

Dhondy's misguided vigilantes

by Harwant Bains

Vigilantes, by Farrukh Dhondy, is ostensibly a play about young Asians in the East End, about the web of tradition which entraps all, and about the superficiality of self-images which in turn attempt to romanticise and mystify the reality of 'being Asian'. Perhaps it is because Mr Dhondy attempts to trawl too deep, with too small and ragged a net, that all he brings up are a few rusty old clichés.

The play's dramatic content revolves around a number of situations which have long been the object of ridicule within Asian communities. This is partly because they are precisely those situations which many trendy people regard as the paradigms for understanding Asians in Britain. (Whenever the BBC make an expedition to Southall to discover 'what the youth are thinking,' you can rest assured that the first place they will go to is Southall Youth Movement).

Thus, the action centres upon a Bengali Youth Club which is funded by the GLC. It has a pool table, a 'case worker' in residence who is well versed in all the sociological jargon, and a ready-made group of (not very young) disaffected youth. There is also the representative of the

jumping-on-the-race-industry-bandwagon, in the form of a young lady who has turned her back on the community - thus becoming a scarlet woman, and a researcher for a TV channel to boot.

Last, but not least, there is an almost gratuitous symbol of the torn-between-two-cultures theory, symbolised by a young Bengali man with a white cockney mother, and a recently arrived uncle who seeks to deprive him of his father's land back in Bangladesh.

Mr Dhondy's young Asians live with an eye to the Mother-country, stuffed full of heroic misconceptions. This may be true of many young people who came to England in their teens, and are now in their late twenties or early thirties, but - to my knowledge - has little to do with the

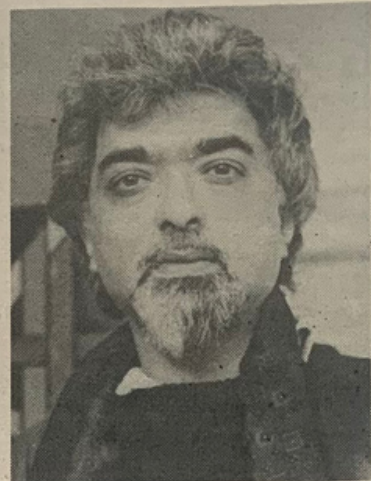
outlook of young Asians today. Not only this, but the young Bangladeshis in their Youth Club seem obsessively concerned with the projection of a certain 'image'.

This image - one of noble alienation and struggle - is most relentlessly espoused by their 'leader' and resident maternal figure. Of course, being the miserable, misogynistic mini-cab drivers that they are, they cannot swallow the bitter truth - especially since it comes from the TV researcher they all spit upon. All in all, they react in a wholly uncivilised manner to a TV programme which explodes their world view, and their most macho member shows his displeasure by attempting to rape the scarlet woman. This, presumably, is intended to signify the 'circle of tradition'

which 'tightens into a noose!' If Asians really do have this kind of collective self-image, I am yet to stumble across it. Perhaps a few of them do, but most of them are probably in Broadmoor by now.

However, any piece of theatre which gives black actors and writers the opportunity to exercise and develop their talents on the West End stage must, in some sense, be welcome. We can only hope that the advent of such organisations as the Asian Co-Operative Theatre (under whose auspices this play is performed) will provide many more opportunities of this sort. Particularly memorable - subject matter aside - were the performances by Badiu-Zaman and Ursula Jones.

All theatre is representative; this is inevitable. When theatre utilises hackneyed images and well worn situations, it can say nothing new, and nothing of any value. Mr Dhondy takes a jaundiced view of young Asians; puts pathological specimens on stage and makes general points. The



Dhondy - bringing up rusty old clichés



Zaman and Ursula Jones

people he portrays are not 'ordinary people.' They are withered, emotionally sterile, misguided and without any trace of nobility.

They are shadows on a dirty pavement. There are no saving graces. Only the scarlet woman has a chance of making heaven on her own,

guided by white folk. Personally I do not share Dhondy's vision. No doubt many a white conscience will rejoice at the sight of this pub-

lic defaecation, this destruction of attitudes which nobody of any import ever held.

Films. Second chance for Punjab classic

by Anita Lakhani

Ek Chaddar Malili Si, a film based on Rajinder Singh Bedi's award-winning novel, bringing back memories for many film-goers. The version was late due to a letter - Geeta Kapoor's lady of small m was

Hema Malini has been selected for the role of Rano, previously played by Geeta Bali. Rano's husband is played by Kuljushan Kharbanda and Rishi Kapoor plays the part of her brother-in-law. The parts of Rano's mother and father are played by Dina Pathak and A.K. Hangal.

The screenplay is being written by Phani Mazumdar and Makhan Singh. Madan Joshi is writing the dialogues for the film, and music is being composed by Annu Malik. Camera-work is handled by N. Singh.

Brazilian delegation in India

It looks as if Indian commercial and serious films are likely to receive more publicity in Latin American countries during the November Rio International Film Festival this year, according to a three-member Brazilian film delegation who visited the 10th International Film Festival of India, held in New Delhi recently.

According to delegation leader Luiz Carlos Barreto, Latin American cinema has received a tremendous response during the Delhi Film Festival. Rio is to reciprocate with a special section on Indian cinema.

Canosa, the director of the Rio Festival, who attended the Indian Film Festival, selected the following films during his brief stay in Bombay for the forthcoming festival - *Ustav*, *Kalyug*, *Khandhar*, *Deewar*, Satyjit's Ray's film *Ashanti Sanket* (Distant Thunder) and Gautam Ghosh's *Paar*. He will be selecting further films during the Cannes Film Festival. Canosa predicts that Shashi Kapoor's *Ustav* will be hit in the Rio Festival because of its magic and sexuality without nudity. The festival will also feature a retrospective of Shyam Benegal's films.

Canosa is also planning to screen Ray's *Hirok Rajar Deshe* (The Kingdom of Diamonds) and *Goopy Gyne Bagha Byne* (The adventures of Goopy and Bagha) and Gautam Ghosh's and Dhakal and Andhi Gali.

In an interview with *Screen* the weekly newspaper, Barreto, who is the president of the Brazilian Film Producers Association, said that a considerable amount of scope existed for marketing Brazilian films in India.

Barreto is contemplating co-productions with his Indian colleagues.



Rekha in *Ustav* - predicted to be a hit in Rio Working for London archive.parmindervir.com