

BRAND EQUITY

SPECIAL ISSUE

THE ECONOMIC TIMES DECEMBER 05-11, 2018



Alyque Padamsee famously closed discussions with "I am Alyque". His colleagues, clients, friends and foes in advertising and theatre say it was a right he had earned. This special edition of Brand Equity is a tribute to the man they all called 'God'.

By Amit Bapna, Priyanka Nair & Delshad Irani

"Alyque helped creatives push their ideas through, which was a very big thing," says Lintas alumna Usha Bhandarkar as she recalls the time the agency's chief Alyque Padamsee fought Hindustan Unilever's top brass to greenlight a crucial campaign to fight a new, formidable threat in detergents. At Levers, these efforts were filed under 'Project STING: Strategy to Inhibit Nirma Growth'. But the truth is the client had already bought air-time during the 1984 Olympics and they didn't have a back-up campaign. That's how Surf's Lalitaji was

born, by a twist of fate and a shove from Padamsee. Lalitaji is just one in a pantheon of Indian advertising icons that Padamsee helped bring to life. From MRF's Muscle Man and Cherry Blossom's Cherry Charlie to the green bikini-clad girl in the waterfall for Liril. Also among his greatest hits was the legendary campaign 'Hamara Bajaj' for the desi two-wheeler brand and KamaSutra's category defining launch campaign, 'For the pleasure of making love'. People who knew him and worked with him say Padamsee had a finger on the nation's pulse and he helped mould ideas into campaigns with his unique creative sense. And yes, when it mattered

most he put his theatrics to good use to sell those ideas to clients and consumers. Chander Mohan Sethi, a former Reckitt Benckiser chief, worked closely with Padamsee for Cherry Blossom, the shoe polish brand. He remembers Padamsee's impressive presence and "his ability to directly sell the campaign's logic in the most engaging formats." One would expect nothing less from a man whose passion was theatre. Says Sethi, "He was known to be short on tolerating "pushy clients" and he also demonstrated that in campaign development." Try to challenge the thought and he would stand up, all 6-feet of him, and make his point most forcefully, adds Sethi. The 'Cherry Charlie' campaign broke through the clutter and re-ignited shoe polish sales for Reckitt. It was what we now call famous and effective work. Vindi Banga, a

former chairman of Hindustan Unilever, remembers Padamsee as a true lover of a big and simple idea. Banga tells us perhaps it was his creative pursuits that helped him connect with the consumer; "Because of that he was able to instinctively agree with ideas that were going to catch the mood of the nation. When you think about the Liril, Surf and Bajaj work, they all caught a broad mood in the nation and that was fantastic." Ajai Jhala worked at Lintas in the 1980s and he recalls how Padamsee repeatedly reminded the team to never diminish Lalitaji's tough-as-nails attitude and slightly abrasive value-seeking personality. She was meant to be that way. In a strategy review board meeting for KamaSutra, research had shown that the biggest driver of condom use was prevention of diseases and not birth-control,

recalls Pranesh Misra, an ex-Lintas chief. Years of Nirodh (the first made-in-India condom brand) advertising had made the category so unappealing that people hated condoms. "It is like swimming with a rain coat on!" was one of the consumer narratives, as Misra puts it. "AP caught on to that and the insight came in a spark. "We need to change condoms from pleasure inhibitors to pleasure enhancers. And KamaSutra will do that!" he burst out at the meeting," recalls Misra. It was life-altering, particularly for the by and large "sexually repressed" Indian consumer. That's how the "scandalous" campaign starring Pooja Bedi and Marc Robinson came into being. One of Padamsee's greatest achievements, though, was Lintas, the agency where he cultivated a breed of adwallahs the current world could certainly use more of. He made Lintas the first ad agency to become a household name, says Joseph George, former group chairman and CEO of MullenLowe Lintas. Gerson da Cunha, the theatre actor and ad veteran who headed Lintas from 1969 to 1979 says Padamsee took Lintas' billings to a level nobody had even dreamt of. He adds that Padamsee simply wanted to lift the quality of advertising in the country. And he succeeded in his mission. Adds George, "Padamsee was, arguably, singularly responsible for turning government's, general public's, media's and corporate India's attention on the advertising industry disproportionately beyond its size and scale."

QUIRKS OF A True 'Mad Man'

The peculiar sides of Alyque Padamsee that endeared to and enraged so many

Bells, beer and broken legs

Padamsee's year-end soirees at his residence (Christmas Eve) were legendary and many Lintas staffers were deployed to party frontlines every year. Once an employee had suffered a torn ligament in his leg after a road accident. When Padamsee noticed his absence at that busy time he inquired about the gent's whereabouts. He was told about

the accident. He asked about the employee again the next day. On the fourth day, when he heard the same answer Padamsee said, "His leg might be broken but his mind isn't." Then he instructed his staff to send the work to the employee's home. As they say in the business, the show must go on. Padamsee cared for his employees though. Many former and current Lintas people we spoke to said that Lintas' annual gifts helped them set up their homes.



Notes from AP

One of Padamsee's famous IIM-A hires, Pranesh Misra (who later became President and COO of the agency) tells us, "We were in awe of his Panasonic cordless phone that he had acquired. George, his man Friday, would carry that phone into the meeting room first. It indicated that AP was about to arrive, which he did after at least 10 minutes. He was always running late for internal

meetings but was a stickler for deadlines! After a training program by Sharu Rangnekar, he embraced the idea of having a principle of fines (a rupee for each minute of delay in joining a meeting). So, from the next day, in addition to his cordless, an alarm clock and a glass collection jar preceded him to the meetings. Only hitch was that he continued to be the highest contributor to that kitty! All the collections were donated to Mother Teresa."

#FakeNews: Lalita D'Silva breaks a famous Padamsee myth

The story of Alyque Padamsee's barefooted secretary walking miles to return to office after being rushed into an on-the-go meeting is believable. But it's #FakeNews or the result of adlanders putting one too many creative twists on the truth. It is, however, true that his secretaries who'd often shrug off their footwear to sit comfortably at their desks, did find themselves barefoot and next to an energetic Padamsee in an elevator and around office many times.



Prayer Meeting with 'God': When a young D'silva joined the agency she thought the Prayer Meeting was about joining hands and saying Hail Mary prayers. In fact, prayer meetings at Alyque's Lintas were about sharing ideas.



Many of Padamsee's work meetings happened in his car. These usually ended with him asking people to get off at a random location after he was done talking business. Then they'd have to make their way back to office or home from wherever Padamsee left them.

I AM ALYQUE

THE LATE ALYQUE PADAMSEE WILL BE REMEMBERED FOR HIS UNIQUE IMPRINT ON THE ICONIC BRANDS HE HELPED BUILD



PHOTOS: TIMES ARCHIVE

La
Lala lala la
Lala lala la
la la la

Forever Fresh.
Liril remembers Alyque.

The Old Boys' Club?

"Alyque was a Ladies Man and way ahead of his times," writes **Meenakshi Menon**, a Lintas alumna and founder & chairperson, Spatial Access



In 1980, when I joined Lintas as a junior account executive there were so many women to look up to. The head of the film department was Mubi Pasricha, one of the most creative film executives in the business. The head of media planning was Helen Anchan, who went on to train and develop a legion of media planners who spread across the globe. There were creative heads galore - Nina Verma, Anita Sarkar, Imtiaz Dharkar. Later Grace Martins took over the studio and production units. Pathfinders (The Market Research agency) was headed by Nunu Sethna.

Women were a valued resource. They were respected, treated fairly (but we did have gender pay disparity) and knew that even though AP could be scary and intimidating at the best of times, he was fair. That was a time when there were no formal redressal mechanisms in place but the culture at Lintas was one of respect. We were a bunch of young people in our 20's and 30's, many of whom came from fairly conservative backgrounds. Alyque had a giant reputation for his inability to tolerate any nonsense, anything that was unfair was dealt with summarily.

It was in the early 80's that I had first-hand experience of Alyques' King Solomon justice. The movie '10' starring Bo Derek was a sensation. One bright soul in Lintas decided to have some fun and set up a poster ranking the Lintas women. As you can imagine there was a furore. Some of us, me included thought this was in bad taste, some thought it was a lark and laughed it off. We heard about the poster and the rankings but had not seen it because the poster was in the Gents' loo on the 15th floor. So a couple of us went to meet AP with a complaint asking that the poster should be removed and the boys behind the idea hauled up. Alyque was very upset, not at the poster or the idea behind it but the place in which it had been located. He felt that had it been out on the main notice board as a joke we could all have had a laugh but by putting it up in the gents' loo the boys had been tawdry and disrespectful. The poster



(Top) A New Year's Eve party - 1981
Photo Source: Facebook/ Gita Manian

was removed. AP apologised to us but the boys were ticked off in private.

Alyque was truly a Ladies' man and all of us at Lintas knew about his colourful private life because he never kept anything hidden. It was out in public. Alyque was so secure in his skin, he did not care a hoot for what people thought or said. For me, a twenty-something finding my feet in the corporate world, it was marvellous to see first-hand his ability to create his own moral code and live by it. Everyone at Lintas felt like one large family and AP was Paterfamilias. Willy Nilly we all got sucked into his life in some form or fashion. Art directors would disappear because they were busy with creative cards for AP's friends and family. Copywriters would be writing blurbs for plays. The film team would be creating background videos for his public presentations. The Servicing chaps would be chasing sponsors for his

plays. I even organised playdates for Shazbaan and my daughter (they were in the same class at school) nothing was too much or too little. Strangely enough everyone wanted to be part of his life and experience. Everyone gave their time and talent willingly, AP never bullied us to do his personal stuff, often he bullied us when it came to work. We were all privileged by our proximity to his genius

He was a man of strong opinions and unabashedly used his incredible theatrical skills to his advantage. For Alyque we were all actors on his stage and it was his job to get us to play our roles to the best of his ability. Which is why, Alyques' Lintas had more than its fair share of talent, male or female. AP once said to me "what matters lies between the ears and not between the legs" he made sure everyone in Lintas used just one yardstick - Talent & Delivery. Gender was the last thing on his mind.

AP ONCE SAID "WHAT MATTERS LIES BETWEEN THE EARS AND NOT BETWEEN THE LEGS." HE MADE SURE EVERYONE IN LINTAS USED JUST ONE YARDSTICK - TALENT & DELIVERY.



L-R: Prem Mehta, Meenakshi Menon and Alyque Padamsee



L-R: Meenakshi Menon (then Madhvani), GM Bombay-1 (the HLL unit); Prabha Parmeswaran DGM Bombay-1; Meera Kaul, head studio & production and Kavita Advani, head films.

"Working with AP was very inspiring and exasperating"

Usha Bhandarkar, a key member of the team that created Surf's Lalitaji campaigns and kept Levers (detergents) at Lintas, was hired by Padamsee. When she joined Lintas she was pregnant after many years of marriage and wanted a part-time job. Padamsee, she tells us, was very kind and gave Bhandarkar a great deal of



independence. And so she stuck to her half-days.

Bhandarkar recalls: "I was a member of the Strategy Review Board and Creative Review Board. So I saw how he reacted to all campaigns and how his mind worked. He bought a lot of theatre to advertising. Theatre is live, raw, and every pause and every look has to be planned for effect. He brought that to advertising. There's a lot of non-verbal communication in theatre.

Now if you look at the famous KamaSutra condoms ad there isn't a word in it. It's totally non-verbal with one line at the end - 'for the pleasure of making love'. Although both the teams, print and film, were maestros at it, it came through very well because it was well articulated before execution, and that happened at the review boards. Alyque always had a point of view. Some ideas were very zany. We loved listening to his crazy ideas but to execute them was another matter." She adds, "Working with him was very inspiring and exasperating."

#Alyquedotes

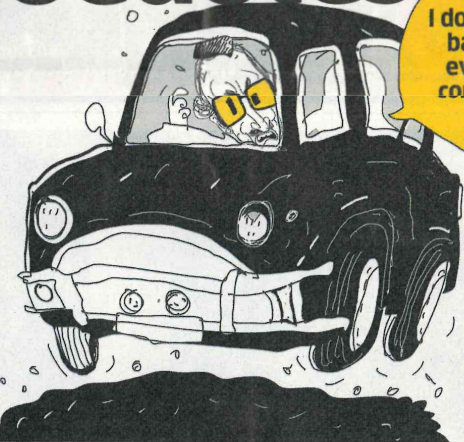
Josy Paul
Chairman and CCO, BBDO India

"Alyque Padamsee is the original son of the theatre God. The world was his stage and theatre was in his blood. Every meeting at Lintas was like a one act play, when Alyque entered the room. It was dramatic and fascinating! And he made us fall in love with advertising. He used to tell us, "The moment you stand up to present an

"The car lights were lit brightly so that passing vehicles and waiting public can see Alyque at work. It was a stage moving at 40 kmph."

idea, to a client or anybody, remember you are on stage! So script your part and plan your movement. Then rehearse, rehearse, rehearse." Everything was about the performance. It was about the lights and the action. Even my interview. It happened in his car from Nariman Point to his home in Breach Candy. The car lights were lit brightly so that passing vehicles and waiting public can see Alyque at work. It was a stage moving at 40 kmph. We can never forget the things he used to say "I give you the freedom to fail." and "When you create a concept, you create a future." Alyque created Alyque, and with that he created a future for so many of us."

ILLUSTRATIONS: ANIRBAN BIRRA



I don't want my balls rattled every time I come to Delhi

LINTAS ALUMNUS, SUMAN SRIVASTAVA RECALLS, "ONCE, TO MAKE THE LINTAS OFFICE PEOPLE COMFORTABLE WITH COMPUTERS, ALYQUE ACTUALLY ORGANISED A COMPUTER GAMES TOURNAMENT IN THE OFFICE."



Rattled, Not Shaken

During one of his trips to Delhi, Padamsee found himself in the backseat of a white ambassador on bumpy Capital roads. In the car with him was his Lintas Delhi team - Ritu Sethi, Navroze Dhondy and Eric 'Penny' Jackson. Padamsee was getting "rattled" in the back seat. So, he told Penny in his inimitable style to test-drive the cars because "I don't want my balls rattled every time I come to Delhi."

One fine day in the Capital...

"I thought he was gone" laughs Navroze Dhondy as he recalls the time Padamsee found himself staring down the barrels of elite commandos' guns. Padamsee and crew were waiting to present a campaign to Rajiv Gandhi. After a long delay Padamsee was running rather short on patience. Then he saw Mani Shankar Aiyar. So, naturally, Padamsee called and jumped across the room to get Aiyar's attention. This incident happened not too long after Indira Gandhi's assassination, so security was on edge and tighter than usual. Within seconds, three to four commandos had a shocked Padamsee in their grip. Aiyar spotted the adman in distress and asked security to back off. Eventually Padamsee and his team made their presentation to Gandhi and got the PM's sign-off. Padamsee's body parts, one assumes, were suitably rattled.



"I am Alyque"

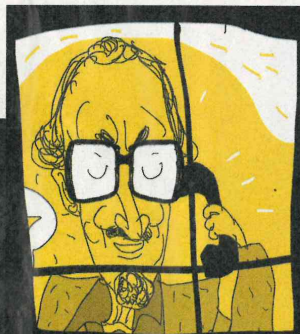
Prasoon Pandey, director, Corcoise Films on why Padamsee earned the right to close any discussion with "I am Alyque."



too a very junior one. I am reminded of one time that I wrote a film for a Lever brand. A senior brand manager at Levers informed me that I could not work with the director of my choice as there was a panel of 3 directors chosen by Alyque and I had to stay within that panel. I was passionate about my script and refused to be tied down by any panel. I was also brash and abrasive.

The matter went to Alyque's court. I told him that I thought the idea of any panel was regressive, government like and encouraged mediocrity. One would imagine that he kicked me out instantly and killed my career even before it started. Any other man in his position would surely have. Instead he sat me down and asked me to come up with a plan by which I could get to make the kind of film that I wanted to make without making the brand manager

loose his face. He then signed and approved a plan to put up a panelled director as a front to attend the PPM and then transfer the money to the director of my choice. Once the film was ready, this front director had to appear one last time to present the film. The film did get made exactly that way and also went on to win many awards. But that is not the point, the point is that it could very well have bombed too. I guess when he saw a youngster go 'all in' at the roulette table, he decided to back me up and go 'all in' too. My pile of risk was minuscule as I had been in the business only a few years. His pile of risk was tall and included a reputation meticulously built over 50 years. But then like I said he was passionate as hell and audacious as few can be. Of course he earned the right to close any discussion with "I am Alyque."



If you dared to question him he famously closed the conversation with his semi nasal "I am Alyque". Many thought it to be the sign of a megalomaniac but those who worked closely with him knew that Alyque was far from that. I think those dramatic announcements of his were only a way to ensure that a creative voice was heard far above the verbose and jargon laden din of daily business. Megalomaniacs do not tolerate idiosyncrasies of another man and that

L I N T A S

Alyque you will be missed.
With our deepest respect - Lintas family.

MULLENLOWE
LINTAS GROUP

IPG MEDIABRANDS

Lalitaji Speaks



BHARAT CHANDA

Surf's 'Lalitaji' remains one of Alyque Padamsee's and Indian advertising's most memorable creations. Brand Equity's Amit Bapna spoke to Kaveta Chaudhry aka Lalitaji and asked her what it was like working with the creative maverick.

"IT WAS a joy working with him. When you are intense with your work you enjoy the other person's intensity as well. I do not recall him ever over-directing or straight-jacketing me as performer."

LALITAJI'S CHARACTER was inspired by Padamsee's mother. His brief to Chaudhry was to make the character seem a bit "bossy".

MANY OF her gestures were worked out on the spot and Padamsee helped flesh out the character better. Recalls Chaudhry, "The fussier I looked while doing the hard bargaining, the better it was for the character."

(For a more detailed account of Lalitaji's journey, read the next issue of Brand Equity)

'Return To AP'

"The cynical among Lintas' chatterati insisted that Alyque did Public Service films because Mother Teresa owned Lintas at the time," writes filmmaker and writer **Adi Pocha**.

One of the things about Alyque Padamsee, that I or anyone who has ever worked with him, will never forget, are his famous "Return to AP" notes. Alyque used to carry a fat planner everywhere he went. This typically carried two or three pads, which served distinct and different purposes. Once (so the story goes), one of Lintas' copywriters, could not contain his curiosity. "Why do you carry three pads, Alyque?" asked the copywriter. "One, is for Notes..." explained Alyque patiently, "The second is for Memos." With his usual flair for theatre, Alyque then stopped. The writer just had to ask: "And the third?"

"The third..." said Alyque dragging out the words as if he was explaining to a simpleton "Is - to - wipe - my - F@#K-ING - arse!"

Well, fact is that, yes, Alyque did carry a whole bunch of pads in his planner, and one of them was the famous "Return to AP". This was essentially a normal pad, unruled, but with the words "Return to AP" printed on the top in Alyque's own scrawly handwriting. And this pad came with its own state-of-the-art technology: A piece of carbon paper. When Alyque scrawled something on this pad, tore it off and handed it to you, you knew from the corner of your experience, that a perfect carbon copy of the note remained with the old man. Which meant, you could not conveniently forget about whatever was scrawled on the note. **YOU HAD TO FOLLOW THROUGH!** And "Return to AP" on the appointed date, with torn note in hand, to tell AP exactly how you had completed whatever it was that he had asked you to do. This was Alyque's unique system to deal with what he used to call "India's second biggest industry."

When you took the bait and asked him what industry that would be, Alyque would snarl: "The f@#k-ing follow up industry!"

And that was one thing about Alyque: He was a Changer. He didn't like following up and he didn't like things not getting done, so... He developed a system to solve the problem. And even outside Lintas, Alyque was never happy leaving things the way they were, if the way they were didn't work. Like the traffic light outside Villa Theresa School. One day he was stuck in traffic on Peddar Road for an inordinately long time. The next day he summoned the wonderful walrus moustached admin head of Lintas to his house:

"You know that traffic light outside Villa Theresa school?"

"Y-y-yes Alyque..." "I want it OUT. NOW!"

"B-b-but Aly..." "NOW!" Legend has it that a call was actually made

On one occasion I received one such "Return To AP" note. But this one was a little different. It all started because Alyque's Lintas was deeply committed to Public Service Advertising. Typically these would be very simple, idea driven commercials. Things that could be shot at low cost but which allowed creative people to really flex their muscles and showcase their talent. Like the child's hand drawing her family in stick figures on a slate: "This is my daddy, this is my mummy, and this is me..." The child pauses then rubs out one leg on her own stick figure and says matter of factly: "No. This is me."

Or the cattle bazaar, where the camera slowly drifts across a herd of cattle at a mandi with price signs around their necks... then moves further to reveal a man, also with a price sign around his neck... anti-dowry. Or the hand drawing the single line of Gandhiji... All brilliant little films.

The cynical among Lintas' chatterati insisted that Alyque did Public Service films because Mother Theresa owned Lintas at the time. She did. It was gifted to her by T Thomas, ex-Chairman of Levers, who received it as a part of his retirement package. But I think Alyque did Public Service films for two reasons: Yes, it was a great showcase and fabulous publicity for Lintas. And I think underneath that tough exterior, Alyque was a thinking, feeling man, who always wanted to change things, make things better.

In early 1986, my creative director, Noel Godin, told me that while I was a good print writer, I would have to improve my film writing skills as the world was moving to television. So as one of my objectives for the year to improve my film skills, I committed to make two Public Service films. Which I did. One was the Helmet film which won a Clio. Two coconuts, hands place a helmet on one. Muscled hands with sledgehammers, swing down on both coconuts. The one without the helmet smashes to smithereens. As the voice says: Go ahead. It's your choice. After all... it's your head."

The second film was never released. On the drought in Rajasthan. A small crew, just three of us, went around Rajasthan and shot the people suffering from probably the worst drought of our times. We showed the simple, heart wrenching film to Alyque. He did not say a word. Just hugged me. Never before, never again. And then a few days later I got a "Return to AP" note which just said: "Proud of you."

Unfortunately, I can no longer find the note. But I am sure a carbon copy exists. Somewhere. Patiently waiting. For this one and only note. That was never meant to... "Return to AP."



PHOTO COURTESY: NAVROZE DHONDY

A TRIBUTE TO THE MAN WHO

FATHERED

ICONIC BRANDS.

(Including KamaSutra condoms.)

Alyque Padamsee

Regn.No.MAHENG/2002/6711 Volume 17 Issue No. 49 Published for the Proprietors, Bennett Coleman & Company Ltd. by R. Krishnamurthy at The Times Of India Building, Dr. D.N. Road, Mumbai 400 001 Tel. No. (022) 6635 3535; 2273 3535; Fax: (022) 2273 1144 and printed by him at (1) The Times of India Suburban Press, Akurli Road, Western Express Highway, Kandivli (E), Mumbai 400 101. Tel. No. (022) 2887 2324, 2887 2330; Fax: (022) 2887 4230; (2) The Times of India Print City, Plot No. 4, TTC Industrial Area, Thane Belpur Road, Airoli, Navi Mumbai-400708 and (3) TIMES PRESS, Plot No. 5A, Road No. 1, IDA Nacharam Ranga Reddy District, Hyderabad-500076. Editor: **Delbad** Brand/Responsible for selection of news under PDB Act. © All rights reserved. Reproduction in whole or in part without the written permission of the Publisher is prohibited.

Surf excel

Alyque, you will always be remembered.
Just like your iconic campaigns, you too will forever have a place in our hearts.



#BETHROWBACK Browsing famous chapters in the history of Indian advertising and marketing.

"Lalitaji became a fund raiser for me while making Udaan"



By Amit Bapna

She played one of the most iconic characters of Indian advertising. Brand Equity pried around and re-discovered Kaveta Chaudhry aka 'Lalitaji'. Here she shares her journey from the time she was discovered in 1984 to resurrect Hindustan Unilever's then declining laundry business to her life after Lalitaji.

The casting drama

A graduate of Delhi's drama and theatre school, NSD, Chaudhry had worked with the late adman Alyque Padamsee in a play called 'Pagalkhana'. Her role was a complete departure from the saree-clad character of Surf's Lalitaji. (In the play, she was a mental asylum inmate with a split personality that made her swing from an innocent Madonna-like avatar to a seductress armed with a whip.) When casting for the Surf campaign's smart, value conscious housewife began Padamsee wanted Chaudhry to audition for the role since he believed that she understood the 'sur' (tone and rhythm) of the character. Arguably, Lalitaji became her greatest role.

Demystifying the house-wife

The brief: Surf was in trouble as the threat of Nirma increased by leaps. Says Chaudhry, "I decided to play the character with a definite note - from the client point of view. Many of the gestures were worked on the spot. Alyque had helped flesh out the character better. For instance, it was decided that the fussier I looked when bargaining, the better it was".

The *bindi* became her trademark and, along with the distinctive hairdo, it was always recalled in the consumer research. The agency, Lintas, and client had many conversations about whether to create and show her parents and husband. But research showed that women wanted to have full control of the household and were not comfortable with having a man doing household chores. So the myth of a husband in that scenario could have alienated the consumers from the brand. That's why Lalitaji's spouse remains a mystery to date.

What's in a name?

The character was called Lalitaji because the name had to connect with people across India. Again, research confirmed 'Lalitaji' as a name with resonance in all parts of the country. The ad films were in



16 languages, which was far from the norm back then.

Brand-extensions

"Many years after the campaign, Padamsee on a TV show asked me if I felt I'd got branded and also limited as an actor because Lalitaji was so successful. I said 'yes!'" In fact, Chaudhry felt compelled to stop HUL and the agency from putting her face on product packs. She resisted hoardings as well, but later agreed to it.

Charged by the success of the character, Padamsee envisaged a TV show

with Lalitaji as the 'agony aunt'. But around that time the TV show 'Rajni' launched. (Rajni's character was played by the late Priya Tendulkar). The two characters were similar, and the former project put on hold. Recalls Chaudhry, "Of course, I went on to make the much-acclaimed TV series 'Udaan' which ran into two seasons between 1989 and 1992. (She wrote, directed and acted in it.) The Lalitaji character became a fund raiser for me while making 'Udaan'."

The story of how 'Lalitaji' saved the day for Levers and Lintas

Lintas alumnus Usha Bhandarkar, who worked on the HUL campaign, shares one of Indian advertising's most famous chapters. And it's a nail-biter.

When I joined Lintas, Levers detergents was about to leave the agency because they were being thrashed by a brand called Nirma. For Unilever to be thrashed by a cottage-sector, poor, small brand was very serious. And Levers had old brands like Surf and Rin that had been ruling the premium roost.

I was totally unaware of all this drama when I joined.

The agency dedicated a whole unit to only detergents. Alyque Padamsee said 'look, you are our top priority'. He assigned new, good, young bright people who had not worked on Levers before. We were the people giving a new look, feel and direction to the category. We had no baggage of what the client had rejected and why he had rejected. We just went with what we thought would work for them.

In the 80s, there was hardly any TV, it was mainly cinema, radio and print. When TV came Nirma did something very clever. They sponsored 'Mahabharat' and 'Ramayan'. So Nirma awareness skyrocketed at that time. Everybody was still new to TV advertising. Then here comes this woman, a housewife, totally confident and control of herself and managing not only herself but also the people around her. She made waves. This is what women wanted to be. They aspired to be her while other women were smiling at the children, serving the husband and all. But

Lalitaji was different. She was quite an outspoken woman.

Alyque fought for Lalitaji because the marketing manager at the time, the late Shunu Sen, who was a very dear friend of Alyque's, said this is not Levers' advertising. Also, there was no other campaign to run. They had bought space in the 1984 Olympics. That's where it aired and it got such huge airings. It ran three times a day. Back then you'd do twice a week on TV at most. So she became a phenomenon.

The truth is Shunu ran it because he had no option. If he did Lalitaji would never have aired. It's a true story.

Even we were very worried. It was not easy, such a big client, brand on notice. But the DAR (day after recall) scores were phenomenal. You can imagine how many brands were on that Olympics and this was extraordinary response. Something Levers never really had before.

Then we looked into the brand and what did consumers really connect. We didn't intend for Lalitaji to be such a well-educated, well informed, intelligent woman. But people were getting that from her. Then we began fine tuning and tweaking. That campaign which was meant to run as tactical ads only until Levers could get their other brands to fight, actually ran for many years. (Then later Wheel came along and fought Nirma head on, because you couldn't have Surf fighting with Nirma.) But Lalitaji did really well for the brand and she became a good friend of the consumer. And that's how we got back the client's confidence.

(As told to Delshad Irani)

Padamsee tales

Chaudhry's rapport with Padamsee developed during the production of 'Pagalkhana' and 'really helped me when we worked together for Surf. He never over-directed or straight-jacketed me as a performer. While he seemed to be a hard-as-nails and a tough administrator from outside, he was a true artiste from inside and somebody who appreciated another artist," remembers Chaudhry. "When you are intense with your work you enjoy the other's persons intensity as well," she adds.

Lalitaji version 2.0?

While Chaudhry featured in commercials before and after the Surf campaign, she was never seen as Lalitaji. Chaudhry went on to launch her own production house where she directed many corporate films and docu-dramas. She still loves the stage and would, if given the opportunity, dabble in ads again; "Because I have been away from this world for a while people do not remember me as writer, producer or actor." Lalitaji, on the hand, is unforgettable.

amit.bapna@timesgroup.com

Editor's Note: Last week, we published a special edition of Brand Equity as a tribute to the late adman Alyque Padamsee and the response to the edition was heartwarming. But there are many stories we couldn't publish at the time. These are just two of those personal accounts. So here we have Padamsee's long-time friend Gerson da Cunha, the man who introduced him to advertising, and his mentee, Madhu Noorani, share their memories of 'AP'.

"We didn't sit in plush offices and write mythical scripts"

Brand Equity met ad veteran Gerson da Cunha to talk about his friend the Late Alyque Padamsee

BY PRIYANKA NAIR | MUMBAI

When you meet Gerson da Cunha his voice modulation - the choice of words, his tonality - immediately leaves an impression. He sounds like a character from a Shakespearean play. One shouldn't expect anything less from the famous theatre and ad man.

Da Cunha is a journalist-turned-adman, who headed Lintas for a decade (1969 - 1979), and later moved to the US to work with UNICEF. The 91-year old is currently enjoying his retirement in Mumbai. In all these years, his love for theatre is as passionate as ever, just like it was his comrade and colleague Alyque Padamsee, who passed away last month.

Da Cunha recalls his first meeting with Padamsee; it was at the dress rehearsal of Ebrahim Alkazi's production of William Shakespeare's Richard III at St Xavier's College in 1948. He remembers how Padamsee came in late for the rehearsal because he was busy with a neighborhood cricket match. "Nobody knows how far he got with his fast blowing, but the world

knows Alyque for all the drama he always created," he laughs.

Over the next few years, Da Cunha met Padamsee on various occasions, in green rooms and outside. When Da Cunha switched from journalism to advertising, Padamsee was busy penning scripts. In fact, when he saw Padamsee's flair for writing Da Cunha recommended he join the agency J. Walter Thompson where he was a copywriter.

Later, Da Cunha left J. Walter Thompson for Lintas, and not too long after Padamsee followed him there.

During those days,

LINTAS DISCOVERED THE WORLD OF CINEMA ADVERTISING BECAUSE OF AP'S AMBITIOUS VISION



Gerson da Cunha

while Da Cunha found satisfaction in writing copies, Padamsee wanted more. Da Cunha says, "Alyque wanted to incorporate performing arts in advertising with a different style. He set up the films division in Lintas to bring this aspect of his passion alive. Honestly, Lintas discovered the world of cinema advertising because of his ambitious vision."

Da Cunha also tells us how Padamsee gave a platform through this division to many upcoming filmmakers like BR Chopra and Shyam Benegal, among others.

It was also the time when copywriters and ad filmmakers functioned very differently. "As creative professionals, we never sat in our plush offices. We never wrote mythical scripts. Alyque and I have travelled with the sales and trade force at Levers for various campaigns. Look at all the iconic work from Alyque's portfolio, it gave a sense of the society and times we lived in. It was all possible because of the hardcore groundwork."

According to Da Cunha, these habits helped creative professionals of their time shape real scripts for ad films. Still in awe of Padamsee's ability to deliver, Da Cunha says, "Alyque also wanted to run a happy agency. We wanted his people at Lintas to be delighted that they were there." He adds, "Alyque always helped me when I was in trouble. I wonder who I will make that first call to now."

priyanka.nair@timesgroup.com

CONVERSATIONS WITH GOD

Madhu Noorani's first job was at Lintas. Here she recounts her conversations with boss and mentor, Alyque Padamsee.

By far the best GOD conversation I have heard is one narrated by my first boss at Lintas, Adi Pocha. Alyque and his right hand man of the time, Baghu Ochaney, were travelling together.

The car breaks suddenly and Baghu lets out a startled 'Oh God!' And GOD says without batting an eye lid: 'It's ok, Baghu. When we are alone you can call me Alyque'. Everyone called him Alyque.

Soon after I joined Lintas, I referred to 'Alyque' at the dinner table. My dad frowned: 'You must call him Sir, or Mr Padamsee at the very least!' So, the next day: 'Good morning Sir'. And the indignant response: 'Don't you know my name?' That night I glared at my dad at the dinner table.

My first month at the agency. I was poring over a page full of lines I had spent all day writing. A pen jabbed my arm. I looked up. Straight into the eyes of GOD himself. 'Let's have a look!' He ran a critical eye over the page. 30 seconds later, a rip. And then a pile of yellow paper on my desk. 'See me tomorrow.' I stayed out of sight. But Alyque remembered everyone, and forgot nothing.

A week later, a chance encounter in the lift. 'Aaaaahhh it's you! What's the new line?' I mumbled something about how I was still



writing it. 'Excellent!' He fixed me with a stern eye: 'It won't go till it's perfect.' And then, to lighten the mood, he asked me what I did in my free time.

'Patchwork! Interesting. You stitch two things together to make something new. Good! You already know how to create an idea!'

I walked around 6 inches taller that day. And every day after, I worked hard to grow into those tall shoes he gave me! GOD makes us work in wonderful ways. Nothing went out of the agency without being 'blessed' by GOD.

One Saturday afternoon, I found myself at Alyque's home,

clutching some scripts. The living room was already full, so I was ushered into the spare bedroom, which was also full.

I retired to the balcony. An hour later, I wandered out, but was firmly told by the housekeeper that Saab was busy and that I would be called when my turn came.

I went back and waited. I watched the sunset. And waited some more. Finally at 8, I ventured out again. All the lights were off!

Saab had left for a play! Doomed. The 'super-urgent' client presentation would have to be cancelled due to an unforeseen act of GOD!

On Monday morning, I found a note on my desk: 'See me.' I went. Immediately. And was ticked off for getting into office so late. No apologies for Saturday. 'Show me the scripts'.

Then, many on-the-spot advertising lessons later: 'You can tell the client I have delayed the campaign. Yes? But please don't tell them I left you in the balcony!' Alyque had worked his magic once again.

'Sit down.' I looked around. There wasn't a chair close enough. 'Sit down!' Patience was not one of his virtues. I sat on the floor. Promptly. We had just made a 'beautiful film' for Marico's Hair and Care. With the great Whitelight. Underwater. How cool was that! Proudly, I pushed the VHS tape into the player. He saw the commercial twice. And said: 'This is not an ad. Dramatic pause. I waited still hoping to hear how brilliant it was. 'This is a slide

and sound show! No! Wait! This is a nine-teen fifty's Hin-du-stan le-ver's slide and sound show!'

Oh. And then, brandishing his favourite toy of the time - the TV remote with a 'still-frame advance' button - he gave me the finest lesson in editing anyone could ever receive. 'Shot 5 should come after shot 1 and shot 2 is... rubbish. Throw it out. It can't possibly come after shot 1. CONTINUITY. What is it called?' 'Continuity', I mumbled.

In 5 minutes and two viewings, he had completely reedited the film. Verbally. GOD is in the details. Never forget that.

Talking of never forgetting... 'So how is the baby?' 'Aimee had a baby, not me.' 'I know, I know' Months later... 'So how is the baby?' 'And again, 'That was Aimee.' 'I know, I know'. I put it down to absent mindedness, hoping for a new question the next time.

Some years ago I bumped into him at the Bombay Gym. Again, the familiar question. But this time, I could proudly give him a different answer. 'I never had my own baby, but now there's a lovely child called Jasmine in my life.' He beamed and wagged an excited finger at me: 'See! I knew it all along!'

And that was Alyque. His instinct was uncanny. His wit irreverent and quick. His foresight effortless. His passion relentless. He was omnipresent. Energetic. Awkwardly affectionate. Ever so critical. Overly dramatic. In a hurry to make it happen. He had the logic. And he whipped up the magic. Making sure there was a little bit of GOD in all of us.

The author is president (creative) Lowe Lintas. Views expressed are personal.

