

MEDIA

BERKELEY — After languishing for four decades in the flickering shadows of TV, radio broadcasting has once more moved to the centre of US cultural and political life.

The fastest-growing sector in this audio renaissance is so-called talk radio — non-stop chatter by a perpetual procession of hosts, guests, and callers on topics ranging from health care to sex therapy, welfare to Whitewater and everything in between.

More than a thousand stations nationwide now feature talk-only formats, and most operate around the clock, and nearly half of all adults in the United States, of every background and persuasion, tune in to talk radio at some point during their week.

Americans are drawn to talk radio, as they are to computer networks like the Internet, both by their conviviality and their anonymity. In a culture whose ever-tenuous sense of community is rapidly eroding, the virtual community of the airwaves has become a kind of electronic town meeting, a place to sound off and be heard without fear of embarrassment or retribution.

The results of this freedom are decidedly mixed.

At its best, talk radio is a cumulative conversation in which the insights of each enrich the understanding of all. But in all too many cases nowadays, the talk turns ugly.

Spurred on by the inflammatory rhetoric of a few high-profile "hate radio" hosts, misanthropes and malcontents call in to talk radio in disproportionate numbers, railing against the

AFRICAN programmes, almost unknown on British television in the recent past, are beginning to share air time with major Western productions.

They have broken attitude barriers and African producers, once second-rated, are now respected in British television circles.

BBC programmes have long been dominated by mainstream Western productions and local documentaries. Rarely did they screen African documentaries and if they did these were usually produced by their own crews.

The programmes centred mainly on civil strife, war or hunger. BBC crews were usually seen in Africa only during the British ministers' visits or when they trailed behind royal family members like Prince Charles or Princess Diana.

African producers, angered by false perspectives of Africa presented on British television, have been struggling to repair Africa's image overseas.

London-based Ghanaian producer Eddie Oyorley says: "People here say African programmes on development, cultural or social issues and the wildlife, for example, give them a well-deserved break from the violence, war and sex that dominate British television. We are offering al-

ART

Vision so Vivid and Vibrant

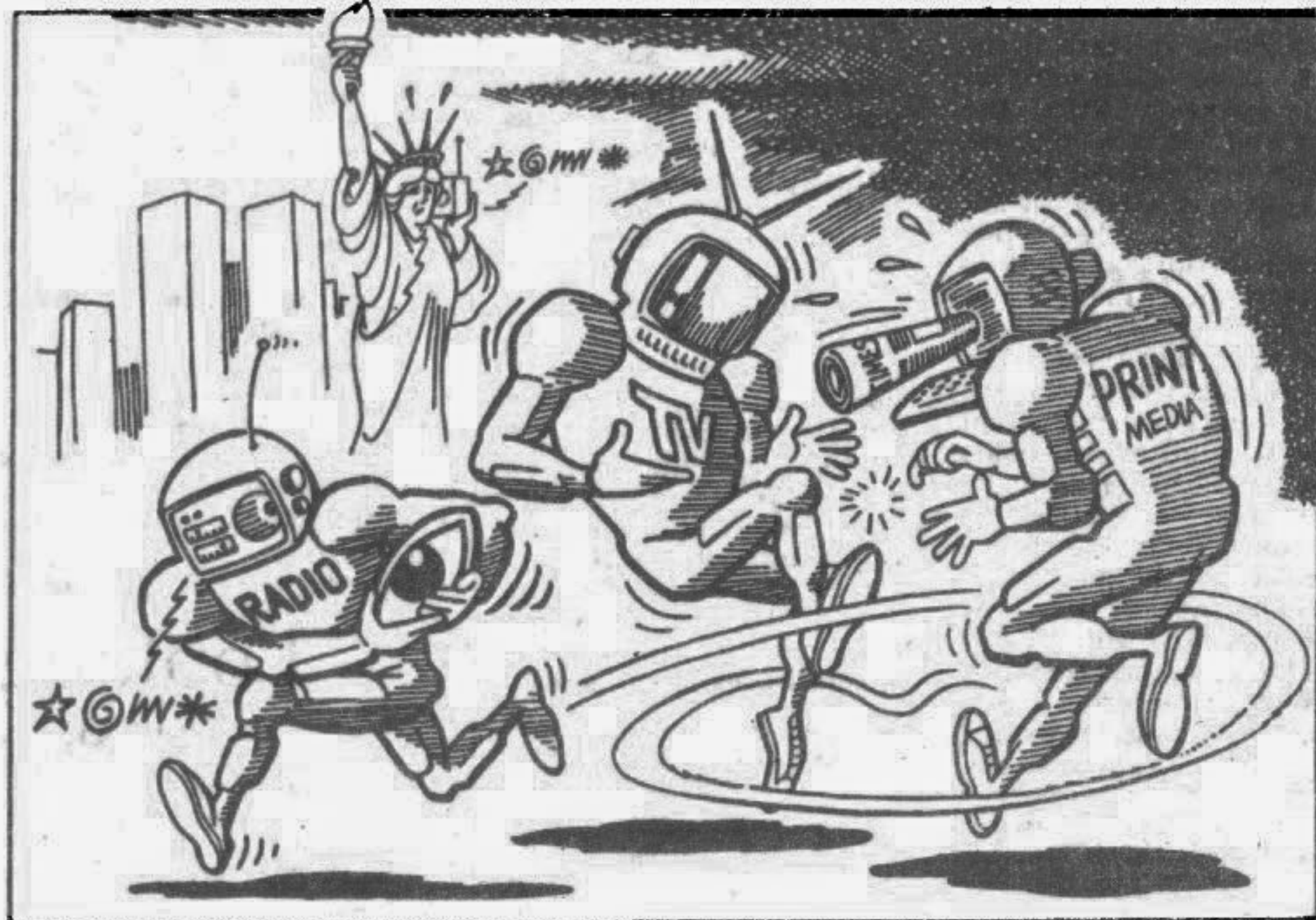
It was a short space of time. A brief span of four weeks. Twenty-seven days, to be exact. But the range and the intensity of the experiences were so overpowering that they sprang forth one hundred and twenty-five landscape paintings, including an eighty-four feet long one which unquestionably demanded a Herculean energy from their creator. And the passionate intensity with which the works were done is also a pronounced adherence of the artist to the Romantic principle — art is the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings, to rephrase the Wordsworthian declaration. Nasim Ahmed Nadvi, a Bangladeshi artist, attended a landscape painting workshop in the Krasnoyarsk township of Siberia organised in connection with the festival of folk cultures and participated by representatives from 24 countries of the Asia-Pacific region. The astounding number of works which is the upshot of Nadvi's stay at the snowy region and, on his return, exhibited at the gallery of Shilpakala Academy recently, are the subject-matter of a critical exegesis that follows.

THE very first impact of Nadvi's work on the viewer is that he/she after looking at the pictures for some time begins to feel lost in a vast space, a space uninhabited by people. And slowly Siberian coldness creeps in through the eyes to the limbs with an intensity of almost experiencing the sce-

UNITED STATES

Radio Controlled

Peace and conflict specialist **Mark Sommer** examines in this exclusive Inter Press Service column whether the resurgence of talk radio in the United States is a sign of democratic renewal or just pure demagoguery.



groups they love to hate — minorities, liberals, welfare "queens", and immigrants.

Spurred on by the inflammatory rhetoric of a few high-profile "hate radio" hosts, misanthropes and malcontents call in to talk radio in disproportionate numbers, railing against the

BRITAIN

African TV Begins to Shine in

For a long time now Africa has been a "no-go-area" for British television — except for news clips of dictators, famine, civil strife or dying children. It has become ingrained in the minds of many Britons that the continent is nothing but hell. This mentality is changing, reports Gemini News Service, thanks to a new group of African television producers. **Shepherd Mutamba** writes from London



ternative material and we are happy with our progress."

Oyorley, like his colleague, veteran Cameroonian pro-

mean-spirited than it actually is.

Troubling as these trends may be, they have taken on truly menacing dimensions only in the past year as politicians with retrograde agendas have teamed up with charismatic talk show hosts to transform the public's in-

choate anxieties about economic uncertainty and social tensions into victory at the polls.

Since their pivotal role in producing last November's stunning triumph by the Republican far right, talk show host Rush Limbaugh and his demagogic imitators

AFRICA

have become both king-makers and king-breakers — vilifying the President, promoting his Republican rivals, and setting the tone and terms of the national debate with a surly contempt for anyone with whom they don't agree.

Indeed, in the wake of the Oklahoma City bombing, President Bill Clinton had fleetingly dared to suggest that there might be a link between the incendiary rhetoric of certain hate-radio hosts and the violent actions of right-wing terrorists.

But he was soon silenced by an angry chorus of hisses from the hosts themselves and their powerful allies in the new Republican Congress, who complained that their free-speech rights were being threatened.

Yet for all of its current excesses, talk radio is not inherently an anti-democratic medium. Alone among the broadcast and print media, it allows for instantaneous interaction between speakers and listeners. This spontaneity and responsiveness gives talk radio its potential as the most promising means of reviving a desperately needed debate about the future of the country and the world.

As talk radio's influence has come to be recognised, new and more thoughtful voices are beginning to be heard on the airwaves — like Mario Cuomo, former governor of New York, and other liberal stalwarts.

But in seeking to shift the balance of the debate, liberals face daunting obstacles. A blizzard of unprocessed information and a frenetic pace of life leave most Americans

AFRICA

Many African producers have refused to repair the image of their continent while working in Africa. Instead, they packed their cameras and came to Britain. Why?

The British media often still promote an image of Africa as the "Dark Continent." So the African producers set up camp in Britain itself to convey the message at close-range that: "Africa is not what you always make of it." The strong image-rebuilding campaign is succeeding.

This summer, African programmes are regular fare on British television. BBC-2 and the independent network Channel Four are running programmes almost daily.

Rural development, education, political issues, the state of health, women's issues and even social subjects — such as a polygamist with 10 wives — are making it on prime time. And viewers enjoy the programmes.

Afro Wisdom Films is a success story for African television production in Britain. Since 1992, Shewa and his team have been churning out programmes.

One of their most successful productions is *Love Doctors* which looks at African and Caribbean self-styled healers and their

London-based Afro Wisdom Films says: "Brilliant television ideas plus a bit of luck have helped me."

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OBITUARY

Tribute to Salil Chowdhury

PTI reports from Calcutta

"A song is incomplete till a singer is able to interpret the "musician's diction". Salil Chowdhury once said of himself.

Modern song will remain forever indebted to this frail-coking, unassuming leftist genius who gave both Bengali and Hindi music a fresh identity and stature through his love for different genres in folk, Indian ragas and the yet distant drums of western music.

Born in 1925 in Assam, Salil grew up in the lush green environs of tea gardens. He inherited his interest in music from his father,

and his 'gaanyer bodhu' (a village belle who finally succumbs to the exploitation of landowners). "In my own way I modified phrases and idioms of the Indian classical folk and western music to give them expression in the way I wanted through my music. Then it dawned on me that I could not find suitable music as a vehicle of my expression and would have to chart my own path".

Later he had problems with the IPTA which he left.

Few music composers like Salil Chowdhury can claim "most Indian artistes have sung my compositions".

Mohammad Rafi, Mukesh,

1949. Although the songs were not great hits, his reputation as a music director was established.

Bimal Roy asked Salil Chowdhury to come over to Bombay for composing the music of his 'do bigha za-meen' in 1953. This was another turning point for the composer. Songs like 'haryal sawan doule bajata aaya' and 'dharti kahe pukar ke' became instant hits, making him a name at the national level.

With genius also came dress as Salil made the music scores of several insignificant films. He emerged from this rut with Bimal Roy's *madhumati*, which earned with the best music award.

The songs of the film became a rage with 'suhana sa-jar aur yeh mausam haseen', 'dil tadap tadap ke' and 'aaja re pardeshi' on people's lips.

Salil went on to score music for nearly forty films like 'parakh' (1960), 'maya' (1971) and 'kabuliwala' (1966).

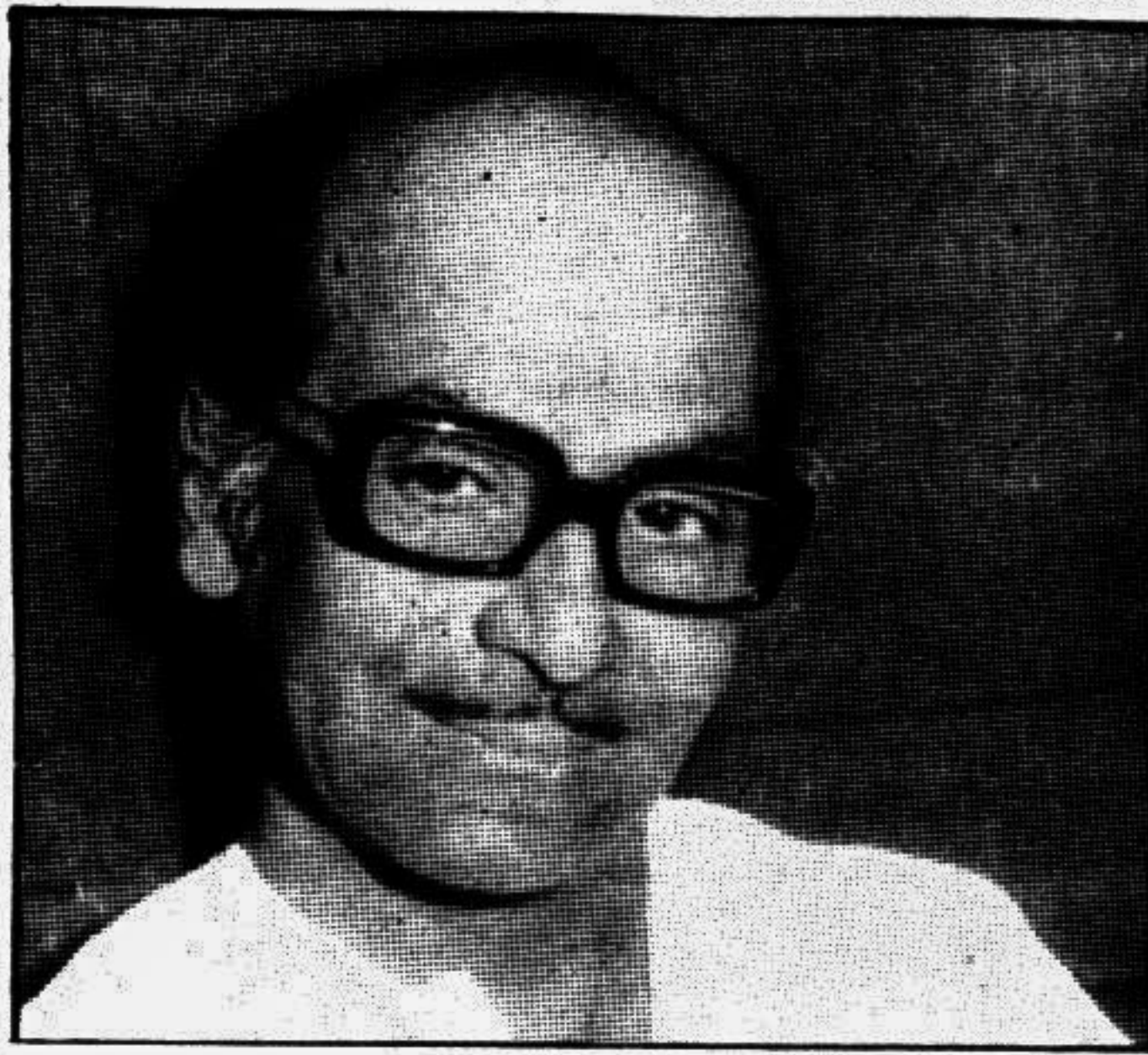
Lyrics, music and rhythm brought a fresh lease for modern Hindi and Bengali songs. Though at first glance, its foot-tapping appeal seems to have a simple springboard, yet the gamut of scales Salil used took a Lata Mangeskar or Sandhya Mukherjee to do justice to his scintillating compositions.

The piano, the accordion, drums and double bass were not unknown in modern Indian songs. But it was Salil who brought about a synthesis between the spirit of western music and traditional Indian instruments, losing nothing of either genre, but achieving a fusion harmonious to the indigenous ear.

In his folk based songs it was not only the ones that he had heard as a child in Assam which influenced him, but as like in 'madhumati', he used a folk tradition of Kazhakhstan to amplify the effect.

His fame as a composer was also well established. Salil's superb craftsmanship using the musical tools of notes, scales and octaves, together with an innate genius to recognise the exact effect needed for a background score to blend with the visuals, enriched the entire mosaic of a film.

In his own words, Salil Chowdhury said, "I realised that I had to strike out my own path in music to give sensibility to my diction. None could do this for me. Therefore, I felt the need to emerge from the traditional shell of Indian music by breaking up and rearranging the elements to evolve my very own form. When this was by the people I understood that my experiment was successful".



Dr Gyanandramoy Chowdhury, an expert of Indian classical and western music.

"I did not learn music as such from others My father had a huge collection of western music. I developed a strong taste for folk, Indian and western classical".

The family shifted to Calcutta and Salil was put under the tutelage of his uncle, Nikhil Chowdhury, a famous musician. The decision was Gyanandramoy's who recognised the emerging talent of his son.

Salil's association with the IPTA in 1944 coincided with his first steps into the world of music. A staunch leftist and committed to Marxist philosophy, Salil, like all other leading figures of his milieu, joined the IPTA to voice protest against exploitation and the horrors of war. He was a member of the IPTA for a very long time and composed stirring songs for the IPTA choir like 'o alor patho jatri' (travellers of the light - 1949), 'janmabhoomi' (motherland 1951), 'haate moder ke debe' (1949) and 'santir gaan' (song of peace- 1951).

A few of his Bengali compositions were a watershed — the setting to music poet Sukanta Bhattacharya's 'runner' (village postman), Satyen Dutta's 'palkir gaan' (song of the palangin), Bimal Ghosh's 'ujjal ek shank paira' (a flock of gleaming pigeons

Manna Dey, Hemnata Mukherjee, Lata Mangeskar, Yesudas and Sushila 'gave expression to my music through their mellifluous voices".

It was Salil Chowdhury who initiated the Indian nightingale, Lata Mangeskar, to the fresh pastures of Bengali songs.

Evergreen hits like 'nishi din, nishi din baaje smaranero bin, 'na mono lage na', 'saat bhai champa' and 'na jee na' continue to enthral music lovers decades later.

Bengal's melody queen, Geetasree Sandhya Mukherjee gave a new direction to modern Bengali songs in 'ujjal ek shank paira', 'aay brishi jhepe, moner basanto elo', 'ga ga re pakhi ga' and 'sanji go katha shono'.

Hemanta Mukherjee's rendition of "runner", 'dhitang dhitang bole', 'jharer kachhe rekhe gelam amar thikana', 'patho barbo bole patho nemechhi' and 'duranta ghurir oi legechae pak' are now part of legend. There was a time when 'runner' had come short of a cult song.

Salil Chowdhury once said, "I consider the Bengali songs of Hemantada and Lata Mangeskar to be the best among those who could interpret my music".

It was Satyen Bose who introduced Salil to film music by inviting him to do the musical score for 'paribartan' in

making the distance prominently blue, and in Nadvi's typical way — a blue icy and soft yet not so soft. So, with the strategy of putting colour prominently in the receding line he bounces the cold breeze from the distant horizon back to the viewers. This journey from the viewers' point of view to the distant line is a racy one particularly because of diagonal brush strokes towards a point at the distant horizon.

The next thing and the most obvious aspect to be noticed in Nadvi's composition in his use of angular per-

spective. Here the influence of Japanese prints is conspicuous. He makes use of this angular perspective to gain a carefully calculated effect of immediacy and causal composition. The apparently arbitrary cutting-off the near corner of a mountain or a slope or watching a village from two trunks of pine trees gives a sense of personal participation in the scene, by bringing the foreground so close that we can as if easily reach or even touch the burk of the trunks or feel chilled water of the calm lakes or serpentine streams. His mas-



tery in handling the watery watercolour can be felt particularly looking at the composition with logs. The way the roughness and lifelessness of logs and its grains have been captured with a subtle variation of brush stroke and a minimum of

tonal flexibility is an experience likely to last for long in one's memory. This sort of trivial details also exemplifies his deep-rooted interest in Romanticism. Attention to trivial aspect we have seen in Coleridge — his Ancient Ma-

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by **Ziaul Karim**

nes in their reality. Naturally, the engagement ensued from experiencing the works resists any critical analysis. Nevertheless, an attempt to understand the creative endeavour and stylistics of the works would greatly enhance the pleasure of looking at the paintings mostly done in watercolour.

Now, determining the access point into the works which are thoroughly accessible, is the first hurdle we have to cross in deriving and

which very well fits into Romantic principle: "Si vis me flere dolendum est primum ipsi tibi" — that is, if you want me to weep you must first grieve yourself. So, the passionate intensity that tumbled forth a massive total of works can be felt as one encounters the works. Before going into the details of the point of view with which he, the artist, has executed the works we would prefer to understand his colour that emanates the irresistible

extracting, if I may put it like that, the aesthetic pleasure. Let us return to our first impression of looking at the Krasnoyarsk landscapes through the eyes of Nadvi. In successfully transmitting the overpowering feeling of vastness or deep space of the snowy region he reminds us of Horace's philosophy of art

coldness. The mystery of coldness or so to say chilliness lies in Nadvi's use of icy blue colour and with the use of water the colour gets a naturalistic freshness that works on the senses. Had it been in oil the impact would definitely have been different. This choice of one medium over the other on the part of any artist to execute his work or giving expression to his vision once again proved the truth in art that the point of view, and in its broadest sense *weltanschauung*, dictates the matter or style not the style, dictates the point of view.

One very important strategy that Nadvi adopts in the way he distributes his cold colour to intensify the snowiness of the landscape. Unlike other landscapists, he achieves recession quality not by making the distant scene generally less coloured but by

One very important strategy that Nadvi adopts in the way he distributes his cold colour to intensify the snowiness of the landscape. Unlike other landscapists, he achieves recession quality not by making the distant scene generally less coloured but by