

# Asian Ads and Asian Values

Asian advertisers are trying to find new ways of selling products that take into account ethnical and cultural considerations. Yuli Ismartono of Inter Press Service reports.



Inter Press Service

**F**IERCE competition in Asia's growing consumer market is opening up a can of worms about marketing and promotional ethics, bringing into question some prevalent advertising practices in the region.

In Indonesia, one offending television advertisement selling cellular mobile telephones shows a man in a bar surrounded by beautiful women talking to his wife on his hand phone. "Oh, I am in the middle of a meeting, darling."

Other advertising techniques that have drawn criticism here include the use of children to try to pressure parents into buying luxury items they cannot afford.

A commercial for Duty Free Philippines shows a young boy looking longingly at their neighbour's TV set. When his mother returns from working abroad, the entire family rushes to meet her at the airport. Then they all head merrily to the duty free shop to buy their own TV set and all the other goodies on sale there.

In India, a recently unshackled media and the invasion of satellite television has brought on an explosion of slick consumer commercials that critics say have raised people's expectations sky high while their incomes have shrunk.

In Indonesia, the Institute for the Guidance and Protection of Consumers in Semarang says half the children it questioned in a survey said they pressed their parents to buy products they saw advertised on television.

"It is okay to expose children as members of the family, but it is inappropriate to exploit their ignorance to advertise products," said Indra Abidin, chairman of the Association of Indonesia Advertising Agencies.

Television has become the advertiser's prime choice of medium across Asia. In Indonesia, spending on TV commercials reached about US\$480 million (1,062 billion rupiah) in 1994. The figure is expected to increase to close to US\$700 million in 1995.

Executives, pointing to the influx of consumer goods in the Asian marketplace, the people's increasing spending power and the availability of the television medium, say the advertising industry in the region is at a crossroads.

# Ihtesham : Pioneer of Bangladeshi Film Industry

**F**ILM Director Ihtesham talks to Kaiser Parvez Ali: "Let me start with the time when I had retired from the army as a captain in 1946. I wondered about what to do. One day I took lease of one cinema hall called Minar at Lalmonirhat. Later, with the successful running of the hall, I took lease of two more cinema halls in Sanatar and Natore. Then I decided to open a film distribution office at Dhaka in 1957. I imported Indian and Pakistani films for my cinema halls. I used to go to Lahore to import films. I was studying film making at that time; I read books on film making written by various writers. After some time I thought, 'why can't we make films here?' I came across Late Jabbar who was making *Mukh o Manush*. He was using obsolete Imo film making cameras and recorders. I thought something must be done and I met Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman who I knew from my

childhood — he was then the Industries Minister. I told him we must do something to improve the film production in our country. He took the initiative and the Bill for the construction of FDC was passed and the Film Development Corporation came into being. I made my first film *Aye Desh Tumar Amar* in 1959. The story was about the country that has become independent and was facing problems due to flooding and I provided solutions, such as construction of dams. I introduced Khan Ata, Rehman and Sumita in this film. Late Zahir Rahan was my chief assistant. The film was very successful at the box office. Then I made a successful film called *Rajdanir Bookee* dealing with the problems in a capital city, with the assistance of FA Dossani. At that time there was a film festival in Lahore, and I thought of producing Urdu films here.

I made *Chanda* in 1963 with all the Bengali cast and introduced Shabnam, Rehman as the heroine and hero and music director Robin Gosh. In 1964 I made *Talash* with Rehman and Shabnam in lead roles. The films were so successful in the then West Pakistan that *Dawn* the English language newspaper stated that the film makers of West Pakistan must learn film making from the Bengalees. I made *Chokori* in 1967 with a new face Nadeem and made *Shabana* a heroine for the first time. The film was very successful at the box office. Then came the war of independence, I was stuck in the western part of Pakistan. In 1972 I made *Mithee Ke Putle* there and the film was sent to the Mosco film festival. I came to Bangladesh in 1973 and made *Bandini-Mushtaq*, my son directed the film. I made *Dur Desh* in 1982 with Parveen Bhabhi, Nadeem, Raj Babbar and Babita — the film was shot in Canada.

At one stage I quit film making when I saw that the filmi atmosphere here was not congenial. Nobody respected their elders. I went into the garment business but lost money. I realised that our film industry was becoming hostage to limited number of heroes and heroines. I decided to come back to the film industry with a bang to break the monopoly system. I started *Chandni* with new faces Shabnaz and Naim — the film did very well at the box office. I decided to cast Moushumi in my next film but due to the pressure from Naim and Shabnaz I couldn't. I did not stop there and cast Shabnoor and Shabbir in *Chandni Raatte*. I wanted to break the monopoly of Naim and Shabnaz. Two of my new films are ready for release — one is *Sainik* where Shabnaz and Amit play the leading roles. The story is about our resources and the evil system of the country.

The film is against all in the country. I ran into problems with the censors, finally it is now ready for release with any cuts — even the preamble in the film was cut. This cannot be accepted, there are two laws for filmmakers — there is censorship but what about dish antennas, can they control that? So why do we have this double standard?

Another film of mine that is ready for release is *Moumachi*. It deals with lawlessness in our country — women are raped and the culprits are rarely caught, so the heroine with other women form a group and they fight and seek justice against the criminals. I have introduced a new handsome hero by the name of Shams. I think he will be very successful in the future.

I not happy with FDC — the equipment are all outdated and this affects the production of the films. Even our cinema halls do not have good acoustics. The environment of the cinema halls are not conducive for families to go to cinema hall to view good films.



Shabnoor and Aarati in Sainik

# Endangered Species

**T**HE mere mention of India makes people think of at least two things: the Taj Mahal and snake-charmers.

Ah... but while the Taj — a memorial to undying love — still exists in all its glory, the same cannot be said of snake-charmers anymore. It seems that their existence as unofficial symbols of an exotic tradition is in jeopardy.

Even before the time of the Raj snake-charmers hunted deadly reptiles in the houses of feudal lords and the white sahibs and caught them alive, a job they did admirably. For many families, it also often became a profession handed down from one generation to another.

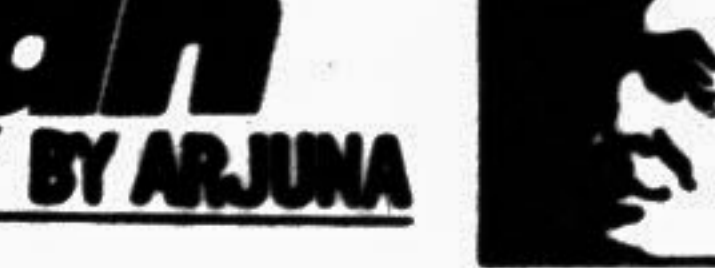
A few miles away from Delhi, barely 50 families survive in what was once a snake-charmers' village. The headman, Chhotu Ram, has only tales of despair these days. Even his plans to train young snake-charmers have failed to take off. For one thing, his boys, belonging to the lower caste and backward



classes, have marched away to the cities to work as labourers, artisans or bricklayers. Others who learn to repair cars are more profitably engaged in car repair shops.

"Perhaps, there might be one graduate from our community who went to university but he doesn't bother anymore to come back or meet his family. He is probably ashamed of them," says one village elder.

planned development have only meant a defunct hand-pump a well and two small houses built under a housing programme. A few years ago, the state government allotted a plot of land to each villager. However, the villagers have not grown a single crop primarily because they have little, if any, knowledge of agriculture.



Only two persons have gone to school as people here felt that as their children would inevitably become snake-charmers, schooling was useless.

Life has always been tough for a snake-charmer. Says Jagannath: "Everyday, we cover more than 30 kilometres on foot and stage snake shows to eke out a living. A day's labour fetches no more than 20 rupees (less than US\$1)." Massive deforestation has added to their woes as snakes have disappeared with the loss of trees.

Many foreign journalists visiting Delhi for the first time are already being dissuaded by their own editors not to write about snake-charmers. For India is now a modern developing country.

Occasionally, the services of snake-charmers are still required near forests or in the new colonies. Some research institutes seek their help in extracting poison from the snakes to produce antidotes to snake bites.

Thus, some snake-charmers still survive in certain parts of the country, particularly in the northern states of Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan, Bihar and Madhya Pradesh. And in the south, Irula tribesmen now specialise in venom collection for medicine purposes.

According to official statistics, there are more than half a million snake-bite cases annually in the country and at least some 50,000 people die.

So, the ancient craft of snake-charming is slowly but surely vanishing. Indians are turning to more modern forms of entertainment so that even the snake-charmers' village has a television set or two. Some snake-charmers even have their own fields to cultivate now and are slowly becoming farmers.

— Depthnews Asia

# Nation goes Loopy on Lotto

In the year since Britain launched its National Lottery, its popularity has reached fever pitch. But as the game of chance celebrates its first anniversary, Elisabeth Kalbfuss of Gemini News Service reports renewed controversy over whether the state should be using the lottery as an indirect "tax on the working class" to fund the arts and charities.

**E**VERY Saturday night, 12 million people in Britain gather in front of their television sets for the new national pastime. They are primed with excitement and the anticipation that they hold the week's winning lottery ticket.

Since it launched the country's National Lottery in November 1994, Camelot — the profit-making consortium that runs the enterprise — has found itself operating in a nation delirious with lotto fever.

publicly-funded British Broadcasting Corporation reaps a bonanza of viewers as it screens a live lottery variety show. The highlight comes when on of three machines — nicknamed Arthur, Lancelot and Guinevere — spews out the numbered balls in the winning combination.

In its first year, the lottery took in £3.26 billion in the once-a-week Saturday draw. Jackpots, based on sales, average about £8 million a week and the odds of winning are 14 million to one. The biggest ever prize was about £23 million. In March, instant-win "scratch cards" — punters scratch off a surface to see if they have won a cash

with its success. "It's gone on for a full year and shows no signs of dying down. We're in show business here (but)... we never expected this much money this quickly."

The televised show, often criticised as tacky and commercial, feature special guests such as US movie star Patrick Swayze or singer Luther Vandross, and its regular stars have become household names.

Television dramas now include lottery plot lines. One newspaper reported that 5,000 news stories had been published in the lottery's first year — an average of 100 a week.

The upmarket Sunday Times devoted an entire magazine to lottery stories and trivia, capped by a front page computer-altered photograph of a beleaguered Prime Minister John Major choosing lotto numbers beside the headline: Even He Could Get Lucky.

Only part of the current media frenzy is due to the



A poll for The Times says that 80 per cent of Britons play the lottery, and three-quarters of them play every week. The average weekly amount spent is £2.43; more, it says, than people spend on medicine or, in allegedly animal-mad Britain, on their pets.

And every Saturday, the prize — were introduced, accounting for another £1.09 billion in sales. Both tickets sell for £1 each.

The lottery's success and the hype surrounding it are no surprise to David Clark, lottery operations director for Camelot, who credits an aggressive marketing campaign and a willing audience

turned into a cult hit on the British chat show circuit. Anthea Turner, the show's main host, has parlayed her stint into a new contract with a commercial network that will make her one of the highest-paid women in British television.

It is a wildfire that has been fuelled not just by greed