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“THREADS”—a film depicting Bengal’s pride “Nakshi Kantha”, centuries-old embroidered quilt with tradition of art, was screened at the George Washington University Museum and Textile Museum in Washington DC.

The 30-minute documentary “Threads” tells the story of renowned artist Surayia Rahman, an unconventional woman in Bangladesh who frees herself and hundreds of other women from poverty and social hardships by creating timeless works of art.

Producer Cathy Stevulak and her husband Co-Producer Leonard Hill who had been in Dhaka from 2001 to 2003 said they made the film for several reasons: “To raise awareness of the work of artist Surayia Rahman and the women with whom she worked and to preserve the stories and culture of this art form.”

Besides, they want to show an example of women’s empowerment in Bangladesh and to draw attention to artisan enterprise, which employs millions of people in the developing world.

Leonard Hill said “We hope that people who see *Threads* will be inspired to choose handmade, artisan goods and better understand how one person can make a positive difference in the lives of many by sharing their skills with others.’

The film is dedicated to the memory of Tareque Masud, Mishuk Munier and Ses Purvis, all of whom died before the film was finished. Ses was the wife of a former USAID mission director and was a close friend of Surayia Rahman. The film took five years in making.

Bangladesh Ambassador to the USA Muhammad Ziauddin was present as special guest at the premiere show of the film on Thursday afternoon while three former US Ambassadors to Bangladesh-Amb. Willard DePree, Amb. William B. Milam and Amb. Dan Mozena were present in a group of selected audience.

The film depicted how Surayia, by dint of her indomitable spirit and dream, revived Bengal’s Nakshi Kantha and brought it to fame as well as empowered distressed women economically and socially. Most of these women lost their husbands during Bangladesh’s war of independence in 1971.

Surayia reflected love, romance, social conflicts and human sufferings vividly in Nakshi Kanthas through delicate works of needle and thread.

She vividly portrayed the life style of the Queen Victorian era as well as day-to-day activities of rural men and women of Bangladesh in her “Nakshi Kantha” that enthralled the audience.

Suraiya was also inspired by the renowned Bangladeshi Poet Jasimuddin's famous poem "Nakshi Kanthar Math".

Speaking on the occasion, Ambassador Ziauddin said Bangladesh enjoys a long and rich history of innovations in textiles. The legendary Dhaka Muslin, the Jamdani and Kantha, which inspired Suraiya Rahman, are special kind of textiles unique to Bangladesh and the Bengal region of the South-Asian subcontinent. Kantha depicts stories and dreams of the women who create them with much devotion, love and care.

The Ambassador said Suraiya transformed the Nakshi Kantha into art, making Bangladeshi embroidered wall hangings as fine and appealing as the tapestries of Europe.

He said Suraiya discovered her destiny as an artist, teacher and as a benefactor of women. Many of the women she worked with were poor, destitute and single mothers. Suraiya gave them jobs and taught them the skills which earned them food and helped educate their children.

The Ambassador expressed his gratitude to filmmakers Cathy Stevulak, Leonard Hill, Catherine Masud and all others who contributed to the making "THREADS" which highlights a core aspect of Bengali tradition—the Nakshi Kantha.

