

Interview

# The mystique of miniature plants

Arhamul Huq Chowdhury's bonsai exhibition at Bengal Foundation.

FAYZA HAQ

SP EAKING about his exhibition at the Bengal Foundation, which is on for a week since May 24, Arham says, "I found bonsai as I saw in some samples around me in Bangladesh and in books. I found it very decorative and fascinating so that



Arhamul Huq Chowdhury

I was intrigued by how it was grown and nurtured and that is how I got into bonsai at the age of eleven . I find this something small, beautiful, decorative and mysterious. I find that our own plants are made into bonsai so that they differ from those found in Japan and China where Bonsai originated from."

Asked if the nurturing of bonsai is difficult, Arham says, "It is a bit yes and a bit no because the problem in Bangladesh is that we cannot get the necessary equipment for taking care of bonsai. These include small pots, which I've had to make myself and clipper which I've had to have brought for me from overseas . Normally you have to be more careful in nurturing this than other plants. Pruning watering and feeding other plants with manure is much simpler in comparison. Again , you need books from overseas to guide you in your work, and when I began more than a decade ago these books were rare in Dhaka and I had to resort to

friends and relatives to get me the necessary literature which I needed to look after the plants. Your interest leads you to do these things . I made the pots with tiles and concrete although nowadays certain pottery centres does provide you with these tiny pots . I many schools of bonsai they believe in different styles of shaping the plants such as in Suzu province in China , where bonsai originated, they used only pruning , whereas in Shanghai they used copper wiring to bend and taper the branches to the desired shape and form.

"Often, little pieces of paper are tied to the branches to give the desired bending. Generally we do pruning, and the bending through copper wire, which is very effective. Traditionally, in the authentic Japanese way, the branches were worked upon with copper wire heated with a fire of straw but nowadays the bonsai masters in Japan and China recommend the usage of wire coated with plastic."

Talking about the plants that he has used, Arham says, "I've used the local plants and indigenous items for all my pursuit of art. My goal has always been to be 'deshi'. Here I've used the Japanese and Chinese bonsai technique but I've used local plants like 'bot', 'kamini', 'tamarind', 'radhachura' , 'krishnachura', 'neem' etc. In Japan and China , they in turn, use the local plants such as maple, pine and juniper, which naturally give you a different effect. Trying our own plants, which would adopt more easily in our own environment , will make more contributions to the tradition of bonsai making."

Asked if he got any advice from anybody while going about his work a pre-teenager and later as an adult in his twenties, Arham says," I relied mostly on books although I had some relatives who inspired me and egged me on to go forward with my interest in bonsai. Yet it was very much illusive as I couldn't get a book and got one, and that began giving me glimpses of it, long after I began my bonsai. I bought the necessary books to

guide me myself from an early age yet pictures were available in calendars and some segments of tourism books on Chinese and Japanese culture . I began instinctively, so to say. 'Bonsai' is a word that means planted in a tray, and is taken from Japanese."

Speaking of the problems that he faces in his pursuit of nurturing bonsai, Arham says, "The main problem is getting the necessary tools but still 'necessity is the mother of invention'. Authentic pots, items for pruning, wires and the other equipment are not available. Again, you cannot obtain the latest books we don't get interaction with the mainstream bonsai makers. If you have the interest, you can go forward on your own".

Dwelling on his experience as a

used to do landscaping and wrote articles on them and solved problems in people's queries on the heritage of garden designing touching the plants from Greece to China, along with other topics like good fertilizers and repotting. On the whole, my writing was based on local plants. I even promoted the use of local grass in the landscaping in different ways."

Elaborating on the landscape work that he does, Arham says," Whoever can afford a piece of land, whether on the roof or the backyard, on the front yard or at the side of the house has asked me to do this work. Big balconies have also been worked upon. I have added fountains and rock gardens to enhance the intrinsic beauty. It is like painting with plants. The plants

'bonsai' first appears in Kamakura period (1192-1333) and a picture of bonsai is seen in the famous picture scroll of the priest Honen of the same time. The painting shows trees in their natural form planted in tiny pots and shown as decorating a shelf. This shows that bonsai was being cultivated for appreciation at that time. The picture scroll dates back to the Kamakura period, which mainly delineates the life in the Heian period (794-1191)

"Numerous essays written since the Kamakura period discuss the fact that trees and plants were gathered from the fields and mountains and made into bonsai. A famous No play called "Hachi-no-ki" (plants in a pot), deals with the subjects of the same period, talk-

with deformed trees for a short period. This passing phase with its odd peculiarity was soon corrected and revived. A nationwide bonsai exhibition was held in Tokyo in 1914. Today bonsai is taken to be a hobby for the rich although interest is also growing in places like USA, with technical advice and equipment from Japan."

Talking about the care of bonsai, Arham says," As bonsai is grown in a bowl, the size is controlled by the proportion of soil the roots are able to nurture in. The environment restricts the growth with the roots of the plant being controlled by the container. A balance between the roots, trunk, branches and leaves have to be kept in mind. Extra nourishment to

are trimmed, this also controls the growth of the roots and leads to a cycle similar to that which takes place when the roots are cut.

"Strong sunshine, specially the ultra-violet ray, affects the growth of the trees. Therefore, except in particular cases, such as directly after repotting, trimming etc, bonsai should be put on elevated shelves where they should be able to receive sunlight. Sunshine, which is essential for plant growth, also controls excessive growth in bonsai.

"The sun dries up the soil in the bonsai . If constant watering is used, the bonsai will grow tall and , as such, watering should be controlled. Bonsai requires daily watering but this should be in limited quantity.



Samples of Arham's local bonsai



are the live paints."

Asked if bonsai is being cruel to plants in mutating them, Arham says," The priests in the past collected them from the mountains and fields and looked after them. I don't think that these religious men could have done something cruel that is being continued today. Since the plants give fruits and flowers, they are happy in their potted homes."

Talking about the history of bonsai , Arham says, "The word



ing of plum, cherry and pine as the trees in the pots. This proves that the appreciation of bonsai goes back to eight hundred years.

"During the Edo period (1615-1867), gardening and bonsai, with flowers and coloured leaves were immensely popular and so developed greatly. With the increase of interest in Southern Sung-style painting bonsai was also often used as painting subjects. Meanwhile, bonsai became a fad,



the branches and leaves is passed on to the roots and helps the underground growth. Repotting is also important as fresh soil can be used and extra roots can be cut from time to time.

"As for trimming and pruning,, it is necessary to shape the bonsai to the required form. These cutting and shaping also reduces the growth above the ground so as to keep a proportion with the root growth. When growing branches



"Ventilation is also ensured by putting the bonsai on a high shelf as good ventilation causes the soil to dry faster and serve as an indirect way of limiting the plant growth."

Arham, who has had about ten exhibitions so far on his calligraphy, paintings, furniture, plants and embroidered and hand-painted clothes, says about his displays," I have enjoyed working on all of them and I have no favourites."

## TV GUIDE

BTV	
<b>Morning Session</b>	
9:10	Nijer Jonnye
9:35	Driptal Uchcharan
10:00	Drishtipat
10:25	Shasthathatha
10:45	Movie of the Week: Earth Quake
<b>Evening Session</b>	
3:20	Bengali Movie: Sundari Miss Bangladesh
5:30	Shukhi Poribar
6:00	Khabar
6:35	Programme from Chittagong station
7:00	News Headlines
7:05	Geetimalya
7:30	Earth Final Conflict
8:00	News in Bengali
8:30	Drama: Shiulimala
9:00	News Headlines
9:30	Chitra-Bichitra
10:00	Talk Show: Khola Janala
10:30	News in English
10:55	Mini Series: Sea is green
11:30	Khabar / The News

EKUSHEY TV	
12:00	Ekushey Headlines
12:05	Ajker Potrikay
12:14	Ekatturer Ei Dine
12:20	Mukto Khabor
12:50	English Film: Enemy Mine
2:30	Ei Shoptaho
3:00	Ekushey Headlines
3:05	Shorashori
4:00	Mega Serial : Noorjahan
5:00	Amazon
5:00	Ekushey Headlines
6:05	English Series: MacGyver
7:00	Cartoon: Totally Tooned In
7:30	Ekushey News
8:00	Drama Serial: Otithi Apon
8:30	Bangla Film: Paharader
10:30	News: Simulcast from BTV
11:15	Ekushey Late Night News

ATN	
5:30	"Islamic Prog"
7:00	Ognibina
7:35	Nirob Kano Kabi
8:05	Drama: Uttaran
8:40	Drama: Bhalo Basar Oranee
9:15	Reporting Magazine : Ghotona Probah
9:50	Special Prog : "Ghiti Shotho Doi"
11:00	Bengali Film: Lathial
4:00	Indian Bengali film: Griho Juddo
6:32	Children Prog: Shapla Saluk
7:10	Film Prog: Surchobi
7:50	Drama: Uttaran
8:25	Reporting Prog: Ghatantar Nepathee
9:00	Drama serial : Teen Tekka
9:35	TV show : Bhabnar Khorak
10:10	Megaserial Vidroh
10:45	Bengali Film: Moner Agun

BBC WORLD	
6:30	World Business Report
7:30	Asia Today/World Business Report
8:30	Asia Today/World Business Report
9:30	Asia Today/World Business Report
10:30	Talking Movies
11:30	Eur Dir/USA Dir/Sci World/Aus Dir
12:30	Click Online
1:30	Correspondent
4:30	Holiday
5:30	This Week
7:30	Click Online
10:30	Wheels "Hospital"
11:30	This Week
12:30	Earth Report
1:00	BBC News/Dancing in/The Street/Pole To Pole/Global Protest/Brits
2:30	Talking Movies
4:30	Eur Dir/USA Dir/Sci world/Aus Dir
5:30	This Week

STAR GOLD	
10:30	Woodland Bollywood News
11:00	Geet Bahar
11:30	Ziddi (Joy Mukherjee, Asha Parekh)
3:00	Woodland Bollywood News
3:30	Ek Duuje Ke Liye (Kamal Hassan, Rati Agnihotri)
7:00	Geet Bahar
7:30	Saturday Special: Milan (Sunil Dutt, Nutan)
11:00	Rahein Na Rahein Hum
12:00	New Wave Cinema Pestonjee (Naseeruddin Shah, Shabana Azmi)
12:30	Pestonjee (Contd...)
3:00	Geet Bahar
3:30	Deep Jalta Rahe (Abhi Bhattacharyya, Randhir, Manju)
7:00	Raaz Ki Baat (Simi Garewal, Sujit Kumar)

HBO	
7:00	Strays
8:45	Stop! Or My Mom Will Shoot
10:30	If Looks Could Kill
12:30	Biloxi Blues
2:45	Fortress 2
4:45	Life in a Day
6:30	Batman & Robin
9:00	The Street 06: The Ultimatum
10:00	The Brady Bunch Movie
11:45	You've got Mail
2:15	The Affair
4:30	Batman & Robin
STAR WORLD	
7:00	The Simpsons
7:30	Things People Do

8:00	The Bold & The Beautiful
10:00	That '70s Shows
10:30	Travel Asia
11:00	Fox Kids Goosebumps
1:00	World Championship Wrestling Worldwide Mission Impossible
2:00	Baywatch
3:00	First Wave
4:00	Hercules
5:00	Xena
6:00	Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's The Lost World
7:00	First Wave
8:00	Water Rats
9:00	3rd Rock From the Sun
9:30	Star News
10:00	Baywatch Hawaii
11:00	First Wave
12:00	Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's The Lost World
1:00	Xena
2:00	Hercules
3:00	Key of David
3:30	Morris Cerullo
4:00	Benny Hinn
4:30	Space Island One
5:30	Doggie Howser J A G

STAR PLUS	
6:30	Star Geetmala
7:30	Ek Main Aur Ek Tu
8:00	Hit Ya Fit
8:30	Good Morning India
9:30	Fox Kids
10:30	National Geographic Special
11:30	Hit Ya Fit
12:00	Kuchha Papad Pucca Papad
12:30	Mirch Masala
1:00	TSN
1:30	Gharwali Uparwali
2:00	Tu Tu Main Main
2:30	National Geographic Special
3:30	Tea Time Cinema: Pushpanjali (Sanjay Khan, Naina Sahu)
4:30	Fox Kids Sunday Chalti Ka Naam
8:30	STAR Mast Movies: Soldier (Bobby Deol, Preity Zinta)
11:30	Aaj Ki Baat
11:45	Soldier (contd)
12:30	Jubilee Plus
1:00	Kalash
2:45	Sewalal Mewawala
2:00	Tu Tu Main Main
2:30	Sonpari
3:00	Ek Main Aur Ek Tu
3:30	National Geographic Special
4:30	Musaffir Hoon Yaron
5:00	Gharwali Uparwali
5:30	Shrimati Sharma Na Kehi Thi

STAR MOVIES	
6:30	Comedy : Life With

TODAY'S HIGHLIGHTS	
	<b>EKUSHEY:</b> 12:50 p.m. <i>Enemy Mine</i> . In space-war a human soldier loses his spacecraft and lands in an unknown planet. He meets another alien, who was his enemy before.
	<b>STAR WORLD:</b> 8:00 p.m. <i>Water Rats</i> . In the Family Way: Crime, punishment, betrayal, retribution, suicide and family tragedy when Goldie and Holloway infiltrate a crime family operating an insurance scam on Sydney Harbour.
	<b>HBO:</b> 9:00 p.m. <i>The Street 06: The Ultimatum</i> . Balmont Stevens is opening a branch in Paris and Alex is up for the job. Alex decides to use it as a trump card and issue Jack an ultimatum "marry me or I'll take the job away."
	<b>STAR WORLD:</b> 12 midnight. <i>Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's The Lost World</i> . The Prisoner: A mysterious old woman, a shape-shifter, appears to Veronica, convincing her that her lost parents are safe in El Dorado.

8:30	Movie: Blind Terror
10:15	Thriller : The Sixth Sense
12:00	Drama : One Good Cop
1:45	Action : Paper Bullets
3:30	Thriller : Pi
5:15	Action: Final Descent
7:00	Thriller/enn: Terminator 2
9:15	Drama : Dreaming Of Joseph Lees
10:45	Action : President's Man
12:30	Thriller : Brokedown Palace
2:30	Drama : Dreaming Of Joseph Lees
4:30	Comedy: Life With Mikey
6:30	Action : Mercury Project

AXN	
6:30	Space Warship/ Yamamoto Yoko
7:30	18 Wheels of Justice/Caged
8:30	Planner Ex II/World Extreme Games
9:30	Rollerjam
10:30	Space Warship /Yamamoto Yoko
11:30	Exploring the Unknown
12:30	Silk Stalkings
1:30	World's Most Amazing/Videos I
2:30	Pensacola III/Brothers
3:30	Movie: Montana
5:30	Space Warship/ Yamamoto Yoko
6:30	Rollerjam
7:30	Beastmaster II /TBA
8:30	World's Most Amazing/Videos I
9:30	Silk Stalkings
	VII/Teachers Pet

PICK OF THE DAY	
	<b>The Brady Bunch Movie</b> On HBO at 10:00 p.m. Bradys are stuck in the 70s in an era where kids undergo weapons checks at the school dance. When a real estate developer threatens to sell their house for taxes, the kids find a way to raise the money and save the way.

8:00	Ghostwriter
8:30	Wishbone
9:00	Sesame Street
10:00	Norman Rockwell's Breaking Home Ties
12:00	The Great Elephant Escape
2:00	Seventeen Again
4:00	A Town Torn Apart
6:00	Sea Change
7:00	Cuts
9:00	My Brother's Keeper
11:00	A Place For Annie
ZEE MGM	
10:30	Movie: Blind Terror
12:30	Ripley's Believe It or Not!
1:30	Movie: Blind Terror
3:30	Silk Stalkings
4:30	Pensacola III/Brothers
5:30	Rollerjam
1:00	Sea Change
2:00	Danger Bay
3:00	A Case Of Deadly Force
5:00	Sesame Street
6:00	Seventeen Again

SPORTS	
6:00	Western Union World Football
6:30	Nba Action
7:00	Nba Playoffs Conference Finals Los Angeles, CA USA San Antonio Spurs @ Los Angeles Lakers Western Conference Finals Game 3
9:30	Ecb International Cricket The Npower Test Series London, England Pakistan @ England 1 <sup>st</sup> Test Day 4 Highlights
10:30	Snooker Billiards Espn World Snooker : 2001 Embassy World C'Ships Sheffield, England Semifinal
11:00	Alp Tennis Show
11:30	Cayton Boxing Films Boxing Best's Best : Muhammed Ali
12:30	Athletes In Motion
12:00	Motorcycle Programming Fim Individual Speedway Wild C'Ship Gp 2001 Germany, Germany Highlights
1:30	Lpga Golf Lpga Coning Classic Coming, NY USA First Round
3:30	Nba Playoffs Conference Finals Los Angeles, CA USA San Antonio Spurs @Los Angeles Lakers
5:00	Recehorse Digest

7:00	Capitol
7:30	Music Zone
8:00	Late Show With David Letterman
9:00	Homicide Life On Street
10:00	Evening Shade
10:30	If Tomorrow Comes
11:30	Full House
12:30	Too Close For Comfort
1:30	Central Park West
2:30	ER
3:30	If Tomorrow Comes
4:30	Central Park West
5:30	Homicide Life On Street
6:30	The West Wing
7:00	Living Single
7:30	Full House
8:00	Touched By An Angel
8:30	Police Academy
9:30	If Tomorrow Comes
10:30	La Femme Nikita
11:30	Central Park West
12:30	Full House
1:00	Police Academy
2:00	Late Show With David Letterman
3:00	Music Zone
4:00	Benny Hill Show
4:30	Too Close For Comfort
5:00	Original Sound Track
ZEE CINEMA	
9:00	Kuch Lamhe Kuch Nagme
9:15	Directors Diary
9:45	Movie Fare
10:00	Raaz
1:00	Cine News
1:15	Madhyantar

STAR SPORTS	
7:30	Golf Programming GolfGlobe 2001
8:00	Wta Tour German Open Berlin, Germany Quarterfinal and Semifinal
11:00	Sports Unlimited
12:00	Sbk Superbike Magazine Highlights
12:30	Psa Super Series Al Ahram Psa Master 2001 Hurgghada, Egypt Highlights
1:30	Asian Club Championship Asian Club Championship 2001 Korea, Korea Final
3:30	Extreme Magazine Yoz Magazine
4:00	Nba Inside Stuff 2000/01 Nba Inside Stuff
6:30	Spanish League Highlights 2000/01 Spanish League Highlights
5:00	Formula One Qualifying 2001 Formula One Qualifying Monte Carlo, Monaco Grand Prix Qualifying
6:00	National Rugby League National 2001 Mel-

1:30	Dastaa
5:00	Darpan
5:15	Super Hit Hamesha
5:45	Film Time
6:00	Takkur
9:45	Chapati Chat
10:00	Weekend Cinema
10:30	Gajgami
2:15	Kuch Lamhe Kuch Nagme
2:30	Kanoon Meri Mutthi Mein
5:30	Chehren
5:45	Film Time
6:00	Apna Jahan
ZEE MUSIC	
6:00	Dial M
7:00	Aalap
7:30	Tararun
8:30	Hit Pe Hit
10:30	Hit Mix
11:00	Fillers
11:30	Zee Music Box
12:00	Best of the Best
1:00	Hit Pe Hit
2:00	Jharokha
2:35	Compact Disc
3:05	Tararun
4:00	Hit Pe Hit
5:00	Zee Music Box
5:30	Hit Mix
6:00	Just Jammin
6:30	Dial M
7:30	Hit Pe Hit
8:30	Zee Music Com
9:30	Zee Music Box
10:00	Sizzlers
10:30	Jharokha
11:05	Zee Music Live/Cool Age
11:35	Zee Music Live/Pyar Mohabbat Etc

ALPHA BANGLA	
7:00	Jeebon Rekha
7:30	News Bulletin
8:00	Alaap
9:00	News Bulletin
9:05	Bharat Bhromon
9:30	Cine News
10:00	Mayuraskshi Tumi Dile
10:30	Daibadho
11:00	Swaponneel
11:30	Grihasajja
12:00	Bahari Aahaar
12:30	Swapo Niye