

ESSAY

Remembering a pundit

There are only a few humorist writers in the world who have the courage to belittle themselves while creating humor, and Syed Mujtoba Ali was one of those rare pundits, writes Sarwat Chowdhury.

THE tragic events of September 11, 2001 have stirred the thought processes of almost everyone in the world, least to say New Yorkers themselves. Couple of months after the event, I was back in NY and remained glued to the TV for follow up stories on what the American media now calls the events of 9/11. Besides CNN, it was interesting to watch local TV stations like ABC, CBS and even NY One's reporting on Afghanistan. Ironically, the distressing events of September seem to have given rise to some instant "Afghan experts" who gave their opinion on the history, way of life in Kabul and elsewhere what is known as Afghanistan. At some point, I got a bit tired of all the repackaging of similar stories and took refuge in one of my favorite Bengali books "Deshe Bideshe (I had it brought it along with me this time from Dhaka).

Dr. Syed Mujtoba Ali is the author of "Deshe Bideshe" first published as a serial in the "Desh" magazine in 1948. In my early teens, this famous travelogue had first introduced me to the lives of the people in Afghanistan. Once again, as I reread the book, I could not help but be dazzled by the brilliant writing of Dr. Ali. February 11 marks the 28th death anniversary of this literary giant of Bengali literature.

Syed Mujtoba Ali was born in 1904 in the Karimganj town of the then Sylhet district. He was the third son of Khan Bahadur Syed Sikander Ali. His family was well-known for its deep interest in religion and spirituality. One of Dr. Ali's nephews (from his eldest brother) would later grow up to be an internationally reputed journalist and the founding editor of the Daily Star, late S.M. Ali.

As a youngster, Mujtoba was very attractive, extremely bright, and courageous. In 1921, during the time of non-cooperation Mujtoba was a student of class nine, and "first boy" in his class at the Sylhet Government High School. As part of school protest, he also abstained from going to school. Later on, he went instead to study in Shanti Niketon. Actually, there is a little story behind that move. Two year earlier, 14 year old Mujtoba was present as audience at a speech given by Rabindranath Tagore in Sylhet. The topic of the speech was

"ambition". After hearing Tagore's talk, young Mujtoba wrote to Tagore asking him what to do if you wanted to aim high. Mujtoba's parents were amazed to find that a letter (in reply) had come from Tagore himself to their son! From his childhood, Mujtoba Ali was known to surprise his family by taking brave initiatives, through which his marks of genius was already shining through. He convinced his parents to send him to Shanti Niketon. He was in school there for six months. After that, the Vishya Bharati College was established and he enrolled in college.

After five years of study, in 1926, Mujtoba Ali (along with Bachu Bhai Shukla) became the first ever graduate of Vishya Bharati. At Vishya Bharati, he had the opportunity to study *Gora*, *Balaka*, Shelly, and Keats under Tagore himself.

It is interesting to note that though Dr. Syed Mujtoba Ali wrote at least 28 books in Bengali and has only one publication in English, he was a gifted polyglot. By the time he reached adulthood, he was accomplished in at least 15 languages: Bengali, English, Urdu, Hindi, Sanskrit, Farsee (Persian), Arabic, Pashtu, Gujarati, Marathi, German, and Italian. His Ph.D. thesis "The Origin of Khojas and their Religious Life Today" was published in 1936 from Germany.

After Vishya Bharati, Syed Mujtoba Ali went to study in Aligarh. Meanwhile, he did his matriculation from Calcutta University. Mujtoba had been a favorite student of Professors Benoit and Bodganey (at Shanti Niketon). The latter two by that time had joined the Education Ministry in Afghanistan, and recommended Mujtoba for a job at the Department of Education there. So, by 1927, 23 year old Syed Mujtoba Ali was teaching English and German languages at College of Agriculture Sciences in Kabul. His book "Deshe-Bideshe" provides an extraordinary glimpse of life in Kabul those days. He taught in Kabul for two years. Unfortunately, civil war broke out in Afghanistan, and Kabul's progressive minded Ameer Amanullah Khan was deposed. Ali returned home. It became known that the then Foreign Secretary of the Indian Government Sir Denis Clay himself had requested the British representative in Kabul, Sir Francis Humphrey, for arranging a safe passage of Syed



Syed Mujtoba Ali

Mujtoba Ali. In 1929, Mujtoba Ali sailed from Bombay for higher education in Europe. His book "Jale Dangar" (On Land & Water) gives a unique account of that travel. In the winter term of 1929, Ali studied at Berlin University of the then undivided Berlin. Those days Einstein was still teaching there!

By 1930, Mujtoba moved on to the quieter campus of University of Bonn, and began his research work in comparative religion. His Ph.D. thesis (mentioned earlier) was dedicated to his father. In 1932, the 28 year old Syed Mujtoba Ali already had a doctorate degree, and

returned home. Two year later, he went back to Europe and visited Germany, Austria, Czechoslovakia, Italy and other places for linguistic work. On his way back, this time Ali went to study at Al Azhar University (1934-35) in Cairo. During that time, at Al Azhar, Ali was only student from this sub-continent! From Cairo, he was offered the position of professor in Comparative Religion at the then Baroda state of India. He taught there for eight years.

Mujtoba Ali was not only a brilliant writer and academic, he was well known for his oratory which was mingled with his sense of humor. While in Baroda, he gave a

talk at a Tagore Society meeting. The meeting was presided over by Sarojini Naido, who greatly appreciated the talk. By the 1940s, Dr. Ali began writing more regularly. At first, he used pen names and wrote for "Anandya Bazar", "Basumati", "Hindustan Standard" etc. Around 1948, he gave a talk to the students of Bogra College in the then East Pakistan. The impressed students lobbied very hard for him to come to Bogra. He joined the position of Principal of Bogra College in 1949. It is said that the out-going Principal Dr. Muhammad Shahidullah had also recommended Dr. Ali for that job. While in Bogra in 1949, he wrote about the need for a separate state language in the then East Pakistan - well ahead of the Language Movement of 1952.

Through the late 1950s and 1960s, Dr. Ali wrote prolifically. His books became very popular among the younger generation those days. Among his avid readers was my mother who was also Dr. Ali's niece (from his sister's side). She fondly called him "huru mamu" (youngest uncle) and named her first daughter Shabnam after another of Dr. Ali's famous book based on Afghanistan. "Shabnam" was published in 1960.

Dr. Ali went back to Germany in 1970 for the last time. He had been in Germany during Hitler's rise and went back several times after Hitler's fall. He wrote one book on Hitler, but did not have time to write more as he passed away after a sudden stroke in 1974.

Syed Mujtoba Ali was married to Rabeya Ali - herself an accomplished educator, who got her BT degree and higher training from England prior to 1947! Late Rabeya Ali retired from the post of Assistant Director of Public Instructions in 1972.

From what I gather from various publications on and by Dr. Syed Mujtoba Ali, and by talking to those who had the opportunity to know him - it is clear that his distinctive talent simply radiated from his personality. People who once met him never forgot his charm. His "adda" was famous and coveted not only because of his wit, but also because of the knowledge that somehow rubbed off to others. His brilliant mind was complemented by his excellent memory. Mujtoba Ali had the uncanny ability to pick up new languages, and then utilize them in

his writing. Like Nazrul Islam, and Sattendranath Datt, he introduced many Arabic and Farsee words in Bengali and thus enriched our mother tongue.

These days, a lot of young men and women are traveling from Bangladesh for higher studies abroad. But, it is quite incredible to imagine how a young Muslim boy in the 1920s found the courage to leave home by himself for higher studies abroad. In his life time, he traveled to many places and gave accounts of his visits in his various books. I think it is also admirable that he always returned home from his various visits, and finally returned to his homeland to spend his last few years in Dhaka.

Dr. Ali had a luminous mind, and until his death he enriched it by continuous reading and writing. He knew how to laugh, and also how to make others laugh. He set a new standard for writing humor in Bengali which still remains unparalleled. His sense of humor in his writing is very enjoyable, but he was also an expert in making us cry through his writing (for example, in "Shabnam"). During his lifetime, he was internationally renowned for his expertise in comparative religion; some claim that still there is no other "pundit" in the subject from the sub-continent to reach the stature of Dr. Ali.

Syed Mujtoba Ali never went after cheap popularity; and perhaps that's why he is yet to be given the recognition he so highly deserves. His open-minded endeared him to his well-wishers, friends, and strangers from various countries. I understand that people have done Ph.Ds on Dr. Ali, but he hardly got any formal recognition for his contribution to Bengali literature.

In May 2000, I had the opportunity to participate from Dhaka at a workshop of European Network of Bangladesh Studies at the University of Oslo, Norway. There I met a senior German scholar who had met Dr. Ali during one of his visits to Europe. He said, there are only a few humorist writers in the world who have the courage to belittle themselves while creating humor, and Dr. Ali was one of those rare pundits. Perhaps Dr. Syed Mujtoba Ali's confidence came from his own inner knowledge of his greatness!

INTERVIEW

'I think Indian music today has already reached out to the world'

Aman Singh caught up with the 69-year-old still-very-young-at-heart grandfather of Indian classical music, Manna Dey. Excerpts from the interview.

Tell us something about your uncle K C Dey. Did he exert a great influence on you?

He was like a father to me. I used to love his voice. He was my mentor and guru, and I owe everything to him. He was a great singer, I am fortunate to have been born in that family.

How did you get your break in Ram Rajya?

Ram Rajya happened because Vijay Bhatt, the producer and the director, came to my uncle to sing for Balmiki. My uncle recommended me, saying a sensational voice was required for that particular character. Though Bhatt thought I was little more than a child when he first saw me, they nevertheless called me to the studio. That was the beginning of my career. That was also the first song I sang.

You have sung a number of songs with Lataji. What has the experience been like?

It's been great. Lata (Mangeshkar) is a great songstress, and she calls me Dada. We are very good friends. I think we have been fortunate to have Lata amidst us as a singer. She has set a standard in singing. Before her we had many famous singers, but when she sang it was very different. *Shree 420*, *Chori Chori* and *Mera Naam Joker* are some of the films in which you sang for Raj Kapoor. Who made that decision? Was it the music director or the hero?

Raj Sahab chose me. And that's all. The experience was a very enjoyable one.

Everyone knows about your music career. But hardly anyone knows you as a person. So please tell us something about yourself.

I was born in Calcutta. My father was the late Shri Poorna Chandra Dey, and my mother was Mahamaya Devi. Before my uncle (K C Dey), there was no music in the family. He turned blind at the age of 13. He took up music after that. By the age of 20, he was a full-fledged singer. Being blind, he must have gone through immense hardships. And I thought, if my uncle could do all this, why can't I?

How many Bengali songs have you sung?

About 2000!

Are you a law graduate?

No. I am a simple graduate. Every Bengali is a graduate. When did you sing your first Hindi film song?

I migrated to Bombay with my uncle in 1943 after my graduation. Uncle was the music director and I was assisting him. There was a film being made called *Tamanna*. There was a song there, called *Jaago Aiyee Usha*, which I had sung. But the character in question, a beggar, was singing with a girl, and we were in search of a woman who could sing with me. You know who we ultimately discovered? Suraiya. That was her first song with me.

Rabindra Sangeet and Bengali history usually mark everyone. How did they affect you?

I love Rabindranath's songs. That's because I feel that lyrically there could not be anything better. As far as other songs were concerned, I think I wasn't good enough to understand them. It was very high-flow. Very deep philosophy about life and all that. I have all the notations of his 3000 odd songs with me. The most unique thing about him was that all the lyrics were his, and he even wrote the music for all of them. He was a genius.

I remember on one occasion, Shankar (of Shankar-Jaikishan duo) asked me why was it that all the Rabindrasangeets have so much 'rona-dhona' in them. I replied that it was not so at all. Why would one cry? Learn, hear and try to understand what they say. There is a way of singing Rabindrasangeet. You give me time and I'll sing for you. I sang for him for two hours, an experience he later referred to as educating. There is an inner way of singing these songs.

You have sung more than 2000 songs....

I have sung about 3,500 songs, and done so in almost every Indian language. I cannot distinguish between the number of Hindi songs I have sung and the rest.

How many times have you received the Filmfare awards?

Once for the song *Ae Bhai Zara Dekh Ke Chalo...* (Mera Naam Joker)

In what way have you tried to impart your knowledge to the younger generation? Do you have any disciple?

My nephew, Sudebh Dey sings. He sings well. Some other singers also try to sing my songs. They are very good. Otherwise, I would say the standard of today's girls and boys' voices are definitely better than our generation.

Tell us something about your personal likes and dislikes.

It's very easy. I eat everything. I have no reservations that way. I love meeting people from all walks from life with open arms. I love every kind of music, including western classical and western pop music. I love instrumental music too.

What has been the philosophy of your life?

Do good and bear no malice towards anybody. I take everything in a good-natured way. I have always believed that there are more good people than bad in this world.

The change taking place now in the music world is towards the negative. What do you feel about this?

I think everything needs a fresh touch to it. The way we used to sing was very different. Now, for example, the song, *Sur Na Sajai Kya Gaon Mein*, *Sur Ke Bina Jeevan Suna*, which I sang for Bharat Bhushan, became very popular. That kind of song will be out of place in today's kind of movies. There is no situation like that anymore. The subject is different. They cannot do it.

Today, songs are framed to suit movie sequences. People listen to them, try to remember them for a month, but forget them in a day. The bulk of the work today is unbelievable. They can never complete it.

You have learnt western music also. Who has been your teacher?

I learnt from my uncle and Zabeer Khan in Calcutta for a few days. Then in Bombay I learnt from Abdul Rahman Khan.

What are the expectations from new age singers today? According to you, how do they fare in the music world?

Tremendous. In fact, I think the various genres of music that are around in India at the moment will prove healthy for the industry.

Which song has been your favourite?

I have been a very good student of music, and so I cannot differentiate between my own songs.

Who is your favourite music director?

My favourite is Madan Mohan, Shankar Jaikishan, Burman Sahab, and C Ramachandra. I am a great admirer of individual art.

Who among your contemporaries do you consider the best?

Mohammad Rafi. No doubt about it.

Not Kishore Kumar?

You cannot compare the two. They are two different artistes.

Do you think that the old age music will come back?

Definitely. How can we forget our roots?

Sometimes you like singing for one particular hero. Do you have any favourites?

Balraj Sahni Sahab was my favourite. I used to love him as an actor. He was a very graceful actor. Then I liked singing for Raj Sahab (Raj Kapoor) because he was so versatile. We have had wonderful times together. I would say an actor and director like him would never be born again.

Is there any song you relate with him?

Well I have sung many songs for him. However, I think the best would be *Dil Ka Haal Suno Dil Waala*.....(trills to the memorable *mast* song).

What about western songs?

I love western songs. During college days, they used to say I sound like Pink Cross. My favourites are Pink Cross, Frank Sinatra, Perry Como and Jim Reeves. I have sung them all.

If you were told to sing for someone today, would you sing?

Why not? Definitely. The whole trouble is that if I am asked to sing for Aamir Khan, I will not because he is like my grandson. But if I am asked to sing for Anupam Kher, I will. He is a very versatile actor and I think if he is given a meaningful song, he will put all his efforts into it. And I'll put my heart and soul in it.

We always remember something from our times. Is there anything you miss?

This is a very difficult question. I will never say the old times were better. Yes, there are certain things, which have changed, like the way of working. The way we used to work is no longer followed. This troubles me a lot. They say there is a lot of rivalry in the music industry. Did you have to face that?

Plenty. Without healthy rivalry, you cannot perform well and you cannot deliver.

What do you hope for India as far as music is concerned?

I think Indian music today has already reached out to the world. In time you will see that India is number one because we have melody, rhythm and colour in our music. There is a regional flavour that marks our music. Each region has its own colours. You won't find the same in any other part of the world.

You have sung in almost every style till now. Do you think you have missed something?

What have I missed? Tell me. I have even sung the twist song. I have sung *Yuk Chaturmath*; I have sung *Laga Chunni Mein Daag*. What is left? I sang for Mehmoond and made all his songs hits. Source:Internet

Waiting for rediscovery

As film music expands its horizons, the soul of Bengal is waiting to be rediscovered, writes Biswadeep Ghosh

WHAT'S the quintessential Bangla melody? It is that tune whose roots can be detected in the composer's coexistence with various forms of Bangla music. This includes ragpradhan (the semi-classical genre), Nazrul Geeti (compositions of Kazi Nazrul Islam), Rabindra Sangeet (Rabindranath Tagore's creations), *adhunik* (modern songs) and, of course, folk music. In a musically vibrant ambience, an exposure to all these forms, and more, is inevitable. It's a part of growing up.

Melodies with a Bangla soul: a brief look at the history of Hindi film music shows how several music composers created them at will. In the music of Pankaj Mullick known to most modern-day listeners as the singer-composer of "Kab Tak Niraash" (from *Doctor*), we can sense this quality. We can hear it in the work of Anil Biswas, the two Burmans, Salil Chowdhury, Shyamal Mitra and others.

Many of these melodies, such as the classics of Mullick or Biswas, would be out of place in contempo-

rary mainstream films since cinematic creativity has been redefined dramatically. But the music composer can learn a lot from the history of film music, and explore Bangla idioms that can be made to blend with the texture of modern-day music very easily.

That isn't happening, which is ironic because modern-day film music is marked by more intrepid experimentation than ever before. Ismail Darbar reworked a Manganiyark folk melody to generate "Nimbooda Nimbooda" in Sanjay Leela Bhansali's *Hum Dil De ChukeSanam*. Just when we thought that A R Rehman had peaked with Ashutosh Gowariker's *Lagaan* comes the soundtrack of Shankar's *Maya*, which may not be as good but incorporates sounds from Rajasthan. Those who thought that Ashok Kumar's "Raiigaadi Raiigaadi" was the last Hindi rap number will have to revise their perspectives now that Anu Malik has made an innovative song in Rakesh Mehra's *Aks*. Qawalis find a place in soundtracks quite often. Bhangra

makes an entry once in a while. Absent is the song with a Bangla feel characterised by a simple tune and thoughtful instrumentation that the lay listener can hum quite easily, murdering the song, pleasing himself.

Missing are tunes like the ones created by Salil Chowdhury who was really popular with Bengali directors like Ritwik Ghatak and Mrinal Sen. Best known for the haunting soundtrack of *Madhumati* among his Hindi music forays, he produced several cuts that became popular in both Bangla and Hindi such as "O Sajana Barkha Bahar Aayee" in *Parakh* whose Bangla version is "Na Jao Na." Many other Chowdhury numbers have two versions, like "Ja Re Udja Re Panchhi" from *Maya* which, in Bangla, is "Ja Re Udey Ja Re Pakkhi" and "Kahin Door Jab" from *Anand* that became popular as "Ami Proshno Korey..." in Bangla.

So vast is their body of work that writing about the two Burmans can fill up an entire encyclopaedia. Blessed with an unmistakably nasal voice, the father Sachin Dev

Burman recreated the spirit of contemporary Bangla music in a song like "Jalte Hai Jiske Liye" from *Sujata* that only Talat Mahmood could have sung. The favourite composer of many top directors like Guru Dutt, Bimal Roy and Dev Anand, it is SD's folksy compositional forays that highlight the fact of inspiration most notably. Among these are "Mere Saagan Hai Uss Paar" from *Bandini*, "Safal Hogi Teri Aradhana" from *Aradhana* and "Wahan Kaun Hai Teri" from *Guide*.

Unlike his father, RD Burman looked towards the West very frequently. But in his songs as well, the spirit of Bangla music played the trespasser. That produced some marvellous songs such as "Tum Bin Jaun Kahan" (from *Fyaaar Ka Mausam*) whose Bangla version is "Ek Din Pakkhi Urey..."

For a melody like "Tujhse Naraaz Nahin Zindagi" from *Masoom*, RD needed the voice of Anup Ghoshal to do an impeccable job in the song's male version. *Amar Prem*'s "Bada Nathkat Hai" sung by Lata Mangeshkar is a modified folk mel-

ody, while *Aandhi*'s "Tere Bina Zindagi Se" has a Bangla original composed by RD that Gulzar happened to like. The director of *Aandhi* who worked with RD in eight of his films, Gulzar used the tune and his lyrics, giving birth to a classic.

With a style inspired by Pankaj Mullick in his career's initial phases, and a voice cut out for Rabindra Sangeet, Hemant Kumar composed Hindi film songs that could have been set to Bangla lyrics most easily. "Bekarar Karkey Hamey" from *Bees Saal Baad*, "Yeh Nayan Dare" from "Kohra", "Ya Dil Ki Suno Duniya Vaaan" from *Anupama*: Hemant Kumar's compositions epitomised the spirit of Bangla music. Even when he sung for others, he did not deviate much, a quality that can be heard in "Hal Aana Dil Toh Awara" composed by SD Burman for *Solva Saal*.

Alongside such highly successful composers is someone like Shyamal Mitra, whose body of work for Hindi films is far from huge. Mitra has been responsible for minor classics though, such as "Tere Gaalon

Ko Chumu" in *Amanush* ("Jodi Hoi Chor Kaunta" in Bangla) and "Saara Pyar Tumhara" in *Anand Ashram* (Amar Shopto Tumi" in Bangla). Simple melodies, but hard to forget.

What's surprising, therefore, is why the modern-day music composer isn't experimenting with Bangla musical idioms at a time when novelty is the key to success most often. The industry hasn't had a distinctive music director who has grown up in an atmosphere of Bangla music in a long time. But why should that matter when an A R Rahman, in his quest for uniqueness, can dig into Rajasthani folk music? Should the sounds from Bengali be dexterously used, the results would be refreshingly different. As film music expands its horizons, the soul of Bengal is waiting to be rediscovered.

Source:Internet

Losing a Voice

Why has contemporary art lost its edge, wonders Mishta Roy

YESTERDAY I went to see an art exhibition in one of the city's leading galleries. But what caught my eye more than the paintings themselves was a huge prosperous looking woman bedecked in heavy loops of gold draped all over her expensively clad body. She was intently surveying the paintings and the business-like glint in her smile dazzled me. I watched her from the corner of my eye as she took out little scraps of cloth from her handbag and matched the blue to the blue shade of the painting. Satisfied, she beckoned to the person in charge who sensing a sale beamed at her before making hurried motions to a minion for tea and biscuits. The artist was also there and hovered in the background. He stepped forward and approached the woman. After much debate, it was understood that the blue hue of the painting was slightly darker than the shade she held out...the colour of her sofa set. The artist agreed to paint the exact blue onto certain parts of the canvas hence ensuring the sale of his work. I watched appalled as the transaction took place and yet another colour coordinated drawing room gained its 'cultural' identity.

In his 1991 essay "The Soul of Man Under Socialism", Oscar Wilde wrote: "A work of art is the unique result of a unique temperament. Its beauty comes from the fact that the author is what he is. It has nothing to do with the fact that other people want what they want. Indeed, the moment that an artist takes notice of what other people want, and tries to supply the demand, he ceases to be an artist, and becomes a dull or an

amusing craftsman, an honest or dishonest tradesman. He has no further claim to be considered as an artist."

There are artists who alter their works to suit the tastes of the flamboyant nouveau riche. There is the artist who produces the identical painting year after year, adding perhaps a single unobtrusive element that would perhaps save it from criticism. He does so as the 'style' is one that was highly lauded by the buying public and hence a safe space for him to work from. The sale of his works is ensured. Then there is the artist who paints insufferably sentimental paintings. And there are artists who cannot say one single word to the paintings credit. Why has he made such a picture? What does it say? There is no answer. It is like asking why the sun shines.

Why does this inherent apathy dog the heels of the many 'modern' painters working in the contemporary situation in India? History has provided us with religious, iconographical and archaeological interpretations of Indian art. Based heavily on the theory of beauty (*rasa*) derived from this, a tentative contemporary art practise has mapped out its space. Yet, there is a great divide between the artists who belong to the school of 'making of art' and those who uphold the 'thinking of art'. This is an ironic process at work here for one cannot exist without the other.

A great sense of complacency and ease has set in. The Indian easel painter largely no longer responds to, respects or translates contemporary experience into visual

space. It is too difficult for an artist to tread that fine line between intense private association with public understanding and interpretation. In this age where the post-modern thinker/artist is producing works of compelling concern and a precise recognition of the political and social situations they are faced with, the easel painter in India has slipped into a state of antiquity and one that exists to pander to the needs of a demanding societal lifestyle.

To state a cliché, a country like India that strains between various identities - spiritual, traditional, modern, nuclear, metropolitan, international tribal and rural should offer up enough imagistic fodder to keep the artist satisfied for decades. The post-modern artist would have been very, very happy in India. But instead of bold new images, we are still faced with the rural landscapes, the pensive Rajasthani women (very popular with Delhi buyers), the tortured man stretching out his arm for an unattainable goal or the usual splashes of colour quickly passed off as 'abstract'. I have even seen clocks attached to certain canvases to give them some additional value; almost as if the artist himself was apologetic about making something that had no function other than to look pretty (that too would be debatable).

The subordination of art to lifestyle is a grave problem facing the art world in India and it is not a question of a few isolated cases. Many well-known and respected artists who are often seen cavorting between the pages of leading newspaper's society pages also indulge in these methods, be it to make a

quick buck or just plain lack of creativity. Their elite aloofness and distant aura do to their sense of being a heavyweight and make it possible to get away with whatever they may choose to paint. I remember when I was in art college where I spent five long years of my life trying to master the brush, a respected and high-profile artist came visiting. The first thing he said to a class of 30-odd young students was to 'never think'. Perfect advice for the artists who were to become the future.

The idea of the artist as a being who is liberal in his support of freedom of expression and demands for equality and the belief that their art could influence human destiny, that they could change the world is an image absolutely lost to the present generation painters. The idea of being consciously involved in a process of thinking about himself and the society he inhabits, of becoming aware of his cultural self in history is replaced by a sense of detached factory-line, assembly line production. He does not and cannot instill through his work a sense of sensitivity to cultural, ethnic and human conditions and experiences.

The western artist in today's world recognises the world as radically heterogeneous, the past as radically different from the present and all cultures as radically different from one another. They uphold the uniqueness and the singularity of all individuals. Conceptual artists, be it Performance or Installation or Earth artists, deliberately produce work that is difficult if not impossible to classify according to the old system such as painting, sculpture or photography. Some have produced work that cannot be placed in a

museum or a gallery. Late 20th century art has deliberately placed itself beyond the limits of control.

Today western art historians and critics can no longer absorb contemporary art into the system. Traditional art theory and art history have failed along with modernism. Although now in the West this is now being ridiculed by conservatives as "political correctness" India has yet to even see the beginnings of the tensions created by the post-modern condition or situation as it is often known. The so-called 'thinking' artists are yet grappling with modernism and its pitfalls.

As a fledgling, liberalizing third world country India adds yet another identity to itself. Her approach to development is a catalyst to economic and technological advancement. She will attain a higher standard of living with more spending power and become part of a 'global environment'.

In looking at development in India as industrialisation i.e. creating products for consumption, Vandana Shiva points out that it has not exactly been a positive force of change. She says "...development was thus reduced to a continuation of colonization: It became an extension of the project of wealth creation in modern western patriarchy's economic vision..."