

South Asia Against AIDS Foundation Opens Its 'Art of Love' Auction

By CHANDRAKANT PANCHOLI

In December, 1996, Alan Greenspan, the chairman of Federal Reserve Bank described the situation in the stock market as "Irrational Exuberance" and coined a new term.

Evidently, he never met Asha Olivia, the founder and President of South Asia Against Aids Foundation or SAA AIDS; if he had, he would have known something about the "Extremely Rational Exuberance" that she emits.

And never mind, Greenspan! Just be careful when you step into Manhattan, next time. Otherwise, before you know it, you will be a Board Member of her organization!

And why in just two years' time, this organization has become a classical success story?

Her simplicity attracts people. And that reminded me of what Mirza Asadullah Beg Khan, a poet born in 1798 and also known as Mirza Ghalib, wrote: "Ye Saadgi Pe Kaun N Mar Jaay Aiy Khuda, Ladte Hai Aur Haath mein Talwar bhi Nahin." (Oh! God! Who will not die while looking at this simplicity? She is fighting (a battle) and does not even have a sword in her hand!).

A list of participants in her program and her associates reads like a "Who

is Who" in New York. Asha greets everyone as if he or she was her long lost friend. And her networking skill has drawn a host of other organizations to donate time and money, including Aria Das's Star Public Relations and Rohi Mirza and Rashi Syam's Haseen Events - a management and marketing company. She has also got two Restaurants - Dawat and Tabla to donate food.

SAA AIDS opened its "Art of Love" Auction at a reception held at Prajit and Projjal Dutta's Gallery "ArtsIndia" situated at 206 Fifth Ave, New York, July 18 at 6:30 p.m..

This is its Second Annual Benefit Pre-Gala - Festival that extends till Saturday, July 27, 2002. It was a celebration for 26 Artists and Art Galleries who were donating their paintings and photographs to make this fund-raising event a grand success.

SAA AIDS is helping South Asia's women and children to lead lives of true self-empowerment through Shelter, Healthcare and Education.

It believes that this strategy will be effective, in the long-term, to fight the epidemic of HIV/AIDS that is spreading rapidly in South Asia.

Several Artists, including Shelly Bahl, Natvar Bhavsar, Rodeny Dickson, Shan Jayakumar, Keith Kaminski, Payal

Khandwala, Rita and Trupti Patel, Shaheen Rashid, Zhao Suikang, Sooni Taraporevala and Taj Gallery of Art and Inspiration have donated the works for auction. The proceeds from sales will benefit the SAA AIDS.

There are several art works whose bidding price is in the range of \$275 to \$1,000. "The value of these art-works is three to four times higher than the opening bids. But I wanted to keep the prices low, so that any family can afford it."

I want an average family to buy the art-work and hang it in its living room. You don't have to be rich to appreciate art", said Asha Olivia, the President and Founder of SAA AIDS. All 34 works are original.

The Wine and Food for this event was donated by Danny Meyer's, "Tabla" Restaurant. In a separate interview, Floyd Cardoz who is from Goa and was trained in Switzerland, stated that Indians in the U.S.A. should show generosity towards worthy causes "I was very happy to create appetizers for this event", he declared.

So, if you want to buy some original paintings and photographs at reasonable prices and have some satisfaction of helping a worthy cause, call immediately Amisha Patel at 917-566-2714, Donnis Glover at 646-391-0571 or e-mail Asha@SAA AIDS.org.