

# An Indonesian rhapsody



**A** FAMOUS Punch cartoon has a few cowboys entering a street in the United States with shop legends having names such as Patel, Shah et al. And their awestruck response is 'Injuns' before they flee the scene. The ubiquitous Indian may invite such wry humour. However, this may not be applicable to Indonesia where the Indian Diaspora is miniscule. They, of course, have made their presence felt in the economic scene, especially the Sindhis, Marwaris and other business communities known for their Midas touch. And the Malayalis are also there, maybe numbering a few hundred families. They have left their stamp in a different way; mainly as a result of the efforts of a Malayali couple, who have spearheaded a kind of light music revolution in their country of working choice.

They are Sunil and Sunitha, a husband and wife duo from Kerala.

As many others of Indian origin, the couple moved to Indonesia seeking better prospects. Sunil, an instrumentation engineer, jumped at a lucrative offer and Sunitha

In 1999, emboldened by the popularity of their performance the couple formed a music group, 'Sahiti'. What gave them impetus to their venture was the Indonesians' ardent love for Hindi film music. Of course, there was the Indian community as well which found it very expensive to get singers from India all the time.

The new and unique twist they gave to their troupe was in training 10 Indonesians to become members of the troupe. "It was no cake walk," together they chorused, "when you consider the switch-over the locals had to make to accommodate themselves to an alien tongue." Used as they are to the Indonesian language, Bhasa, it was not easy for them to adapt their tongue to an Indian language, though, as a people, their affinity to quite a few things Indian is heart-warming, agrees the couple.

But the couple trained them well and the troupe's performance was well received. Their songs in Malayalam, Hindi, Tamil and Telugu has ready takers and the couple and their troupe have been giving as many 15 performances a month,

**T**HE NOTED director, Rajivnath, has just returned from Almati, the former capital of Kazakhstan, completing the first schedule of his latest film, 'Moksha'. The film, which focuses on maternal affection and oriental values, has the celebrated Hindi actress, Zeenat Aman, in the lead. The young artiste, Anoop, has been cast opposite Zeenat.

According to Rajivnath, the spark of the film originated from his personal experience, following the death of his mother in the United States and the trauma the family had to undergo in bringing the body home.

His friend, Babu Bharadwaj, had written a novelette, 'Shava Ghoshayatra', based on Rajivnath's narration of his mother's death. But Rajivnath has given a new dimension to the story written by Babu Bharadwaj to make it visually appealing.

The hero of the film, a young bachelor, is compelled to accompany his mother to the U.S. to visit his sister who is settled there. He leaves the native village to which he is emotionally attached, against his will, since he does not want to stay away from his mother.

The mother dies in America and the young man's relatives in the U.S. try to prevail on him to cremate the body there, in vain. He refuses to comply and decides to take the body home to fulfil his mother's wish that she be cremated close to the spot where his father was laid to rest.

He starts the journey with the coffin, but the terrorist strike on the World Trade Centre brings the entire world to a standstill. His flight is diverted to Russia and he is compelled to stay in the airport with the coffin.

Though the airport authorities urge him to leave the coffin at the airport and go to a hotel, the youth insists on staying with it. A prominent Malayali lady, who has settled in that country, learns about his plight and comes to his help. She takes him to her house and he gradually develops an affection for her, which leads to a new turn in the story.

## Sculpture

**A** NYBODY who has been to Thunchan Parambu at Tirur could not have missed the gigantic sculpture of a bird epitomising the 'kilipattu' of the father of Malayalam poetry. Perhaps, more befitting than any real-life statue of Ezhuthachan, it is truly a poem in metallic form resonating powerfully the message of a perennial inter-textuality between the various modes of artistic representation. And the man behind this metallic sculpture is a young leading sculptor and landscape artist of Kerala, Balan Tanur.

"M. T. Vasudevan Nair had entrusted me with the task of erecting a fitting memorial to the father of Malayalam poetry. I came up with a symbolic 'bird', much to MT's delight and surprise," muses Balan, recounting the tale of the statue's origin.

Instrumental in introducing sculpture in a big way into public places,

