



PHOTO: PANG XIAOQIAO / FAHMIM FERDOUS

FAHMIM FERDOUS, back from Ningbo, China
China may be known today as a global economic powerhouse and an industrial giant, but it still takes immense pride in its thousands of years of rich culture and heritage. Even at the enterprising port city of Ningbo (in the Northeastern Zhejiang province) where the focus stayed on the city's economic and technological advancements, we were given a first-hand taste of Chinese culture, in a masterclass on traditional Chinese painting. A delegation of journalists from all over Asia (including this correspondent), were given a taste of painting peony flowers in watercolour, at the 'Focus on Ningbo' leg of the Discover China trip organised by leading Chinese newspaper China Daily on October 12.

The Red Peony Chinese Painting and Calligraphy Academy, located at the city's University Zone Library, is founded and operated by Jiang Hongsheng, who prefers being called Jack. The academy particularly takes in visiting foreigners and expats for free lessons in traditional Chinese Peony painting, in an effort to promote Chinese culture.

The item on the trip itinerary listed as a 'visit' to painting/calligraphy studio was enough to get me excited, but I realised I would get much more than what I wished for, when I saw palettes, paper and brushes were set on rows of tables, and Jack said we were going to be getting a hands-on experience. With a quick introduction to Peony watercolour, the ever-so-energetic painter gave us a quick demonstration of the basics in fluent English (not the most common skill in China). From getting the right amount of water on the brushes to mixing the five basic colours (black, white, red, yellow

and blue) to create different shades and doing simple strokes and dabs, a thorough walkthrough got us all in gear for the 'practice' session.

As we sat down, it quickly became evident that it was not as easy as Jack had made it look - particularly for journalists, who Yuan Meikeng (a journalist at The Star newspaper in Malaysia) described as more much more 'literally' adept than visually. But Jack, with his experience of giving lessons to first-timers, kept our enthusiasm at a high - walking around, helping us hold the

brush properly and answering questions. After a few sheets of practice paper, we were ready to do our final work - on a Chinese fan-shaped paper on which peony painting is traditionally done. By the time we finished up and put our signatures on the piece, one hour had passed without anyone noticing. What we did looked nothing like the beautiful artwork framed around the studio, but we were all rather impressed by each others' (and our own) work over such a short span. Jack then handed out gifts to us in a lottery, which included his own

signature peony watercolours, brush holders and painting accessories. But then came my most special moment of the afternoon. Jack asked us all where we came from, and his eyes lit up when I said "Bangladesh!" Jack keeps a big world map at his studio, and whenever someone from a new country gets a peony lesson, he gets to put a small peony sticker on the country on the map. Of all the delegates, Bangladesh was the only non-represented country on the map, and it was a rather silly moment of pride for me to put a stamp on my country's name.



Delegates engaged in painting the peony; (top) the writer puts a sticker on Bangladesh on the world map.

Painting Peony

A first-hand encounter with Chinese culture



No Puja vacation for

MIM

Actress shoots new film in Kolkata

SHAH ALAM SHAZU

Bidya Sinha Mim, who started her career in modeling, has gradually established her as a TV star and is now strengthening her foothold on the big screen. She is in such high demand that even the Durga Puja brings no respite for her. The Daily Star caught up over the phone from India, where she shared her plans and current work.

"I usually try to shy away from work during Durga Puja and spend time with family, because it's very important to me. But this time, it could not be. I'm right now in Kolkata, shooting for my new film 'Black'. Tollywood hero Soham is opposite me in it."

"Despite my schedules, I am trying to soak in as much as I can of the festivities. I've visited the temples at night after shooting pack-up. My mother is here, so I have that going for me, which is nice. But I wish I could be in Dhaka, or maybe my native home of Rajshahi."

"I wish all my fans and well-wishers the best on this auspicious occasion," concluded the actress.

PUJA FESTIVITIES

"I'm celebrating Puja in Pabna" ... Chanchal

SHAH ALAM SHAZU

National award-winning actor Chanchal Chowdhury makes sure he sets time aside to celebrate Durga Puja. In a conversation with The Daily Star, the talented actor shared his Puja plans.

"I'm busy shooting all year long, and do not get much chance to visit my hometown. I take a break every Durga Puja to visit my ancestral home in Pabna's Kamarhaat with my wife and son. I've been here two days, and it has been great to reunite with relatives."

"Puja has always meant celebrations for me, but now it's a responsibility too, with my child, nephews and nieces. We're a big family of eight siblings ourselves, so the house is always buzzing this time of year."

"I love spending this leisure time with family, friends, and people who come to visit me. My mother also loves making various sweets for us, which we gobble up happily."

"Doshomi is a big celebration for me. Like other years, I will go to the river for the Bishorjon this year as well."



BAJRANGI BHAIJAAN to be dubbed in sign language



Salman Khan-starrer "Bajrangi Bhaijaan" will be dubbed into sign language, after a request made by Geeta, the hearing and speech impaired Indian woman who was stranded in Pakistan for last 15 years. She is now set to return to India.

The dubbing will be undertaken by the Centre for Persons with Special Needs in India. "I have recently interacted with Geeta, who is in Karachi (Pakistan), through video call using sign language. She

said that Salman's 'Bajrangi Bhaijaan' should be dubbed into sign language so that she and a large number of people like her would be able to watch and understand the movie, especially its songs and dialogues in a better way," head of the help centre and sign language interpreter Gyanendra Purohit said.

Directed by Kabir Khan, "Bajrangi Bhaijaan" is about a speech-impaired Pakistani girl who

is stranded alone in India. The character played by Salman finds the girl and takes it upon himself to reunite her with her family in Pakistan.

Purohit said he has been in touch with the external affairs ministry for the last three months on the issue of Geeta's return to India from Karachi. "We wish that when it is exhibited for the first time, both Salman and Geeta should be part of the screening," Purohit said.

He said that Geeta is a big fan of Salman and during has expressed her desire to meet the Bollywood star along with her family members. "Geeta has a special place for Salman in her heart. Her story is almost similar to the screenplay of Bajrangi Bhaijaan which was a huge success in the country," he added.

According to Purohit, in the past, famous films like "Sholay" (1975), "Gandhi" (1982), "Munnabhai MBBS" (2003) and "Tare Zameen Par" (2007) had been dubbed into sign language.

Source: Hindustan Times

Dazzle this festive season.



Hazoorilal
BY SANDEEP NARANG

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