

## PARALLEL LIVES ALYQUE PADAMSEE AND JIM HAYNES – PART II – ACHIEVEMENTS

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While Alyque was developing his two careers in Bombay, Jim stayed ten years in Edinburgh, becoming a Father of the Fringe Festival. He started his own Theatre with Ricky Demarco, the Traverse, which is an Edinburgh institution and still going strong. It was conceived as a theatre for Premieres only and for over 60 years has been the starting platform for many great playwrights. Today the Festival is a massive gathering of shows, plays, concerts, over 3,500 events taking place in some 250 venues across the city and Jim is recognised everywhere. To attend the Festival with him is a very special experience as I have done many times. He is greeted on every corner by fans and well-wishers, inviting him to see their shows, handing him free tickets, asking his opinion about their work, some even dropping to their knees in the street before him in gratitude. Rather as with Alyque in India!

One time we were there, the first evening we went to the Scottish Arts Club where he was presented with an Award for being a “Living Archivist”, and the last evening he had to present Awards to various winners. I remember we were the oldest by far in a sea of students mostly in their early twenties. They seated us at a table near the stage and I asked Jim whether he had prepared anything or was nervous? He didn’t know the meaning of the word. He got

up to speak having no idea what he was going to say and within two minutes he had the entire audience eating out of his hand, laughing, hanging on his every word. A natural true gift.

Alyque at this time was furthering his dual career in Advertising and Theatre. After working with J Walter Thompson for three years he joined Lintas, one of most respected advertising agencies in India, where he stayed for 37 years, ending up as Chief Consultant and Managing Director. He always claimed these two industries went hand-in-hand, as they are both about people, about role-playing, about acting, just one is a deal more profitable than the other! He was renowned throughout India as the Father of Advertising, building up such diverse companies as Cherry Blossom, Timex, Lifebuoy, Surf washing powders, Jet Airways, Johnson & Johnson, Ponds, and Lipton’s Teas amongst many others.

Alyque produced his first play in 1951, at the age of just 20. He specialized in English speaking theatre and has a wonderful command of the language as well as a beautiful speaking voice. His favourite playwright is Shakespeare by a long way. He has put on many of the great Bard’s works and is happy to declaim any of the famous soliloquys at the drop of a hat. But he also loved the classics of Congreve, Marlowe and Goldsmith, moving on to Shaw, Strindberg, Eugene O’Neill, Edward Albee and Tennessee Williams to name but a few. He produced several musicals such as “*Evita*” and famously – and controversially – “*Jesus Christ Superstar*”, first in 1974 then in 2014, forty years later. He loved to experiment and in the 2014 version he had two separate casts which performed the piece alternately and he revelled in the differences that transpired. By the end of his career he must have produced

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\* The writer is British born and bred but has spent much of her adult life in France, the Loire Valley, the Deep South. She has now been living in Paris since 1999. Her passion is travelling, exploring the world and its people and experiencing their various and diverse cultures. For the last 17 years she has spent the winters travelling widely in India, a country she loves, always coming back to rest in Kolkata. These articles are random extracts from the travel notebooks she wrote to record her experiences around the world.

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approaching a hundred plays. Whenever he is producing a play the Cast becomes his present family, equally important to him in every way as his flesh and blood.

In 1963, Jim moved to London. A friend offered him the use of two large empty warehouses in Covent Garden. He quickly turned these into his "Arts Lab", which consisted of a gallery, theatre, bookshop and cafe, and became a hub for meeting people from all over the world, particularly in the entertainment business. He put on the first ever Pink Floyd concert and David Bowie used to practise in the basement. Countless others, the Beatles, the Stones, writers, musicians, singers, actors, anyone who was anyone in the Sixties passed through the Arts Lab.

Meanwhile Alyque was still firmly centred in Bombay and during this period produced many plays and acted in several. His favourite play (after Shakespeare of course) must have been Arthur Miller's "*Death of A Salesman*" which he often directed, playing the role of the Salesman umpteen times. I remember one evening he was playing the Salesman and in the darkness after the First Act he fell off the stage. Although he did not realize it, he had broken his leg but went on to perform the last two acts without feeling any pain until the final curtain dropped and he collapsed in agony – he was so engrossed in his character, real life was completely blotted out. Theatre is Life for Alyque. He feels more alive, more himself, when he is on stage.

Later Jim moved briefly to Amsterdam and with friends brought out a paper called the International Times (IT) and after that the infamous erotic magazine "Suck". He organised the Wet Dream Festival and other notorious cultural events that were rife in the swinging Europe of the sixties. Then he came to Paris where after moving around in several *quartiers* he finally settled in Alesia, in the 14th arrondissement. Paris 8 University contacted him to teach a course which he refused at first saying he could not speak French (he still hardly can) but they insisted, telling him he could teach in English and choose his own subject – which he did. Thus he taught "Media and Sexual Politics" for many years, a theme which allowed him to improvise and talk about anything which came to mind for that day. He told me he often used to decide while travelling on the Metro to his class what would be that day's topic.

Alyque had that same gift for spontaneity and improvisation. One time he had booked out the Kala Mandir in Calcutta, a huge theatre with 2,000 seats sold and his leading lady failed to appear. He had sent tickets for me round to my apartment but now what to do? Within

24 hours he had put together a replacement programme with several of his actor friends and dotted the evening with seven of his favourite declamations from Shakespeare and a scene from "Death of A Salesman". Incredible.

In 1978 Jim started his famous Sunday Night Dinners which have been happening every Sunday for over forty years. It started with a young dancer, Cathy, who came to stay (his Atelier was always open to anyone who needed a bed and still is) and offered to cook a dinner for some of his friends. In its heyday a hundred people used to turn up, often more. Jim does not cook. For years he had a friend living in his basement who cooked every Sunday but when that blew up he asked me and a few other friends to cook, which I have been doing for the past twenty years. Not every Sunday by a long way! But three of us, Mary, me and the original Cathy are his mainstay chefs, with a guest cook every now and then. For the Dinners I cook on a Saturday mostly, Indian curries or Boeuf Bourguignon or Luxury Fish Pie, and we go out for dinner afterwards. On Sundays I come early to finish off salads or vegetables and desserts then lay down my apron at 8pm sharp and enjoy the Party. The idea is to talk, communicate, make friends, find jobs, lovers, apartments, anything which brings people together. Jim has a prodigious memory for names and faces and calls out from his high chair for people to talk to each other.

On the other side of the globe in 1982, Alyque met Richard Attenborough at a party and on the spot Attenborough decided Alyque had to play the part of Jinnah in his forthcoming film "Gandhi". So next day Alyque went round to the Studio, and spent the next few days filming, a small part but crucial and one that he played to perfection.

One memorable time Alyque took me to the Blue Frog club in Bombay and we were dancing Rock 'n Roll at around 1am when we slipped (I was never sure if it was me or him but we both crashed to the floor) and I broke my arm. I knew at once it was broken and the waiters found a bucket of ice for me to plunge my arm into then Alyque took me to the hospital in Breach Candy. A young registrar yanked my arm straight and tied it to a splint under instructions from the Senior surgeon who Alyque knew personally and had called on his home number at 1H30 in the morning. This wonderful doctor called back ten minutes later to say he had booked me a room for 8am the next morning and would operate at 2pm! Which he did, brilliantly, so that today there is no sign that it had ever been broken. My son-in-law, an Orthopaedic surgeon, advised me to "come home!" But I decided I had perfect confidence in Mr Doonawallah and I was right. To cap it all in the hospital I had a great corner room with windows

overlooking the rocks and the sea. As Alyque said, the exact same view as the pricey Taj Bengal Hotel down the way!

Then there were the India Years with Jim, when he and I came regularly to Calcutta for the Film Festival in November. I persuaded him to come to India with me one March and he so loved it he became a Consultant and Delegate for the Film Festival and over seven or eight years we came every November together. They provided us with splendid accommodation at the Bengal Club – huge bedroom and bathroom and a massive drawing room where we could entertain and a Boy to look after our every need. We also had a car and driver at our disposal for the full ten days to take us to all the venues for the films and the parties. The Parties! They were wild, every night at a different location around the city, from super smart hotels, the Regency, Taj, Hyatt etc to all the Clubs, the Calcutta, the Bengal, the RCGC, no expense spared, wonderful food, musical entertainment and even party bags. It was the heyday of the Festival. Then under the new government, with the ousting of the Communist Party and the cultured Chief Minister Bhudadeb everything changed. No more parties, no more fancy accommodation, car and driver. The last time we came together Jim and I gave our own Last Night party on the roof of the Press Club, since not even that was happening officially. I think we had the best years.

Alyque has received many awards and prizes for his work over the years. He was given the *Padrashmi Award 2000* for his role as Jinnah in Richard Attenborough's film "Gandhi", and was named *Advertising Man of the Century* by the Ad Club of Mumbai for his contribution to the

Advertising industry. In 2012 he was awarded a *Lifetime Achievement Award* for his spectacular work in Theatre and his drama productions.

Throughout his career Jim also received many awards and acclamations, several from Edinburgh, including in 1966 the Whitbread Award for his "*Contribution to Theatre*", but it was the Honourary Doctorate from Edinburgh Napier University in 2018, for Services to the Arts that was the culmination of his life work.

They have both written their Memoirs. Jim published the first edition of his book "Hello I Love You" in 1974, though updated since. Alyque brought out his book "A Double Life" about his experiences in Theatre and Advertising, his twin loves, in 1999. Both have written several other small books, mainly potted Philosophy and travel.

To both of these remarkable men Love and People are the key to Life. I have their autobiographies, both inscribed with beautiful dedications.

Jim wrote: "Antonia – you are loved by many, and, I know, love many lucky people, lucky us – hugs kisses and thanks – Jim."

And Alyque wrote: "Darling Antonia – you are a true friend – love is the only real thing in life, Love Alyque."

Yes, how lucky am I to have known them. □

Sadly Alyque Padamsee passed away last November 2018; Jim battles on with many health issues, still living in Paris.