

BCI Diplomatic Mailbag - The Ambassador's newsletter:
Communicating with BCI members around the World

2008

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Edition



BCI- Ambassador's
Newsletter

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Editors Message

Hi to all

We say it every year but this one seems to have skipped past at a very rapid rate and I am wondering what happened to 2008.

On behalf of all the board of BCI and myself I would like to wish all ambassadors a very Happy Christmas and a fantastic Bonsai packed 2009.

Certainly another action packed 2009 from a Bonsai point of view is approaching.

Keep those articles coming as it certainly keeps the newsletter fresh and interesting.

Bye for now

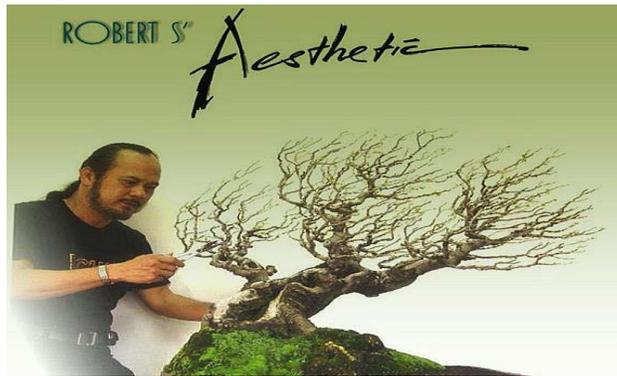
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Robert Steven visits India

RADHIKA SOOD
Member, Avadh Bonsai Association,
Lucknow, India



When the wind blows....from Indonesia to India, it rustles, resonates and whispers the arrival of **Robert Steven**, a specialist, at designing the **Windswept Style** of Bonsai, amidst the cultural opulence & architectural grandeur of the City of Nawabs.

Robert, who is an internationally acclaimed bonsai master, was in the city recently to share his immense reservoir of knowledge & invaluable experience, with members of Avadh Bonsai Association, Lucknow.

Avadh Bonsai Association, as you already know, is a non commercial organization, actively engaged in the cause of spreading the art of BONSAI, aptly called 'Nature in Miniature' since the last eight years. It has been imparting basic & advanced training to students, interested in learning the nitty gritty of this creative art form. Most importantly, it also partakes equipping them with know-how's for the systematic upkeep and maintenance of their prized bonsai through various classes, workshops, national and international bonsai magazine subscriptions and regular technical Audio-Visual presentations.

The association's ever-augmenting learning & growth flame is kept, eternally ignited by the dynamic leadership & ceaseless efforts of the Group **President, Mrs. Santosh Arora**,

Chief Advisor, Mr. k.k. Arora & dedicated team of committee members. In addition to hosting exhibitions every two years & encouraging member participation in National & International Bonsai Conventions, Photo Competitions, the group, continuously strives to stay abreast with the latest in bonsai techniques. The group, had therefore, invited some times back leading Indian, internationally acclaimed, Bonsai Masters Jyoti & Nikunj Parekh, from Mumbai & provided its members with a world class opportunity to learn and enhance their knowledge of the subject.

Under the aegis of Sahara India Parivar, as part of this year's marked agenda, the association had the honour to invite **Mr. Robert Steven – 'the Architect of a Green World in Miniature'** for conducting an interactive teaching, demonstration, workshop & critique session for all participating members, from 7th Sept to 9th Sept, 2008.

Winner of various prestigious international awards & also author of a very informative book on Bonsai 'VISION OF MY SOUL', this multifaceted master, enthralled the audience, with his simple, straight forward, glib talk, mimicry & unique style of teaching.

Now, he is no ordinary bonsai master; rather he presided over the three day workshop as one '**hard task**' master, who does not believe in any pleasantries, any compromises or any mincing of words when it comes to teaching & communicating his ideology about Bonsai. His energy, flair & passion for bonsai comes across as no surprise, as he connected, holding his audience captive and spell bound, even as he reprimanded, criticized and pointed out lacunae, during the endless Critique sessions.

At the same time, he inspired, motivated all, as he repeatedly beseeched & requested the students to understand the basic plant morphology & physiology, before attempting to stylize the ordinary garden plant into a thematic Bonsai, conveying a message. He implored to bring about a paradigm shift, in pursuing Bonsai, not merely as a part time hobby, but as a serious way of Life.

The master during his opening address categorically stated that a Good Bonsai Tree should be able to speak for itself. Rather, the tree should narrate its own story, reflecting the environmental factors & conditions which gradually lead to its miniaturized shape. It should aesthetically mimic a full fledged tree of the same species, commonly found outdoors. The foliage should ideally be compact, to give appearance of age & maturity. The plant should be structured in such a way, that it accentuates the dynamics, the motion, and the natural flow of the tree. While, considerable emphasis should be laid on its branching pattern & their overall ramification.

In the master's words the Tree too portrays a Personality, a disposition, as they appear cheerful, sad, happy, sentimental, aggressive or even romantic. Each tree has a character, a focal point of interest, which should be highlighted. He explained how to work with the line, the shape, the colour and texture of the tree, and integrating them all together, to achieve an overall artistic, balanced look. Most importantly, he infused, that care should be taken to maintain an overall dignified simplicity of its design/style.

He explicitly expressed an observation, that in nature, it is characteristic of the roots to grow towards the source of water, while the branching pattern too merely tends to follow

the direction of the root. However, depicting the same in an indigenous Bonsai is a quite a challenge for any bonsai artist.

The theoretical lessons, discussions and Question Answer sessions were interspersed with spur-of-the-moment demonstrations, where he showcased his expertise working on assorted variety of plants ranging from Casuarina to Ficus, Witex, Jaquinia, Bougainvillea, Rain tree & cascading style Juniper, belonging to the select members.

As an impromptu gesture he restyled a Suihan Penjing (Land-Water Landscape), giving it his own personal touch, by placing the main tree and the main rock at an off centre position, as the main focal point. With uneven placement of flat rocks, erect rocks, and smaller trees bending over the rivulet, forming a groove, he gave this asymmetrical creation, a lot of contouring, variation, depth and mystery.

In the same vain, he skilfully re-arranged a Forest grouping of multi-trunk Ficus trees, by deftly separating out the individual trunks, into many single trees in varying sizes. Later he planted them all back together, after defoliating them completely, to form an asymmetrical, natural forest arrangement, bereft of leaves, depicting autumn.

During a special workshop session, he solicited few students to come forth and work on their plants while he observed & diligently guided them. To name a few, KK Arora, Madhuri Halwasia, Nita Singh, Anita Narrain, Gunjan Banga, Usha Singh promptly accepted the challenge and set to put his teachings at test, while stylizing their respective plants into 'Robert's Style' Bonsai. The master seemed visibly impressed and content with the enthusiastic audience participation & overall results. At the close of the workshop, each member was duly awarded a 'Certificate of Participation' for the same.

Robert Steven, convincingly preaches and demonstrates what he staunchly believes in; as he advocates to '**Thinking, out of the Box**', although at the same time, he cautions, that 'Unique' does not always mean beautiful, yet one needs to explore all possibilities with regards to shaping of the plant, optimizing on its best quality. Rigidly following, the Bonsai rule books word by word and/or bending them as and when needed, while moulding the plant, based on the tree's innate motion / dynamics, seems to be the mantra propagated by him. After all, 'Rules' or 'No Rules'; both are 'Two sides of the same Coin', employed effectively to create an aesthetically beautiful Green Art Form of BONSAI.

Last but not the least; this 'master-blastor' teacher graciously agreed to share with us his expertise in designing his prima-nova 'Windswept Style' Bonsai. Sighting an example of a car in Motion, he explained the concept of Anti- Gravity / Anti- Balance. Later, he playfully mimicked, as if he himself were in motion, whilst running and asked the photographer to click his snap 'IN MOTION'. With that, he went on to explain the varied effect of a strong wind, a gentle wind, the effect of a continuous blowing wind on each branches, each twig of tree. He demonstrated the same by completing defoliating a Fig Tree, shaping & wiring its individual branches, & then giving them each a wind blown effect. The mesmerizing result undoubtedly appealed to all senses, as it looked alluring, like a MOTION PICTURE of a Tree, portraying the effect of 'When the Wind Blows...'



Some candid shots of the event in India are shown above

Some ideas for your club meetings

I include below a copy of an Email received (with thanks I might add) from New Zealand.

“Avon Bonsai Society (Christchurch, New Zealand) holds a pot making evening most winters and she suggested you might like some pictures for the BCI newsletter.

The photos show the pots being made, some of the pots after they were fired and finally (photo 2007) a photo of some of last year's efforts already in use.

The members have been asked to plant up this year's pots with anything they like and bring them to the September meeting when Alan and I will give a prize (probably another pot!) for the best effort. Alan and I glazed and fired the pots which all came through the process with some really nice examples. Considering the fact that some members had never made a pot before we were very pleased (and so were they) with the results.

By the way, we all enjoy reading the Ambassadors newsletter, great to read what other clubs are doing around the world.”

Regards,
Beverley Van
Vice Pres. and BCI Ambassador
Avon Bonsai Society,
Christchurch New Zealand



As you will be aware I spent two years in Sydney recently and the club I became a member of did a similar event as shown below and I have put some photos below of the activities.

Please if you have any ideas on different types of meeting nights lets share them around – have you ever tried a blindfolded demonstration??



All hard at work



A masterpiece takes shape

New Orleans next Year



As an early notification it is New Orleans hosting the conference next year June 19, 20th and 21st 2009 outstanding demonstrators including Bill Valavanis will be available shortly, if you require details Email the following bcibizness@cox.net

Don't miss out book now.

Ambassadors Corner

Thanks again to all that submitted articles and if you would like to be a published author please send something in, it, makes my life easier and keeps the newsletter interesting and fresh.

I do hope all ambassadors have their badge, if you don't have one send me an Email and I will post one out, these are for ambassadors only.

Ambassadors competition

Come on all a few years ago this towel with 20 plus badges would have fetched \$500.00 and at \$US150.00 it is a steal

Shown below is the towel with some of the badges, I am putting this towel and badges up for auction and I will guarantee 20 plus badges on the towel -, who has US\$150.00 to start. Email me your bids to me and the auction closes 30 November 2008.

All money raised will be donated to BCI!



Closing and next Issue

December is here and in my part of the world it gets hot and hopefully wet as I am in a semi tropical part of the world.

I appreciate all the support and help given by many ambassadors over the year and again any ideas on ways to improve or better the program would be welcomed.

If you have never been to a BCI convention why not make it a New Years resolution to go to New Orleans or maybe suggest your club raffles a registration – this will pull a lot of interest and could make you club some real cash.

Please feel free to circulate this newsletter throughout your club and please don't hesitate to take portions of it and use it as part of your club newsletter, it is meant to be shared and Email makes this task very easy and inexpensive.

That is it from me for 2008, and see you all in 2009 – Merry Christmas and a great New Year

