



Remembering our  
illustrious founder

## The Jamshed Bhabha Memorial Lectures

# Men of Substance

*Ahead of the second Jamshed Bhabha Memorial Lecture, Chairman Mr. Khushroo N. Suntook reflects on the qualities that make Dr. Bhabha and Dr. Farokh E. Udawadia, the distinguished speaker for this year, kindred souls.*

**A**ugust 21 marks a date when our beloved founder Dr. Jamshed Bhabha would have been 107 years old. Yet, it seems like yesterday when he walked through the corridors of the NCPA. His spirit still pervades the organisation and guides us.

He would have been deeply distressed at the closing of the theatres and I am glad he is not here to see this gloomy period, but I am sure he would have confronted it with the fortitude he always showed.

Dr. Bhabha was not only a man of art but also of science. He would have thoroughly approved our foray into the digital world. The movement we are making to reinvent our business—all on account of a microscopic virus—would certainly have had his tacit approval.

There is nothing he liked better than a new idea and the telephone would ring immediately after one was brought to his notice. “Let’s have breakfast on Sunday to discuss it,” he would say.

Dr. Bhabha spoke most admiringly of his friend and his doctor of choice Dr. Farokh E. Udawadia. They were in many ways kindred souls — two personalities with largely the same values and philosophy of life, and both, matter-of-fact persons. Dr. Bhabha had desired that after he had been cremated there would be no ceremonies to continue the mourning process. Typical of the man.

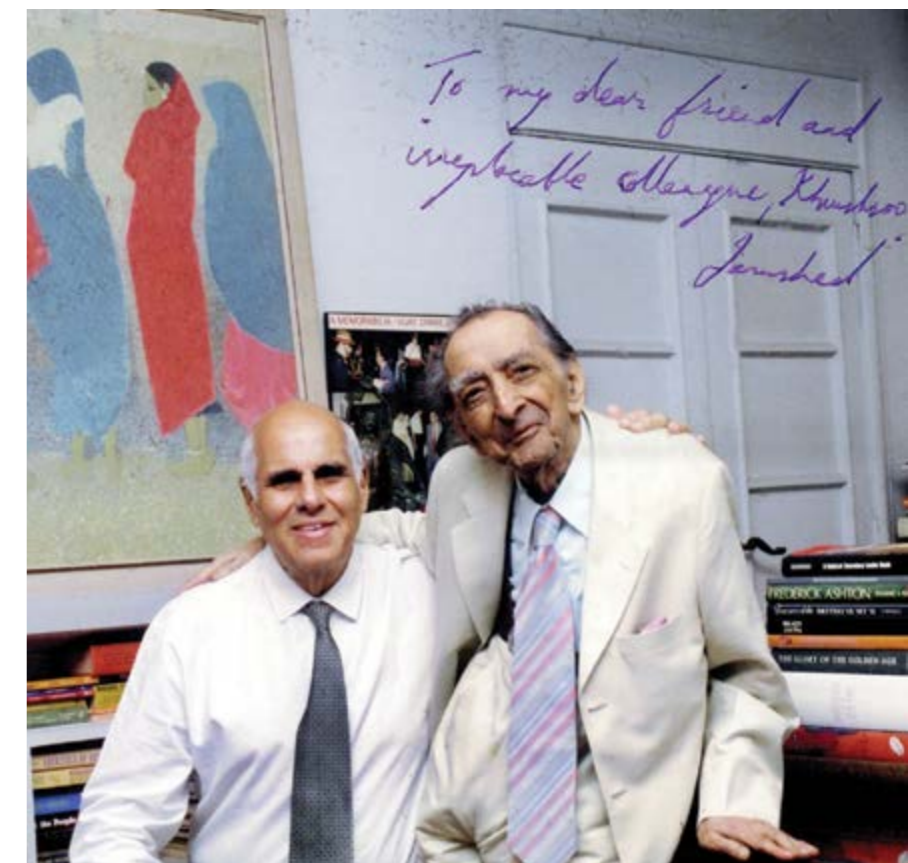
Dr. Udawadia, who needs no introduction, is a complete person. He is not only a distinguished physician but also a personality who embraces the city with his extraordinarily prominent contribution to it. His love of art and music must be mentioned, particularly music, which he makes a part of his life in spite of working nine days a week.

We request you to hear Dr. Udawadia’s profound interpretation of the importance of art in everyday life. Without this, we are nothing but calculators. ■

*The lecture will be broadcast on the NCPA YouTube channel and Facebook page on 21st August 2021. For more details, please log on to [www.ncpamumbai.com](http://www.ncpamumbai.com)*



Dr. Jamshed Bhabha was a man of art and science: Seen here (left) with tabla and sitar legends Allarakha and Ravi Shankar, and (right) with Nobel Prize-winning physicist Neils Bohr, J.R.D. Tata and Homi Bhabha



In Mr. Khushroo N. Suntook, Dr. Jamshed Bhabha saw a friend and an irreplaceable colleague



# The Good Doctor

A legend in the field of medicine, Dr. Farokh E. Udwadia's love of art and literature has been a constant companion and guide in his practice of over six decades. In the second Jamshed Bhabha Memorial Lecture titled 'Art and Mankind', he will discuss why art deserves a place of importance in all human endeavours.

By Snigdha Hasan

He arrives at the NCPA in his scrubs one July afternoon and as he settles down in Mr. Khushroo N. Suntook's office, the pleasantries quickly make way for a fascinating conversation on the Mozart Effect, Beethoven's Ninth, Dante's early life, Correa's Champalimaud Centre in Lisbon, all interspersed with fond mentions of poetry. Dr. Farokh E. Udwadia is in the building and this is how art and science mingle in the good doctor's definition of medicine.

They say physicians like him are rare, and the long list of accolades—he was the youngest Indian ever to be elected a Fellow of the Royal College of Physicians, Edinburgh, in 1969, at the age of 38; was awarded the Padma Bhushan for Contribution to Medicine in 1987; the Giants International Award for Excellence in Field of Medicine in 1992; the Dr. B. C. Roy National Award for the year 2000 in the category of 'Eminent Medical Teacher'—attest to his complete mastery of medicine. But to his patients, he is godlike, while the agnostics and atheists among them settle for a more earthly "legendary". This veneration stems from his precise diagnoses of the most cryptic symptoms, something he attributes to bedside manner—the art of listening to the patient, and empathy. And for these, he turns to art. 'If you want to know exactly how a human being works, you will be much better off if you had an idea of the humanities. Read poetry, literature and you get a good idea of what suffering is,' he said in an interview with Bachi Karkaria.

In his last days, when Dr. Jamshed J. Bhabha was being taken to the hospital, his physician and friend of many years was by his side. "He held my hand and said, 'Farokh, you are like a rainbow in the sky,'" says Dr. Udwadia as he reminisces about their discussions on art and music. "That's how our friendship grew stronger."

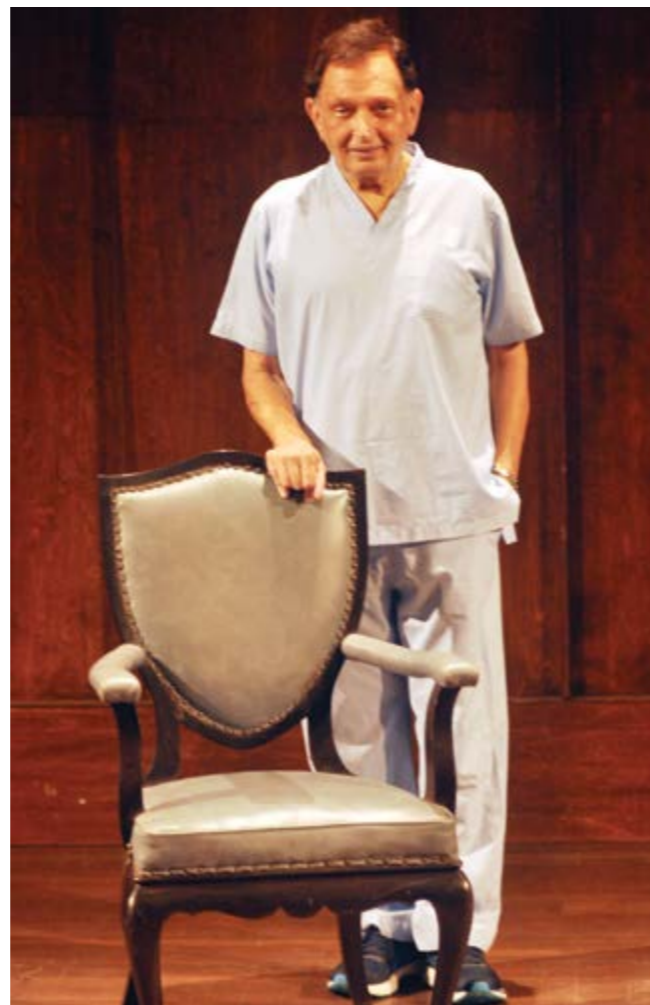
It is fitting then that Dr. Udwadia will deliver the second of The Jamshed Bhabha Memorial Lectures, a series that honours the memory of the NCPA's illustrious founder. Every year on Dr. Bhabha's birth anniversary on 21st August, an eminent speaker from diverse disciplines is invited to speak on art and culture and allied fields. The theme this year is 'Art and Mankind'.

"Art and culture influence each other [but] art transcends culture. It is a great communicator and brings people, societies and countries together," says Dr. Udwadia as he briefly discusses the themes he plans to delve into in his lecture, starting with an overview of the visual arts—painting, sculpture, architecture—

literature and music. "Music and the mind is a fascinating subject. There is also much to be spoken about how suffering affects creativity."

Art preserves what a historical fact cannot," he points out, referring to the need to preserve our culture, and civilisation that dates back to 5,000 years. "The work that the NCPA has done to preserve this socio-cultural heritage of India is remarkable; there's no other such place in the country. Yet, it hurts to see the apathy of people who wouldn't mind paying for dinner in a fancy restaurant but would crib about buying a ticket. That is why we need to start early and impress upon children the importance of art," says Dr. Udwadia, as he evokes Dante's poetry on how it was at school that he learnt to tread the path that led him to where he was.

As the conversation progresses, Mr. Suntook reveals a secret. Dr. Udwadia is a violinist himself. "Jamshed would often ask me, 'Where is your concert? The hall is free for you,'" he replies. A recital by Dr. Udwadia may not have materialised, but a lecture has. And on a topic that Dr. Bhabha would have wholeheartedly endorsed. ■



# 'A vital unifying and inspiring force'

These excerpts from an article by Dr. Jamshed J. Bhabha in the first brochure about the National Centre for the Performing Arts speak of his vision for an organisation in the service of the arts, and the role of the arts in nurturing humankind.

The culture of a people is no accident of history or gift from heaven which can simply be inherited: it is the expression of Man's aspirations, the fruits of his striving for a fuller life. It is grounded in human decision and effort and can be lost forever by neglect and inaction.

The National Centre for the Performing Arts was registered as a Public Trust in June 1966 under the name of the National Institute of the Performing Arts. Its present name was adopted and registered in November 1967.

At a time when magnificent centres for the performing arts are being established in various parts of the world, it seems necessary

to state the distinctive features of the Indian centre. The centre in India—in addition to being a home for the performing and expressive arts—like its counterparts in other parts of the world, is conceived primarily to maintain the continuity of the great teachers of Indian music, dance and drama, and to record and preserve the finest performances in these arts. Unlike the music of Europe and America, the music of India is largely unrecorded. A system of music scores has not yet been devised for Indian music and relatively little of it has been recorded on tape and disc. The art has been handed down by oral tradition and kept alive for centuries by teachers and masters who have been members of hereditary professions. This category of hereditary teachers is fast dying out and disappearing with the changes in society that since India's independence have ensued from growing industrialisation and urbanisation. Thus, the proposed National Centre for the Performing Arts is necessary for the survival and preservation of a great heritage of music, dance and drama, which may be lost to mankind forever, just as it has been bereft of the heritage of the classical music of Ancient Greece for want of records.

Apart from this basic reason for bringing the Indian



There's enough proof that the art, sculpture and paintings of India have drawn heavily from various dance forms. Seen here is a painting in the Ajanta caves

performing arts centre into being as speedily as possible, a brief reference seems appropriate to other important considerations which underline the need to have a national centre of the kind projected.

Trite though it may seem to say "Man does not live by bread alone", it remains a truth that bears repetition. When man's elemental wants are met, and often even when they are not, he needs something more to fill his life. Leisure has aptly been described as "the growing time of the spirit", and the quality of the arts available to man in his hours of leisure, whether in the form of drama, on the stage or the screen, or of music or dancing, helps to sharpen his faculties and finer instincts and mould the man. In fact, the importance of the role of the arts in all their forms, classical and folk, traditional and contemporary, is masked only by the complexity of present-day life and the proliferation of the arts themselves into many directions, some of little basic value. A true picture emerges of the role of the arts, if we consider times less complicated than the present.

In Ancient Greece, the arts were dedicated to the all-important purposes of religion and the creation of supremely beautiful temples. While no records survive of Greek music, which suffered the fate that threatens

to overtake much of the classical music of India, pictorial and sculptural representations of musicians and dancers show that these arts too were concerned primarily with the manifestations of religion. It is significant that the Greek *μουσική*, from which the word 'Music' is derived, was used comprehensively for all the arts of the Nine Muses. Contrasted with *γυμναστική* (gymnastic), it included the culture of the mind as distinguished from that of the body. The philosophers valued music, both in the ancient general sense and in our restricted sense, chiefly as an educational element in the formation of character.

In later centuries in Europe, the arts were similarly harnessed in the service of Christianity and created great churches, adorned in France and England by stained glass of unsurpassed beauty, and in Italy and South Europe by wall paintings which culminated in the masterpieces of Masaccio, Leonardo and Michelangelo. The earliest classical works of European music similarly took the form of religious music.

## The quality of the arts available to man in his hours of leisure, whether in the form of drama, on the stage or the screen, or of music or dancing, helps to sharpen his faculties and finer instincts and to mould the man

In India, the arts were, if anything, even more closely integrated with religion, and to this day some of the greatest music and dancing is associated with temples and related to worship. The concepts and themes of religion permeated her fine arts, dance and drama. It is noteworthy that the dance in India has been inseparable from drama. The same words *nata nati*, actor actress, also designate dancer danseuse; and a theatre (*natyashala*) is equally a dancing stage. *Natya* is dancing used in drama (*nataka*). In his great treatise, the *Natya Shastra*, Bharata dealt with the three cognate arts of Acting, Dancing and Music as inseparable constituents of Drama. It is also remarkable that in no other civilisation has the classical dance had such a powerful impact on the other arts as in India, where in the great rock-cut sanctuaries of Ajanta, Ellora and Elephanta, and in the splendid temples of Konark, Bhubaneswar and South India, we see masterpieces of sculpture and painting that portray gods, goddesses and attendants in postures of grace and rhythm derived directly from the great dance forms. The manifestations of art were in truth regarded as means of education.

We thus get a truer picture of the importance of the arts to humanity as a vital unifying and inspiring

force if we consider previous centuries when life was less complicated than it is today. While in the last 200 years, in Europe and America, music has been mainly of a non-religious or secular character, it remains true of all the great arts, past or present, that they have a profoundly stirring effect on the human mind and spirit, and transcend the limitations and barriers of race, nationality, class and creed.

Today, in India, as in any developing country, the processes of industrialisation are having a widely unsettling effect on the life of the people. The movement from the country to the towns, the new strains and stresses of urban life, the pulls and pressures of labour unions and political parties have combined to loosen old ties of family and community and to destroy or diminish the regulatory effect, even if at times cramping, of old beliefs and traditions. Timely indeed is the warning given by Dr. Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan, when, as President of India, he stated that "Mental slums are more dangerous than physical slums". In the ferment in which India finds

herself today, if the people's energies are to be channelled into peaceful, creative and constructive directions, more is required than the promotion of industrialisation and the advancement of science and technology: attention needs to be given to the development of the spirit and character of the people. Disruptive and divisive forces like communalism, casteism, provincialism and narrow nationalism can be combated effectively not by the use of force, but by reaching men's motivation.

The immense integrating force of the arts on the international, as on the national plane, is recognised in the famous words of Mahatma Gandhi:

"I do not want my house to be walled on all sides and my windows to be stuffed. I want the culture of all lands to be blown about my house as freely as possible."

In keeping with the spirit of the universality of the arts, the National Centre's Master Plan envisages an International Division to ensure that the music and other performing arts of Asia, Europe and America have a place in the National Centre. This will stimulate cross-fertilisation of ideas and promote the development of India's arts in new directions, but from national roots, in a fast changing world.

It is in that spirit that, at the very inception of the National Centre for the Performing Arts, a powerful Board of Advisers was constituted of those who had rendered distinguished service in the fields of the arts not only in India but also in friendly countries abroad.

It is the fervent hope of all those working for the National Centre that Government agencies, foundations, firms and individuals in India and abroad, will extend generous support to an institution that is striving to preserve a most important part of the national wealth of India, a precious heritage of human striving and achievement, for the benefit of all mankind. ■

*Excerpts from an article from the first brochure about the NCPA before it came into being.*