze of indigo, violet and blue. There is something almost stormlike in the painting which seems to have a lot of movement with its slanted, irregular strokes. The piece has been inspired by the artist's long stay in Thailand.

Figures too, adorn some of Kibria's work although they somehow blend in with the background. "Maidens and Krishnachura", another acrylic

far away from her birthplace Bangladesh, such as Bangkok, Canberra and Islamabad. In fact, it is her exposure to so many foreign lands while travelling and living with her diplomat husband A S M Kibria, that has given her paintings such versatility.

Her training includes at

canvas, etc. Apart from her formal training Kibria says that she has learnt a lot from visiting many galleries in different countries — in France, Italy, London etc. "I think visiting different galleries in different places gives a lot of inspiration to artists," she says.

Yet inspiration alone has not helped her produce such quality work. Kibria is very serious about her painting and works every day for at least two hours, usually in the morning. "I always like to have something on the easel," she smiles serenely.

Kibria's other passion, though less intense than painting is singing something that she has been doing since she was a child. It is perhaps this that lends such melody to her paintings that have an almost mystical quality about them. With soft strokes and gentle collaging of colours, Kibria's paintings are uncomplicated and reflect the subtle tranquility of Nature when it is at peace with itself.

Buckingham

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Windsor Castle which was ravaged by fire two years ago. The venture was a resounding success with thousands of people from all corners of the globe

coming to pay eight pounds sterling each to admire the treasures of this most famous stately home. The souvenir shop, offering items ranging from fine china and glass to jewellery, completely sold out.

The writer is an LPS staff

Viewing Video

by Lenin Gani

SERIAL MOM is a comedy based on the true story of Beverly Suthpin played by Kathleen Turner. Turner, an ardent conservationist and proud cook, seems to lead the perfect life of a devoted wife to a respected dentist husband and an adoring mother of two adolescent children. But actually beneath that soft exterior lies a heart of rage which is easily awakened if any person seems to threaten Turner's family or who simply get on her nerves over trivial issues. So starting with her son's maths teacher right down to her daughter's boyfriend nobody is spared Turner's wrath. Initially, the family finds the facts hard to swallow, however, as the spate of killings pick up, their suspicions are aroused. Eventually the police catch up with Turner during one of her gruesome acts and she is put on trial for mass murder. This is undoubtedly Turner's finest

hour because even without the aid of a lawyer she systematically ridicules each of the prosecution witnesses' testimony during her cross-examination. The verdict is overwhelmingly in her favour and she is set free.

Clifford is the tale of a 10-year-old boy who is left in the care of his uncle. Clifford seems like the perfect nephew. But after his uncle breaks a promise to take him to a place called Dinosaur World, Clifford goes about breaking up his uncle's long-time relationship with his girlfriend. This is only the tip of the iceberg, the crunch comes when Clifford destroys his uncle's master plan during a presentation. His uncle then decides to turn the tables on Clifford by scaring him out of his wits at the Dinosaur World. This comedy is worth watching and will certainly give you hours of laughter.

ENGLISH

NAME	TYPE	CAST
1. The Dark	(Horror)	
2. White Fang-2	(Adventure)	
(Walt Disney production)		
3. The Force	(Action)	
4. Hard Drive	(Murder/Thriller)	Jason Gedrick/Kim Delaney/Gary Hudson Matt McCoy/Edward Albert
5. Summer Slam '94	(Wrestling)	
6. Romeo is Bleeding	(Thriller)	Gary Oldman/Lena Olin
7. Serial Mom	(Comedy)	Kathleen Turner
8. Stalingrad	(War)	
9. Mirror	(Horror)	
10. Skeeter	(?)	

BANGLA

NAME	TYPE	CAST
1. Amritar Putra	(Soc/Drama)	Uttam Mahanti/Anuradha Roy/Sumitra/Vaskar Banerjee
2. Tushar Tirtha Amarnath	(Hindu/Myth)	Dipankar/Sumitra/Rehana Sultana

Source: Film Fair Video and other clubs

Orissa

Continued from Page 9

jampacked. At the Ladies Hostel we were greeted by Rumana's course mates. One of them, Sarita, Rumana's roommate, prepared tea and an elaborate snack for me. When she came to know that we had no lunch she wanted to cook rice for me. I was surprised to see Rumana and Sarita, carrying a big bag. The bag was full with Rumana's old books. It was quite heavy, Sarita was smilingly helping Rumana carrying the bag from their second floor room.

BOOKS

Continued from page 10

broadened slowly but steadily — thanks largely to the good work turned in by the NGOs — competition for jobs gets tougher all the while. And landing a job is dependent on general awareness derived from reading and some amount of reading-based knowledge of one, two or an array of subjects. Every year some six hundred thousand of school graduates are being injected into the jobs market, far more than the present shape of economy can cope with. And this figure would increase by leaps and bounds in the new millennium. Add to this the great surge of non-formally educated people coming up and picking up trades as diverse as tailoring to word processing, motor tinkering to garments manufacture. Illiteracy now has no place in any of the traditional or even new-fangled trades. These jobs mean cash and cash security at the month-end means a prospective reader — possibly of Chesterton's penny-dreadfuls or of modern-day porn magazines but still a precious reader.

Socio-economic pressures joined by politically inspired literacy and education programmes by successive governments is sure to push the population of literate people up to just the double of what

his rickshaw. There was no time for wash. We went to the train station. Before boarding the rickshaw I exercised my routine. I asked him how much would he charge for the station. He asked Rs 8/- and I agreed at Rs 7/-. Never for a moment he complained about carrying my big luggage. I paid him Rs. 8/-. He also helped me in fixing up a coolie. The coolie took Rs 5/-. In the train I was full of regrets — I should have paid the two rickshawpullers more money. The feelings and concerns they had shown for me would not compensate if I had paid them more. I felt I should have paid them at least

Rs 10/ each although it was no match for their simplicity. Perhaps for my routine as a Sambalpur providence was harsh to me when the coolie at Howrah demanded Rs 50/- and then he would also not take me to the pre-paid taxi counter. His interest seemed to be with the outside parking lot where a free-market was operating. The taxi drivers were demanding fares and taking passengers according to their choice. After much heckling and reminding that I would call the police the coolie charged me Rs 20/-. But he had left me at the mercy of the taxi drivers who were promoting

the free market concept. I had no alternative with a heavy luggage. I had to agree to pay Rs 20 but share the seats with five other passengers. Inside, aged ladies were regretting for carrying heavy luggage.

At Calcutta I was given a chance ticket. The certain ticket would be available after three weeks. I was told, I had to take the chance seeing the rush myself at the Biman office where the Biman officials were working under tremendous pressures from passengers. Pressures from home-coming passengers are really difficult to bear. At the airport the same experience. Lot of pressures upon the Biman officials had also learnt the lessons on the virtues of patience, tolerance, and courtesy. They were courteous although. My patience also was rewarded. I got a seat after waiting for four hours tensely at the airport.

Back to the days when I was waiting for the chance ticket dates, I went to the Academy of Fine Arts for a change. The play "Ras" by Narendra Nath Mitra was on stage. The play, staged by a Group Theatre had drawn sizeable audience. I had no idea about the story. The story is based on a Muslim family and their interactions with other fellow Muslims. All the characters in the play were Muslims. I appreciated the tolerance of the audience in watching a play based on a Muslim family — on the life, happiness, sorrows of a Muslim family. The Academy of Fine Arts management's warning notice hung on the campus also struck me: "No Cars Allowed". In striking contrast I remembered one such notice boldly displaying "No Rickshaws Allowed" on the campus of a big public office in Dhaka.

made in the utilisation of jute which has the promise of a revolutionary impact on the economies of the impoverished peasants who form more than 70 per cent of the population and of book production and printing. Paper pulp is being produced from green jute plants delivered by the peasant at the mills. The innovation ensuring the supply of the country's entire need for paper would, if bungled, for the first time infuse good chunks of cash at the base stratum of the population. The two complementary developments should combine to send the literacy and book consumption profiles of the nation shooting to unexpected heights.

Books, in the last analysis, have to generate their own clientele, convert philistines into men and women of culture by themselves — book consumption is a culture in itself. Utility of books as a necessary prop to the individual's economic and social survival and progress only lays the ground of this culture. Great writers of irresistible pull do the main trick of winning over a whole people initiating a qualitative leap in a nation's life. Bangladesh very badly needs and eagerly awaits the arrival of such writers who would be instrumental in a possible radical growth of book consumption which is the key to a prospering book trade allowing all involved a goodly portion of the pie.

What a contrast! We don't make cars but we have become car lovers. We make rickshaws, we have barred rickshaws, in Calcutta, although cars are manufactured, some people have the mind to ban cars.

At the end of the journey