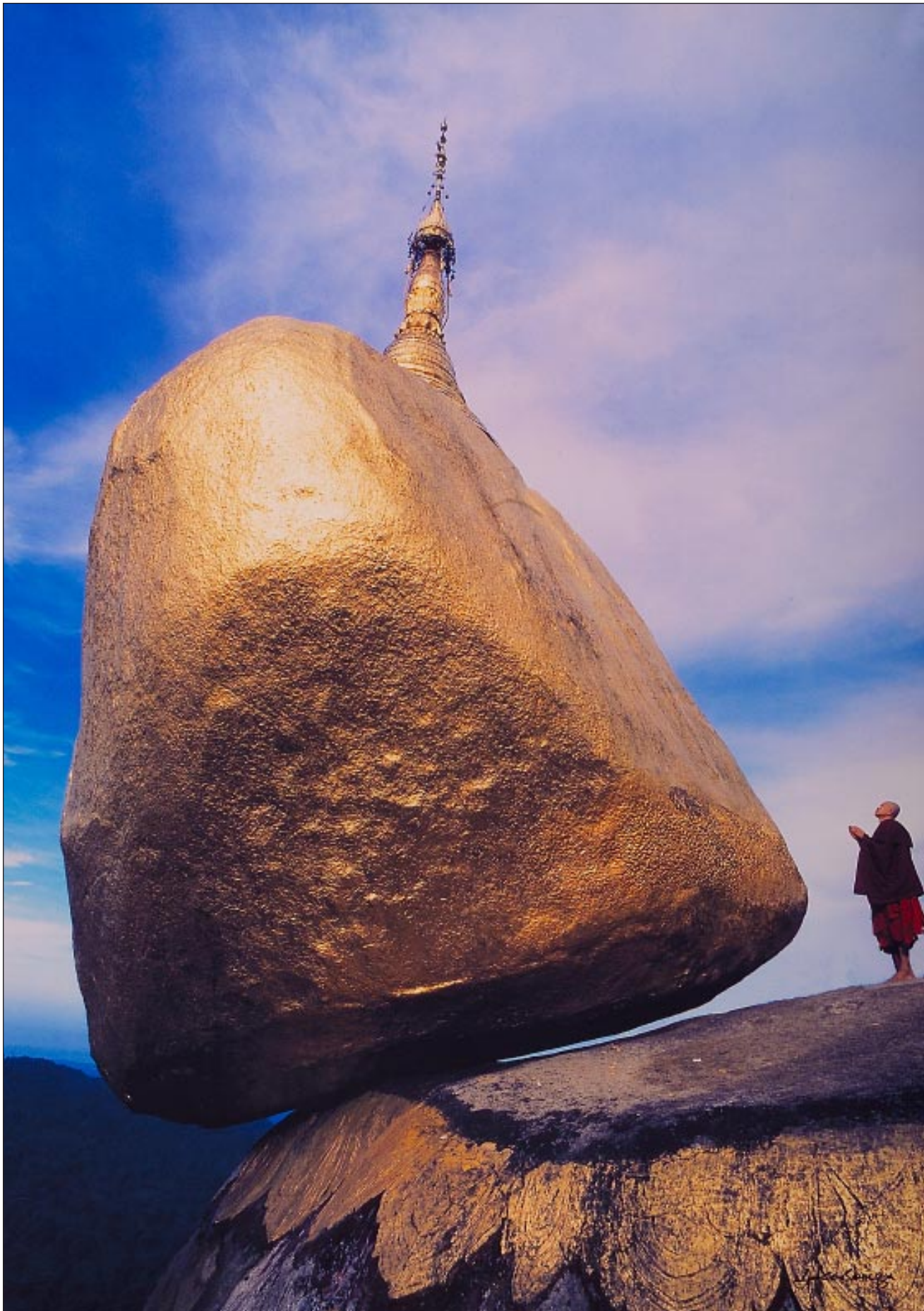




The Incredible Moment...

RASHME SEHGAL

Photographers are trawling our crowded streets, our pin box size homes, our dwindling forests and melting glaciers in search of the decisive image, the exact moment, which will translate their vision into a visual statement of empathy and beauty. By doing so, they have lent dignity to the lives of millions of Indians who are eking out their living under the most trying circumstances.

Photography in India has arrived with a bang. A niche group of gifted professionals have developed a large body of work, which can stand out against the brightest and the best. From corporates to portraits, from fashion to famine – there is no call these youngsters are not willing to take. A far cry from those days of yore when dead pan pictures of solemn looking *netas* (leaders) hung out of







government complexes, apart of course, from those unromantic looking photos of married couples that used to be published in the magazines of yore.

Its positioning is something not everyone is willing to accept. For centuries, sketching and painting were seen as the only modes of making images of animals and human beings. The great 20th century American photographer and artist Man Ray is reckoned to have said, "I photograph what I do not wish to paint and I paint what I do not wish to photograph" but our own Raghu Rai is not willing to accept this adage.

"Photography has left art far behind. Photography may be just 150 years old but a great photographic image has a mass appeal which goes far beyond any painting", says this seasoned photographer.

And then obviously trying to bring art down a notch or two, Rai comes up with this startler, "A good picture has tremendous mass appeal; a good painting's appeal has never gone beyond a select arty group".

Photojournalist Prashant Panjiar goes a step further. "In the beginning of the 21st century, it seems completely pointless to be debating such a subject. Photography's bonafides are like the law of physics – immutable and unchanging".

It's quite understandable for photographers to swear by their profession, but why are photographs not fetching the venerated prices that art works command? Art aficionado Maneka Gandhi is trying to correct this



imbalance by showcasing the works of 200 photographers for an exhibition titled “The Incredible Moment”.

The idea of bringing so many photographers under one platform is to make art collectors sit up and take notice of the sheer variety of images available today. Says Gandhi, “in the west, photographic work sells for several lakhs of rupees and prints sell for a minimum of \$3000 to \$4000. Museums, galleries and private collectors are the buyers. By pricing our photographs between Rs 2,000 to Rs 25,000, we are hoping the same thing will start happening here also”.

She further points out, “We undertook a similar exercise when we showcased 600 of India’s most outstanding artists including MF Hussain, Jogen Chowdury, Arpita Singh, Anjolie Ela Menon, Vaikuntam and Manu Parekh and sold their works at Rs 40,000 per painting to raise money for *People For Animals*. The show made collectors sit up and take note of just how much art work was happening in the subcontinent. We plan to do the same with photography”.

The money is being raised to build a hospital for animals in Kerala. Animal activist, Ambika Shukla, and artist-photographer,



Kriti Arora, are helping her put this ambitious project together.

“I think what we are trying to highlight is how India offers many co-existing realities. Many of these realities are self-contained but very often they inter lap in order to form a magical cosmos”, explains Kriti Arora.

Devika Singh who runs a photo agency *Photo Ink* believes young people have started looking at photography as a collectible but this is still at a very nascent stage. “For it to start being collected in a serious manner, some guidelines will have to be worked out. How many editions of a certain work

will photographers agree to bring out? What kind of paper will they use? Raisin coated paper, which is presently being used by most photographers does not have such a long shelf life so they will have to switch over to vintage prints. Once these technicalities are worked out, I see there being a boom”.

Acclaimed photographer Pablo Bartholomew on the other hand believes photography will always attract a niche market. “We have reached a stage where young photographers need to hone their craftsmanship and that can only happen in a certain social milieu. We need to develop the right

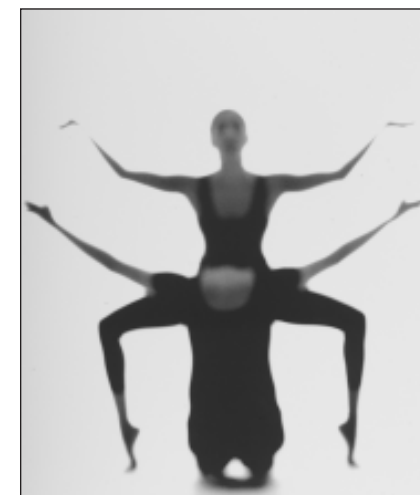
historical and political climate for such a transformation to take place”.

If pre-independent India saw photographers focus on portraiture and landscape, post-independent photography rode on the shoulders of photojournalism. Other genres including wildlife, travel and industrial photography came into their own at a later date.

Biting their teeth into photojournalism did not always prove to be an easy experience. Nitin Rai recalls how he travelled to militant-ridden Srinagar in the mid-nineties to do an assignment for Sunday magazine.



"Taking photographs of militants was a hair-raising experience. The correspondent and I were blindfolded and taken to meet these guys in a place situated on the outskirts of Srinagar. That was bad enough but subsequently, one of these guys was captured in Hyderabad carrying the copy of the same Sunday in which the story appeared. The Hyderabad court served me a non-bailable warrant to come down and identify him. I had no choice but



Rafiq Sayed



Kriti Arora/Surviving on the edge



Prabuddha Dasgupta



to do so but it was a scary experience", says Nitin who now works as a freelancer.

Panjiar recalls how when he was working with *India Today*, he went to the village of Bhikiwandi outside Amritsar to photograph a family which had fought the militants single-handedly. "I was just leaving when the woman of the house picked up a rifle and asked me to shoot a picture of her alongside her husband and her son. I did it simply to oblige her. The picture was used on the cover of *India Today*. It taught me an important lesson. One must always keep one's mind open for new ideas and one must always keep up a dialogue with the people one is clicking".

Many women photographers have found an oeuvre away from

the hurly burly of political events. Dayanita Singh's family portraits of the rich have been crafted with both intimacy and affection. Mumbai-based Ketaki Sheth's images of Bollywood move away from the glossy glamour to highlight the social divisions and the conditions under which the industry functions.

In the *Discovery of India*, Jawaharlal Nehru quoted Nietzsche as saying, "Not only the wisdom of centuries but also their madness breaketh out in us... India has a thousand mouths." It's these "mouths" that are being explored and captured; their aspirations and dreams are being hewed to form a visual revelatory thread.

◆

The author is a senior journalist.

The photographs displayed in this article are part of the exhibition – "Incredible Moment" – that opens at the Maurya Sheraton in New Delhi on August 19, 2005.



Gujarat's Embroidery

"MARVELLOUSLY BEAUTIFUL"

Text: SHAHEEN PERVEEN
Photographs: SHAHID A. MAKHFI

Gujarat's contemporary dress style is a cultural manifestation that has evolved over centuries and has remained a principal mark of identity and social cohesion. Though dress is indicative of one's position in social hierarchy, it is also one of the first indicators of identity that disappears in the process of cultural assimilation and racial mingling.

The ethnic embroidery in Gujarat is almost synonymous with Kutch, which was once a part of the trade route between Central Asia and the Far East. Given Gujarat's coastline and numerous harbours, it exposed the land to the outside influences. Some of the best and oldest textiles were created in Gujarat and they were in great demand in other parts of Asia. Old residents of Kutch still recount romantic tales of caravans laden with silk, pearls, carpets etc. traversing the Rann of Kutch to reach the port cities. Exposure to the outside world had its effect on embroidery as well. The women of Kutch weave a magical world of colour and celebrate everyday life. Elements and traces of Baluch or Sindhi embroidery merging with those of the Kutch is well established. Marco Polo, writing about Gujarat said, "They

also work here beautiful mats in red and blue leather, exquisitely inlaid with figures of birds and beasts and skilfully embroidered with gold and silver wire. They are marvellously beautiful things; they are used by the Saracens to sleep upon".

Embroidery in Gujarat is akin to ritual decoration and can be found everywhere. *Toran* is the most common embroidered doorway decoration with hanging flaps supposed to bring good luck. *Pachitattis* are hanged from the corners as a welcome symbol to the visitors. *Chaklas* are embroidered square pieces of cloth used as furniture cover, while *Bhitiya* is the impressive wall hanging. Mirror inset embroidery or *Abhala* has now become a part of the ethnic chic fashion world, where small mirror discs are fixed with closely worked silken thread. Usually the mirror work is done on a dark background with motifs like flowers, creepers, petals etc. Though the motifs are inspired by daily life happenings, ancient beliefs and rituals, they vary from place to place and are passed down the generations from mother to daughter.

It is not unusual in Kutch to find young girls, their mother and even grandmother sitting together to create the best of *cholis*,

Facing page: "Toran" (top) and a specimen of 'Jat' embroidery (below).



Decorative embroidery.

ghagras, *odbinis* (blouse, skirt and head-cover), bed spreads, bags, wall hanging and a variety of ornamental pieces for home decor. Until recently long hours were spent to create the best in embroidery for personal use but today things are somewhat organized and speedier in order to cater to the needs of the tourists as well. At a very early age the girls acquire embroidery skills, honed by generations, and with pride and patience they prepare their own trousseau.

Each community in Kutch has its own distinctive style of needlework. Geometric patterns of *Sauf* embroidery by the *Sodha* community appear to be the earliest extension of Iranian-Baluchistan influence. The time consuming needlework involves stitches on the base by counting every single thread that imparts a uniform, balanced look as if the design was woven on cloth. Sodha Rajputs migrated to Gujarat

from Pakistan during the 1971 Indo-Pak war.

Ari embroidery is equally old and famous for its heavy work. Prepared with the help of an awl, it represents a cobbler's stitch which requires considerable skill and practice. The sharper and finer the hook of the awl, the more refined the quality of the embroidery. This is done in silk, or locally made satin called *Gajji* or on a silky satin fabric *Atlasb*. Ari embroidery was patronized by the royal ladies of Kutch who were fascinated by the Persian motifs like peacock and flowers. The garments with Ari embroidery are usually dotted with *bootis* (leaves) which round off with big ones known as *Nadir Shahi booti*.

Rabari embroidery is the most prominent work and widely available. The women of Rabari community wear black skirts with creative edges embroidered, and so are their profusely decorated



Rabari embroidery.

veils with tie and dye patterns. A Rabari bridegroom's embroidered logcoat is worth a look. Even children wear heavily embroidered salwars and shirts. The Kutch Rabaris make use of mirrors of various shapes and sizes and therefore their works have a variety though they stick to minute chain stitches.

The finest embroidery with most intricate patterns created by the needle comes from *Mutwa* and *Jat* communities. The Mutwas, living in Banni, excel in all styles of embroidery and they work out the tiny mirrors with ease. Fine handspun cotton and quality silk is used in red, white, golden yellow, blue and black to develop patterns and booties interspread with birds and animals motifs. The Jats, who migrated from Baluchistan, are experts in inserting the smallest of the mirrors with utmost perfection, amidst pleasing colours and design that are usually geometric patterns.

The ladies from *Lohana* community in Banni create fantasy with silk thread thickly piled in deep orange, golden yellow, dark red and bright blue. The bootis are inset with mirrors, making use of chain stitch, buttonhole stitch, etc.

Applique or *Katab* is another form of decorative needlework, more pronounced in Saurashtra where women from the *darzi* (tailor) community prepare it for commercial use. Its origin relates to a tailor's wife who saved the cloth remnants in the shop, which finally created quilt covers, and other decorations. After all, nothing should go waste. Unlike the Pipli work of Orissa, here it is done in patchwork based on pieces of coloured and patterned fabric, which is finely cut to serve the motif and then stitched on to a plain background to produce quilts, curtains and wall hangings. Patchwork quilts from Kutch are worked upon by neat running stitches and are quite popular

with tourists. The higher the pile of quilts, the higher the owner's status, for, it establishes his ability to accommodate a number of guests simultaneously.

Next to garments and home decors, a variety of decorations are created for the bullocks, horses, camels and palanquins. Horn covers or *Shinghadiwas*, forehead covers, saddles, body hangings and neck ornaments for bullocks and camels are most popular. Leather embroidery is a later addition in the long list of marketable craft. Now embroidered *jootis* (shoes) of Banaskantha are quite popular along with a variety of leather products including beds spreads!

◆ The author is a noted freelance writer.

Mirza Mazhar

SECULAR PIONEER

PROF F.A. QADRI

The idea of an all embracing unity was propounded by the Mughal emperor Akbar (1556-1605). He was certainly influenced by the Sufi ideology when he undertook to promote a deeper understanding among different religions in his empire by arranging discussions of their representatives and having translated into Persian the main religious and literary works of the Hindus. Akbar's imperial eclecticism took the form of an intellectualized magical syncretism with Dara Shikoh, his grandson.

Dara Shikoh (1615-59) was a keen student of Sufism. He came into contact with leading sufis and Hindu yogis. He was a disciple of Sufi Mulla Shah and was a prolific writer. He came to the conclusion that there was no difference, except purely verbal, in the way Vedanta and Islam sought to comprehend Truth. He occupies a pre-eminent place among those who stood for the concept of universal tolerance and who desired that the state should be based on the support of both Muslims and Hindus and remain essentially above religion. His defeat in the war of succession did not, by any means, imply the defeat of the trend he represented.

Eighteenth century was an era of crucial significance in Indian history. During this century new trends in the religious thought brought about a change in the religious milieu. Sufism entered a phase of great significance characterized by fresh interpretation of religion and religious attitudes. It

was during this period that Mirza Mazhar Jan-i Janan (1699-1781) departed from the earlier traditions and declared Vedas as revealed book and Hindus as *Abl-i Kitab* (People of Holy Book). Never before any Muslim religious thinker had so clearly and categorically enunciated his views.

Mirza Mazhar was the son of a Mughal noble Mirza Jan and was named at his birth *Jan-i Jan* by emperor Aurangzeb. The emperor is reported to have remarked that “since the son is the very life of his father, I name the newly-born son of Mirza Jan as *Jan-i Jan*. Later, his love for poetry and his romantic temperament made it *Jan-i-Janan* (life of the beloved). His title was *Shams al-Din* and *nom de plume* Mazhar. He joined the Naqshbandi Sufi order at the age of eighteen and perfected himself a spiritual after a hard labour of three decades.

Mirza Mazhar evolved his own *Shamsiyah Mazhariyah* branch of the Naqshbandi order. He concentrated upon the leadership of his order which flourished in Delhi and Rohilkhand. Not less than 49 of his spiritual successors are known by name. Mirza Mazhar was widely known and highly respected amongst the people of piety and learning in Delhi. A strict disciplinarian and a man of high integrity, he also had great admiration for beauty.

Mirza Mazhar is also regarded as one of the four pillars of Urdu poetry. His illustrious contemporary,

Mir Taqi Mir, called him, “a saintly, *derwesh* like, scholarly, perfect, reputed and incomparable person”.

Among his contemporaries Mirza Mazhar was known for his clarity of thought and expression, frank opinion and at times outrageous statements. His biographers, however, attribute this quality to his *mirzaiyat* (princely attitude). Although a strict disciplinarian in the implementation of the canonical law, he respected the sentiments of the masses.

Mirza Mazhar quite often recommended his friends and disciples for employment – these included both Muslims and Hindus. He also had many Hindu disciples, some of whom were Mirza's students in Persian and Urdu poetry. Two of his disciples, Basawan Lal *Bedar* and Kishan Chandra *Majruh*, were poets of repute. His letter of recommendation for employment of one of his Hindu disciples, Braj Lal, has survived. Mirza Mazhar seems to be quite emotional about the prestige and self-respect of his Hindu disciples. Once he rebuked Najib al-Daulah for asking a Hindu to quit Mirza's gathering as the Nawab wanted to speak to him (the Mirza) in seclusion. When it was brought to the notice of Mirza Mazhar, he reacted in the following words:

“All those who come here (my friends), even if they belong to the Hindu community, are my hands and feet and are helpful in so many ways, and whenever the Nawab comes, he only wastes my time”.

Mirza Mazhar's views about the Hindus and Hinduism are a complete departure from the early Naqshbandi tradition. His style is sober and matter of fact, unlike

the high flown ones of his contemporaries. It is believed that he might have read the translations of Hindu religious texts carried out under Akbar and the writings and translations of Dara Shikoh.

What should be the Muslim attitude towards the Hindu gods? Mirza Mazhar replied as follows, in what is called as his biographies, as also in the collection of his letters, *Maktub-i-Cbibardahum* or the fourteenth epistle:

“The ancient Indian books reveal the fact that at the time of creation of human kind, God sent a book called *Bed* (Vedas) in four volumes, through his angelic agent, Brahma, in order to guide the people of India regarding their duties in this world and the world hereafter. The Vedas contained the divine dos and don'ts and didactic stories about the past and prophecies about the future. On the basis of the Vedas Indian jurists formulated the basic principles of their religious beliefs. This came to be known as *Dharmashastra* or the science of religious belief or *ilm-i Kalam*. The human race was divided into four classes who took guidance from the Vedas for their conduct and social ethics. This came to be known as *Karmashastra* and is similar to Islamic jurisprudence, *figh*.

“The Muslim law considered it essential to have different laws for different times, but the Hindus did not abrogate the divine law. Accordingly, they divided time into four periods, called *Jug* (yugas) and derived a code of conduct from the Vedas. Later interpolations by scholars are unreliable. All sections of the Hindus believe in God most high, consider the world to be created, believe in its ultimate destruction and in the Day of Resurrection; they also accept

accountability for the worldly deeds, the meting out of reward and punishment. They are expert in all the rational and traditional sciences, ascetic practices and in the study of gnosis and interactive knowledge.

“Their saints and sages divided the human life span into four parts; the first being devoted to the acquisition of knowledge, the second to attending to worldly duties and the begetting of children, the third to self-purification and spiritual improvement and the fourth involved severance of all connections with this world and life of seclusion and asceticism. The last, the highest ideal of a human life, was necessary for complete emancipation”.

Mirza Mazhar's observations on the Vedas and Hindu religion were welcomed by many. While his junior contemporary Shah Abd al-Aziz (d. 1824) considered Krishna among the proteges of God (*Wali Allah*), his own spiritual successor Shah Ghulam Ali (d. 1825) had considerable admiration for the Hindu forms of prayers and yogic exercises.

Mirza Mazhar's expressions about Hindus and Hinduism have been significant all through the history and are more relevant in the present times. These ideals need better appreciation and provide a firm and sound bedrock for national and emotional integration of all Indian people.

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Pandita Ramabai

CHAMPION OF WOMEN'S EMANCIPATION

MARIA ISABEL CRUZ

Ramabai – the first Indian woman writer in English who was well known not only in India but also in England and America – was among all those who were in the forefront fighting for better conditions for Indian women. Her writings reflected not only a better knowledge of Indian women's conditions but also provided a closer look into their needs and their capacities. Ramabai believed that only the Indian women could achieve their own emancipation.

Youngest of the three children of Anant Padmanabha Dongre and Lakshmibai, Ramabai (1858-1922) was extremely attached to the country of her birth and had an insatiable desire to seek knowledge. As a Hindu, besides being educated, she respected and adhered to the principles of her religion. She had a very tough childhood; due to poverty her family was forced to leave the city and make a living in the forests. In spite of this, her father taught Sanskrit to all his family members.

After her parents' death, she was left to fend for herself. At the age of 22, she married a Bengali gentleman. This happy married life lasted only nineteen months, because her husband suddenly died of cholera. Although these tragic experiences left a deep imprint on Ramabai's soul, she was not deterred – as she now had a little daughter Manorama to take care of.

In the late 19th and early 20th century, feminist groups had emerged on the scene and they were espousing the cause of Indian women. Ramabai too joined the crusade.



In Poona (now Pune), she formed a society of women called *Ayra Mahila Samaj* whose aim was to protect the interests of women and to discourage child-marriage. Ramabai realised that she needed special training to help these children, so she decided to go to England for the purpose. Before going to England, she wrote a simple guide for women's day-to-day life: *Morals for Women (Stridbarma Niti)*; this provided her the requisite funds for this voyage.

Ramabai and her daughter were warmly welcomed by the Sisters at St. Mary's Home in Wantage, and both were duly converted to Christianity. She spent about three years there, teaching Sanskrit and studying mathematics, science and English literature.

In February 1886, she went to the United States of America in order to be present at the Graduation ceremony of Anandibai Joshi, who was the first Indian Hindu woman to obtain the degree of Doctor of Medicine. Ramabai dedicated her next book *The High-Caste Hindu Woman*, published in America in 1887, to Anandibai, as also to her

own mother. This book analysed the different stages in a woman's life: childhood, married life and (as in her own case) widowhood.

In those days, if a woman became a widow, it was perceived to be the result of her bad deeds (*karma*), either in this birth or in the previous one. But Ramabai did not accept this idea; she started the process of achieving women's liberation from such outdated ideas. At the end of her book, *The High-Caste Hindu Woman*, there were some interesting suggestions to help and educate the caste widows. But this was a very difficult process, as the Indian people did not agree then with women's education and a Hindu woman could never agree to live with a person of a different religion or country – if at all she was remarried.

Pandita Ramabai was a pioneer of women's education and had enough courage to pave the way for women's freedom. Step by step women began to regain their place in the Indian society. Ramabai initiated this process with her fight against the child-marriage, *suttee* and such other practices. Her fight was indeed the beginning of women's emancipation in India...



The author is a researcher in Portugal.

Telemedicine

BRINGING HEALTHCARE TO DOORSTEPS

India lives in its villages, as Mahatma Gandhi had said. This is because almost 80 percent of India's population lives in villages. And despite government's best efforts to ensure health for all, medical facilities in the rural areas are still not adequate.

The Government is now making sincere efforts to provide health care facilities at the very doorsteps of all citizens including those living in far-flung and rural areas. Towards that end, a meaningful and economical integration of the communication technology, information technology and the medical know-how is being devised to bring at the doorstep the specialty healthcare no matter where you are. The technologies have been synergised. The concepts have been successfully demonstrated. The system is called Telemedicine.

Telemedicine system consists of a Computer (PC) with customized medical software connected to a few medical diagnostic instruments like ECG or an X-Ray Machine or an X-Ray Scanner for scanning the X-Ray photos. Through this computer which digitalizes the medical images and information of the patients like X-Ray image, ECG or blood test report, the details are sent to the Specialist Hospital through the communication link which could be a satellite VSAT system or terrestrial lines. This information is, in turn, received at the specialist centre where the specialists examine the reports, diagnose, interact with the patients

and suggest appropriate treatment during the video conferencing session through the Telemedicine system.

Telemedicine facility thus enables the specialist doctor and the patient separated by thousands of kilometers of geographical distance to see each other visually and communicate. This enables the doctor to assess the physical and the psychological state of the patient. In this way, the systematic application of information and telecommunications technologies to the practice of healthcare rapidly expands the outreach of the healthcare system. The systems have been commissioned and effectively used to treat patients in remote areas. The concept is picking up like wild fire. Obviously the beneficiaries are the people in the remote and rural areas.

The Indian Space Research Organisation, ISRO, with its primary policy of using space technology for the benefit of the common man, has taken up Telemedicine in a big way. Starting with pilot projects in 2002 with "Proof-of-concept technology demonstration", ISRO has till today established the facility in nearly 100 hospitals; 20 of these are at the Super Specialty Hospitals and eighty of them in remote areas.

The results are extremely encouraging. While the utilisation and performance levels vary from place to place, some of the remote area hospitals have optimally utilized this facility. In the case of District Hospital, Chamarajnagar in

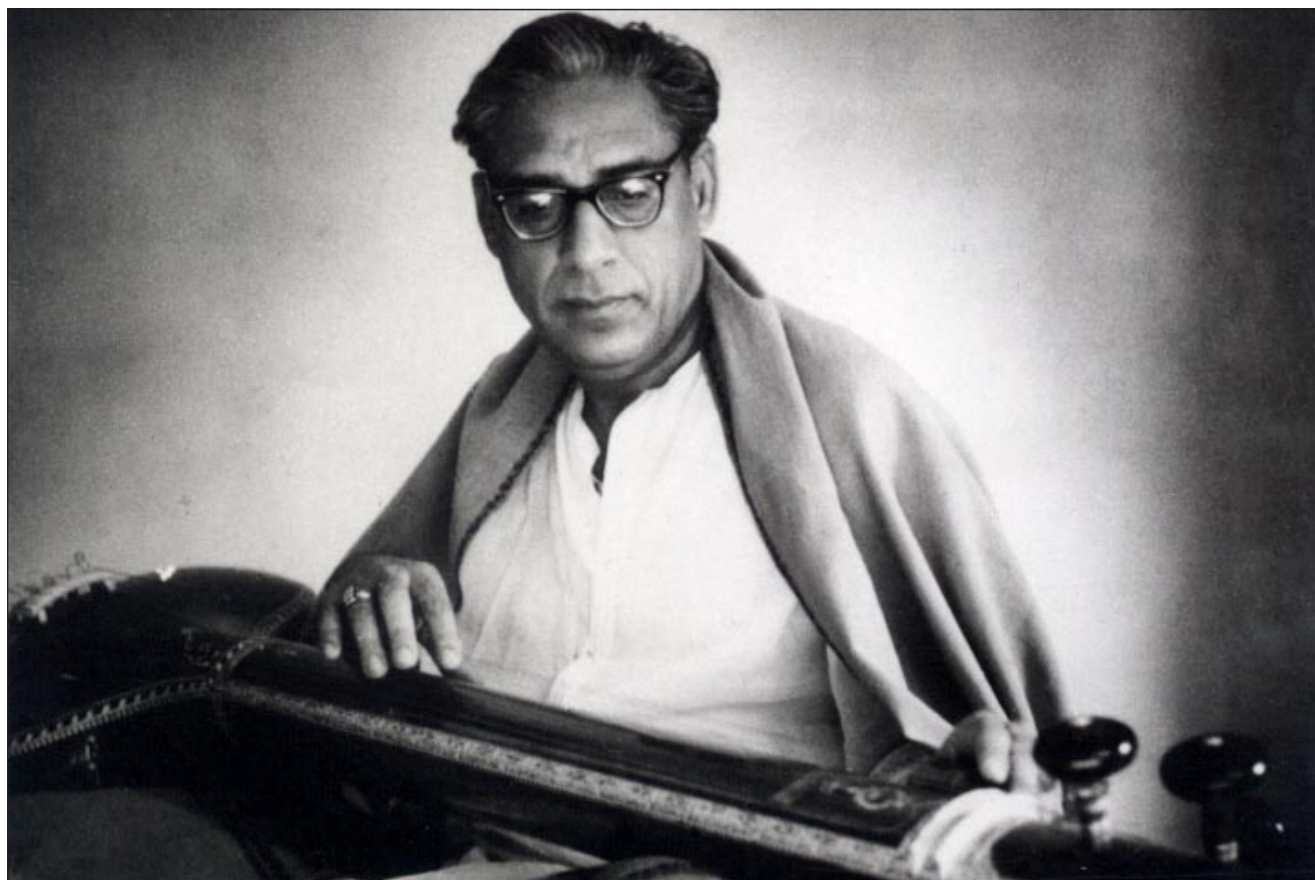
Karnataka – within a matter of three years, nearly 15,000 patients have obtained consultation services from Super Speciality Hospitals without really travelling to the big cities. Lives have been saved in certain pilgrimage places with the help of this facility. Bullets have been removed from injured Jawans in remote places through instructions obtained from experts through this facility.

During the recent Tsunami disaster, which struck the coastal areas of India and the islands of Andaman and Nicobar, the SATCOM based Telemedicine and GRAMSAT Network provided by ISRO was immediately pressed into service. Also, a few communication systems which were affected during the disaster in some of the islands were restored in a short time and used extensively for providing medical consultations as well as relief work.

It is also heartening to note that people are taking to this facility in a big way. There have been generous contributions from Super Speciality Hospitals, besides a number of other enthusiastic and philanthropic institutions and hospitals also getting involved. The requirements for establishing this facility have been pouring in from many states.

Realizing the efficacy and advantages of this system, efforts are afoot to extend this facility to all district hospitals.





Ustad Amir Khan.

Amir Khusrau's “Quwwal Bachche Gharana of Music”

BINDU CHAWLA

It was indeed quite intriguing how Ustad Amir Khan Saheb, despite being steeped in the music of the *khayal* – the highly classical form of Hindustani music – would love to listen to the *quwwali*, and would in fact immensely respect a genuine *quwwal*. The *quwwali*, with its edge of poetry over music, was of course a lighter form of music as compared to the *khayal*.

Ustad Amir Khan Saheb in fact would call himself a descendant

of the *quwwal bachche gharana*, the first ever *gharana* (school) of *quwwals* that marked a turning point in the history of music of the subcontinent.

The *quwwal bachche* (children who rendered quwwalis) sang Sufi mystic poetry, trained by Amir Khusrau himself. Their purpose of course was to spread the message of Sufism, and the mystic verses came from sources as varied as the Quran, to Persian poetry, and even to the “wise

sayings” of the common man. As is apparent, the appeal of the quwwali reached not only far and wide at that time, but has continued to do so down the centuries. The reason is simple. Sufism – loved for its common man’s spirituality on the one hand, and for its abstract or non-representational approach to spirituality on the other – lays emphasis mainly on the purification of the human mind and soul through *realization* triggered by deeply meaningful

verses sung in a manner so as to make the listener ecstatic.

Ustad Amir Khan, by expressing his love for quwwali, was not only tracing but also acknowledging his musical roots in Amir Khusrau and in the quwwali. He was in fact acknowledging Sufism itself. And so Khan Saheb would observe how, with the help of the words, the *qauls*, or the sayings of the saints, the quwwals would begin spiritual arousal of masses. He would observe the principle of chant and repetition that played a key role towards that end, and the movements of the quwwals that were meant to lead to the final mystic trance – the collective mystic trance known as *sama bandhana* in the Sufi language.

And Khan Saheb would point out to his disciples how the aim of the *khayal* too was the same – to kindle spiritual ecstasy in the listener. The difference in the two forms was one of classical refinement and musical detail.

All the classical arts of India have emerged from their humbler, folk roots. And this was also how the genius of Amir Khusrau emerged. Referred to by some as the Renaissance Man of Hindustani music, Khusrau worked with a rich variety of existing folk tunes and ditties to work out some extraordinary scales of *ragas*; and a variety of *bolis* or local dialects which he used while composing some of his most celebrated quwwalis ever, in Hindi as well. Apart from this he categorized for the first time the types of quwwalis that were being sung in his time in the *khanqahs* of the Chishti saint, his guru Nizamuddin Aulia. He classified all the types – *naat*, *gul*, *khamsa*, *qaul*, *qalbana*, *tarana* and *khayal*, – the format of the last-named type eventually evolving into the popular *khayal* of Hindustani music in the coming centuries.

In the world of *khayal* music – not much attention was paid to

the content and importance of the lyrics. But Ustad Amir Khan Saheb brought in a fresh breeze of re-discovery. The words should not be meaningless, he would always emphasize, because the impact of the musical rendering will increase hundredfold if the *bol* (words) are powerful and their pronunciation very clear. And while he himself composed a beautiful repertoire of memorable *khayal bandishes*, Khan Saheb inspired his disciple, Pandit Amarnath, too into composition, and this resulted in a great enriching of the world of Hindustani music. With Sufi khayal lyrics – Pandit Amarnath composed over 250 compositions, outstanding in their Sufi content, a body of work enviable in the world of Hindi poetry as well.

Although Ustad Amir Khan went on to found his own classical *gharana* of Indore – the first abstract style in the khayal rendering in North India, it is truly a mark of his greatness that even after achieving recognition for its uniqueness he did not ignore his roots – in Amir Khusrau and the history of the *quwwal bachche gharana*. Whenever he came to Delhi he would make it a point to offer *sajda* (humble respects) at the Nizamuddin Aulia dargah. For a musician who was never known to be comfortable going to a masjid, this indeed was deeply moving.

◆
The author is a musicologist.



Vedic School

PRESERVING GURUKUL TRADITION

KUMUD MOHAN

It's 8.00 am. The *shanti paath* (invocation for peace) at the *Yagya Shala* has just finished. Bald-headed boys in spotless white *dhotis* and *kurtas* file past silently to the teaching block. Through an unpretentious cemented stairway, you reach a corridor of classrooms. The emptiness inside the classrooms takes you by surprise. There are no charts, no desks, not even chairs. Just four bare walls with a couple of grilled windows. On one side is a blackboard and a raised platform or *chowki*. The students leave their slippers outside and, spreading their individual rugs on the floor, settle down in the *padmasana* or lotus posture – known to be ideal for mind-body balance and conducive to concentration and absorption.

Enter the teacher, similarly bald and clad in the same *dhota-kurta*

uniform. The youngsters stand up and one by one touch his feet respectfully. The teacher raises his right hand in the *ashirwad* or blessing gesture before sitting down to face them in *padmasana* on the *chowki*. The lesson on Sanskrit Literature begins. The text today is based on wisdom culled from the interesting animal stories of the *Panchtantra*.

Shrimad Dayanand Vedarsh Mahavidyalaya, in the south of Delhi (affiliated to the *Dayanand Saraswati Vishwa Vidyalyaya*, Rohtak University) is amongst three hundred schools in India struggling to save the centuries-old Gurukul traditon of teaching. Established about 70 years ago by Swami Sacchinanda Yogi, this institution once produced a highly motivated student-force that participated in the non-cooperation movements initiated by Mahatma Gandhi in 1942 and



1946. After India's Independence in 1947, however, lack of sufficient patronage coupled with paucity of funds led to its steady decline and closure by 1961.

However, it was only 18 years later that Acharya Haridev from Jhajjar, Haryana, managed to get the school functioning again from 1979 onwards. Today, housed in a 6,000 sq yard campus, the *Shrimad Dayanand Vedarsh Mahavidyalaya* imparts boarding and education to some 250 *Brahmacharis* (celebrates) in accordance with Vedic Gurukul traditions on a non-profit basis, as laid down by Swami Dayanand Saraswati. Young boys who have passed the 5th class in regular schools, and are able to fulfil requisite criteria related to general knowledge, grasping power and mathematical skills (about half of them get rejected), are admitted here regardless of caste, community or religion.

They come from all parts of the country – Assam, Bengal, Maharashtra, Orissa, UP, Bihar, Karnataka... More than sixty percent of them belong to the

poorer sections of society (very often they're tribals), as their parents feel that the child holds a better future in the *Mahavidyalaya*. In any case, paying just Rs. 400 a month for the total responsibility of upbringing of the child, including his food, books, clothes, education and health, is less than what they would be spending at home. Sometimes, parents from a cultured lineage, lamenting the absence of Indian traditions in the Macaulay model prevalent countrywide, prefer to send their wards to a Gurukul. For instance, Amit Kumar, from a well-to-do *zamindar* (landlord) family in Meerut, Uttar Pradesh, came here because his parents preferred Gurukul upbringing and wanted him to be well-versed in Sanskrit.

Admission to the Vedarsh Mahavidyalaya is formalised with the sacred thread ceremony to mark the beginning of Vedic education. This ceremony is an equalising factor for all, irrespective of their background. The first lesson is in simplicity, self-dependence and self-control



in community living. Ten toilets are shared by all the 250 inmates. The *ashram* rears its own cows. Meals are *satvik* or chaste, consisting of milk, *dalia* (porridge – coarsely ground whole wheat), chapatis, pulses, vegetables and rice with wholesome spices like ginger and cloves rather than the *tamsik* onion and garlic (believed to stimulate carnal desires). Fruit and curds are included once or twice a week. Fried delicacies also find their way into the menu twice or thrice a month (when received from donors).

Teachers and students share the same meals, wash their own clothes, sleep on the floor and follow the same demanding schedule stretching from 0400 hrs to 2200 hrs, six days a week. On the seventh day, Sunday, the only concession made is that formal education is replaced by traditional body-building games like *kabaddi* (a team-game involving mental and physical alertness), wrestling and tug-of-war.

In the long run, the strict regimen seemingly seeps into the psyche

of the boys. The Vidyalaya rules clearly state that uncalled for contact with outsiders interferes with the development and growth of the students and is therefore disallowed. Once the session gets underway, no holidays are allowed – except the annual one-month summer vacation. The children may sometimes talk on phone in their spare time, depending on individual requirement. Otherwise, they are not free to communicate with the outside world even through letters – except with the permission of the authorities.

Not all the spartan simplicity is accepted happily, though. Regular *mundan* or shaving of the head, for instance, is one ritual that almost every student rebels at inwardly (since it sets him apart from the youngsters outside), but dared not protest outwardly. Rules are rules after all, and they knew what they were stepping into.

“We discourage and disallow physical punishment of any type in the Vidyalaya”, explains

Pradbanacharya Haridev, the Principal, “We believe in *ahimsa* or non-violence. Physical punishment would anyway lead to resentment and reinforcement of the fault, rather than reform the child. Normally, we point out the consequences of a child’s actions to him and encourage him to do some introspection. Once he is convinced of his mistake, he himself decides his own punishment”.

Actually, some students who come to the Mahavidyalaya with the sole purpose of securing a degree and making a living, find the going tough. One year of Gurukul education is enough to separate the wheat from the chaff. The delicate and disinterested drop out within a few months of joining. The tenacious ones trudge along till the end. And the meritorious ones make it to the prestigious *Arsh Jyotirmath Gurukul* branch situated in the jungles of Himalayan foothills near Dehradun. Although only four years’ old, this institute has already

produced some national level champions. Four of its students, starting from the 15-year old Deepak Kumar, trained by Narain Singh Rana, father of the world renowned marksman Jaspal Rana, will be participating in the national level shooting competition this year.

The Mahavidyalaya has also produced national and international level champions in the field of Yoga. In academics too, its students far excel those from other universities. During the last 15 years, nine of its students have won gold medals in the Delhi University examinations after passing out from here.

“Our students join regular universities later to improve their job prospects”, clarifies Dr. Surya Narain Nanda, who obtained his doctorate from the Delhi University. Nanda is a Sanskrit news reader on TV and has been teaching here for the last four years. “Actually, the course here is far more difficult than at other universities”.

Of the 20 odd *Shastris* and *Acharyas* who pass out from the Vedarsh Mahavidyalaya every year, many have become lecturers, writers and researchers. Some have perfected themselves in the art of *mantroccharana* or the oral tradition of reciting the Vedas. Others are *purohits* conducting religious ceremonies like births and weddings. Yet others set out as missionaries, setting up Vedic schools in India and abroad.

◆
The author is a noted freelance writer.



Indian Hospice in Jerusalem

NAZEER ANSARI

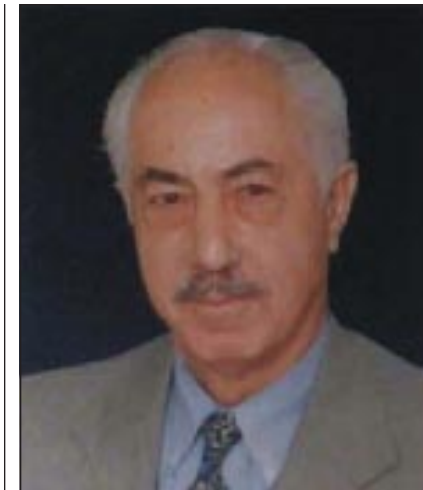
The Indian presence in Jerusalem could be traced back to over 700 years ago when a well-known Indian saint (*Walli*) Baba Farid Shakarganj from Ajodhan, now known as Pak Pattan and situated in Pakistan, came for pilgrimage to the Holy Land. A direct descendant of the second Caliph of Islam, he was on an 18-year tour of some Islamic countries. Impressed by his piety, the local Islamic community offered him for staying two small rooms attached to a mosque in Jerusalem. However, after his departure, these two rooms and the mosque became a pilgrimage site for Indian pilgrims visiting the Holy City. This site, which was known as *Zawiya-Al-Faridiab*, was granted to the Hospice and dedicated as a charitable Wakf property for a pious purpose.

With the passage of time, donations from Indians brought the area of the Hospice to its present position; it is now spread over seven *dunums* (seven thousand square meters), located inside the Old City of Jerusalem, opposite Bab Al-Zahera (Herod's Gate) and only minutes away from the holiest sites of the three monotheistic religions. This area came to be known by Indian pilgrims as *Al-Zawiya Al-Hindiya* (the Indian Hospice) where travellers and pilgrims could find rest and comfort. In addition to this location in Jerusalem, some Indian visitors also bought property in the city of Gaza and offered it to the Indian Hospice trust in Jerusalem.

After the collapse of the Ottoman Empire, Great Britain was designated by the League of

Nations as the mandatory power in Palestine with Jerusalem as the administrative capital. The Islamic Higher Supreme Council was established in Jerusalem to supervise Islamic affairs and places. The Council was headed at that time by Al-Hajj Amin Al-Husseini, the Grand Mufti of Palestine. In 1922, the Council sent a delegation to India to collect donations for the renovation of Al-Aqsa Mosque. Members of this delegation met with some Indian leaders of the Khilafat Movement represented by Maulana Mohammed Ali (who died in London on 3rd of January, 1931, and was buried upon his request at Al-Aqsa Mosque), his brother Shawkat Ali, Dr. Mukhtar Ahmad Ansari and Hakim Ajmal Khan, with whom they discussed the affairs of the Indian Hospice. They conveyed to the Indian authorities the urgent need for a reliable and well-qualified Indian representative to reside in Jerusalem and to be the official delegate of India in order to administer and supervise the Hospice. The late Sheikh Nazer Hassan Ansari from Ambehta, Saharanpur, in the Indian state of Uttar Pradesh, and a member of the Khilafat Movement, was chosen for this position. He was sent to Jerusalem in 1924. The choice of Sheikh Ansari was welcomed by all members of the Islamic Supreme Council in Jerusalem, and they proclaimed him the Sheikh of the Indian Hospice as well as the trustee of the Indian Wakf in Palestine.

During his administration from 1924 to 1951, Sheikh Ansari paid several visits to India and collected donations from leading personalities. The funds were used to erect new buildings on the land of the Hospice and to renovate old ones. The new structures were named



Custodian of the Hospice – Mr. Nazeer Ansari.

after the most generous donors such as “Osman Manzel” for Mir Osman Ali Khan, the 7th Nizam of Hyderabad, “Reza Hall” for Nawab Syed Mohammad Reza Ali, the 11th Nawab of Rampur, and “Sadiq Gate” for Sadiq Muhammad Khan, the 12th Ameer of Bahawalpur.

During the Second World War, the Indian Hospice was utilized as a leave camp for the Indian soldiers who served with the British troops in the Middle East. The General Headquarters established two wings on the Hospice's property as a gift, the “Delhi Wing” and the “Travancore Wing.” After the War the British Mandate in Palestine ended in 1947. The same year India also became independent and the first Indian Embassy in the Middle East was established in Cairo. From that date onwards, relations were officially established with the Government of India.

Sheikh Ansari passed away in 1951 and according to the traditions followed at the Hospice, his eldest son Mohammad Munir Ansari was chosen to inherit the position. As a result, a *Shari'a* document was issued by the *Shari'a* Court in

Jerusalem proclaiming Sheikh Mohammad Munir Ansari as the Director and Trustee of the Indian Hospice Wakf as of 1952.

During the administration of Sheikh Mohammad Munir Ansari relations with the Government of India intensified and Indian visitors to the Holy Land increased in numbers. In 1963 the Indian Hospice was granted financial assistance by the Government of India in order to construct a building consisting of twelve shops, the rent from which would provide a fixed revenue to meet the Hospice's expenses.

Because of the new political situation that developed after 1967, Indian visitors stopped travelling to Jerusalem. The Indian Hospice sustained extensive damage during the war but it continued to render its services in whatever manner it could. Since 1992 the Government of India has been granting financial assistance for the renovation and upkeep of this historical and religious monument. Many dignitaries and pilgrims from India have been visiting the hospice ever since. The Ansari family, proud custodians of the Indian Hospice since 1924, always looks forward to welcoming Indians to the Holy City.

◆ *The author is the Custodian of the Hospice.*

The Hospice.



Diu

PEARL IN ARABIAN SEA

Text: QUEENY SINGH
Photographs: SOUMITRA MOHAN

Diu, the tiny former Portuguese settlement on the seaside near Junagadh on the Saurashtra peninsula, is an exotic tourist locale. Diu indeed is a small island – 11 km down and 3 km inside – off the Gulf of Cambay near the port of Verval; it is joined to the mainland by a creek. In the north of Diu is Chasi River, while its other three sides are surrounded by the Arabian Sea. It is connected to the mainland by two bridges – one near Tad village and another near Ghogla village.

The climate of Diu remains pleasant throughout the year – the temperatures fluctuating between 20 and 30 degree celsius. It is widely believed that the first ruler of Diu was a Rajput by the name of Jallandhar. However, in 1380 AD Diu fell to Muslim invaders. Bahadur Shah, the Sultan of Gujarat, constructed the fort that is now its dominant feature and a source of great attraction to the tourists. The location and construction of the fort shows how great strategists the Indian rulers were. The fort is rock solid and could not be breached easily; it is surrounded by sea from three sides and only a moat connects the fort from the remaining side.

In the 16th century, the seafaring European nations were looking towards the orient for trade. Consequently, the Portuguese came to Diu in 1510. Its cession

to Portuguese was however confirmed in 1543. Fearing attacks from their trading rivals – British and French, the Portuguese governor Dom Joao de Castro reconstructed the fort after the siege of 1545. It was named *Praca de Diu*. The Portuguese bronze and iron cannons bearing arms are still positioned on the ramparts of the fort, as if ready to be fired at a moment's notice! A walk on the ramparts of the fort with cannons in battle readiness sends a chill down the spine and triggers a vision of sea-battles of bygone era. Large quantities of unused cannon balls are still lying in the corners of the fort. There are also two lighthouses within the walls of the fort, one of which is still functional. The reflection of sun and walls of the fort in the sea is simply magnificent.

The Portuguese also built a chapel dedicated to St. James into a wall of the fort. Another chapel in the fort has been converted into a Museum. It houses a collection of inscriptions carved in stones, some in Arabic of pre-Portuguese era.

Not satisfied with the strength and inaccessibility of the fort, the rulers constructed their outpost, a rocky structure with a lighthouse, in the middle of the sea to meet the challenge of their adversaries. The locals called this *Panikotha*. A motorboat from the fort can reach *Panikotha*. A visit to this landmark before sunset is rewarding. The



Arabian Sea caressing the Diu Fort walls (above) and St. Thomas Church (left).

view of Diu fort from Panikotha is fantastic. As the sun goes down, Panikotha is flood-lit and the sight is beyond description.

Although the influence of Portuguese culture is visible in many facets of Diu life, traces of Rajasthani and Muslim influence are also found. The Jallandhar Nath temple, the oldest temple in the memory of the first Rajput ruler of Diu; the Gangeshwar temple dedicated to Lord Shiva, where the lingam is washed by sea waves, located at the far end of Nagoa village; the *Nagar Seth Havelis* (grand town houses of wealthy merchants) in typical Gujarati style and the Jami Masjid



Above: Nagoa Beach.
Facing page: Jami Masjid (top) and
Nagar Seth Haveli (below).

are reminiscent of the pre-
Portuguese culture.

The streets of Diu bear a look of a European town. The architecture of houses is different from those in Gujarat. It is actually a mix of Portuguese and Gujarati architecture; wooden balconies projecting over narrow streets are visible at many places. The buildings that occupy the pride of place in Diu are the churches of St. Paul and St. Thomas and the tower of the Church of St. Francis Assisi. St. Paul's Church was constructed in Gothic style in 1610 and is consecrated to Our Lady of Immaculate Conception. St. Thomas Church also houses the Museum to depict the life of Diu in old days. With the departure of Portuguese from

India in 1961, the local Christian population has dwindled and regular church service is conducted only in St. Paul's Church.

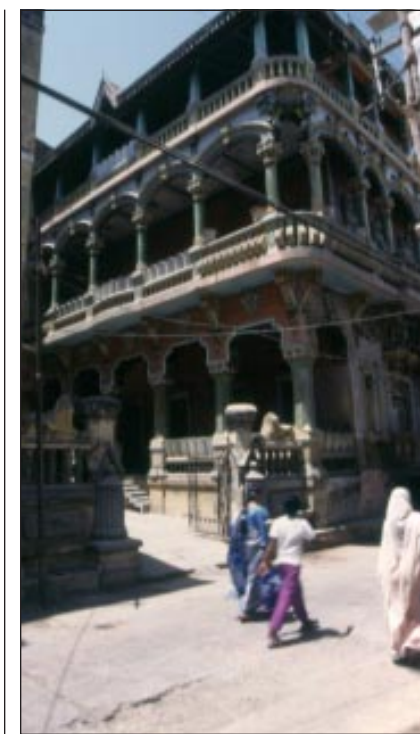
The description of Diu would be incomplete without the mention of its beaches – Jallandhar, Chakratirath, Gomtimala and Nagoa, among others. Of these, the beach near Nagoa in the shape of a horse-shoe is one of the finest beaches in India. It is located on a placid blue water bay where facilities for swimming and other water sports are available. Tented camp accommodation has also come up lately. Not very crowded, one can relax and laze around at Nagoa Beach. The other beaches also possess their distinctive attractions.



There is a narrow winding path that goes around Diu. The path takes you to villages at *Vana Kabra* and Bucharwada, where one finds coconut grown in abundance. Bulk of the local population is engaged in salt production and fishing. With many exotic varieties of fish available here, Diu has emerged as an ideal destination for seafood.

Many inhabitants are also engaged in weaving and dyeing of cloth. The local handicrafts of high aesthetic value include ivory, tortoise shell, printed cloth and horns of animals.

Diu is also a little paradise for bird watchers. One can watch flocks of blue rock pigeons, parrots, *koels*, doves, crows and sparrows. The



major attraction is the presence of a variety of migratory birds from August to February. These include cranes, rosy pastors, ducks, purple gall mile, jacanas, blue reef horns and kingfishers.

Diu has everything that a tourist looks for; its quiet and serene ambience makes it an enchanting place.

◆
The author is a freelance writer.



THE BOLTING ASIATIC WILD ASS

Text & Photographs: BHAGAT SINGH

The Little Rann of Kutch, situated in Gujarat, was declared a sanctuary in 1973 for the protection and conservation of the Wild Ass found here. Although most of the Raan area consists of dry seabed salt desert, yet there are several small grazing islands. This flat saline desert is flooded during the monsoons and turns into a swamp with wild grasses and bushes growing all over. In winters, it turns arid. While this region lacks vegetation, its peripheral areas contain dwarf trees and thorny bushes.

The Wild Ass is a sturdy animal known for its speed and hardiness. It has a socialization pattern similar to the African Wild Ass. The adult males defend their territories and during the mating season, try to restrict the movements of their mates within their own territory. The



adult males drive away the young males. The wares and fillies wander through all territories in small groups.

These animals once overran the Raan of Kutch (Greater and Little both), making inroads into the hinterlands of Sind, Northern Gujarat and Saurashtra. But now they remain confined to the Little Raan of Kutch only.

The Wild Ass is also called *Ghar Khad*, because of its sandy coat, erect chestnut coloured mane extending as a broad stripe along the back to the root of the tail. It looks handsome with 110-120 cm standing at the shoulder, and taller than the donkey.

The wildlife lovers may see swift movements of these animals running in files, when disturbed; otherwise they remain confined in smaller groups, standing still in the vast expanse of arid zones. They graze in shrubby lands during the day, but invade the nearby cultivated fields in the night. The visitors may easily encounter herds of wild asses leisurely grazing in the periphery of the scrub jungles. During the monsoons, when the Raan gets inundated due to heavy rains, some of these animals take shelter on islands in the middle of the Raan and breed there.

The wildlife authorities are making sincere efforts for their

survival, including planting trees, shrubs and grass for grazing, and providing water in the desert areas.

◆ *The author is an eminent wildlife writer/ lensman.*



An old picture postcard depicts the original beauty of Banganga with temples, homes and lamp pillars.
Picture postcard courtesy Rajan Jayakar.

Blessed Banganga

Text: BRINDA GILL
Photographs: SATYAJIT S. GILL

Banganga, a sacred tank near the western seaface of Mumbai, has its origins steeped in mythology. *Ban* is arrow in Hindi and *Ganga* is India's most sacred river that flows from the Himalayas in the north down to the northern plains hundreds of miles away from Mumbai! It is believed that many centuries ago, the Hindu deity Lord Rama paused in the area and thirsting for water shot an arrow into the ground from which sprang forth a flow of water from an underground spring that emanated from the Ganges! Thus, *Banganga*, regarded as Mumbai's oldest and largest surviving Hindu sacred spot, is believed to have originated. It is therefore only natural that the scenic Banganga has developed into a famous pilgrimage site.



As a tranquil pool of water near the Arabian Sea at the edge of a well-wooded hill, Banganga's sanctity down the ages has also drawn ascetics and their presence here has enhanced its sacredness. It has gradually led to the building of temples, homes, hermitages, rest houses for pilgrims and broad steps around it. In the 17th and 18th centuries, European travellers visited the site and penned their observations, while European artists painted its scenic environs. Interestingly, some of these views were later printed on picture postcards that conveyed overseas the beauty of Banganga.

Banganga is approached through narrow sloping streets lined with buildings revealing the organic development of a settlement. After the bustle of the streets,



Above: The Banganga tank surrounded by temples and homes. Left: A lamp pillar with small holders for burning lamps.

sudden appearance of Banganga as a vast open space surprises the visitor. The soft ripples of the waters of the tank that stretches 115 metres by 40 metres and a clutch of geese gliding by instils a sense of peace. A stream of water from the north-east corner of the tank steadily fills it up, while a pole signifying the *axis mundi* or centre of the earth marks the centre of the pool. Underground valves and overflow outlets leading into the sea maintain its water level. Broad flat steps running down to the water from the sides offer access to the sacred pool.

Pilgrims circumambulate the tank in a clockwise direction paying their respects at the different



Old stone sculpture depicting deities (top); decorative brackets of a temple (above) and tree worship (right).



temples and shrines along the path. The circumambulation commences from the southern entrance to the site; the path is dotted with several temples on the eastern side – a direction regarded as auspicious.

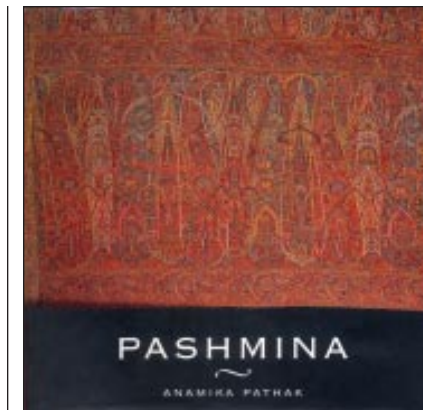
In the narrow streets around Banganga, temples and old architectural elements create a singular charm and space. Carved wooden doorways, decorative brackets supporting the roofs and images of deities beneath trees tell a tale of their own.

Banganga, declared a Heritage Precinct in 1995, comes alive during the two-day Banganga Music Festival organized by the Maharashtra Tourism Development Corporation (MTDC) and the Indian Heritage Society.

◆
The author is a noted freelance writer.

Pashmina PRIDE OF KASHMIR

Dr. CHARU SMITA GUPTA



frames and the furniture which provide a platform for its display.

Mastery of the traditional techniques of weaving, dyeing and decorating the textiles in India continued to be a carefully guarded secret for centuries. Such skills and knowledge of the techniques were kept within the limited peripheries of the designated groups and were shared only by close relations. There is enough evidence in excavated materials such as stone blades, knives, chisels spindle whorls and bone points at the Neolithic site of Burzahorm and Gufkarl in Kashmir, along with the fossils of sheep/goat, to explain that the man in the Kashmir valley was familiar with technique of converting sheep/goat hair to some kind of cover for protection from cold.

Over a period of time, Kashmir valley has excelled in wool weaving techniques. Kashmir developed a distinct style of decorative weaving from the locally available wool fiber, commonly known as Pashmina. Similar to the

illustrious Persian carpets in design presentation, Pashmina were the body-wraps for men and women in various sizes and designs. Today in the global scenario, Pashmina is a class apart among the wraps which drape the human body and decorate the furniture as the back throw. Pashmina is technically a goat hair fabric with multicolor artistic weaving. This is often decorated further with fine embroidery known as Amlikar; Kani weaving and Jamavar are few of the world renowned woollen embellishments

With this backdrop monograph “Pashmina” by Anamika Pathak is an interesting reading of the woollen handloom industry of Kashmir.

PASHMINA by Anamika Pathak; published by Roli Books, New Delhi; Price: Rs. 595.

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The reviewer teaches museology at the National Museum Institute, New Delhi.

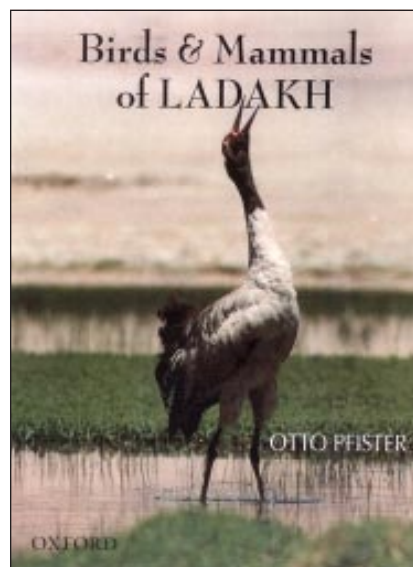
Ladakh

HAVEN FOR WILDLIFE

Lt. Gen (Retd) BALJIT SINGH

Ladakh's geographical inaccessability has been a blessing and a blight for its wildlife. While it held at bay all forces inimical to the well being of its birds and mammals, at the same time it had discouraged deliberate field investigation and scientific documentation of its fauna and flora. However, since the mid-eighteenth century, explorers, mountaineers and "game" trophy hunters had contributed in the compilation of an "inventory" of Ladakh's wildlife. But the distinction of the first comprehensive and exclusive book on the "Birds and Mammals" of Ladakh finally goes to Otto Pfister.

Pfister is a Swiss national. By vocation he is an environmental



consultant to MNCs but by passion he is an acclaimed Naturalist and wildlife photographer. He was

beguiled by Ladakh in 1976. There was no turning back. For, he made twelve more visits, each one of five months' duration. And his 25 years labour of love gives us detailed life histories of all the 276 species of birds and 30 mammals of Ladakh, together with one or more colour photograph of each. The text is thoroughly researched.

For the sheer joy of parent-progeny bond, the photograph of *Hume's Groundpecker* feeding its fledgling is a delight to watch. When it comes to capturing motion and concentration of an animal on the hunt, the photograph of the *Pallas* cat is in the mould of a classic. And the black-necked crane on the cover is simply stunning.

Pallas' Cat.



Instead of the usual distribution map, Pfister inserts a paragraph for the description of each bird/mammal under the heading, "Typical Areas of Encounter" which leaves little to chance when you want to spot the object of your desire. For the lay birdwatcher, there is another useful paragraph wherever necessary, under the heading "Similar species" to avoid mistaken identifications. Another significant feature of the book is its most comprehensive description of Ladakh's ecosystem, its wildlife (which need to be protected zealously) and what he astutely calls "Locations Beyond the Tourist Circuit" which for consideration of security require special entry permits.

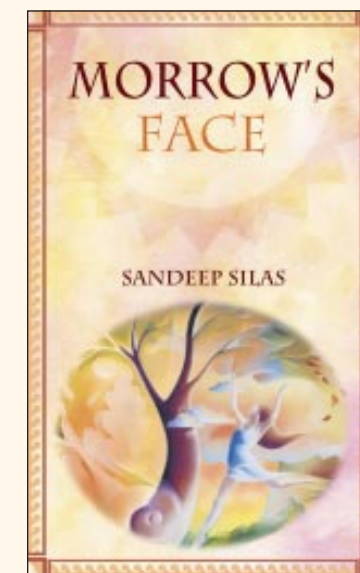
Pfister is the first author to textualise the unwritten "Code of Ethics" for nature observations to respect and preserve natural heritage. He cautions that you should "always remember that you are an intruder and, as such, must respect animals and their ecosystems". It is a book that is useful for the scientist, and pleasureable both for the amateur and vacationers to Ladakh.

BIRDS AND MAMMALS OF LADAKH
by Otto Pfister; Oxford University Press,
New Delhi; Price: Rs. 795.

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*The reviewer, a retired Army General,
is a writer on flora & fauna of India.*

Of Life's Joys & Sorrows...

BHARAT BHUSHAN



Of all the forms of expression that evolved in language as humanity grew, poetry always had the most universal appeal. Such has been the power of poetry that it melted the hearts of Kings, it brought a flush to the cheeks of princesses, it motivated armies to conquer, it stopped the hands of tyrants, it skilfully clothed a truth in satire to drive a point home and it became a weapon to the indefensible. It is perhaps the purest way to celebrate the beauty of nature; above all, it is a dimension of the spirituality of man. Poetry gently attempts to refine the coarseness of life. It is actually divine.

"Morrow's Face" by Sandeep Silas is unique in many ways. It holds in its pages days and nights, moments and events, hopes and desires, sadness and hurt, the worthlessness of pursuit and yet its celebration, joys of life and its thrills, as also a deep understanding of the 'definite' and the 'indefinite'. The poet in him rises with each page of the book to explore those hidden mysterious boundaries that are visible faintly but are resolute to each feeling, each moment of our lives.

Though the grouping of the Poems is mainly due to the poet's effort to present to the reader the currents of pure verse as they flow in the book, yet we find a common thread that binds all. One gets a strong feeling that he is writing about our very own lives, our hidden 'selves'.

MORROW'S FACE by Sandeep Silas;
published by Sterling Publishers Pvt.
Ltd., New Delhi; Price: Rs. 100 (2005).

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"Ecstasies of love – the joy of divine love" (above) and "Song of the mystic" (facing page).

Satish Chauhan

THE MINIATURIST

Text & Photographs: N.K. SAREEN

In early sixties when some student or child expressed his desire to become a painter and pursue the subject in the college, his father would invariably oppose it, on the ground that it could be a hobby for the rich but could not be a career option for a middle class youth. "A mere painter can neither get any respect in the society nor could the profession provide a decent earning for a comfortable living", the father would say. This in fact was not altogether off the mark. In India, not very long ago, the financial status of the brave souls who became artist painters was indeed not very encouraging.



"Dancing Nayika" (above) and "Ascetics" (facing page).

However, Satish Chauhan, third son of a migrant small business family was in fact encouraged by his father who himself at some time in his life had wanted to become a professional painter but had remained just a hobbyist. "My father in fact was quite glad and immediately put me in the College of Arts at Delhi as soon as I told him that I wanted to become a painter", says Chauhan. So this 1958-born artist earned his Bachelor of Arts in Painting in 1981 in First Division. Even while in college, he actively participated in annual art exhibitions of his college; he held his first show at Bombay's Jahangir Art Gallery in 1982.

Satish Chauhan's favourite medium of painting is watercolor and he is simply fascinated by the miniatures of Rajasthan. Therefore the tremendous

similarities of the size of his paintings, detailed backgrounds, delicate figures and very vibrant colour schemes abundantly reflect the impact miniatures of Rajasthan have had on all his work. But that should not be a surprise to anyone, because he is a proud son of a proud Rajput, a ruling community of the state known the world over as great warriors. But Satish Chauhan is totally shorn of any fighting instincts; he is a very affable, mild mannered and soft spoken gentleman, who is spiritually inclined and extremely dexterous and devoted to his work.

He has now graduated to larger sizes and has lately started working in oils on canvas. His recently held major solo show titled *The Divine Love* is indicative of his spiritual bent of mind. Describing Chauhan's work, a viewer aptly said that 'divine love is only experienced by those who can sing and dance in a state of bliss, unmindful of time and space'.

Well defined, brightly attired and ornamented beautiful, dancing, playful and serene females occupy larger part and space in his paintings. These remind us of the mythological *apsaras* (fairies). His recent show was well received and appreciated.

It has certainly not been an easy going for Satish Chauhan. He had to go through his own years of struggle to reach where he is now, earning a decent living and be considered as a senior artist. For years he had to slog working for ad agencies to eke out a living for himself and his small family of wife and a son, making book covers, participating in various group shows in Delhi and Mumbai, made murals for the trade fair and paid 'homage' to important political leaders.

His work is now in the collection of Lalit Kala Academy and the College of Arts, Delhi, as also in private collections in India and abroad. Last year he participated in a group show of five painters and exhibited his selected works in Pakistan. His major watercolor solo show, 'Sufi and Ochre Robe', was held last year in Delhi and was very well received.

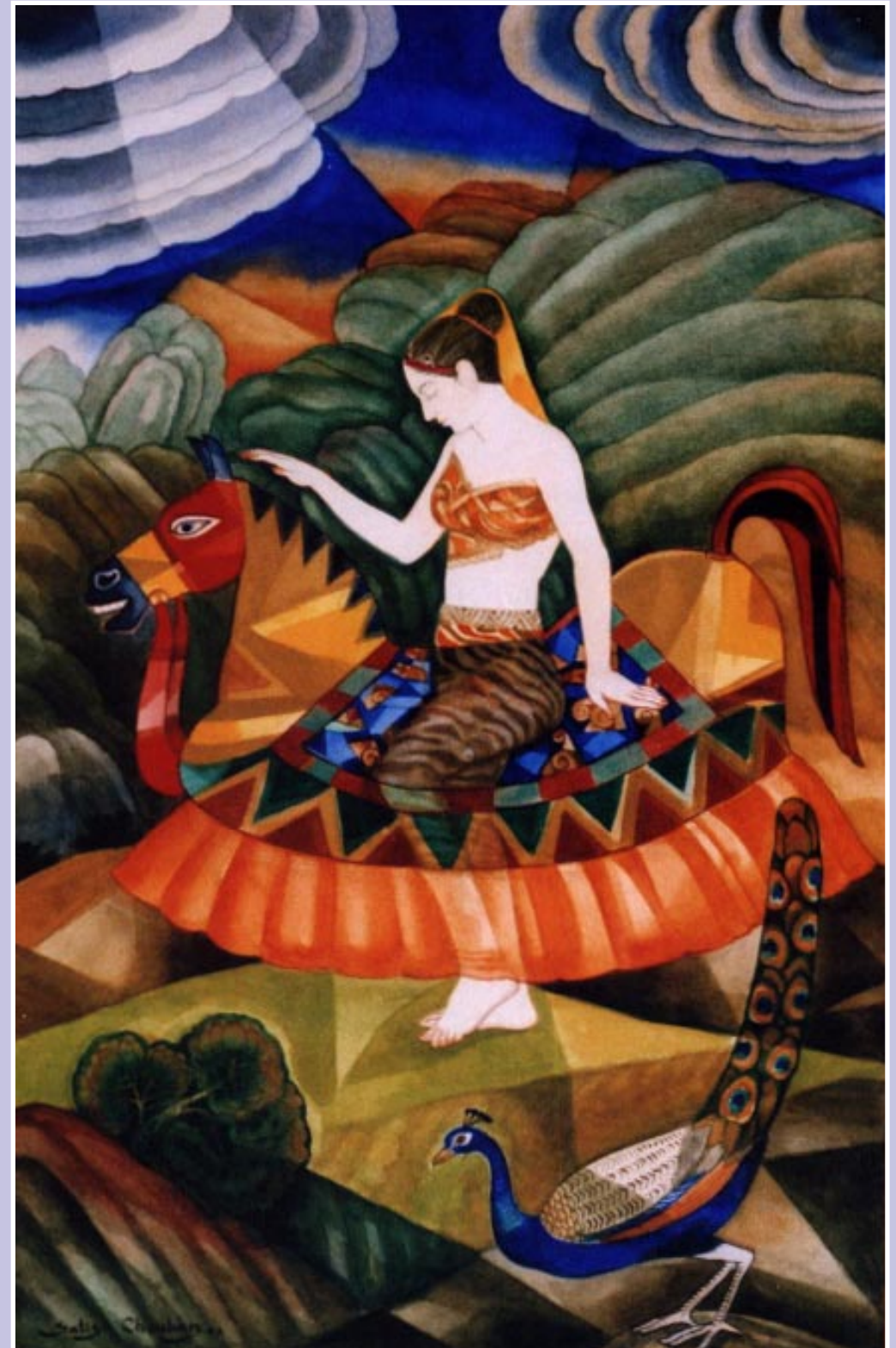
◆
The author is a noted photojournalist.





JUNE 2005

India Perspectives



From the Editor...



This issue indeed is a microcosm of the mind-boggling diversity – both cultural and racial – that India represents. While it delves into India’s age-old Gurukul system of education based on Vedic principles, it also takes note of the 700-year old Indian Hospice set up in Jerusalem that still continues to be a haven for visiting pilgrims to that holy city. Despite facing vicissitudes of history and time, the Hospice has continued to serve the cause for which it was established – serving the guests from India!

A beautifully illustrated feature on the eminent photographers of India who will showcase their work in the forthcoming exhibition in New Delhi in August this year – “The Incredible Moment...” is simply breathtaking. We have tried to capture the range and intensity of their work in this feature.

Gujarat’s world-famous embroidery never fails to fascinate; and this ethnic embroidery is almost synonymous with the Kutch region of the state. The art is passed on from one generation to the other. In fact each community here has its own distinct style – but in sync with the changing times – and akin to ritual decoration.

Kutch is also famous for its Wild Ass – the vanishing species who take to their heels the moment they detect human presence. A feature on these animals is also quite revealing.

India’s efforts to provide healthcare at the very doorsteps of its citizens are bearing fruit – thanks to the Telemedicine concept that is fast catching on. Read more on that in this issue...

Editor
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Back cover: Prayer Hall of St. Thomas Church, Diu.
Transparency: Soumitra Mohan.