

Indian Horizons

Volume 61 No. 3 July - September 2014



Indian Council for Cultural Relations

The Indian Council for Cultural Relations (ICCR) was founded on 9th April 1950 by Maulana Abul Kalam Azad, the first Education Minister of independent India.

The objectives of the Council are to participate in the formulation and implementation of policies and programmes relating to India's external cultural relations; to foster and strengthen cultural relations and mutual understanding between India and other countries; to promote cultural exchanges with other countries and people; to establish and develop relations with national and international organizations in the field of culture; and to take such measures as may be required to further these objectives.

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Foreword

Satish C. Mehta
Director General, Indian Council for Cultural Relations

The popularity of Indian cuisine is now legendary – it is being prepared and relished across the world. Indian restaurants are now a familiar sight in practically every country and Indian food is now winning international Culinary Awards, recognition, and admiration. This volume of Indian Horizons takes cognizance of this phenomena and tracks down our culinary journey, from heritage practices to its modern avatar. As Indian food has now made inroads internationally, the issue covers insights of some master chefs in India. These enterprising pioneers have given Indian culinary practices additional depth by their innovative inclusions, so that Indian cuisine is now becoming more than just an exotic collection of curries and chutneys.

Chef Sanjeev Kapoor, a well-known face of Indian cuisine today, has given a splendid overview of the current status of our cuisine, its many hidden qualities and its ability to cater to varied tastes, and the manner in which the humblest of ingredients can create the most exotic of items for the table. Above all, Chef Kapoor has shared the secrets behind Indian food, namely a fetish for using fresh produce, and food which is in season. Known for his endless repertoire of recipes, Chef Kapoor has offered to our readers a pick of his special recipes, which are easy to follow and enticing enough to make amateurs head to the kitchen.

Known for his uncanny knack of creating amazing combinations of fusion Indian foods, Chef Puneet Mehta has shared creations with candid simplicity. A few slices of Alphonso mango, for instance, when

infused into the Indian staple 'Kheer', is the 'twist' behind a landmark addition on restaurant menus. The ubiquitous samosa, a favourite snack across the country, had triggered off a fusion trail journey for Chef Mehta. He serves it with a helping of the popular preparation of chole and today, he is undoubtedly India's master chef at mixing and matching culinary possibilities.

One of the distinctive periods of culinary revival came about when Chef Imtiyaz Qureshi of Lucknow had made public the secrets from the kitchens of the Lucknow aristocracy. Today he is the legendary face behind the tradition of cooking in a sealed pot or 'dum-pukht' cooking. The popularity of his art had ushered in a revolution, as biryanis, kababs and vegetables were included on five-star menus, and Chef Imtiyaz became a celebrity chef overnight. Noted writer Mridula Garg shared a meal at his table as she exchanged notes and memories over the food with his son.

The photo essay segment goes beyond visual appeal as it contains easy-to-follow instructions for making chutneys, photographed in colourful mouth-watering glory. There are selections from across the country, as every region has specialized in chutney making, combining everyday and exotic ingredients with élan and creativity. Also featured are nostalgic favourites like Grey's chutney and the mango delights that enhance every meal in India.

Chef Ajay Chopra is a much revered name among foodies as he dons several caps. Being an active food writer, his word carries weight in print. As a master

chef, he is often called upon to judge prestigious competitions watched by millions of food enthusiasts. He highlights the strengths and place of masalas in our cooking.

As Indian cuisine finds favour among gourmets worldwide, there is a need to train and prepare world-class chefs. This aspect is aptly presented in the article by Chef Sudhakar Rao, who himself heads one of the best professional institutions of the country. Being in close contact with the current scenario, Chef Rao has provided valuable first-hand information on the credentials of a competent chef and urges youngsters of the country to strive for quality culinary education.

The book section of this volume carries an unusual bunch of recipes from the kitchens of the India International Centre, the capital's meeting ground for intellectuals.

The Azad Bhavan Gallery segment has been diversified to include live stage performances held at

the Azad Bhavan Auditorium, for like the art on the walls, the performances on stage are hand picked for their cultural appeal, their expertise and their entertainment quality. The new inclusion is intended to introduce to our readers an overview of what is making the cultural rounds in the country. The holistic approach of combining fine art and performing arts under the review segment is thus geared towards making the Azad Bhavan experience even richer.

In the last volume of Indian Horizons we had introduced a new segment – some archival photographs to take all of us down the memory lane. The nostalgic makeover of our archival pages at the beginning of the volume, bring back memories for our veteran readership. The response of our readers was more than heartening. It is also meant to trigger off curiosity of our younger readership who are now able to link the names and faces through this photographic coverage.

We hope our readers find this volume, should we say, a mouth-watering experience.



Satish C. Mehta

Editorial

When mulling over themes for our magazine, the humble kitchen is not what comes to mind immediately. But with the surfeit of chef and food related shows on the television network, it struck me that cuisine from India, which has had a vast fan following across centuries, perhaps since the time of the Spice Trade, could be a worthwhile thematic idea. As if by chance, I was introduced to Chef Puneet Mehta a master chef who is familiar to millions of our television viewers. We discussed the possibilities and ever since that fortuitous conversation, he has been the guardian angel and leading light behind this issue.

The first of my suggestions to have an easy-to-make chutney photo essay met his immediate approval. Trailing a route of chutneys from all parts of the country, he offered to write the essay on fusion foods, which till his article came on my desk, to me had meant British versions of curries and tomato soup!

The magic had not worn off with just one chef's assistance for when I approached Chef Sanjeev Kapoor, he was remarkably forthcoming and kept to his deadline so exactly, that I almost shuddered with excitement and joy. He even volunteered a recipe section alongside, for the pleasure of our readers.

Being an ardent fan of tandoori foods and biryanis, I longed to feature the legendary Chef Imtiaz, verily the spearhead behind the dum pukt revolution. Writer and columnist Mridula Garg, despite her innumerable

commitments, offered to have a fireside chat with his son, Chef Qureshi and update us about this legendary chef. In the bargain one learnt about the entire lineage of this Lucknowi family and their culinary traditions.

Dr Pushpesh Pant, volunteered to give a complete run down on festive foods, as this quarter is a festival-packed period in India and the IIC cookbook, a rare gem in its own right, had me trying out recipes from it with gusto. Writing a review was a natural aftermath of this episode.

Master Chef Ajay Chopra has taken Indian foods to diners abroad and at home and thus has a hands-on knowhow on the cuisine scene. His well researched contents and pertinent observations will make every Indian proud, I am sure. Chef Sudhakar Rao surmised a frank appraisal of the educational drawbacks of this professional in India. What was knowledge to me was that one is not a chef simply by becoming a graduate from a hotel management institute and one needs specialized training for it.

Our arts review pages has been widened to include performing arts held in the same complex. This time we have featured music shows exclusively, but in the forthcoming issues there would be a wider mix of on-stage reviews. The archives are filled with nostalgia and altogether the volume was put together to become a preserve of cuisine, culture and the arts, in spicy and mouthwatering sections.

Editor



Subhra Mazumdar

From our Archives



Reception in Honour of a cultural delegation from Sikkim, January 25, 1961



Reception in Honour of a Cultural Delegation from Sikkim, January 25, 1961



Luncheon in Honour of Mr W. N. Brown, Dr and Mrs N. Cousins (U.S.A.) and Prof. Richard Church of U.K. January 13, 1961



First President of India Dr Rajendra Prasad with Speaker Earl C R Atlee of U.K. at the Azad Memorial Lecture, February 22-23, 1961



Dinner in Honour of Earl & Lady Harewood of U.K. April 12, 1961



Dinner in Honour of Earl & Lady Harewood of U.K. April 12, 1961

Indian Cuisine : A Khanakhazana!

Chef Sanjeev Kapoor

An article on Indian cuisine? It's like asking to confine an ocean in a teacup! Indian cuisine is my passion, my niche, a global favourite and it'll be glorified till eternity. My aim is to make Indian cuisine the No 1 cuisine across the globe. I strongly believe that it needs as much attention as it can garner from every corner of the world.

Indian food, like the country, is full of paradoxes. It is simple, yet complex. It has a rich history, but it is not the same even if it is from the same state. Every region, every district has its own distinct cuisine. India is a country of contrasts and extremes, it has the world's most recently formed mountains – the Himalayas, as well as the world's most ancient rocks. It has the world's wettest place – Cherrapunji and the hottest desert – the Thar. There are stretches of permanent snow in the Himalayas and Karakoram, and tropical rain forests in Kerala. If geography has any impact on the development of a people's food, India has surely benefitted from this, as it has come up with one of the richest and most diverse cuisines in the world. You could taste a new dish every day, and it would take more than a few lifetimes before you exhaust the entire repertoire of Indian food.

When travelling south from the northernmost states or from the east to west, you will encounter a distinct diversity of tastes and spices. While wheat is a staple in the northern, western and central states, rice predominates in the south and east. While heady aromas of saffron and anise welcome you to Kashmir, a whiff of curry leaves tempered in coconut oil makes

you feel at home in Kerala. If a diverse preparation of pulses interests you in Rajasthan, the magnificent variety of fish in Bengal will enthrall you.

But while regional cuisines vary tremendously, they share some common threads. Indian food is healthy, featuring grains, pulses and loads of vegetables at every meal; the dishes highlight hot, tart, sweet and tangy flavours in exquisite balance; and they are much easier to cook than you think. A dish might seem complex with a long list of spices, but if you have it all in hand, it's just a matter of tossing them all in at the right time. A typical Indian recipe might have many steps, but the steps are usually simple and straightforward. Cook with the best ingredients and you will not go wrong.

Indian cuisine has as many vegetarian dishes as it has non-vegetarian. There is no cuisine that boasts of as many vegetarian dishes as Indian. It is also one of the reasons of its popularity; even non vegetarians can have a complete vegetarian meal and not miss the meat at all. I can say with total confidence that the best guide to vegetarian cuisine is Indian cuisine. The best part of Indian cuisine is cooking with fresh ingredients. Not for us the canned vegetables or the bottled spices. When we cook we grind our spices and our vegetables are fresh off the market. Indian vegetarian cooking is also about the use of lentils and pulses, and then there is a wide array of chutneys, pickles, raitas and other accompaniments. Having said this, it doesn't mean non vegetarian fare isn't a prime part of Indian cuisine. The abundance of fish,

mindboggling variety is more like it, chicken, lamb, goat etc make non vegetarian dishes as much of a delight as vegetarian.

Indian cuisine's biggest plus has been the influence of all its settlers and invasions. Arabs, Persians, Moghuls, Turks, Portuguese and even the British have impacted our cuisine in many ways. The long rule of the Maharajas in India have given a royal slant to Indian cooking, and it is now a regular feature in restaurants and homes. The kings and nawabs of India took Indian cuisine several notches higher, both in terms of preparation and presentation. To date, the royal dishes are prepared the way it was centuries ago, and the taste also is the same.

When it comes to desserts, let me put it this way. If you have a sweet tooth you are in culinary heaven and if you are dieting then it's sheer hell. Resisting Indian desserts is no mean task. Desserts are a part of every meal, festive or everyday fare. Most Indian homes have a practice of eating something sweet after a meal. While the north has rich ghee laden sweets, the south has milk and coconut based desserts and the sweets coming from Bengal are another story altogether! Every dessert has multiple variations, be it the simple rasgulla or the halwas or the puran polis. As mentioned earlier, every region gives a recipe its unique regional variation.

Food is taken very seriously in India. There are ceremonies to celebrate a child eating solid food for the first time. The child is made to experience every taste (sweet, sour, salty and bitter) on that day, and he has rice for the first time. Rice is considered the most auspicious of all grains. Every ceremony from birth to marriage to death has the use of rice in some form or the other. When a woman is pregnant, she is prescribed a special diet. When she has a baby the diet

again is different. Weddings with all its rituals have different menus related to the various ceremonies. With food so intricately enmeshed in every aspect of an Indian's life, how can it not be glorious and varied?

Food is also considered as preventive medicine in India, especially by ancient Indians. Traditional health systems aim to derive health benefits from the food eaten; many Indian preparations have curative benefits. There is food for the ailing, for the convalescing as well as food to prevent diseases. India has a long tradition of eating specific food in specific seasons. At the onset of summer, winter and monsoon, certain kinds of food is eaten to prevent the illnesses that accompany change in seasons and foods to fortify one to fight the extremes of the seasons. Summer food are all about cooling, while winter and monsoon related recipes aim to provide warmth and strength. Indian cuisine is also known to balance carbohydrates, proteins, fats and micro nutrients from fruits and vegetables with a skill not found in any other cuisine. The health promoting properties of various herbs and spices ensure that all six senses of taste – sweet, sour, salty, bitter pungent and acidic, are satisfied either collectively or individually.

True that the market is flooded with recipe books of Indian cuisine, but there is a wealth of unwritten recipes out there. Recipes that have been passed on for generations from mothers to daughters. There are even recipes that have been passed on by chefs to their proteges, unrecorded recipes that creates dishes that are hard to replicate. Such is the passion for food in India!

An article on Indian cuisine is incomplete without recipes. Here are a few of my favourite Indian recipes.

Amritsari Aloo Kulcha

One of these with a bowl of fresh yogurt... a simple pleasure of life.

Ingredients

First dough

- 2 cups refined flour
- ½ teaspoon baking powder
- ¼ teaspoon soda bicarbonate
- ½ teaspoon salt
- 1 tablespoon yogurt
- ½ egg
- ½ cup milk
- 1 teaspoon sugar
- 1 tablespoon oil

Second dough

- 2 cups refined flour
- Salt to taste
- 4 tablespoons butter
- ½ cup milk

Stuffing

- 2 medium potatoes, boiled and grated
- ½ medium onion, chopped
- Salt to taste
- 2 green chillies, chopped
- 2 teaspoons red chilli powder
- 1 tablespoon cumin powder
- 1 teaspoon dried pomegranate seeds
- 2 tablespoons chopped fresh coriander

Method

1. To make the first dough, sift the refined flour with the baking powder, soda bicarbonate and salt. Add the yogurt, egg, milk, sugar and a little water. Knead well to make a medium soft dough.
2. Add a little oil and knead again. Cover with a damp cloth and rest the dough for one hour. Knead the dough once again and divide it into eight equal portions.
3. For the second dough, sift the refined flour with salt. Rub in the butter with your fingertips till the mixture resembles coarse crumbs. Gradually mix in the milk and knead to make a soft, smooth dough. Cover with a damp cloth and rest the dough for ten minutes.
4. Knead the dough once again, divide it into eight equal portions and shape into smooth balls. Cover with the damp cloth and rest it for another ten minutes.
5. For the stuffing, mix together the potatoes, onion, salt, green chillies, chilli powder, cumin powder, dried pomegranate seeds and the fresh coriander.



6. Divide the potato mixture into eight equal portions.
7. Flatten a portion of the first dough, place a portion of the potato mixture in the centre, and fold the dough over to form a ball.
8. Flatten a portion of the second dough and place the stuffed ball in the centre, and roll into a ball. Place on a lightly floured surface and roll gently into a circle.
9. Heat a pressure cooker. Dip the fingers in a little water and moisten one side of the *kulcha*, gently press the moistened side of the *kulcha* onto the inner wall of the pressure cooker, making sure the *kulcha* is moist enough to stick to the cooker.
10. Place the cooker upside down over an open flame to make a kind of *tandoor*. Cook on high heat for two to three minutes, lower the heat and cook for two to three minutes more.
11. Turn the cooker upright and gently peel the *kulcha* away from the cooker wall.
12. Brush the hot *kulcha* with butter and serve immediately. Similarly make more *kulchas*.
13. You can also cook the *kulchas* in a preheated oven at 220°C/425°F/Gas Mark 7 for about eight minutes.



Appam

Ingredients

- 1 cup rice
- 1 cup parboiled rice
- ¼ cup coconut water
- Salt to taste
- ¾ cup scraped coconut
- ¼ teaspoon baking powder
- Oil to grease *appam tawa*

Method

1. Soak both the rice together in four cups of water for two to three hours. Drain and grind to a smooth paste adding the coconut water, as required.
2. Add the salt, stir well and set aside in a warm place to ferment for at least thirty-six hours.
3. Soak the scraped coconut in one and a half cups of warm water, grind and extract thick milk. Add the coconut milk to the fermented batter to dilute it to a thick and creamy consistency. Mix in the baking powder and adjust the salt.
4. Heat an *appam tawa* (small cast-iron *kadai*), brush with a little oil. Add one ladle of batter, tilt the *kadai* all round to spread the batter. The edges should be thin and the excess batter should collect at the centre.
5. Cover with a thick heavy lid and cook on medium heat for two to three minutes. Check to see if the sides start leaving the *tawa*. The edges of the *appam* should be crisp and thin and the centre soft and spongy.
6. Serve hot with your choice of *ishtew*.

Chef's Tip: Traditionally fresh toddy is used to ferment this batter. In the above recipe, the coconut water acts as the fermenting agent. A special type of *tawa* made in cast iron is available to make these *appams*. You may also use a small non-stick *kadai* for this purpose.



Dal Dhokli

Ingredients

- ¾ cup split pigeon pea (*arhar dal/toovar dal*)
- ¾ cup whole wheat flour (*atta*)
- 2 tablespoons gram flour (*besan*)
- Salt to taste
- ¾ teaspoon turmeric powder (*haldi*)
- ¾ teaspoon red chilli powder
- 2 pinches asafoetida (*hing*)
- ½ tablespoon oil
- 1½ tablespoons raw peanuts (*moongphali*)
- 1 tablespoon pure ghee
- ¼ teaspoon mustard seeds (*rai*)
- ½ teaspoon cumin seeds (*jeera*)
- 4 garlic cloves, chopped
- 4–5 curry leaves
- 3 *kokum* petals
- 1½ teaspoons grated jaggery (*gur*)
- 2 tablespoons chopped fresh coriander leaves (*hara dhania*)



Method

1. Soak *toovar dal* in two cups of water for half an hour.
2. Mix whole-wheat flour and gram flour. Add salt, one-fourth teaspoon turmeric powder, red chilli powder, a pinch of asafoetida, oil and sufficient water to knead into a hard dough.
3. Boil the *dal* with one and a half cups of water. Add peanuts and remaining turmeric powder to the *dal* when it is half done. Set aside.
4. Roll out thin *rotis* of the dough and cut into diamonds. Set aside.
5. Heat *ghee* in a pan, add mustard seeds, cumin seeds, remaining asafoetida, garlic and curry leaves. Add this to the *dal*.
6. Add two cups of water and *kokum* to the *dal* and when it starts boiling, add jaggery. When jaggery has dissolved, add the dough strips and allow to cook, stirring occasionally, so that the dough strips do not stick to the bottom of the vessel. Cook till dough strips are fully cooked.
7. Adjust salt and serve hot garnished with coriander leaves.

Fruit and Capsicum Ruchumber

Ingredients

2 medium apples, cored and sliced thinly
2 medium oranges
12-15 seedless green grapes, halved
12-15 seedless black grapes, halved
1 medium green capsicum, cut into strips
2 tablespoons lemon juice
1 medium cucumber, sliced thinly
2 medium tomatoes, seeded and cut into strips
2 spring onions, sliced thinly
1 tablespoon chopped fresh coriander leaves
8-10 fresh mint leaves, roughly torn
1½ teaspoons *chaat masala*
Salt to taste



Method

1. Sprinkle one tablespoon of lemon juice over the apple slices to prevent discolouration.
2. Peel the oranges and separate the segments. Remove the seeds and cut each segment in half.
3. For the dressing, mix together the coriander leaves, mint leaves, *chaat masala*, salt and remaining lemon juice.
- 4 Toss the fruit and vegetables in the dressing and serve chilled.

Ghevar

Ingredients

- 1¾ cup (210 grams) refined flour
- 1 tablespoon cornflour
- ¼ cup (45 grams) melted ghee, at room temperature
- 1 cup (250 grams) sugar
- 1 tablespoon milk
- A few drops of screw pine essence
- Soda bicarbonate, as required
- Ghee for deep-frying
- Edible silver foil, as required
- 8 almonds, slivered



Method

1. Mix together the flour, cornflour and melted ghee in a bowl. Add one cup of water in a thin stream and whisk continuously so that all the ingredients blend well, and the ghee and water emulsify into a smooth mixture and do not separate.
2. Add two more cups of water in a thin stream and whisk continuously to ensure again that the ghee and water do not separate. The batter should be of coating consistency. If necessary, add some more water to get the right consistency.
3. Keep the batter in a cool place away from heat, but not in a refrigerator.
4. In a non-stick pan, cook the sugar with half a cup of water, stirring till the sugar dissolves. Add the milk. Collect the scum which rises to the surface with a ladle and discard. Cook till the syrup attains a one-string consistency. Stir in the screw pine essence. Remove from heat and keep warm.
5. Pour sufficient ghee in a non-stick *kadai* and place a three-and-a half-inch round, 2-inch high mould in the centre, so that three-fourth of the height of the mould is immersed in the ghee. Heat the ghee on medium heat.
6. Pour three ladlefuls of the batter into a small bowl, add a pinch of soda bicarbonate and mix well.
7. When the ghee is hot enough, pour one ladle of batter into the centre of the mould in a thin stream.
8. When the froth settles down, pour in another ladle of batter into the mould in a thin stream.
9. When the froth settles down, make a hole in the centre of the ghevar with a thin wooden skewer or satay stick and pour another ladleful of batter into the hole.
10. Increase the heat and cook the *ghevar*, ladling the hot ghee over it two to three times.
11. When the centre is firm and cooked, gently pull out the ghevar from the mould with a wooden skewer inserted in the centre. Hold it over the *kadai* till most of the ghee drains away. Immerse in the sugar syrup for twenty minutes. Drain and place on a platter. Decorate with the sliver foil and almonds. Cool and serve.

Kolambi Bhaat

Ingredients

2 cups Basmati rice, soaked
12-16 (150 grams) medium prawns, shelled and deveined
1 teaspoon lemon juice
salt to taste
½ cup chopped fresh coriander leaves
½ cup grated fresh coconut
3 green chillies, chopped
1 inch ginger, chopped
6-7 garlic cloves, chopped
12-15 fresh mint leaves
3 tablespoons oil
1-inch cinnamon
4 black cardamoms
2 star anise (*chakri phool/badiyan*)
4 cloves
1 teaspoon cumin seeds
2 medium onions, chopped
½ cup coconut milk



Method

1. Marinate the prawns in lemon juice and salt.
2. Reserve one tablespoon each of coriander leaves and coconut for garnishing.
3. Grind the green chillies, ginger, garlic, remaining coriander leaves, mint leaves and remaining coconut to a fine paste.
4. Heat the oil in a thick-bottomed *handi*; add the cinnamon, black cardamoms, star anise, cloves and cumin seeds. Sauté for one minute.
5. Add the onions, sauté for three or four minutes or till light golden brown. Add the *masala* paste, sauté for half a minute and add the prawns. Sauté for two to three minutes.
6. Add the soaked rice and salt to taste and stir gently for one minute. Stir in the coconut milk.
7. Add two-and-a-half cups of hot water and bring to a boil, stirring once or twice. Cook over medium heat till most of the water has been absorbed. Lower heat and cook, covered, till the rice is done.
8. Remove from heat and serve, garnished with the reserved coriander leaves and grated coconut.

Mutton Shaami Kabab

Ingredients

600 grams boneless mutton, ½ inch pieces
 ½ cup split Bengal gram (*chana dal*), soaked
 2 medium onions, chopped
 2 tablespoons chopped fresh coriander leaves
 2 tablespoons chopped fresh mint leaves
 2 teaspoons lemon juice
 3 tablespoons olive oil + to shallow fry
 ½ teaspoon cumin seeds
 1 teaspoon coriander seeds
 5-6 black peppercorns
 3-4 black cardamoms
 2 inch piece ginger, chopped
 10-12 garlic cloves, chopped
 1 teaspoon red chilli powder
 1 teaspoon *garam masala* powder
 ½ teaspoon mace and green cardamom powder
 Salt to taste
 To serve
 2 medium onions, cut into fine rings Fresh mint *chutney* as required



Method

1. Mix onions, coriander and mint leaves with lemon juice to make a stuffing. Divide into sixteen equal portions and set aside.
2. Heat two tablespoons of olive oil in a pressure cooker and add cumin seeds, coriander seeds, black peppercorns and black cardamoms and stir-fry for half a minute on medium heat. Add ginger, garlic and red chilli powder. Add boneless mutton pieces and *chana dal*. Add two cups of water and bring to a boil. Put the lid on and cook under pressure till six whistles are given out. This may take about twenty five minutes.
3. Open the lid when the pressure has reduced. Cook on high heat to dry out the mixture completely, stirring continuously. Remove from heat and cool. Grind mutton and *chana dal* mixture to a smooth consistency.
4. Add *garam masala* powder, mace and green cardamom powder and salt. Mix well and check the seasoning.
5. Divide into sixteen equal portions. Flatten one portion in the palm of your hand and place a portion of onion stuffing in the centre. Shape into roundel and flatten slightly. Similarly shape the rest of the mutton mixture and stuffing.
6. Heat sufficient oil in a frying pan and shallow fry the *kababs* till golden. Drain and place on an absorbent paper. Serve hot with onion rings and mint *chutney*.

Mutton Pudina Shorba

Ingredients

350 grams boneless mutton (fat removed), cut into ½-inch cubes
2 tablespoons oil
1 teaspoon cumin seeds
1 medium onion, chopped
1 garlic clove, chopped
¼ teaspoon red chilli flakes
½ teaspoon cinnamon powder
1 green cardamom
2 medium tomatoes, skinned, seeded and roughly chopped
½ cup chickpeas (*kabuli chana*), boiled
a few saffron threads
salt to taste
½ cup yogurt, whisked



Method

1. Heat the oil in a pressure cooker; add the cumin seeds and sauté till they begin to change colour. Add the onion and sauté till translucent. Add the garlic, red chilli flakes and mutton cubes. Continue to sauté for a few seconds.
2. Add the cinnamon powder and green cardamom and continue to sauté for two more minutes.
3. Add the tomatoes, chickpeas, saffron, salt and six cups of water and bring to a boil. Pressure cook for around twenty-five minutes till pressure is released six times (six whistles).
4. Remove the lid when the pressure has reduced; add the yogurt and cook over low heat for two to three minutes. Serve hot.

Parwal Ki Mithai

Ingredients

250 grams pointed gourd (parwal), peeled, slit and seeded

1 cup (180 grams) *khoya/mawa*

1¼ cups (310 grams) sugar

¼ teaspoon green cardamom powder

10 almonds, chopped

10 pistachios, chopped

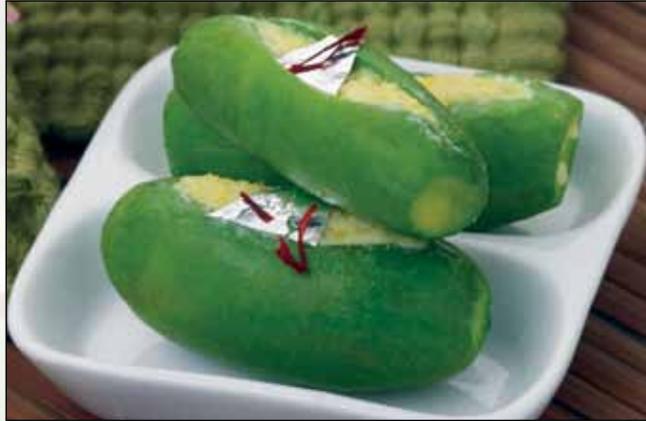
2 tablespoons milk powder

2 teaspoons milk

A pinch of soda bicarbonate

A few saffron threads

Edible silver foil, to decorate



Method

1. To make the filling, roast the *khoya* in a non-stick pan on medium heat till soft. Add one-fourth cup sugar and continue to cook.
2. Add the cardamom powder to the *khoya* mixture and mix. Take the pan off the heat; add the almonds and pistachios, and mix. Add the milk powder and mix well. Transfer the mixture onto a plate and leave to cool.
3. In a separate non-stick pan, bring the remaining sugar and one cup of water to a boil, stirring till the sugar dissolves. Add the milk, collect the scum which rises to the surface with a ladle and discard. Simmer for a few minutes longer to make a thin sugar syrup.
4. Heat plenty of water in a deep non-stick pan; add a pinch of soda bicarbonate and the parwal and boil for two to three minutes. Drain and place the parwal in the sugar syrup. Cook for fifteen minutes, or till they soften. Drain and set aside to cool.
5. Stuff the *parwal* with the *khoya* mixture. Sprinkle a few saffron threads over each *parwal* and decorate with silver foil.
6. Serve cold.

Sandesh

Ingredients

- 8 cups (1.6 litres) milk
- ¼ cup lemon juice
- ½ cup (65 grams) caster sugar
- A pinch of green cardamom powder
- 12 pistachios, blanched and finely chopped

Method

1. Bring the milk to a boil in a deep, thick-bottomed non-stick pan. Add the lemon juice and stir till the milk curdles. Strain and immediately refresh the *chhenna* in chilled water.
2. Put the *chhenna* in a piece of muslin and squeeze till all the water is drained out.
3. Knead the *chhenna* well with the heel of your hand. Add caster sugar and cardamom powder, and knead again.
4. Cook in a non-stick pan on medium heat for eight minutes. Remove from heat and divide into twelve equal portions. Roll each portion into a ball and make a dent on the top.
5. When cooled, place a pistachio in the dent and serve.



Tandoori Murgh Chaat

Ingredients

- 2 boneless chicken breasts, skinned
- 1 teaspoon Kashmiri red chilli powder
- 1 teaspoon ginger paste
- 1 teaspoon garlic paste
- ½ cup drained skim milk yogurt
- ¾ level teaspoon table salt
- 1 tablespoon lemon juice
- ½ teaspoon *garam masala* powder
- 5 teaspoons olive oil
- 1 small green capsicum, seeded and cut into thin strips
- ½ small red capsicum, seeded and cut into thin strips
- ½ small yellow capsicum, seeded and cut into thin strips
- 1 medium onion, sliced
- 2 green chillies, chopped
- 2 tablespoons chopped fresh coriander leaves
- 1 tablespoon lemon juice
- 1 teaspoon *chaat masala*
- ½ small green mango, chopped (optional)



Method

1. Make incisions with a sharp knife on the chicken breasts and set aside.
2. Combine Kashmiri red chilli powder, ginger paste, garlic paste, drained yogurt, salt, lemon juice, *garam masala* powder and two teaspoons oil well. Apply this mixture to the chicken pieces and leave to marinate for three to four hours preferably in a refrigerator.
3. Preheat oven to 200 °C.
4. Thread the chicken pieces onto skewers and cook in the preheated oven or in a moderately hot *tandoor* for ten to twelve minutes or until almost done. Baste it with the remaining oil and cook for another four minutes. When cool, shred chicken pieces and set aside.
5. In a large bowl combine shredded chicken, green, red and yellow capsicum strips, onion, green chillies, half the coriander leaves, lemon juice, *chaat masala*, raw mango (if using) and salt and toss to mix well.
6. Transfer onto a serving plate and serve garnished with the remaining coriander leaves.

Tomato Rasam

Ingredients

- 2 medium tomatoes, chopped
- 4 tablespoons split pigeon pea (*toor dal*), soaked
- ½ lemon sized ball tamarind
- ¼ cup chopped fresh coriander leaves
- 2 whole dry red chillies, broken
- 1½ teaspoons *rasam* powder
- ¼ teaspoon asafoetida
- Salt to taste
- 10-12 curry leaves
- 4 tablespoons pure ghee
- ½ teaspoon mustard seeds



Method

1. Wash, drain and cook toor dal in two cups of water until soft. Strain and mash cooked dal well. Reserve the strained cooking liquor. Reserve two tablespoons chopped coriander leaves for garnish.
2. Soak tamarind in one-cup warm water; remove pulp, strain and reserve.
3. Mix tamarind pulp with the remaining coriander leaves, rasam powder, asafoetida, salt and half the curry leaves and bring to a boil. Reduce heat and simmer for two to three minutes.
4. Add tomatoes and the reserved cooking liquor. Simmer for four to five minutes and add mashed dal. Stir well and cook for a minute more.
5. Remove from heat and sprinkle the reserved coriander leaves.
6. Heat pure ghee in a tempering pan, add mustard seeds and when they splutter add broken red chillies and remaining curry leaves and stir well. Pour the tempering over the prepared rasam and cover immediately to trap the aroma. Serve hot.

Indian Fusion Cuisine – A Kaleidoscope of Food

Chef Puneet Mehta

What is common between Tom Cruise, Barak Obama, Matt Damon, Kate Middleton, David Cameron (British Prime Minister), Dalai Lama, Bryan Adams, Lady Gaga and many more international personalities? The answer is they all love Indian food. Tom Cruise loves extra spicy Chicken Tikkas, Barak Obama loves homemade style simple Indian food and Bryan Adams has his personal Indian Chef to make Indian food as per his choice. Preferences can vary from simple homemade vegetarian curries to extra spicy non vegetarian food items, but Indian cuisine remains among the top three favorite cuisines in the world.

What is so special about Indian cuisine? Well, it's the flavours, spices, variety, ability to accept changes and depth that makes Indian food so special. This is probably the only cuisine in the world which is equally strong in vegetarian and non vegetarian sections. This diversity is because of our vast and diverse culture. According to a belief, every few miles the culture in India changes, and so does the food. In Kashmir we have rich, mildly spiced and aromatic food. Then it starts getting spicier as we go down towards the south. On the extreme west and east (Gujarat and Bengal), the food is slightly sweet... like the people. . Now this diversity in Indian food provides a perfect turf for fusion food. Plus the growing global demand for Indian cuisine has created classic fusions — like the British staple, fish and chips, dipped in chutney or tandoori chicken served with mayonnaise!



Bhut Jolokia. Photo courtesy: Chef Puneet Mehta

Having said that, I feel it is absolutely perfect to call **fusion cuisine as a kaleidoscope of food. Every time we twist a kaleidoscope, a new design is formed. Similarly, a slight smart twist in a recipe and a new dish comes out. It surpasses all the boundaries of terrain, regions, states and countries and blends two or more culinary traditions to create innovative, delectable, delicious dishes.**

It's not that fusion cooking is something very recent or new. The traces of fusion cuisine are found even in ancient food types and techniques, since humans have been exchanging culinary heritage for centuries, but the modern concept became popularized in the



BBQ Chicken Pizza as a classic example of Italian and South West American cuisines. Photo courtesy: Chef Puneet Mehta

1970s. Several French chefs began to offer foods that combined traditional French food with Asian cuisine, especially foods from Vietnam and China.

The concept quickly spread to other major European cities, and the American coast. Some of the very well-known examples combine European and Asian foods. These cultures have wildly divergent culinary traditions, and combining the centuries of cooking traditions of both continents can sometimes result in astonishing dishes. Vietnamese spring rolls might be found on the menu of a French restaurant, while a wasabi reduction sauce might be used on a pot roast. Interestingly UK adopted a version of Khichadi as Kidagree (a breakfast item since the Victorian era) and in turn India developed Mulligatawny soup, which is the soupy version of the Indian staple — daal.. If we are to believe the unconfirmed information, the Mulligatawny soup has been crowned as the national soup of India.

Today thanks to the globalization effect, media, communication and technology boost, the world

seems to be shrinking. People are more educated, widely travelled, open to trying out new things, willing to accept experiments (though sometimes these experiments are wildly successful, while in a few cases they are less delightful, but that's the limitation of experimenting), so the market of fusion food is growing at a very high pace. Different cultural traditions, terrain, local crops/plantation, climatic conditions, generally play a major role in the evolution of food. Keeping pace with constantly changing times is also a main reason behind in the popularity of fusion food.

Today fusion cuisine in India is extremely popular. Let me share the names of a few dishes which will tell the story of its popularity and diversity. We get Italian pizzas in all Indian flavours, Similarly Mexican tacos, burritos, enchiladas, nachos, quesadillas are also consumed in Indian flavours. You walk into any fine dining continental restaurant, and there you will find Indian and Chinese sizzlers on the menu. The same is the story with burgers, sandwiches, soups, pastas...

Even in Mumbai and Hyderabad there are a huge number of Irani cafés, selling the famous Irani Chai (tea from Iran) along with Indo-Iranian bakery items.

Our Indian cuisine is extremely popular. Out of almost 249 countries (approximately) it is estimated that almost 85% countries have on record Indian restaurants or eating joints. And I'm sure that even in the remaining countries there will be Indian food lovers. Indian food is famous for its slow cooking, aromatic, delectable, spicy process. Almost everyone recognizes Indian curries, Butter Chicken, Daal Makhani, Paneer Butter Masala, Chicken Tikka, Chole (chick peas), Rajmah (kidney beans), Idli (savoury rice cake)... the list can go on and on! And above all, the most famous dish Chicken Tikka Masala (boneless chicken pieces marinated in yogurt with Indian spices, roasted and re cooked in tomato gravy with cream and butter) is an Indian fusion Item, that originated in UK almost 55-60 years back. Who invented it? The debate is still on, but it is not only the most popular dish of UK but undisputedly the most famous Indian dish in the whole world. Other than Chicken Tikka

Masala, other fusion items like Kedgerie (a breakfast item), Curry Pie (a continental snack item with Indian flavours), Phall, Mulligatawny soup are extremely popular in the United Kingdom.

Initially when the present concept of fusion food started catching up, there was an element of doubt as to whether the cuisines like Indian cuisine, which is so diverse, will be able to adopt to the concept of fusion food. But it is really very interesting to see that Indian fusion cuisine openly accepted the fusing of various regional cuisines and made them more delectable. For example **Mutton Rogan Josh** – a classic dish from the royal kitchens of Kashmir is not only served by every Indian non vegetarian restaurant in India but is one of the most popular Indian dishes in the world. Similarly **Chaat** – a very popular street food, which had originated in Uttar Pradesh is now not only popular and consumed in the entire country but is immensely popular in South Asia, UK, USA and the Middle East. The flavouring and types of chaat varies from region to region / country, to country but the basis remains the same.



Chicken Tikka Masala. Photo courtesy: Chef Puneet Mehta



Gobhi Manchurian. Photo courtesy: Chef Puneet Mehta

Apart from food types, cooking techniques, spices, flavours being extremely different, Indian cuisine has complimented them and been adapted very welcomingly. The best example in this category is Indian Chinese cuisine. We have successfully developed delicious dishes which are actually not there in original Chinese cuisine.



Chicken Lollypop. Photo courtesy: Chef Puneet Mehta

Indian Chinese cuisine, which is fusion cuisine in its true sense, is the second most popular cuisine after regional foods in India. It is also very popular in many parts of USA and Canada.

A very interesting fact which is worth mentioning here is that during the visit of the Chinese President to India, the first official dinner hosted in his honour had around ten dishes from Indian Chinese and Singapore Indian cuisine along with, 100 famous Indian and International delicacies.



Chicken Tidbits. Photo courtesy: Chef Puneet Mehta

Generally these items are adaptations of Chinese seasoning and cooking techniques to the Indian environment and tastes. Of late we have developed dishes which have absolutely no connection with Chinese cuisine but are popularly dubbed as Indian Chinese dish. Chicken 65 tops this list. This dish was invented by Mr. A. M. Buhari in 1965, at Chennai, Tamil Nadu, and is now gaining popularity in different parts of the globe. Similarly after being inspired I was successful in developing what **personally I have christened Chicken Tidbits**, a dish that is Chinese in looks and feel but completely Indian in taste, which is quite popular among local gourmet circles.

Apart from Chinese fusion with Indian originals, Indian cuisine has successfully been fused with other world cuisines like from UK-Australia (Anglo Indian Cuisine), Malaysia, Singapore, Mexico, Middle East, Mediterranean etc. In fact I believe that our Indian cuisine has such depth that it can accommodate any and every form of food in the world.

Till the late 80s/early 90s Indian cuisine was dominated by North Indian dishes especially from Punjab. But as fusion food gained popularity, the other Indian regional cuisines started playing a larger role in Indian cuisine. Today the world recognizes dishes from Kashmir, Goa, Gujarat, Rajasthan and Awadhi. There is also merit in preparing dishes with a slight twist, keeping the local taste and surroundings



Hyderabadi Biryani. Photo courtesy: Chef Puneet Mehta

in mind. Otherwise if the dishes are made in their authentic way, it might not attract people.

To a large extent the credit of making Indian fusion food such a huge hit in the entire globe goes to Indian chefs, located in all parts of the globe, spreading happiness and satisfaction. The main vehicle for this revolution is 'Change' and the trouble with change is that it is rarely reversible. So generally people are afraid to take any plunge but if they do so once, change takes place. It is as if things have always been the way they have become. That's why talk of change is exciting but the actual implementation of change is unnerving. Indian Chefs were willing to take the risk, because they believed in the power of our cuisine and the ability to accept the new.

As the saying goes, need is the mother of invention, I very strongly believe that this saying fits fusion

cuisine to the T. In the late 80s I was working in western India – Jodhpur, Rajasthan. Those days everyday my breakfast used to be mirchi vada (green chili, potato and gram flour fritters) with bread slices. Hot, crispy, tasty stuff and very easily available and economical. Now when I look back, something which was a need of the hour those days, is a very versatile fusion finger food item today. I have used these type of deep fried snack items in making all types of Indian and International dishes like – stuffed paratha, curry, grilled sandwich, burger, pizza, roll, tarts and dessert. Of course their avatars have kept changing according to the dish and cuisine.

Recently I tried fusing the classic and very popular Indian street food from Mumbai, Pav Bhaji. I was successful in making pizza (using the curry as pizza sauce), pasta (again I used the curry as spicy Indian flavoured pasta sauce) and quiche. I loved making

them and felt so good when people loved them. Similarly when I serve paneer oats kebab with a tangy fruity dip or oats upma for patients recovering from heart disease, and see them enjoy these dishes it is such a satisfactory moment for me and a huge motivation to take up more such challenges.

This feeling is there in all of us... after all cooking is not just following a recipe and using techniques; it is remembered for long when made with passion and love. Long back when my grandmother and mother used to manage the kitchen, they used to very smartly add veggies and fruits in simple items like Khichadi so that we could have nutritious food. Today that is called an Indian risotto. Also, I do not remember a single day when food was served with just one curry or item. It always used to be a gamut of dishes, with some dessert in the end. In case of

any unexpected guest joining at the last minute unexpectedly, it used to make no difference as there used to be ample food cooked to accommodate such situations. This is when there were not many gadgets and life used to be pretty tough in kitchens, but there was passion and love to feed the family.

I'm a big believer of this fusion cuisine format because it gives ample room to innovate and keep up with health exigencies. After all we cook for others to enjoy, so why not cook health as well? There is a lot of effort and innovation going on to create something different... Grand Master Chef Imtiyaz Qureshi from ITC Group (who is considered as the father of the modern Indian dum cooking technique) has started using olive oil instead of ghee or any other oil for making a few of his Indian delicacies, whereas he is a strict follower of authentic recipes



Pav Bhaji. Photo courtesy: Chef Puneet Mehta



Samosa Chaat. Photo courtesy: Chef Puneet Mehta

and procedures. This is what is required to keep pace with the changing time and palates.

Another scoring point for Indian fusion comes the need to plate Indian food. Normally in typical Indian meals, food is not served in various courses like in the west. So the plating of the food is not done like it is done in western food... in small portions. Thus plating Indian food becomes a challenge for the Chefs. In

order to create something different we have worked on plating and created more appetizing looks. For example the all-time favourite Indian snack samosa is now served with chole, making it more appetizing... One of my Indian innovative fusion cuisine specialities is a variation of the all time favourite classic — Kheer. I made creamy kheer, infused with juicy Alphonso mango and dry fruit praline. I call this Kheer Mango Delight.



Strawberry Lassi. Photo courtesy: Chef Puneet Mehta



Kheer Mango Delight. Photo courtesy: Chef Puneet Mehta

As cooking for me is an art form, so the kitchen is my studio, the cooking hob the 'easel', utensils are brushes and with a palette of spices I make art on the canvas of my dish. That is the essence of fusion cooking for me. The more creative I am, the better and more delectable the dish turns out to be. This also clarifies that doing fusion dishes might look easy. In the name of fusion, anything cannot be mixed and served. In art there are no shortcuts and making food is a delicate art... After all, we play with flavours to create beautiful, delicious food.

Thus is not to suggest that you should have authentic cuisines but to get the feel of Indian food, or vice versa whenever you come across any Indian fusion cuisine item think about trying it out.

Doing India Proud: Dum Pukht and Bukhara

Mridula Garg

The current popularity and widespread acceptance of Indian cuisine, is a complete turnaround from the 'hot and spicy' of until two decades ago. For the world outside, Indian cuisine was a gastronomical adventure of the toughest kind with less to relish; being more of a fire-fighting exercise. Yet, this one fact always remained unchallenged, that it wasn't only the noble families who enjoyed and relished the fine intricacies of flavours; the common man's

staple food was no less a story to tell. The tradition of soulful cooking was a norm in the subcontinent and what was prepared was enjoyed with no less a gusto. But someone had to take this story to the world... packaged and padded in a way that was easy for the west to receive it.

The Festivals of India during the 80s did some groundwork and created a backdrop for an interest



Dum Pukht Biryani



Barrah Kabab

in Indian cuisine, as a corollary to the cultural showcasing. One can safely assume the activity in the field around this time to be the real precursor of the wider appreciation of Indian cuisine. It was around the same time that in the quieter city of Lucknow, a city famous for culinary traditions; a young apprentice from a household of palace cooks was making waves with his initiative to innovate. The city is famed for its culture of lavish entertaining and food was always at the top of the list. Many a household secret was wrapped up in the folds of chefs' aprons and stayed there until the following generation of apprentices had proven their mettle to carry forward the baton. Precise measures, pairing and matching of spices, cuts and portions and cooking styles had very severe semantics and these were held sacrosanct because the nobility of Lucknow was a no ordinary one. Cuisine received as much, if not more, patronage than arts and crafts. And the tradition thrived.

At a time when the Governor's House was the central point and the parties held here was the talk of the town it helped when the high browed occupants encouraged fresh thought. As a venue that held the best parties and feasts in town, presumably, there would have been heavy pressure on those behind the scenes to bring something new to the table, ever so often. Chef Ghulam Qureshi, the stalwart Imtiaz Qureshi's son, recounts the days of a happy back and forth at the Governor House, first with Shri CV Gupta and then Shri Akbar Ally who hailed from Kashmir. This constant egging on by the noble connoisseurs to marry features of Wazwan with the local Avadh style of Dum Pukht brought accolades to the young Imtiaz Qureshi in the higher circles of Lucknow private entertaining. It was at one such event that the stalwarts of ITC who brought him over to Delhi and gave him a free hand to create and launch the fine dining experience of Dum Pukht spotted him.

Dum Pukht, which in literal translation stands for 'dum', which means 'sealed' 'Pukht' which means 'cooked' is a style of cooking which the Avadh region is famous for. Typically, the foods are marinated and lightly cooked — and then the container, usually a flat-bedded shallow pan is sealed with pastry and left to cook in an oven. Earlier days, it was the wood fired oven, which added to the aromas emanating as the seals were removed. ITC brought this tradition to their flagship property, the Maurya Sheraton in New Delhi and opened the doors to its now-legendary fine dining restaurant by the name of Dum Pukht in 1989.

Ten years before this, the same hotel had introduced the rugged, robust cuisine of the North West Frontier. The food here brought back nostalgic memories for the first generation of Indians who had had to move

home from the region during the partition. Typically this food was more about the tandoor than the curries, and as such also found much favour with the non-Indian residents of the hotel. And soon the ITC Maurya Sheraton was on its way to make history in Indian cuisine.

At a point in time when the only distinction between Indian flavours were those of South Indian *sambar* and the butter chicken and *dal makhani* of Moti Mahal, ITC had the conviction to launch and sustain two relatively closer genres than the safer route of two contrasting regions. Not only did these two restaurants take the waft of Indian cuisine far and wide internationally, they also helped to start a new appreciation of ethnic cuisine among the early generations of post-partition India.



Bukhara at ITC Maurya, New Delhi

That these two restaurants have become strong brands in themselves and continued serving more or less the same fare for more than thirty years, in an age where the public is hungry for newer palate experiences, itself speaks of the legendary stature of the restaurants. We do believe these are not just happy accidents in history. It is a conscious decision and a persevering attitude with a commitment to quality and honesty to tradition of the ITC management and the culture therein that has led to the sustained gastronomical excellence that one is pleased to see even today.

Dum Pukht can now boast of three generations of Chef Imtiaz's lineage. Chef Gulam Qureshi, currently at Dum Pukht, New Delhi followed into super chef Imtiaz's role as the senior moved to Mumbai to open Dum Pukht at the ITC Maratha. Recently, the youngest

of the tribe, Zoheb Qureshi joined at the New Delhi restaurant. Ever evolving and with controlled experimentation, without wavering too much from the core tradition of Avadh style, the restaurant has been making additions to the menu as per the changing trends. Chef Gulam Qureshi points out that there are many more vegetarian dishes on the menu than there were initially. Similarly, among the veggies too, there are some, considered the lesser of the tribe which would never have been on the menus earlier, such as the beets, and we find them now. In this way, the food trials, which are a regular at the ITC, are in keeping with the client preferences as per the waves of trends.

Twenty years ago, as an assistant editor of India's first food magazine, *Eating Out*, I had covered Dum Pukht for the launch cover issue of the magazine.



Dum Pukht - The Grand Cuisine of India



Kakori kababsat Dum Pukht

At that point chef Imtiaz Qureshi had painstakingly spent an afternoon explaining the nuances of Dum Pukht cuisine, which was a big learning for yours truly. Sporadic returns were never disappointing, but the crowning glory came a few weeks ago when a quiet dinner after a long day at the Dum Pukht turned out to be an organically fabulous experience because of the continued tradition of the captain taking the guests through the menu and helping the uninitiated ones. The evening culminated in a super experience not only because of the food, which was undoubtedly extra-ordinary, but the true *Lakhnawi tehzeeb* seen as a packaging in this case, that put the cherry on the cake. We were not reviewers or journalists sitting there. We were just a set of guests that the staff was waiting upon and how! The culture of hosting guests is different from mere 'selling food' at another F&B outlet. True hospitality emanates from somewhere lower and away from the vocal chords that make the perfect sounding statements. It is in the way that the

guest is taken through the experience. At Dum Pukht the *Lakhnawi* tradition of entertaining lives on as it molds itself to changing palettes. And that is the true hallmark of a living classic. At ITC Maurya, we have not one but two under the same roof.

Conversation with Chef GulamQureshi

How did ITC find him...Imtiaz Qureshi had made a name for himself as the most preferred 'khansama' among the elite in the Lucknow party circles. This was in the 60s and 70s. In those days, the big families would requisition his services in cities as far away as Calcutta. Also he was a regular at the Governor House parties, taking orders closely from the likes of Shri Akbar Ally and working on bringing elements of Wazwan (Akbar Ally was a Kashmiri) to the Avadh style. ITC stalwarts of the years, who were regulars at such parties spotted him and brought him over to Delhi.



Live Kitchen at Bukhara

What was the brief for him...To create a menu that would take the guests back to the days Wajid Ali Shah, the great patron of culinary skills, arts and crafts. His royal patronage had created a synergy among the *khansamas* of Lucknow to prepare and better each new presentation in the royal courts and as such this had become a trend in Lucknow. 'To bring the best of Avadh food in Dum Pukht style to the guests' table at the restaurant'; and towards this the hotel supported him to the hilt in all that he wanted to recreate. "For us, in those days, it was a huge culture shock. We hadn't worked in industrial kitchens. We were used to working on wood and coal stoves. The whole gambit of the hotel kitchen was a huge learning in itself." "We studied how the gas flames worked on the food as compared to our traditional fires and experimented and researched to fill the gaps in flavours".

What kept him going in the new and alien environment...It was the free hand to prepare the menu and the way in which he wanted to do. That freedom, coupled with all the necessary support

and the interactive nature of the top management in arriving at the exact flavours and taste kept him energized. Being a stickler for what leaves his kitchen, he wanted all the steps in food production to be followed to the T, whether in an open kitchen or a hotel kitchen. Super chef Imtiaz gave this assignment his "all" and institutionalised it with his involvement at each step. One can see that the culture lives on even today.

Chef Imtiaz's typical way of working.....from the time I can remember being apprenticed to him, his day always began very early with a trip to the farmer's market (what we call *mandi*). He maintains, till date, which unless the ingredients, the raw materials are the freshest possible, hand picked and checked to be clear of any markings there is little chance of making a satisfactory meal. Shopping for fresh produce remains his typical style even today.

What makes Chef Imtiaz a Superchef.....his mastery over the flavours of spices, their chemistry of



Sikandari Raan

combinations and his intuitive response to balancing of flavours to arrive at that perfect sweet spot, makes him an unparalleled living legend. He set certain ground rules, which are followed diligently, even today, by everyone in the kitchen: Yet always evolving and adding his touches in consonance with the senior management at ITC. This evolution says a lot about ITC and the culture therein. The successes we see today were sincere efforts by people of vision many years ago. World-renowned Dum Pukht and Bukhara restaurants are a case in themselves.

Moreover, working without refrigeration facilities, only on firewood and coal stoves and using *imam dasta* and *silbatta* for pounding and grinding of masalas actually made the flavour processing special. We still maintain the superiority of cooking thus, though not very convenient given that most things can be done in a fraction of the time with the smart kitchen gadgetry of today.

Some of the special dishes that the Qureshi's are proud of... at the Dum Pukht include *Subzpaneer*,

HarraKabab, dudhiyaKabab, and guchhi (morels), Avadh biryani and murghkaushik purdah.

The fare at the restaurant is more detailed than the regular Avadh food. Everything here, down to the *tehzeeb* of hospitality at the restaurant has always been highly specialised. Close involvement of successive top bosses at food tasting sessions, currently that of Nakul Anand, makes a huge difference and creates a synergy required for the creatives behind the kitchen doors to keep bringing out newer gems.

The refreshed menu includes a lot more of vegetarian dishes, in keeping with international trends. *Nilofariseekh with navratna chutney, Kham KhataiKabab* a green lentil Kabab and *Guchisubz-Zar* are some of the new additions.

Additions are based on traditions, research and current food trends. The spices remain the same, we see a lot more vegetarian dishes and highly ethnic ones too, such as the '*Gond ka halwa*'. A few years ago, it would be anathema to have such ethnic health foods on the



DumPukht restaurant at ITC Maurya



Tandoori Chicken at Bukhara

menu, that too at an ultra-fine dining place such as Dum Pukht. Now we do and it does very well.

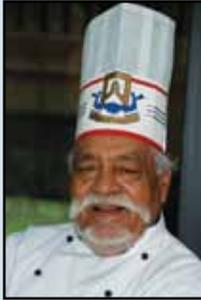
Among the lentils and curries that we are specially proud of are the alu bukhara kofta salan, the Biryani and *they akhni pulaos*; and among the breads are the *taftaan*.... an atta based naan and *naan e bah khummachq*.

At Dum Pukht, the preferred medium of cooking remains mustard oil and desi ghee and the style remains light cooking finished by 'dum' true to the region's tradition. The latest Dum Pukht to be opened across the borders is in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia; and is running to a packed house ever since the opening.

Similarly, at Bukhara, famous for its robust meats and flavours its cooking style remains more of 'tandoor' or in a clay oven. The world famous Bukhara dal is

allowed to simmer on slow heat for 18 hours before it is brought to the table! In a way, the fire never dies in a Bukhara kitchen. The *Barrah Kabab* and *Sikandariraan* are the two non-vegetarian jewels and reasons for pride for those associated with this restaurant all over the world. There is something about the glow of the tandoor and the expertise of the chefs here to gauge its exact temperature that makes the perfect breads and tandoori chicken. Be it in Ulan Batar or New York, Bukhara's aromas create the same heady feel.

At a very different level, but related nonetheless, is the effort to reach their experimentation and research to the common man. ITC's packaged foods division Kitchens of India packages ready to eat Indian curries and preparations can be seen on the supermarket shelves. A nice way to carry back a taste of India for those travelling and make for easy running of kitchens in rushed modern homes.



Chef Imtiaz Qureshi, Grand Master Chef, ITC HOTELS LTD

Grand Master Chef Imtiaz Qureshi holds a very special place in the history of ITC Hotels Ltd. Given his impeccable lineage, Imtiaz has contributed to the making of several cuisine brands especially the Dum Pukht.

Imtiaz Qureshi's journey is almost legendary!

His ancestors were cooks in the royal court of Awadh where the Dum Pukht style of cooking originated two hundred years ago. The kitchen has been his kingdom ever since he was nine. But his talents flowered only after ITC Hotels discovered him in 1976.

With the group's support and culinary vision, he embarked on an epic five-year pilgrimage to resurrect an ancient cuisine, Dum Pukht- a cuisine that went on to conquer the world palate.

Creative by nature, Imtiaz over the years adapted many a memorable dish to his stable, some learnt in the maidans of Lucknow and various others during his urban sojourns. Each occasion necessitated something different for his valued guests, varied as their demands were for 'specials' being created to honour the particular occasion and person.

He however remains a very simple man. The Lucknowi Urdu Imtiaz speaks is so chaste you might need an interpreter! And when he is not talking cuisine, this yesteryear muscleman regales you with stories about Raj Kapoor films or relives his days in the Lucknow gymnasium.

Imtiaz who is today acknowledged as one of the finest grand master chefs in the country has worked his way to the top under the patronage of ITC Hotels.



Dum Pukht Master Chef Gulam M. Qureshi

Chef Gulam M. Qureshi, the Master Chef at Dum Pukht has been instrumental in initiating the gourmets of the Capital into the nuances of the Dum Pukht Cuisine, the Indian fine dining restaurant at ITC Hotel.

Hailing from a lineage of Royal Chefs, Master Chef Gulam, has been with the restaurant since its inception. Chef Gulam Qureshi who learned the secrets of the Avadhi cuisine from his father, adapted the recipes of Indian royalty to restaurant needs. To further enhance his knowledge and understand the historical overtones of this period cuisine,

Chef Qureshi has also studied Urdu manuscripts. Enabled with the skill and knowledge, Chef Qureshi, has succeeded in encapsulating the original aromas and flavours of this legendry cuisine in his presentations. Since very little oil is used, the food is not greasy. In addition, **Dum Pukht** uses fewer spices than the traditional Indian cooking.

Having travelled widely both in India and abroad, Chef Qureshi has ensured Dum Pukht delicacies have graced many a famous table across the world, winning him praise and recognition for Dum Pukht. Chef Qureshi's signature dishes include Raan - E - Dum Pukht, Dum Pukht Biryani, Sabz Khusk Purdah, Harra Kebab, Kakori Kebab, Haleem, Dudiya Kebab, Baghare Baigan and Dum Trout Machchli.

Photo Essay

Chef Puneet Mehta

Chutney... is one of the best complementing agents in our day-to-day food. But what is chutney? Well, Chutney is an Indian condiment or relish which is generally made from fresh herbs (especially mint or coriander), savoury or sweet flavours often mixed with items like raw mangoes, tamarind paste, coconut, sesame, peanuts etc.

The word 'CHUTNEY' is derived from the word 'cani' in the Sanskrit language meaning 'to lick', and that's how generally we consume chutneys.

Though there is no exact record available but apparently pickled and spiced herb paste which was much later called chutney, came into existence in 500 BC. In the early 17th century during the British colonization of the Indian subcontinent sending preserved food stuffs such as lime pickles and fruit chutneys shipped in ceramic pots to European countries like England and France as luxury goods, had started. These imitations were called 'mangoed' fruits or vegetables. In the beginning of the 19th century, many forms of chutneys like Lucknow Chutney (a purée of salted limes), and various brand-name chutneys like Major Grey's or Bengal Club were manufactured in India, specifically for export to Europe. All of these export products were created from recipes appealing to Europeans rather than to Indian tastes, meaning that they were generally

sweet and lacked the intense flavours, saltiness, or peppery heat preferred by Indians.

The bottled version of chutney, started with an apocryphal character Major Grey. He took the native chutney and developed it into a cooked sweet mango chutney, that the world now calls Major Grey's chutney.

Whether as accompaniment or as part of the main course, chutneys have been one of the most integral parts of our meals, adding spice and taste to food. In fact in southern India, where the staple food is rice, the first course of a meal is consumed with chutneys.

Every state or region has their own signature version of chutneys, influenced by culture, terrain, climatic conditions and crops specific to the region. The innumerable Jain, Parsi, and Sindhi chutneys defined by religious dietary restrictions also come into the delicious list of Indian chutneys. In fact, the murabbas evolved out of the Unani system of medicine owe their origin to the Indian connection with the Arab world.

Apart from being mouth-watering as they always are, chutneys have been providing medicinal properties. Ayurveda is one such medicinal wing, which uses an array of chutneys for their medicinal properties for a healthy lifestyle.

Mango Chutney

The original Bengali version which started the global journey of chutneys



Ingredients

2 nos. Raw / semi ripe mangoes
1 tsp Panch phoran (equal mix of cumin, fennel, mustard, nigella & fenugreek seeds)
¼ cup Jaggery (powdered/grated) or as required (depending on your taste)
2 tbsp Oil
1 inch Ginger (finely grated or chopped)
½ tsp Red chili powder
¼ tsp Garam masala powder
Pinch of asafoetida/hing
Salt as required

Method

Wash, peel and finely chop the mangoes (if the mangoes are extra juicy or fibrous, you can extract the pulp).
Heat oil in the pan or kadhai. Add panch phoran spices for a few seconds till they start becoming fragrant. Then add finely chopped/grated ginger and sauté for half a minute.
Now add the chopped mango or mango pulp/puree with red chili powder, garam masala powder and asafoetida. Mix well and cook for 2-3 minutes on medium-low flame.
Add the grated/powdered jaggery, adjust salt as per taste and cook for another 3-4 minutes or till mango pieces become tender. Take care not to overcook otherwise the chutney will become thick.
Once done, transfer in a bowl to cool down. You can store for 2-3 days in the refrigerator.

Shufta

A very rich and delicious recipe from the royal kitchens of Kashmir



Ingredients

- 1 cup Paneer/Cottage Cheese (small diced / ½ inch diced),
- ½ cup Sliced Dry Coconut
- ½ cup Almonds (blanched & peeled)
- ½ cup Pistachio's (blanched & peeled)
- ½ cup Cashews
- ½ cup Apricots
- ½ cup Dates
- ½ cup Walnuts
- ½ cup Raisins or Sultanas
- 1 tsp Soonth Powder (Dry ginger powder)
- ½ tsp Pepper Powder
- ½ tsp Cardamom Powder
- ½ tsp Cinnamon Powder
- 2 cups Sugar
- ¼ tsp Kesar (saffron)
- ½ cup Ghee (clarified butter)
- ½ cup Dry Rose Petals for garnish

Method

Soak Dry dates for an hour in water, remove seeds and chop into small dices.

Wash apricots, blanch for 30 minutes. Remove seeds and chop into small dices.

Chop all the dry fruits in to small dices/pieces and soak in warm water for at least an hour or two.

Heat the ghee in a wok or pan and fry paneer cubes till golden brown in colour. Keep on tossing so that it gets even colour. Once done, remove and keep them aside.

Fry the sliced dry coconut in the same ghee till golden in colour. Add water, sugar, presoaked nuts with the water in which they were soaked, fried paneer cubes, saffron and all the spices, cook on low-medium flame. Keep stirring till it syrup thickens and coats all the ingredients.

Garnish with desiccated/grated coconut or dried rose petals and serve hot.

Roasted Peanut & Onion Chutney

A very famous South Indian chutney in a different avatar by Chef Puneet Mehta



Ingredients

1 cup Peanuts (roasted & husk removed)
1 nos. Onion, large
1/3 cup Tamarind pulp
7-8 nos. Dry red chilies
2 tbsp. Oil
Salt to taste
Water as required

Method

Dry roast peanuts in a pan on medium low flame or oven, cool, remove husk and set aside.
Now to roast the onion, place the onion on an open fire/flame (without cutting the head or peeling it) and roast. Keep turning so that it is completely roasted/charred from all sides. Remove from flame and cool. Once cooled, remove the outer burnt layer, roughly chop and keep aside.
Heat oil in small pan, add dry red chilies and let it splutter.
Take roasted peanuts, onion, tamarind pulp and this tempering in a jar of blender. Adjust seasoning. Blend to smooth paste by adding a little water.
Serve warmed with Idlis / Wada / Dosa / Pakoras / Fritters etc.

Khajur aur Imliki Chutney

Dates & Tamarind Chutney from Central & Northern India.
Also known as Saunth Chutney



Ingredients

1 cup Khajur / dates (seeds removed and halved)
1 cup Imlī pulp (tamarind pulp)
½ cup Jaggery (grated)
¾ cup Cashew Nuts (halved)
1/3 cup Raisins
1tsp Red chili powder
¼ tsp Jeera Powder
¼ tsp Garam masala powder
Salt as required

Method

Soak dates and raisins in normal water.
Take pulp in a pan/kadhāi. Add half cup water and bring to a boil. Reduce flame to low, add jaggery, red chili powder, garam masala, jeera powder, salt to taste (You can reduce / increase the quantity of jaggery as per your taste but remember dates will also release its sweetness), ¼ cup water and cook till the bubbles start coming on surface.
Add soaked dates and raisins along with cashew nuts and let it simmer for a couple of minutes.
This can be stored for 5-6 days in refrigerator.

Hari Chutney

Mint Coriander Green Chutney



Ingredients

- 3 cup Fresh coriander leaves
- 1 cup Fresh mint leaves
- ½ inch Fresh ginger, peeled and chopped
- 12 nos. Hot green chili
- 5 tbsp Fresh lemon juice
- 1 tsp Cumin powder
- ½ cup Cashew Nuts (lightly roasted)
- ¼ cup Raisins
- Salt to taste

Method

Soak dates & raisins in warm water for half an hour. Take all the ingredients along with soaked dry fruits, except lemon juice, and grind to make a smooth paste. Add water if required. Take out paste in a mixing bowl, add lemon juice as per your taste. Serve it with any crispy snacks and chaats.

Tomato Chutney

Indian Tomato Chutney



Ingredients

- 7-8 nos. Tomatoes (red & hard)
- 2 tbsp. Oil
- 8-10 Garlic pods
(crushed or mashed)
- 2 nos. Green chilli
(very finely chopped)
- 8-10 nos. Curry leaves
Pinch of Asafetida (Heeng)
- 1 tsp Red chilli powder
- ½ tsp. Cumin seeds (sabut jeera)
- ½ tsp Cumin Powder
(jeera powder)
- 1 tbsp. Sugar
- Salt to taste
- 2 tbsp Fresh coriander leaves
(finely chopped) for garnishing.

Method

Heat ghee in pan or kadhai, add cumin seeds and let it crackle, then add asafoetida, finely chopped green chillies, mashed garlic, curry leaves and sauté for a minute.

Add cumin powder, red chilli powder and sauté for a few seconds. Add chopped tomatoes, salt, sugar and half cup water and bring to a boil, reduce heat to low and cook for ten to fifteen minutes or till the water evaporates and chutney becomes thick.

Garnish with coriander leaves and serve hot.

Dahi Pudina Chutney

Curd Mint Chutney, an excellent accompaniment with Indian kebabs....



Ingredients

1&½ cups Fresh mint leaves
½ cup Fresh coriander leaves
½ inch Fresh ginger, peeled and chopped
10-12 nos. Hot green chili or to taste
4-5 nos. Garlic pods, crushed
¼ tsp Asafoetida (Heeng)
1 tsp Cumin powder
½ tsp Black pepper powder
2 cups Curd (thick & beaten)
1 tsp Black Salt
Normal Salt (if required) to taste

Method

Take all the ingredients except curd, black pepper powder and normal salt in a grinder jar and grind to make a smooth paste. Add a little water if required. Take out the paste in a mixing bowl and set it aside. Whisk curd to smooth blend, add chutney paste as per your taste (if you want more spicy & minty taste and dark colour then add more paste otherwise add less), add black pepper powder and adjust with normal salt, if required.
To be served with different types of kebabs and tandoori items.

Coconut Chutney

Coconut Chutney served with Idli, Dosa & Wada



Ingredients – For Chutney

2 cups Fresh Coconut (grated)
¼ cup Roasted Split gram dal (bhunna channa dal)
¼ cup Roasted peanuts (husk removed)
2-3 nos. Fresh green chilies
Salt to taste

Ingredients – For Tempering

1 tbsp. Oil
¼ tsp Rai (Mustard Seeds)
¼ tsp Asafoetida powder (Heeng)
3 nos. Dry red chilies
(roughly chopped)
Few sprigs of curry leaves

Method

Blend grated coconut, roasted channa dal, roasted peanuts, and green chilies to fine paste adding a little warm water and salt to taste. Once done, set it aside.

For tempering, heat oil, add dry red chilies, curry leaves, asafoetida powder and rai (mustard seeds). As it starts spluttering add this tempering to the chutney and mix well.

Ideally this should be served fresh, but if you wish it can be stored for a day or two.

Chef's Tip – If you like a tangy taste then feel free to add tamarind pulp or raw/semi raw mango pulp with a pinch of powdered sugar. This will enhance the taste.

Mirch - Lehsun Ki Chutney

Chili Garlic Chutney loved all over the country.



Ingredients

12 nos. Red chillies (deseeded)
15-18 Garlic cloves
3 tsp. Lemon Juice
2 tbsp Oil
1 tsp Cumin Powder (Jeera Powder)
Sea Salt / Salt to taste

Method

Soak dry red chillies in water for half an hour. After that remove soaked chillies but do not discard the water.

Take garlic cloves, soaked red chillies, lemon juice and little water (in which dry chillies were soaked) in a grinder jar and grind to a smooth paste

Heat oil in a pan/kadhai, add the cumin powder, chili garlic and salt to taste. Sauté for a couple of minutes or till the water evaporates.

Once done, remove and cool. Serve with parathas or rotis (breads).

The Saga of Indian Cuisine

Chef Ajay Chopra

Our country is known for its diversity all across the globe whether it is our language, dressing or food. Indian cuisine is ancient, diverse, and steeped in tradition, a synthesis of different ethnic influences, much like the country itself. The spicy food displayed at buffets in the US, or the ubiquitous 'curry' in Britain are only a small fraction of the variety and quality available to food lovers. Indian food is much more than we all know and see.

The map of India is divided by the political demarcations but also has subtle demarcations done by its cuisine. A simple example to start is, Dals or lentils are eaten as a staple all around the country but the flavour of the same changes every 200-300 kilometers. Certain states have almost 10-12 variants of the same lentil. Gourmet Indian food is typically associated with the food cooked in the courts of Indian royalty, particularly those of Mughal emperors



in Delhi and Lucknow in North India and the Nizams of Hyderabad in the South. This food is characterized by elaborate cooking techniques and the use of expensive ingredients. However, there are thousands of hidden culinary gems to be found, including the cuisines which revolve around religions and beliefs.

There are many factors which influence Indian cuisine and many of them haven't even thought of, I have detailed them as below:

• **Intrusions:**

India has been attacked by multiple armies and Mughals being the longest of them all. With Muslim rule established in India in 1194 AD, the cuisine began to reflect Islamic influences. The main Influence in traditional Hindu cuisine was the use of meat and fish. Muslim rulers were great gourmards, famous for their lavish courts and elaborate meal rituals and many of the dishes they patronized are today part of the Indian gourmet heritage.

There is a huge influence of the Moghul culture on the entire cuisine of India, kebabs being one of them. But even before the Mughals were the Aryans who were the first ones to grill any kind of food with spices. That is where probably the first kebab got introduced. Mughals ventured in different terrains and wherever they went the cuisine formed itself differently. Thus the food of Lucknow is very different from the food of Hyderabad or even Delhi and Rampur.

The Christian tradition in India is as old as Christianity itself, with Christianity starting in the Southern state of Kerala. Later, the Portuguese and British accelerated the growth of Christianity. Like the Muslims, Christians ate meat and fish, but developed their own cooking techniques. In Kerala, where Christianity took root over time and in tandem with local culture, food incorporates many local ingredients and cooking techniques and has few European influences. In Goa and Calcutta, where Christianity came with the British and Portuguese and conversion happened more rapidly, food reflects European customs and traditions. Unlike Muslims who are prohibited from

eating pork, and Hindus who are vegetarian, Christians have no restrictions on the type of meat that can be consumed.

• **Temperature or climatic conditions of the land:**

Climate varies across the country and as a result, different regions are characterized by distinct food habits based on what is locally available. Whether it's to do with rainfall or the duration of summer, winter, monsoon or spring, from Kashmir to Kanyakumari there are many vegetables which are common to the entire country but yet all of them are cooked in different techniques. These differences have been erased somewhat by modernization of transportation, but much of Indian food, especially vegetables, is grown and consumed locally.

Wheat dominates in Northern India. whilst rice is the key staple in southern India. North India is famous for its many varieties of wheat breads. e.g. rotis, naans, paranthas, and pooris are but a few of the many examples available, distinguished by the type of wheat flour, whole or refined. Also there are different methods of cooking, like frying, cooking on a griddle, or baked in a clay oven. Shape and size varies from single-layered to multiple-layered, from large to small, and whether plain or stuffed.

South India has innovative rice preparations which are endless dishes based on whether rice is boiled or flavoured (e.g. 'Tamarind rice', 'bisebella baath'), ground into paste with lentils and steamed or cooked on a griddle, like Idli and dosa. Fermented preparations, using coconut alcohol are — appam, — or made into steamed noodles — idiappam — Kerala and Goa in West India and Bengal and Orissa in East India are coastal states famous for sea food. The common flavouring of choice is coconut milk and souring agents including mango or tamarind in the West and mustard in the East.

Cooking oils vary widely – mustard oil is used in Eastern India, coconut oil in Kerala, and sunflower oil in North India. The colder regions of India, like Kashmir, Himachal and Uttarakhand use mustard oil



for their cooking as it has a higher smoking point and it doesn't congeal in colder temperatures and is easy to digest. The other temperate states could use ghee or coconut oil which are heavier mediums.

• **Spending or buying power of the community:**

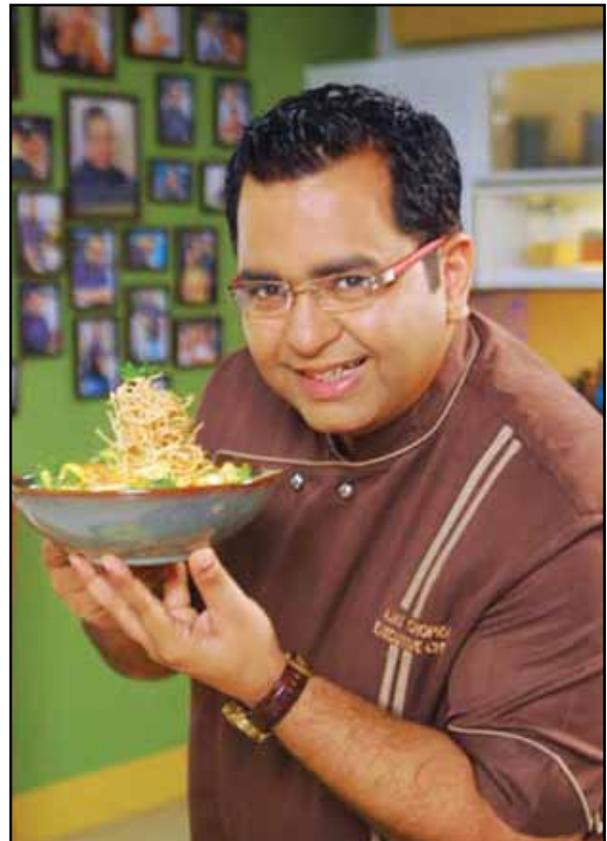
In my learning stages I would get confused with the fact that a Hyderabadi gravy called 'salan' is made with peanuts and another version is made with cashews, almonds and other rich ingredients because one applies the term 'Salan' to meat. Perplexed as I was, I started asking old time khansamas as to how the differentiation, had come about, and one of them actually gave a telling reply, "Bhaiya dastoor to yahi hai ki garib key liye to moongfali hi badaam hai". That including peanuts are a poor man's substitute for almonds reasoning that for the poor the have, and not the products (meat) suffices. The same thought actually drives the cuisine of a state. But Mirch Ka Salan which is now considered to be the classic accompaniment with a biryani is made with peanuts but a much richer Multan dish like the Gosht Ka Salan is made with almonds, poppy seeds and cashew.

Southern India uses every part of the coconut as it is available abundantly. Northern India uses ghee as there are many homes who domesticate cattle and the byproducts of the same are used first at home before being sold the market place.

• **Attributes to health and how food affects the same**

Spices served not only to ensure that the diet incorporated many spices with medicinal value, such as turmeric and saffron, but also restricted consumption of vegetables, meat and fish relative to cereal by providing a feeling of fullness to the individual.

The role of spices and herbs, in fact, goes beyond just cooking. Ancient Ayurvedic texts prescribe them for curative and therapeutic functions. Though the knowledge of the medicinal properties of the herbs and spices have been lost to most of today's



generation, with flavour and palate taking the forefront, the fact remains that locked in traditional wisdom are age-old secrets of the benefits of herbs and spices. For example, cumin seeds are believed to promote digestion; cardamom is good for the heart and is a natural breath freshener. Cinnamon is helpful in controlling cholesterol; turmeric is a natural antiseptic; ginger is effective against colds and flu symptoms, and the list goes on.

• **Taste or the flavour profile of the community:**

To truly understand differences in the taste or flavour profile of a community in Indian cuisine, one must not only examine how individual dishes differ but also how each dish fits into the overall food consumption pattern of that region. The traditional Indian diet across the country is extremely healthy, with cereals and vegetables forming the bulk of consumption. Meat and fish are eaten in very small quantities along with rice or wheat.

• Role Of Spices

Herbs and spices play a vital role in Indian food. Masala is a word that is often used in Indian cuisine. Masala means a 'blend of several spices' which varies from dish to dish. Garam masala is the most important blend and an absolute essential to an Indian preparation, added just before serving the dish to enhance its flavour. Each state in India has its own particular blend of garam masala.

Fresh ground spices are the order of the day in an Indian home and are chosen not only according to the nature of the dish but also the season. Spices which generate internal body heat are called 'warm' spices and those which take heat away from one's system are called 'cool' spices. For example spices such as bay leaf, black cardamom, cinnamon, ginger, mace, nutmeg and cayenne pepper are considered warm spices and hence used liberally during the cold weather. This is the reason one finds these warm spices traditionally used in numerous local specialties of cold Kashmir.

• Celebrating with food:

Due to the diversity of geographical features and religions, festivals, small or big, are celebrated all year long in India. Special dishes are prepared and offered to respective deities, and the seasonal background plays an important role in the celebration. For example, milk pudding, butter, and curd preparations signify lord Krishna's birthday, Janmashtami, while modakas of fresh coconut, regional varieties of murukku, laddu and kajjaya are thought to be the favourites of lord Ganesh and are offered on Ganesh Chaturthi. In the olden days when the transportation of food stuffs and vegetables was difficult, only seasonal food, typical of the region was cooked and offered to the deities. These food items came to be identified with particular deities, and the practice has continued till today.

There are so many varieties of mithais as one moves from North to South or East to West and within

different ethnic groups that one gets overwhelmed. While rasgulla, chum chum, sandesh and laddoo, gulab jamun, kaju katli are popular in West Bengal and North India respectively, messu, monthar and ghevar are the order of the day in Gujarat and Rajasthan. And this is just the tip of the iceberg.

• Meal time customs

Indians eat several small meals a day. Many families begin the day at dawn with prayers. A light meal of chai (Indian tea) and a salty snack will follow. Breakfast usually takes place a couple of hours later, and may include a traditional Indian dish such as aloo paratha (a flatbread stuffed with potato and fried), or toast with eggs. Other popular breakfast dishes include halwa (made with ground wheat, butter, sugar and sliced almonds) or uppma, which is a spicier version of halwa.

An afternoon snack includes tea and namkeen (snacks or appetizers), and sometimes may involve a visit to a restaurant or street stall that sells spicy snacks such as samosa (a small turnover stuffed with potatoes and peas) or bhel puri. Dinner traditionally is served quite late, and includes two or three vegetable dishes along with rice and chapati. In many households, both adults and children take a cup of hot milk, with sugar and a touch of cardamom, before going to sleep.

Well, all the above mentioned categories clearly explains why Indian cuisine is so vast and diverse. But culinary styles in India can be generally divided into four regional categories, The North, The South, The East and The West. Hence as you move from one region to another, not only dishes, but flavours, colours and the method of cooking change as often the landscape does.

North India:

This cuisine is perhaps the most popular and widely served in restaurants around the world. It is broadly characterized by meats and vegetables cooked in the tandoor (coal fired barbecue). The best known North Indian foods are.

- Mughlai cuisine. Introduced by the Mughals and broadly non-vegetarian in content.
- Traditional Kashmiri cooking also called Wazwan which reflects a strong Central Asian influence.
- Punjabis have the reputation of being great producers of food and still greater consumers of it. Punjab has bequeathed the institution of dhabas, a wayside eating joint, especially on the highways. Punjabi cuisine is not subtle in its flavour and there are no intricate marinades or exotic sauces.
- The rich Awadhi cuisine of the Lucknow region was made popular by the Nawab of Awadh who, to deal with food shortage, ordered his men to cook food in huge handis (vessel) to feed the hungry people. This eventually led to a style of cooking called dum, i.e., the art of sealing ingredients in a large handi and cooking over a slow fire, which you can so well relate to the relaxed outlook and attitude of the people of the region.

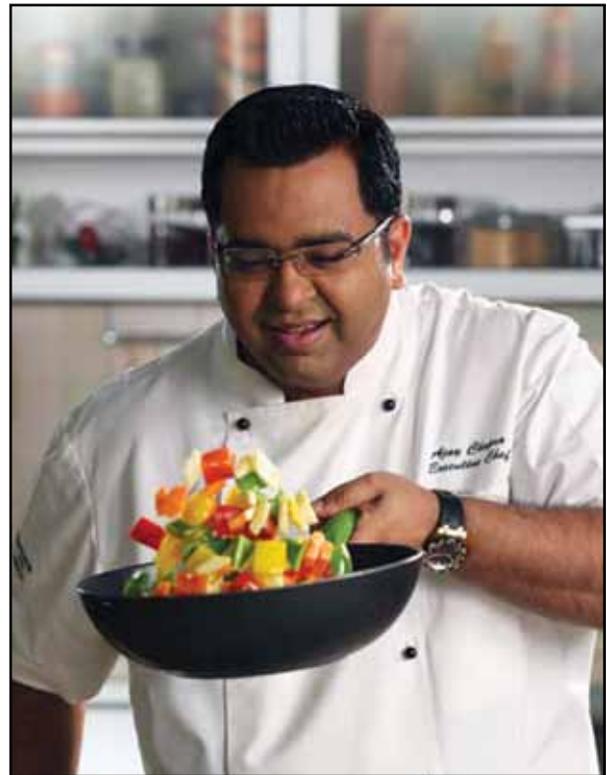
South India:

In South India, rice and dal is usually the staple diet. The food is characterized by dishes cooked on the griddle, such as dosas, thin broth-like dals called sambar and an array of sea food. The region is also known for its heavy use of 'kari' leaves, tamarind and coconut.

- Andhra Pradesh is known for its Hyderabadi cuisine which is greatly inspired by Mughlai cuisine. The wealthy and leisured aristocracy of the erstwhile Nizam State as well as the long peaceful years of their dominance, contributed largely to the development of this cuisine

Karnataka has two main styles of cooking, the Brahmin cuisine that is strictly vegetarian and the cuisine of Coorg which is noted for its pork dishes.

- The Chettinad cuisine of Tamil Nadu has transcended the boundaries of the state to carve out a worldwide following. Generally the dishes are



hot and pungent with fresh ground masalas and a typical menu resembles the aristocratic way of the Chettinad people. Tamil Nadu is also known for its vegetarian Brahmin cuisine which is very popular all over India and overseas.

- The rich intermingling of cultures in Kerala has contributed to the vast melting pot of mouth-watering delicacies that are churned out here. However, in the northern region of Kerala or the Malabar coast, Muslim Moppilah cuisine rules the roost. The Arab influence is predominant in many of its dishes like the Alisa, which is a hearty wheat and meat porridge. South to Central Kerala is where the art of Syrian Christian cooking remains the pride of many a homemaker.

• East India:

Eastern India grows a lot of rice. Green vegetables and fruit are also abundant and so are the foods cooked using them. People prefer, eating a balanced mix of vegetarian and non-vegetarian foods.

- Fish and rice are at the heart of Bengali cuisine. Mustard oil is used extensively and so is panch phoron (a combination of 5 whole spices) which sets this cuisine apart from all others.
- The flavours of Oriya cuisine are usually subtle and delicately spiced and fish and other seafood, such as crab and shrimp, are very popular.
- The food of India's smaller eastern states such as Sikkim, Manipur, Meghalaya, etc. varies quite dramatically due to their geographical location. These areas have been heavily influenced by Tibetan, Chinese, and even Western cuisine in recent times and you will find steaks, pork or chicken dumplings, filling noodle soups, featuring strongly on the menu.

West India:

In western India, Rajasthani and Gujarati cuisines offer a delectable variety of dals and pickles which substitute for the relative lack of fresh vegetables in these areas.

- Rajasthani cuisine is quite diverse. On one side of the spectrum, the love for shikaar (a good hunt) among the erstwhile royalty creates a culinary art form that is unimaginable. And on the other side of the spectrum is the equally grand all-vegetarian food of Marwar or Jodhpur.
- Gujarat has a large populace that has been mainly vegetarian for religious reasons and therefore Gujarati cuisine is strictly vegetarian.
- Parsi food is the hallmark of India's Zoroastrian community — ancient Persians. The Parsis' main

dish is Dhansakh, which is a partaken on Sundays and at all weddings and functions.

- Goan cuisine has a strong Portuguese influence since it was previously a Portuguese colony. The gravies are chilly-hot and spices are ground with vinegar and coconut.
- Malvani/Konkani cuisine is the standard cuisine of the Hindus in the Konkan region of Maharashtra, Goa and northern parts of West Karnataka. Although Malvani cuisine is predominantly non-vegetarian, there are many vegetarian delicacies. However, the 'Konkanastha Brahmin' style of food of the region is quite bland and vegetarian too.

In the end I would like to say that there are few things that are wrongly perceived about Indian cuisine though it has been persisting through generations.

- Firstly, Indian food is not always hot. Though most Indian cooking calls for the use of chillies of some kind – dry red chillies, fresh green chillies, red chilli powder — however, each type of chilli has a different potency and heat. And Indian cuisine uses it sparingly or generously as per the taste requirement of the cuisine.
- Finally, there is no such thing as 'curry'. Curry is actually an English concoction passionately embraced by several parts of the world, without realizing that a single dish does not make a curry. The term 'kari' probably comes from 15th century Tamil literature which means sauce or gravy. There are thousands of gravies or 'Kari' in Indian cuisine and they form the base of a large number of dishes.

Culinary Education in India

Chef Sudhakar N Rao

The biggest challenge that culinary education is facing today in India is the acceptance of the career of a chef and also the lack of awareness about the difference between hotel management and culinary arts education. Most of the aspirants who wish to enter and make their career as professional culinary artists, or as a chef, still don't understand that the hotel management courses being offered in India do teach food production as one of the core

subjects but the overall focus is more on hospitality rather than culinary. Unlike in Europe and America the Indian education system has completely failed in clearly demarcating the two careers and the required courses to develop those special competencies which the careers require.

Nowhere in the world does one hear of a course named bachelor's in hotel management. It's either bachelor's





in hospitality or bachelor's in culinary. Only in India this unique word 'hotel management' was coined to impart education and develop professionals for the hotel, catering and culinary industry. Previously only institutes offering hotel management were established under the National Council of Hotel Management, New Delhi. This never changed for almost 45 years except that the course was upgraded from a diploma into a three-year bachelor's, under IGNOU.

It's only in 1996 that the initial efforts to bifurcate hotel management education into hospitality and culinary segments in India was taken up by private players in the field of education. Unfortunately till 1996, India did not have a full-fledged culinary programme being run by any university throughout the country. Osmania University was the first university in India

to start a three-year bachelor's degree in culinary arts under the faculty of technology. Eighteen years have passed and only a handful of recognised and university affiliated colleges are offering culinary arts with a university affiliation. Most of them lay false claims about the true character of the courses being offered. They either do not have a university affiliation or have some make-shift MOU with a foreign university claiming that they too, are offering a full-fledged culinary programme.

Recently the foundation laying stone ceremony for the 'National Culinary Institute' was held in Tirupati and it is expected to start functioning full time from 2018. Initially it will offer various culinary courses and then will also start post graduate and research programmes. NCI will also be the nodal body to streamline, regulate and shoulder the responsibility

to try and position the culinary profession as one of the important streams of the mainstream higher education options available to the students passing out of 12th class. Until and unless this segregation of hospitality and culinary careers is done properly the culinary profession will suffer and will not get its due.

Making of a Chef

After being in this profession for over three decades now, people keep wondering as to what is the secret behind my success. My recipe is no different from any other successful entrepreneur from any other field. Successful people do not do different things; they just do the same things differently. Becoming a chef is not very difficult and not all that easy too. Being a chef is a very physical profession. You are required to remain on your feet almost constantly. A kitchen is almost scorching hot year-round so you should be quite prepared for that. Even in the best-conditioned areas, a kitchen is often as hot as 95 degrees Celsius or higher. But choosing to be a chef for a living is a very rewarding and time-consuming job. The road to becoming a chef requires much training and hands-on experience and the passion to be in this demanding and ever challenging hotel industry.

Here's what you need to do to be a good chef. A strong desire to be a chef is a good place to start (a culinary school with a latest curriculum and best teaching hands), having a good sense of smell, and taste will be necessary also. It would be very difficult to prepare a good meal if you can't decipher the differences from one spice to another; or if you do not know which spices go well together and which ones don't. Cooking is a lot different from being a chef is. If you are just cooking for yourself you have room for errors. If you are cooking for others, you will want to cook your food to perfection and present the food in an enticing manner as well.

There are stages to becoming a chef. You have to start at the bottom, but becoming a chef is one of the few occupations where you can get most of your training

on the job. If you have an inclination towards this profession then working in a restaurant during high school for the experience will be a good idea. Even if it is a non-cooking position you will learn what it is like to be on your feet for long hours. Be certain that this is the career to which you want to devote your time. Make certain you will possess the education, experience and skills necessary for your recognition as a chef. Stay up to date on food trends and advances in kitchen equipment. Read as many culinary magazines and journals as possible. Understand that to be a successful chef you must have years of hands-on experience and formal training. Most chefs are in the culinary profession because this career fulfils their artistic needs, social needs (interact with all kinds of people), and it is never boring. There is always something new to learn! .

Culinary school students should learn skills in a very elementary fashion without any frills or shortcuts that they might learn in a professional kitchen. That's why the emphasis on the basic skill development with a very traditional approach should be applied. Culinary schools are indispensable to young aspiring chef who really want to make a career in professional cooking because the culinary schools give access to such a repertoire of basic knowledge which one has to acquire in the beginning stages of one's career as chef.

There is an urgent demand to streamline the culinary education in India to make it a career oriented professional course. The various steps which needs to be taken up immediately is to first classify whether to look at it from an art, craft or a trade point of view. If the focus is on developing the technical skills then the curriculum should be hands on in the kitchens and not classroom-based. The world renowned chef Escoffier has rightly said, "No theories, no formulae, no recipe, no matter how well written, can take the place of experience." while developing chefs and good chefs are made and not born. To make an excellent professional chef there is an urgent need to develop good culinary schools with all the required state-of-art infrastructure which can impart the budding chefs

with technical know how of that whats and ifs of the fine art of cooking. In order to compete with the best culinary schools of the world special emphasis is required to be placed on the quality of the chef trainers. Instructors who will teach, mentor and train the aspiring chefs should be hired only after clearing various stringent selection procedures wherein the candidate has to demonstrate his technical skills as part of the selection procedure to become an instructor of a reputed culinary school. If you really look at the most famous chefs world over, their successes solely depended upon the institute where they pursued their basic culinary education coupled with their inherent talent and cultivated skills.

In order to develop good culinary professionals there are three important components which need to be properly put in place.

*curriculum and teaching methodology

*instructors and up gradation

*positioning and absorption

The budding chefs can be groomed into professionals with the process starting at the selection of the right culinary school which has an approach for an ever evolving and updated curriculum. In order to have a thorough understanding of the basic, intermediate and advanced culinary skills one has to go through a formal culinary school programme which should be duly supplemented by a minimum of six months of industrial exposure training. Learning should be continuous, on-going and a practice based process with special emphasis on the mother cuisine first. Other famous international cuisines should also be a part of the curriculum only after the budding chef is





made to understand the principles, customs, practices and traditions of the mother cuisine. Special focus towards regional and sub-regional cuisines has to be duly stressed throughout the academic curriculum. There is no substitute for experience and only with ample practical sessions and substantial classroom theory the learning process will be complete and the aim of attaining technical hands-on skills will be fulfilled. Only this approach towards designing the curriculum for a culinary course will have positive results.

The purpose behind culinary education is to learn basic food preparation, learning the styles of knife cuts, and application of heat and food presentation. Most importantly of all, food preparation is sanitation. The importance of sanitation cannot be over emphasized.

In a business based upon service and hospitality, reputation and indeed, livelihoods are dependent upon the customer's good will. If a well trained chef is behind the operations in a food production facility, automatically the cooking and safe food standards will go hand in hand and will ensure that the business does not suffer due to an unprofessional approach.

Chef instructors who are entrusted with training aspiring chefs in vocational programmes, culinary schools, and colleges need to be highly focussed while instructing students. Instruction may take the form of lecturing, the assignment of tasks, demonstration, and guidance through skill labs. Culinary instructors will need to develop teaching methods which are interactive or collaborate, new methods to be applied to assess students' skills through exams and

demonstrations of abilities, meet with and advise individual students, and stay informed as to the latest trends in their specialty field. Culinary schools should hire instructors who have substantial work experience, often at the management level in a professional food production facility. New chefs who aspire for a teaching career in the culinary field should seek out opportunities to move up in the supervisory and management ranks only. Then they can be looked upon as prospective culinary trainers.

Recent trends show that success, career and money are issues in the minds of all young people. Everyone eyes the fastest way to enter a big income stream. It is pretty hard to explain to the 'youngistan' that all careers are not fast and some careers start slow but in fact are more stable and rewarding. Today's generation is very much in a hurry and is driven by the 'big guns syndrome'. In this race they only count the zeros rather than going for a long term rewarding career. One should understand that all entry level careers do not pay well but they give you valuable training that will be the foundation for the future.

Long term career plans should always be the top priority. In the Early nineties Indian's were eager and desperate to go abroad and felt that only an overseas career was a path to big and fast money and long-term, less paying careers took a serious beating. One has to be ready to accept a less paying career but which is more stable and with long term growth possible item. If one is in a culinary profession he/she can be confident fifteen years down the line you may yet to make it big in terms of money but can proudly say that your career has been and is the most stable one when compared to others.

As a culinary educator the biggest challenge I face today is in convincing the budding chefs to accept a career which may not look so lucrative to start in the monetary sense. It is felt that the hotel, catering and culinary industry with a four fold growth has not done much in terms of remuneration for the entry level positions when compared to other streams of professional careers. Though some positive signals are emerging a lot needs to be done to attract the best talent into the industry.

Festivals and Food in India

Pushpesh Pant

India, the quintessential 'Land of Resplendent Diversity,' has an amazing range of glittering festivals that mark the calendar. These festivals are the time to take a break from the grueling routine of every day life — pause and reflect, calling up 'remembrances of times past' in sessions of sweet, but not always silent thought. 'Lights and Sound'. Abundant 'Splashes of Colour' alone are not what make a festival. Food too contributes its bit. Most festivals are associated with special culinary delicacies.

The last quarter of the year in India is the season for festive feasting. It begins with Dussehra (Puja in

Bengal) that in Himachal Pradesh, UP, Bihar, West Bengal and Karnataka marks the most mouthwatering day in the calendar. Eid follows, bringing with it in its wake succulent kebab, aromatic pulav, biryani, seviaan and phirni.

This is the time to gorge on pakwan and mishthanna

Pakwan (paku+ann) translates literally as (properly?) 'cooked' cereals. In many parts of India 'properly' cooked means food that is deep fried or boiled in milk — the pakki rasoi that is considered purer repast than polluting fare contaminated and contaminating because it's untouched by ghee, oil or milk. It is in





this category that items like puri, kachori, bada are placed.

Mishtanna doesn't need any explanatory translation and is synonymous with mithai-sweetmeats like pua, halva, payas and kheer. Mithai is paired with mewa — dried fruits and assorted nuts. In brief, traditional festive foods offer a mind-boggling range of rich delicacies.

Durga Puja, Kalipuja, Gurupurnima, Bihu, Onam, Gudiparva, Ugadi contribute their not inconsiderable bit to make these three months a glutton's dream come true and a gourmet's delight. There are many interesting equally resplendent regional and ethnic delicacies that can hold their own against any of these mainstream classics.

A traditional celebratory feast in Kangra is called dham. In Sanskrit the word means ultimate destination and it is reasonable to assume that in the culinary context also this implies the acme. Dham is cooked and served at all festive occasions including marriages. It is a multi-course meal that is prepared exclusively with lentils and is served with rice. No dry items or vegetables are offered as accompaniments. All the delicacies are cooked eschewing onions and garlic (though with changing times these taste enhancers have made slow inroads!) and the orthodox still insist that those who man the pots and pans should be Brahmins. In villages and small towns the common men eat off pattal (plates fabricated with broad leaves) while those belonging to royalty used thali and katori wrought in silver, gold and bell metal. The metal ware too was lined with a pattal.



The variety that the common lentils provide is quite amazing. Kabuli chana that is usually encountered in the Punjab in a piquant, pungent incarnation — dry or in gravy — and is relished in a dham in a mildly sweet flavour enriched with lotus puffs, dried dates and raisins. Bengal gram curry too is refreshingly different with full-bodied dark green gravy that acquires distinction due to the incorporation of spinach.

The split chana daal is strongly reminiscent of the Bengali recipe that is laced with coconut slices and raisins. The whole mash that is prescribed for all auspicious occasions makes its appearance in a shiny dark hue — the lustre on the surface is due to the film of melted ghee. As if this were not enough a bowl of bundi ka raita made with gram flour droplets cooked in yogurt, chips in to add colour and a slightly different taste. Steaming boiled rice is constantly piled

on the pattal to enhance the enjoyment of different dishes as per one's own preference. This is actually a wonderful way to compose courses as per choice. A deep-fried whole red chilly along with a fresh green chilly is put on the plate to make life better for those who like it hot! The sweet dish surprisingly isn't a kheer popular in the hills but meethe chawal, not to be confused with zarda (saffron-tinted dessert from the Mogul repertoire).

The accent in festive foods in India is on uncompromising quality, purity and plenty. The challenge for the host and the cook is to present a multi-hued thali (platter) that can tickle the palate with all the six flavours (shadras). Mostly the spicing is simple yet subtle. Sonth (dried ginger) adds just a hint of astringency and pipali (long pepper) adds its pleasant pungent taste. Nutmeg and mace

complement the aromatic bay leaf and cloves, cardamom and cinnamon seldom encountered in rural cooking contribute a hint of the exotic to various delicacies. Ghee and malai (clarified butter and clotted cream) enrich the meal. Dried fruits like raisins and dates introduce natural sweetness while the cleansing bitter taste is good for the body and remains well hidden — a bit of fenugreek in the tempering maybe. Almost forgotten regional festive recipes strive to blend taste and textures, tints and aromas provide an unmatched symphony for the senses.

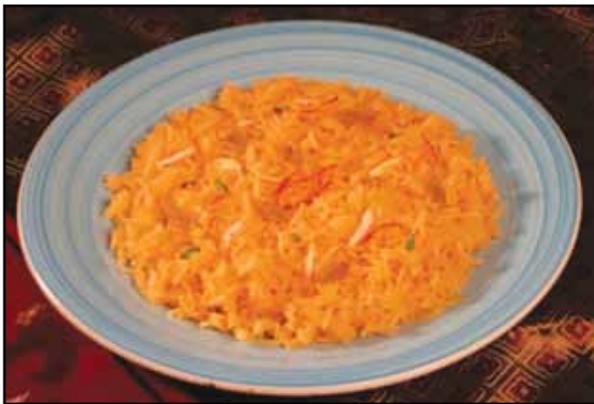
Magh Mela or Makar Sankranti marks the Sun's passage in to the summer solstice — Uttarayan 'officially' declaring the end of chilly winter in the northern part of the country. It is celebrated most elaborately in Prayag-Allahabad in January. The most important ritual is *snaan* — the bath, and the prescribed food

is *khichari*. Many other regional festivals coincide with the *sankranti*. *Lorhi* in Punjab is enjoyed with a bonfire and *gajjak* and 'popped corn' and other grains, in a shared *bon homie*.

The advent of spring is ritually celebrated with boisterous *Holi*. Music is in the air and with evaporation of frost, splashes of colour greet the eye — like the brilliant yellow of mustard in the fields. It's not surprising that like the *abir-gulal* powders to paint faces in different tints, the festive food too, seeks to 'colour the mind'.

Origins of *Holi* are traced to millennia old *Madanotsva* — a popular celebration heralding the advent of spring. This was the season when the mango trees sprouted blossoms and desire stirred in young hearts. It was a time to get rid of the shackles of inhibition, indulge in fun and frolic with gay abandon. Miniature paintings





in the Rajput-Mogul style or in Pahari kalam depict enchanting scenes of Radha-Krishna indulging in Holi sports with their respective entourages and there is no dearth of musical compositions inspired by the pulsating drumbeats and clouds of colourful dust raised by revelers. Holi is a great leveler. Any one can lampoon any one else and get away with – “Bura Na Mano Holi Hai!” The sting of the satirical words or the

shamelessness of the risqué song or joke is softened by specialty sweets and savouries.

Holi — the festival of colours — comes at a time when the winter chill is receding and the torments of summer are still some distance away. In brief, this is the ideal time to tickle the palate and take delight in myriad foods — sweet and savoury.

Traditionally, the revelers are treated to gujiya — the crescent shaped deep-fried pastries packed with mawa, raisins and chironji. At times glazed with sugar syrup, the gujiya is encountered in different sizes. Gourmet in Banaras fancy the dainty confection resembling a half of balushahi while in Agra the ‘jumbo’ has a loyal following. Till a few years back many households prepared gujiya at home — each family following its own recipe. Some ‘lightened’ the stuffing by reducing the quantity of mawa and blending it with suji and grated dried nariyal. Others enriched it with pine nuts and made it redolent with cardamom and saffron strands. The contrasting textures — the crisp, flakey casing and the soft, milky filling make gujiya a two in-one delight. The test of a well-made gujiya is three fold — the envelope has to be as thin as it can be and the deep fried sweet meat mustn’t have a trace of excess fat even if the purest deshi ghee is used; and finally the stuffing shouldn’t be cloyingly sweet. The edges are adorned with a design appealing to the eye.

Other colourful delights one recalls from distant childhood and adolescence are the dark emerald hued Piste ki Launj and the bright orange Santare ki Barfi.

Savoury snacks served at Holi are never substantial but considered essential to break the monotony of sugar. Chura Matar — pounded rice flakes paired with stir-fried spicy sweet peas with a hint of tang is popular in Purvanchala stretching from the Eastern extremity of Awadh to the borders of Bengal. Connoisseurs make contending recommendations regarding the best variety of rice to be used or the



geographical indicator to ensure the sweetest, most succulent peas but there is general agreement that the spicing should be subtle and the balance of sweet and sour in fresh orange juice is most seductive. What a pity that most of us have succumbed to the temptation of 'plating' factory produced packaged namkin — assorted mixtures, mini matthis and potli samosa with long shelf life. How one misses the

lingering taste of ajwain that was integral to home made stuff!

Hosts with budgetary constraints make do with Shakar Pare, Gulgule, Namak Pare.

The accent has always been on euphoric ingredients, mildly intoxicating. This is the reason that thandai is at times laced with bhang. But we shouldn't



forget that the original idea was mazaa (carefree enjoyment) not nashaa (getting intoxicated silly). Bhang (cannabis) or (Shivji ki Buti) rhymed easily with Holi ke Rang (colours of the festival) and Umang ki Tarang (tidal waves of enthusiasm) but more than half the joy in this case was in the journey than the arrival! Preparation of thandai took hours — grinding the almonds to a paste, procuring all the prescribed ingredients, from chaar magaz seeds to rose petals and ‘filtering’ the potion through fine muslin. Believe you us, it was more an exercise in mood manipulation than getting a kick.

A generation ago preparations for Holi celebrations began months in advance. Winter evenings were crammed with musical soirees — Holi baithak where talented singers, mostly amateurs, regaled family and friends with popular compositions. These sessions

were interspersed with refreshments comprising pakori, samosa and jalebi. In Uttarakhand, alu ke gutake tempered with aromatic jambu grass from Tibet and suji ka halwa with masala chai were a must. Those who stayed back shared potluck of puri-sabji-khir. In villages and small towns — and gali-mohalla in bigger cities — khari holi appealed more to the young who roamed around in singing bands that swelled and shrank. In the past, this ritual too was performed for a fortnight. Nowadays, all the action is packed in a day.

The idea on this day of non-stop merrymaking is to sing and dance spraying or smearing colour on friends and foe. ‘Nibble n Move on!’ traditional delicacies were designed to keep the energy levels high and to ensure that the hyper excited were ‘tranquilized’.

Snacking at each doorstep leaves little appetite for lunch even when it is served late after the ritual bath. More often than not it is a simple light meal of karhi-chaawal.

In recent years alcohol and ready made bought from the shop have emerged as spoilers rendering the festival unbearably boisterous and leading us astray — away from euphoric polychromatic foods — with a quick fix 'high' that ends, more often than not, with a painful hangover and well deserved guilty conscience!

Baisakhi the quintessential post 'Harvesting Festival' is celebrated in April with vigorous Bhangra dancing. Food comprises a robust rustic rural repast of Saag, Roti-Daal (not Kali!) Lassi, Malpurha.

Bihu coinciding with Baisakhi is celebrated in Assam. Bihu too, has a ritually prescribed traditional menu with accent on local ingredients like fish and vegetables — greens and bamboo shoots — flavoured with khaar and sweets like peetha. Group dancing in folk style and innocent flirtatious exchanges are what make Bihu special.

Janmashtami commemorates the birth of Sri Krishna and is traditionally celebrated fasting and feasting in Brindabana An equally interesting visual in Mumbai has the Govindas recreating the band of adolescents, the Lord's companions, enacting the drama of breaking a mataki hung high, to test their acrobatic skills in gymnastics as well as nerves!

Ganesh Chaturthi where Chaturthi literally translates as 'the fourth day in a fortnight' (each month is divided into two fortnights in the Hindu calendar), is the most significant chaturthi and is the one dedicated to worship of Ganesh as Vinayak Vignanashak—the remover of obstacles and the guardian herald of auspicious beginnings. Mumbai/Pune get into a frenzy, first making and installing gigantic clay idols of Ganpati, followed by singing and dancing of Ganpati Bappa Morya — visarjan Modak, Puran Poli are its staple fare.

Autumn is the quarter of the year packed chock-a-block with festivals. Dussehra following nine action-packed days of navaratri in October is in fact many



festivals rolled in one. It is the festival in Kolkata, Mysore, Varanasi, Kullu and Delhi. (Daandiya Raas is what sets apart Navaratri celebrations in Gujarat with the emphasis on Sri Krishna frolicking with his companions and not on the Prince of Ayodhya's victory over the demon Ravana.)

Durga Puja in Bengal celebrated on ashtami — the eighth day of this fortnight is arguably the most important cultural celebration in that state, marked by the erection of pandals and gluttonous splurging on street foods. Also, it is a time to exchange gifts visit relatives and offer hospitality at home. Larger-than-life colourful idols of the indomitable Mother Goddess Durga are installed in pandaals and their immersion in water in a ceremonial procession after Vijayadashami to the accompaniment of the beating

of drums and frenzied cheers, is the ritually prescribed conclusion.

Decorations in pandals vie with each recreating historic monuments or providing a glimpse into future inspired by science fiction films! However, it is food that is uppermost in the mind of revelers. Khichuri, Alu Chop, Kassa Maans, Mocha Cutlet, Jibey Goja, Labang Lotika, Mughlai Paratha, Rezhala, Biryani and much more, are on offer at the street side stalls.

In Mysore, the highlight is the procession of goddess Chamudeshwari led by a caparisoned elephant on a gold howdah. The Palace is lit in the night. Festive food reminds readers of the significance of ragi in traditional culinary repertoire harking back to myths regarding Mahish the demoniacal son of the soil





who ruled this land before he was vanquished by the goddess.

In Kullu The ceremonial procession of sawari of Latu Shah is accompanied by colourful folk singing and dances. Food for the Dhaam is a multi course saatvik meal based almost entirely on lentils deliberately eschewing vegetables and meats.

Diwali, 'The Festival of lights', like Dussehra, incorporates many other festive celebrations like Kali Puja, Laxmi Puja. The run up to Deepavali is marked by Dhan Teras (literally the 13th day) earmarked for ritually prescribed purchase of jewellery and metalware and the main festival is followed by Govardhan Puja and Bhaiyya Dooj. Kheer, sweetmeats, Kheel, Khilone, dried fruits and nuts are served.

Onam is the three-day-long state 'Festival of Lights' in Kerala. Alleppey, Thiruvananthapuram, Trissur, Kozhikode. Snake Boat Races at Alleppey, floral floor decorations. And the multi course menu is showcased in Sadyam.

Pongal, essentially a post-harvest festival with evocative symbolization of the 'pot of milk boiling over' representing plenty, derives its name from a lentil and rice dish. in Madurai, Chennai, Tanjore Pongal is prepared in both sweet and savoury versions.

Eid's essential locations are Delhi, Bhopal, Hyderabad, Lucknow, Srinagar, Ajmer. Namaz in mosques, night scene in bazaars, Eid milap, kids enjoying gifts, Food consists of Biryani, sellers of, Sevian, and Pulav, Kebab, Phirni are on offer.

Rath Yatra at Puri is a grand chariot procession. Food is everyday fare supplemented by pitha, chhena purdh and khaja.

Guru Parb at Amritsar Golden Temple comprises. Paath of Gurubani in classical ragas casting a magic spell over the unending stream of visitors. All are treated to blessed karha parshad.

A community feast, where the spread consists of Tsampa, Thukpa and butter tea are as much a part of Loxar in Ladakh and Arunachal Pradesh as masked Chamb and Lion Dances and the unfurling of the sacred Tanka to mark the occasion.

Bhagoria is celebrated in the border region of where Rajasthan and Madhya Pradesh meet. Bhils have this match making fair where young adults choose their spouses. Youngsters in tribal attire and make-up enliven the village fair participating enthusiastically in games and contests to show off physical prowess or artistic talent. The festive repast is rustic and robust — kadak naak murga and pleasantly intoxicating mahua.

What begins with a 'bang' concludes with a similar 'bang' during the X-mas and New Year binge. This is the time to dig into roasts and bakes, assorted puddings and cakes and indulge in wines, hot toddies and punches — alcoholic or fruity, cocktails and 'mock tails'.

There was a time, what now appears a gone by forever golden age, when every family prepared well in advance for treats with a distinct flavour of the festival, be it sweets with long shelf life or time consuming 'fillings' (pitthi) spiced up with secret family prescriptions. Alas, now the emphasis is on variety and quantity. There are few who bother about quality. For us at least, nothing compares with a meal at home lovingly recapturing the mood and the spirit of a specific festival.

May the festive season fill your life with lights, sparkling colours and boundless joy!



Art Reviews: Azad Bhavan Gallery

Located just off the hub of official activities at the Indian Council for Cultural Relations or ICCR, lies the complex of the Azad Bhavan Gallery. Its strategic location, one surmises, was not a matter of chance or availability of space but something deeper and more relevant. The complex is the first building visible from the entrance to the place and the last image that one carries away as one departs from the premises. While the offices of the organization are a hub of activity during the day, the Azad Bhavan complex awakes to life as the evening hours set in, when visitors stream in to view art exhibitions or are regaled by dance, music and theatre performances of a high order. Thus the active character of the complex becomes a throbbing cultural bonanza every evening, offering approval, acceptance and enjoyment for the public at large. Not just the performing arts and the visual component alongside, this artistic extravaganza is a much awaited event by the diplomatic fraternity, who are given an exposure to our rich heritage through such occasions.



Vocalist Manasi Prasad

As the artists for these performances and art exhibitions are hand picked the work on display, or the numbers on stage are the standard bearers of the quality of our achievements in the fields of music, dance and theatre. The understanding of their content moves at two levels. While the seasoned connoisseur finds in them a quality of perfection and creativeness that are worth noting, the casual viewer and the interested listener is mesmerized by the visual and aural appeal these pristine performances have on offer. In the bargain, every level of visitor takes back a slice of our culture on his own terms and comes back for more. As most of the artists have a long history of performing to audiences beyond our shores, they have learnt to tailor their artistry to meet the demands of a presentation that has the requisite appeal for a non-Indian audience with little or no acquaintance with our cultural roots. Hence the source of their presentations are drawn from our mythology or other sources of heritage, the presentation of which at the ICCR, resonates with their astute ability to fashion these traditions into a contemporary format, without sacrificing their core content.

Fathoming the nuances of the art on the gallery walls or enjoying the stage dynamism of a concert recital in the ICCR auditorium, has its own compensations. Being structured performances tailored to a choreographed wholesomeness within the time limit on offer, allows viewers and listeners the advantage of capturing the essential and interesting bits of the display/performance. Even while these occasions are opening the doors of their imagination to be sufficiently instigated to venture out on a voyage of discovery, they give listeners and viewers a window view into those aspects of the performance that has interested them the most. The balanced presentation of exploration and appreciation is both satisfying and fulfilling and yet sufficiently instigating to create a sense of inquisitiveness in the audience which makes them hanker after a more detailed or repetitive play-out of what they have viewed or heard, or seen, at

the ICCR. In this way, the complex has sent out the right message as also justified the reason for its existence, which is the propagation of Indian culture to audiences at home and abroad.

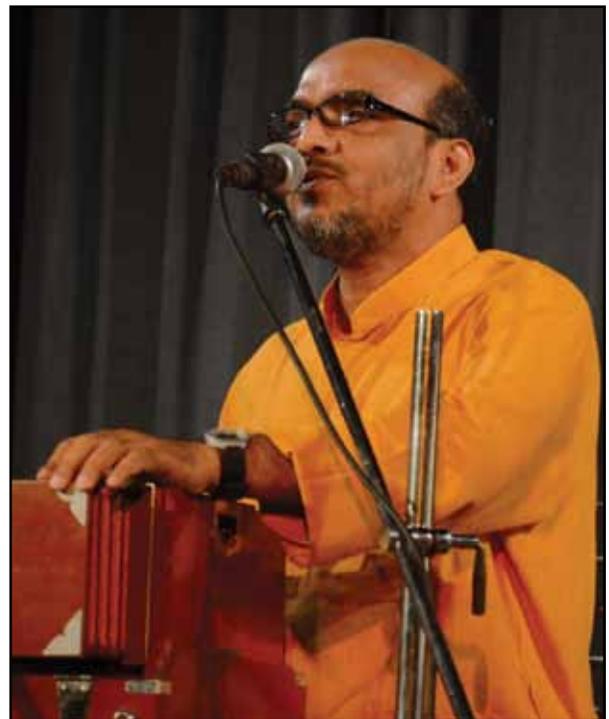
One of the most memorable concert offerings during this quarter has been the vocal recital of artist Manasi Prasad, an exponent of Carnatic classical music. What is striking about this young performer is the freshness of approach that she brings to this ancient form through innovative passages that found approval not just among a strictly trained and understanding coterie of listeners but also among young listeners. The latter group also need to be motivated into listening to this art form and a presentation that is laced with complicate and intricate expositions would be too exacting for their appreciative capacities. Thus musicians like Manasi Prasad have been able to strike a common chord with them by understanding their intense interest in Carnatic music although they lack the expertise to assuage its finer nuances in the way a seasoned connoisseur is able to .

Being born into a family where music was the mainstay, Manasi was initiated into the art form under the abler guidance of her mother. Thereafter, Vidwans Tara Prasad and R K. Padmanabha had taken her under their wing where she imbibed instruction with utmost care and diligence. Currently she trains in Chennai under her guru Sriram Parasuram. Manasi is also an active member of groups that are bringing classical music to an uninitiated audience and her workshops have been a huge draw in the southern cities. Her vocal control, the clarity of swaras, her confident stage presence and the compositional flair of her singing style have made her a much loved performer even at this young age. Her concerts are well attended and at ICCR, she kept her listeners riveted to their seats as they found in her music a freshness and a mingling of musicianship together with audience appeal that kept a largely non-Carnatic group of listeners enjoying her recital.



Bengali folk music artist Tapan Kumar Roy performing with his team

The catchy rhythms of folk airs and the earthy tones of their singing style carries freshness of appeal even when the words of the song are foreign to one's ears. Also, the content of the prose encased within the rhythm is a pictorial journey through the countryside where the folk numbers originate from. A bit of local history, a slice of mythology and the singer's own commentary on the above, lend an air of ingenuity to each of the numbers. As they are spontaneous outpourings of feelings and convey the happenings of the moment as also legends from pre history, their subject matter is sometimes a familiar fact known to the audience. But what these folk singers manage to bring out, is yet another viewpoint, another subtlety waiting to be unearthed by the artist and then enjoyed by the audience. Thus an evening of folk airs never sounds stale or overdone for every singer manages to infuse his own genius into the numbers and create visions of the times and events they about with concrete reflection.



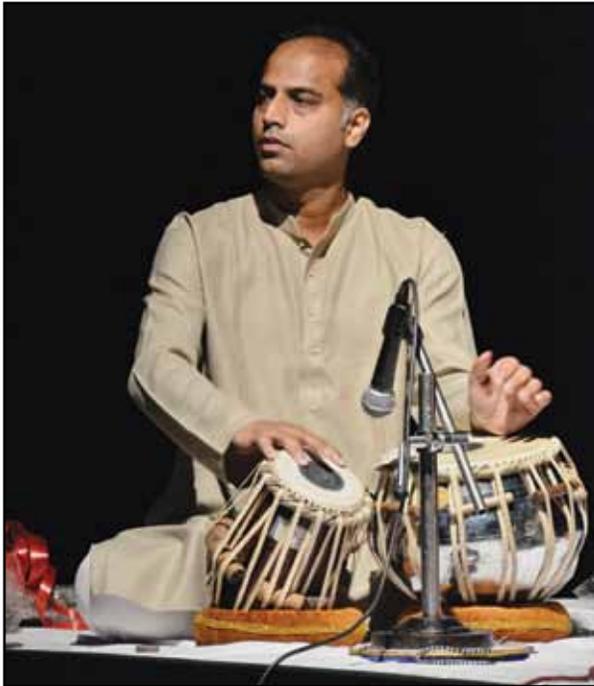
Bengali folk music artist Tapan Kumar Roy



Bengali folk music artist Tapan Kumar Roy performing with his team

Thus was the fluidity one imbibed as one sat listening to the folk airs that were presented by Tapan Kumar Roy. A versatile and well known performer of this genre, Dr Roy holds a doctorate in music and has several albums to his credit. His numbers though legendary and popular with folk singers across the countryside, eulogise the greenery of his state. What is unique about his music is the spontaneity that flows out of his compositional skills. The words are uttered with melifluity and meaning so that even people non-conversant with the language of the lyrics have

no difficulty in creating a visual of the lushness and richness portrayed through his vocal rendition. Apart from the well known numbers that one often hears across the countryside at fairs and gatherings during festival times, Dr Roy also regaled his audiences with unusual inclusions, thereby mingling the known and the lesser known with dexterity. The final outcome was a well choreographed recital clipped to the demands of the time available and the audiences for whom the presentation was on offer.



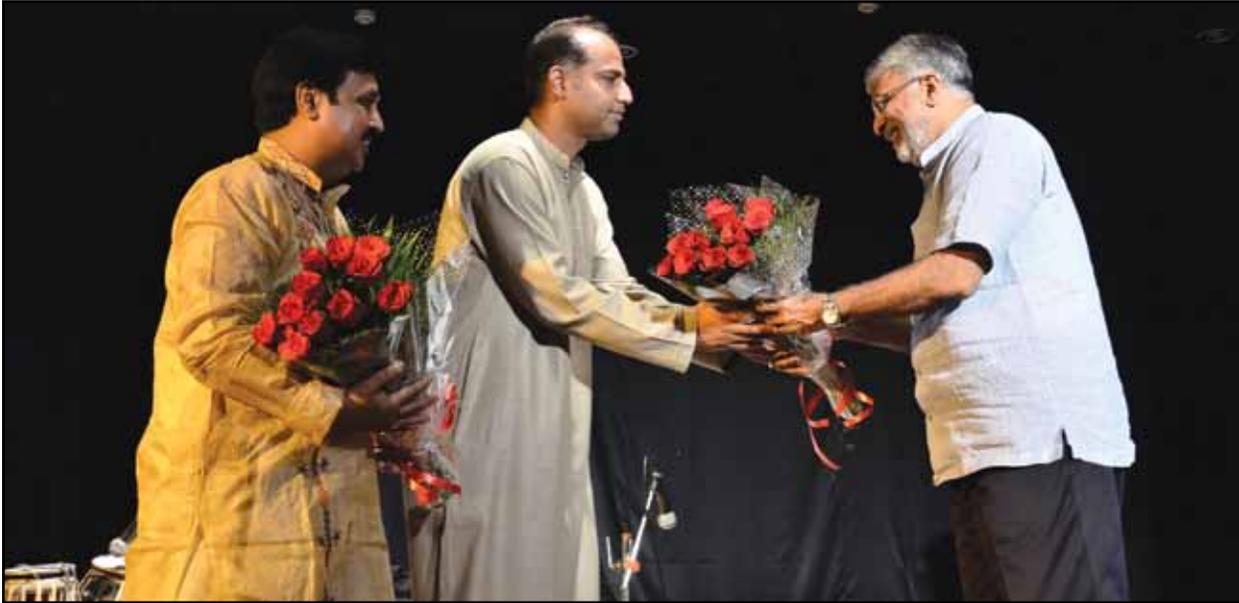
As instrumental music is also a rich arm of the musical tradition of the country, the inclusion of some instrumental solo recitals gave a distinctive edge to the programmes of this quarter. Among the top choices in the instrumental category was the flute recital by artist **Sunil Kant Gupta**, held at the ICCR last month. Playing to a hall of discerning listeners, he managed to create a solemn silence with his music as listeners sat mesmerized by the purist serenity of playing. He managed to draw long and

unswerving musical notes at the introductory *alaap* segment, captivating a mood enhancing quality into his audience. Then recital proceeded with complete command of the bass flute and the smaller more strident smaller flute with its strident sound. Throughout the *alaap*, which was confined to the larger more resonating flute, an unwritten rhythmic aura filled the music, giving the recital a volume and inner rhythm touching one's sensibilities. Hence the music flowed like a dual arrangement where one aspect was concentrated on its rhythmic content, while the musicality of the playing was continued throughout through its innovative, melodic appeal centred around the Raga Yaman, the popular evening raga for a concert coinciding with the sunset.

Having enmeshed the interest and concentration of his audience with his commandeering skills at flute playing, the artist then elaborated the raga contents through a flair of musical combinations, all the while retaining the soft flair of his musical expertise. Even when he undertook the lightning quick *tihais* and came with precise exactitude to the 'sam' note thereafter, the subtle reflections of his intrinsic musical style were not sacrificed. Thus the latter segment of his introductory play though complicated was not a blurred excitement of smudged notes and sharp accents. It flowed like a well finished architectural edifice, where the finer detailing was as carefully

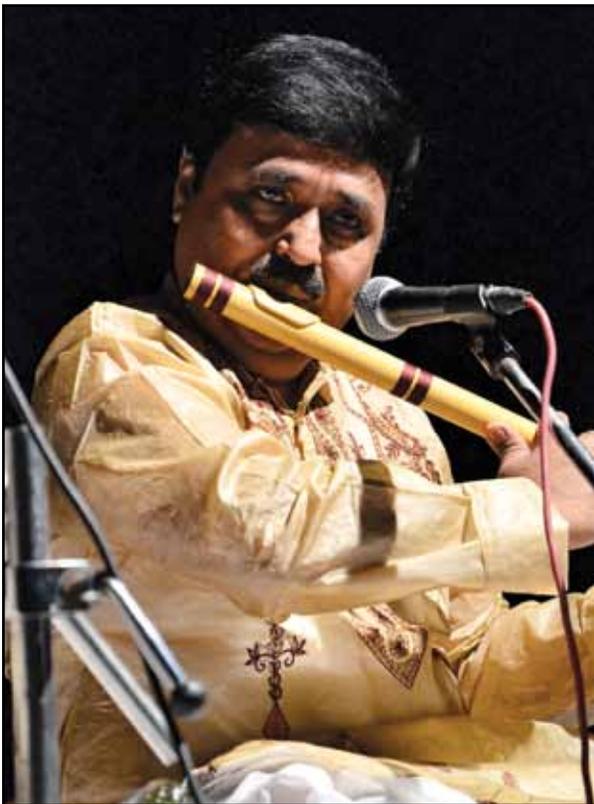


Flute recital by Shri Sunil Kant Gupta from Mumbai at ICCR, Azad Bhavan, 12 September, 2014



Floral felicitation by Shri Satish C. Mehta, Director General, ICCR to the artists

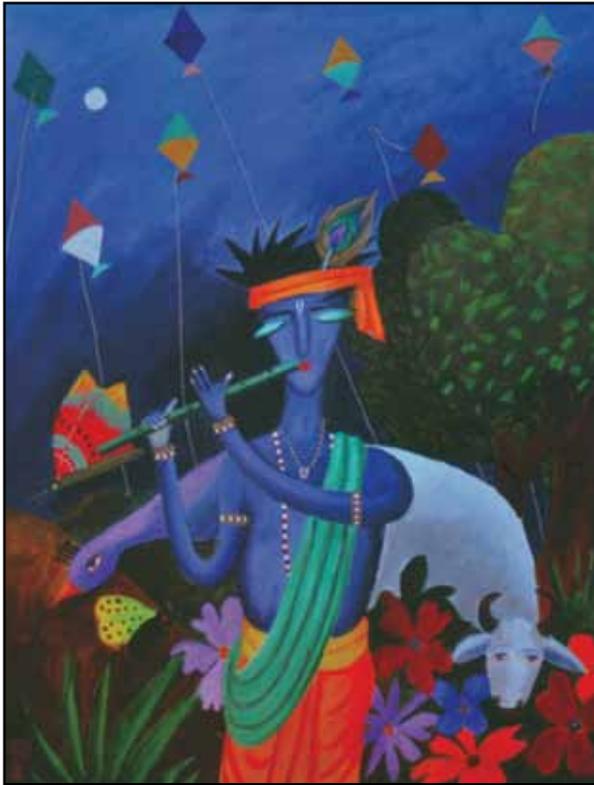
crafted as was the overall musical façade of raga and tala. The artist thereafter continued his recital with



Flute recital by Shri Sunil Kant Gupta from Mumbai at ICCR, Azad Bhavan, 12 September, 2014

short compositions in rupak tala of seven beats and a more regular choice of teentala compositions, to round off his concert. The total effect of the evening was a takeaway that was both short, and lingering, with a continuous smooth and memorable after taste.

Moving on to the section dealing with art on the walls, one must admit that the works exemplified a fluidity that could be as easily linked with our daily lives as they could, with the more mystical thoughts arising within our individual beings. Thus every exhibition during this quarter projected the strengths of individual art makers standing up for principles of art as envisaged and portrayed by the individual within each of the artists. The works were therefore stamped with the spirit of uniqueness, a freshness of insight into things around us and which escape the vision of an ordinary being but which manage to ignite sparks of genius within the artistic minds of the exhibitors. Some of them have come to this platform after making waves elsewhere while others have arrived at this juncture in the early years of their artistic career and together, their contribution to the art on the Azad Bhavan walls have spelt novelty, enthusiasm and interest for every visitor to the gallery.



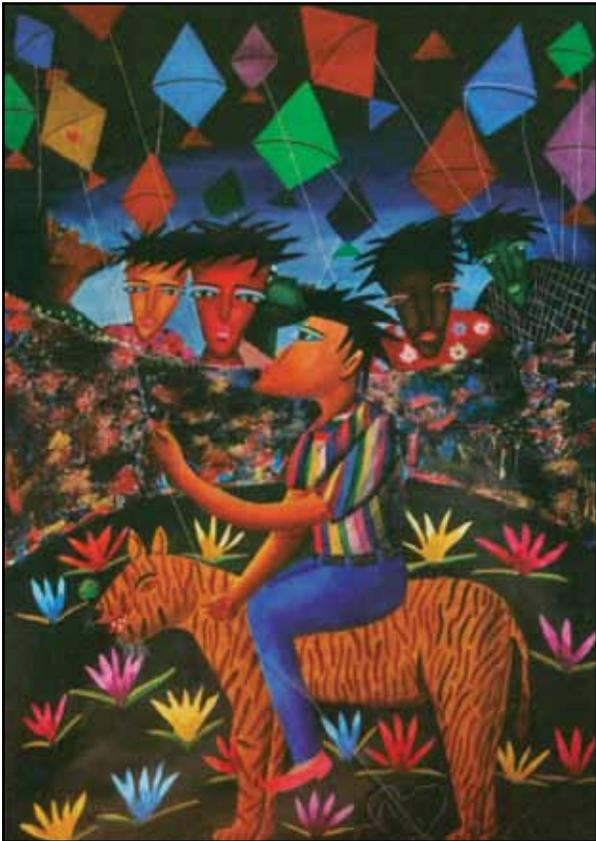
Take for instance the works of artist **Birendra Kumar Singh** who exhibited at the gallery under the Horizon series of the ICCR. His works are centred around the theme of kites, those colourful, flimsy rectangular paper constructs that flutter skywards, their transparency reflecting the sunlight in their gauzy brilliance. Yet that is just the outward appearance, for each flutter of the kite sets emotions on high and the very exercise of flying these paper creations is intermingled with deep-set emotions. In fact, it is nothing short of a mini battle that wages in the skies when two kites battle it out, waiting for the opportune moment when they can cut off the strings that tether the kites to their owners. Fortunes are made or spoilt in these tension-riddled dramas in the skies as one party emerges the victor and the other, becomes even more determined to square their losses at the next opportunity. No wonder the high tension drama as depicted in the works of Birendra Kumar does not speak of pleasantries, of sportsmanship and skill in plying the kite, but treats the kite as the centerpiece to reflect on the complexities raging in the innermost

being of the flyer. For him the kite is not a flimsy scrap tied to a fragile string and the game a mere challenge. It is likened to the power of Shakti, who comes on the battle scene astride a lion, according to mythology. The kite flyer too, enters the arena on a tiger, and the kites that he encounters are depicted against an overcast sky, foreboding troublesome times ahead. In short, the kite flying scene is wrought with tension, and the base emotions with very little glimmer of hope, is positioned on the canvas as a bluish aperture of light, wherein human forms seem to peep out, as if emerging from a tunnel into the light.

Of the forms that Birendra Singh repeatedly chooses, and on which there is a distinct angularity is that of deliberately distorted human forms into grotesque creatures, with hair standing stiffly erect, the faces cast in sharp triangular forms and drapery and garments that continue the theme of deliberate



Patang, acrylic on canvas



Patang, acrylic on canvas

distortion. Even when the theme is mythological, as in the series of Radha-Krishna forms, the kite is a constant presence. The delicacy of the colouration and the commanding light positioning in these works adds a subtle delicacy into his overall format so that instead of the harsh message of his earlier images, there is softness, a romantic overlay, providing calm and surreal richness knotting the work. On the other hand the more conventional human forms with their protruding jaw line and elongated treatment of the eyes, are suggestive of the urbane nature of human existence today, where the kite is the symbol of challenge facing him and which he finds impossible to shake off or conquer, through his limited physical means. While the Radha-Krishna themes give off a feeling of familiarity, as everyone is aware of the legend behind the paintings, the more contemporary settings around the kite images, appear enigmatic

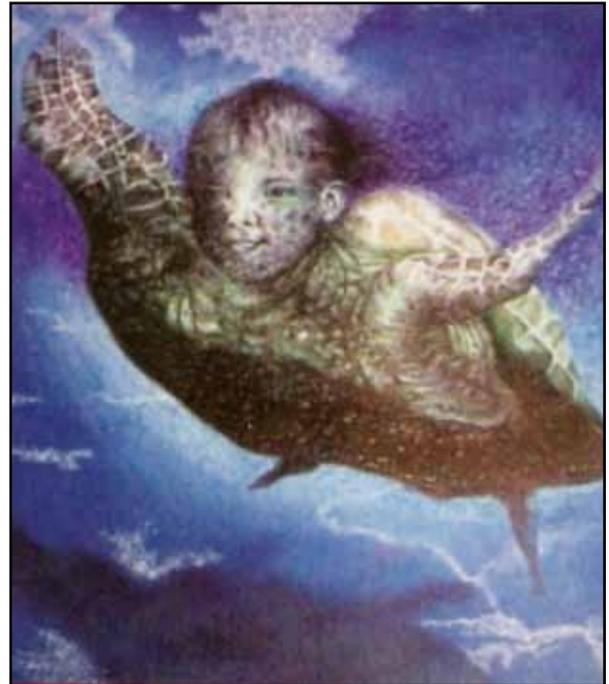


Radha Krishan, acrylic on canvas

and open to interpretation by the viewer giving him leeway to assess according to his own instincts.

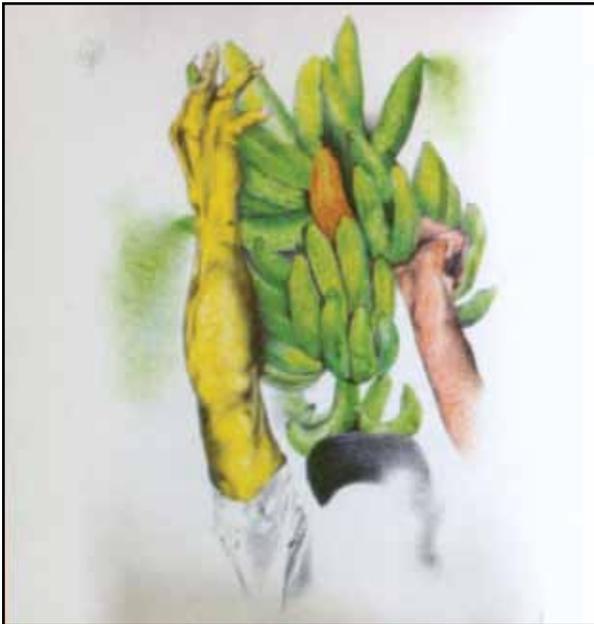
Above all, a refreshing aspect to the works is provided by the artist's bold approach to art. Instead of giving viewers a simple realistic outlay conveying the symbolic message of kite flying as envisaged by the artist, Birendra Singh, incites his audience to interpret his works on their own terms. This gives the works an intriguing aside making viewing not just an appreciative exercise for the visitors but one that makes them exert their little grey cells to make meaning out of his colours, his brush strikes, his sense of balance and his uncanny ability to turn a simple kite into a conveyance tool to bear his deep rooted philosophy. The 'patang' therefore will never remain a flimsy piece of paper to amuse the boyishness within all of us after seeing the works of this artist.

For artist **Upasna Bajpai Tripathi**, art is not a play of colours on the canvas. It is a conduit for bringing to the fore human connectivity as seen through a plethora of situations, gestures, movements and more. The depth of her imagery therefore does not become clear at first glance. The works need to be observed, looked at more than once, and not in a quick or passing glance. It is when viewers pause, go closer to the artwork and concentrate on the depiction of the forms with total seriousness, can they realise the intensity of messaging that she has infused into her creations. This is not a frivolous titillation with the paint box as a tool for pleasantries. It is a narrative where the importance of remaining connected is given full exposure through the silent but telling medium of paint and canvas. That is why Upasna does not confuse her viewers by captioning her works with different titles. Choosing to call all her works as 'Life Relation' which incidentally is also



Life Relation-24, acrylic on canvas: 18x18 inches

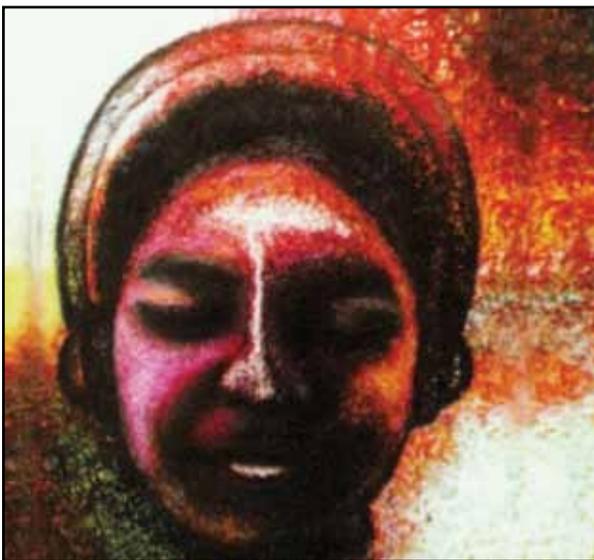




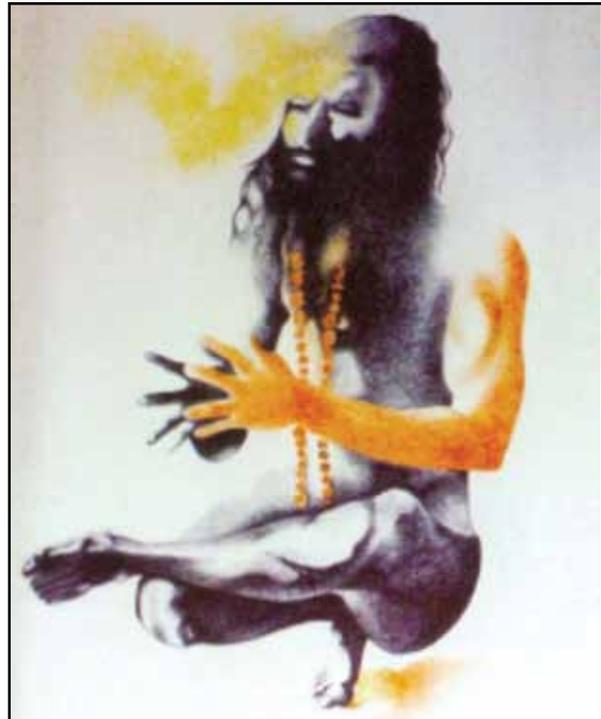
Nature-1, pen & ink on paper: 30x40 inches

her choice of nomenclature for her entire show, she has concentrated the attention of her viewers not simply on the physical canvas in front but also into the mind's eye employing the figures, their postures and their motions to hark back to a deep-rooted familiarity associated with some form of relationship.

Interestingly enough, the relationship that the artist depicts is not always realistic. Her forms have a fairy



Meditation, pen & ink on paper: 11x15 inches



Life-70, pen & ink on paper: 30x40 inches

tale grace about them too. There are telling images of human bodies with the head of an adult ram peering through the canvas in realistic splendour lending a tinge of fantasy to the central theme, for verily relationships can never be a concrete measurable feeling and thus qualifies for a depiction that intertwines an animal-human bonding into a single take with a ram head and a human bodily form. Similarly, the birdlike ecstasy of a flying object with a baby face, evokes similar emotions in the minds of the viewer. Elsewhere the ostrich-like creature elongates into a woman's face depicted with a delicate brush and a paucity of colours, defining the thought process with subtlety. In yet other depictions, neither the animal nor the human figures are those that one could categorise easily, but their overall effect is no less vivid. In fact, the stark backdrop combined with the minimum of colouration and the suggestiveness of the lines remind one of the delicacy of a Chinese wash painting wrought with pen and ink on paper.

To further the idea that relationships are not to be confined into an equal balance of two situations

meeting together, the artist has drawn upon a comparison between man and his relationship with nature. Instead of giving nature a definitive shape on the canvas, the artist has emphasized the presence of it by a conspicuous absence of any format. Instead one comes across a bunch of bananas hoisted up shoulder high and being carried by a faceless image and a pair of well formed hands, suggesting the dependency of man on nature in this unique life relationship. The realistic ripeness of the fruit and the confident stance of its carrier, have a youthful vigour surmounting the entire context urging one to realise how beneficial to man is his closeness, and his intertwining with nature. In contrast, the 'Life in metro' work brings forth the grim forcefulness of modern existence in a crowded metropolis peopled by faceless humans who age before their time, robbed off their youthfulness, their natural joys and their hopes and pleasures that are burred into a clouded and coloured splurge on the space, undefinable and gripping. The serenity and peace that descends when one is drawn towards spirituality and meditation come forth in a realistic image of a mendicant as also in a pair of hands depicting the fingertips held together in a ritualistic stance. Of course the crux of this exhibition has been condensed in a work depicting a pair of hands where the fingers are held together in a loose sort of



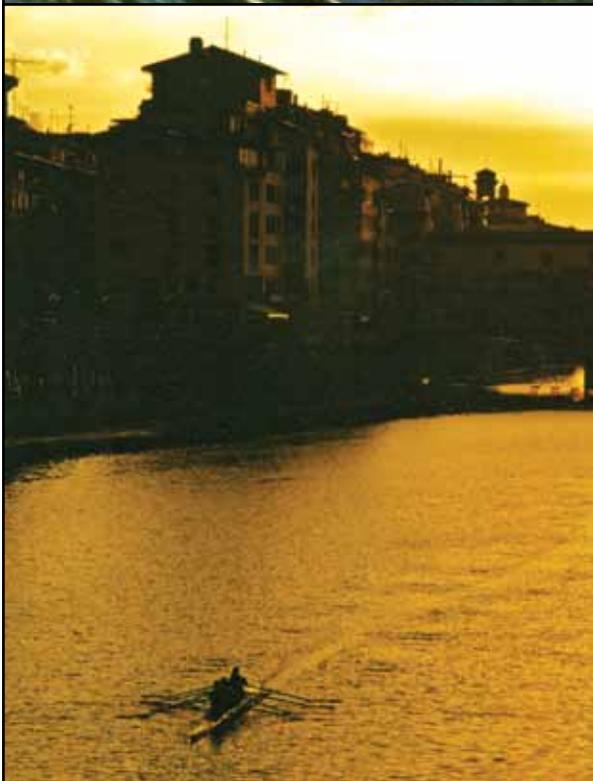
Life Relation-25, acrylic on canvas: 18x18 inches



Life Relation-29, acrylic on canvas: 18x18 inches

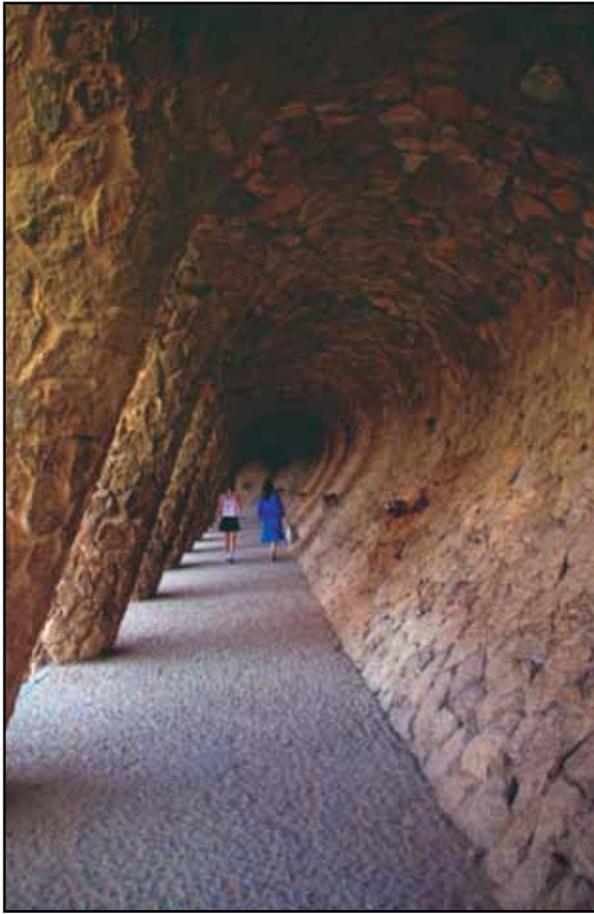
manner, the thumb nails attached to each other as if stitched together. It is only when our own being is conjoined in a perfect relationship of the sensibility and the mind, the physical and mental aspects, can one experience the art of living .

This profound message contained in the art of Upasna has been shown through various media and a variety of forms, ranging from the realistic to the abstract. Colours too, have played a crucial role in the messaging for when the chosen image goes beyond what meets the human eye, the artist has used a mixture of tints enhancing the techniques the suggestiveness of her imagery. When the message is forthright, the graphic element is clearly visible, while the backdrop is left pristine, highlighting the essence of her thought process. When the choice of medium is acrylic over pen and ink, the forms are more relevant to the medium. It is also clear that the artist has a command over human forms for every face has individuality of features and expression, a lifelike realism and a sense of vivaciousness that enhances the ideation behind the image. Even in a combined work using pen and ink alongside acrylic, the unusual merger of mediums reflects the command of the artist over both these mediums. In short, Upasna is an artist who uses her techniques with caution, blending her ideas and her strokes into a holistic combination that is pleasing to the eye and gripping of the senses.



Jal

The photographer-artist duo **Mrida and Bharat Joshi** are active innovators in their chosen spheres of creativity. While Mrida is comfortable with the brush and canvas, Bharat finds the view through the camera lens a source of rich creativity. Together they have exhibited in a joint exhibition aptly titled 'Infinite Life,' for the underlying thought behind their varied expressions is just that. Artist Mrida Joshi's abstract depictions, in colourful swirls, intricate patterns, and mellow depictions of lotus petals, or geometric angularity are the path to contemplate on a realisation of the deific depictions of Brahma or the symbolisation of the idea of the Devi concept. A more meaningful foray, using the concept of the charka and the square surrounding it, is combined with the symbolic Star of David and symbols from other



With Nature, oil on paper

faiths combining all these spiritual ideas to fathom the meaning of that Supreme Reality 'Brahmartha'. And yet there is no departure from a sense of everydayness in the works and that is why the canvas on the walls reaches its message with forthright clarity into the mindset of every one of her viewers. Hers is a concentrated peering into one's inner soul, into a moment of tranquility, using the medium of colour and the regular and recognizable forms that every faith has devised to depict abstract truths.

On the other hand, the work of Bharat, though truthful, is not flatly factual. It resonates with deep seated philosophy, of the vastness of our universe, of the freedom that our minds enjoy and of the spirit that surges above the mundane into higher spheres of understanding, and finds reflection in nature's



Kundlini



Bramharathra

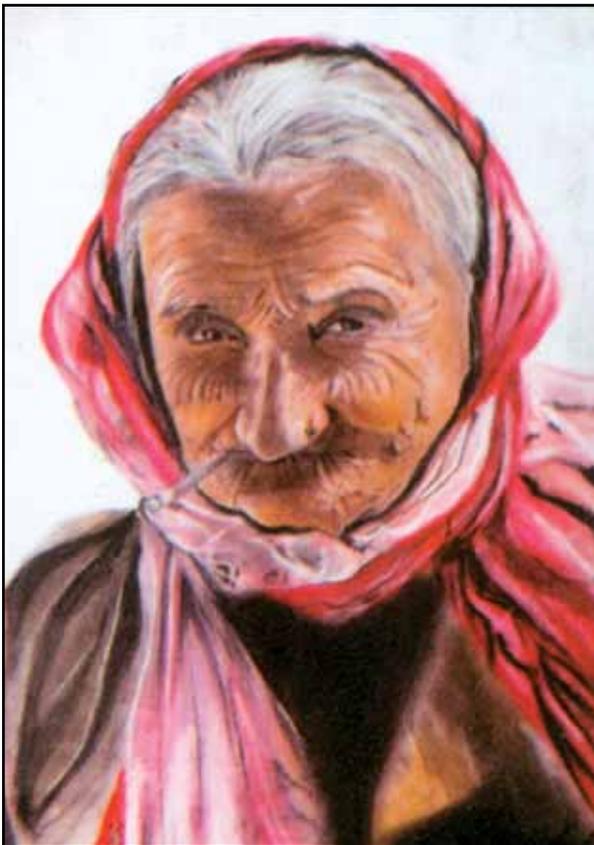
vast and empty spaces. Thus his shots are panoramic spreads with a tiny focus of concentration reminding one of the pupil in the human eye, the crucial element that lightens and brightens our sense perceptions. Printed on archival paper these images are sharply focused with cutting edge precision and yet wear a demeanor of softness and lightness that can only be captured by a discerning photographer. The country boat by the water's edge is the only object with life around, as people go about their tasks around this centerpiece. Elsewhere the rhythm of a trio of rowers crossing a watery expanse is highlighted by a bank of constructions, silhouetted against the evening dusk. The patterning of blocks in the sunlight conveys a similar though visually dissimilar image, exciting the senses by the play of contrasts. Indeed it is the hidden exquisiteness in the ordinary scenes of everyday that have added magic to the images and make each take of his camera become a permanent 'speaking tool' in a silent soliloquy with every viewer in the gallery..



Bent but not broken



Daffodil



Attitude

Capturing the everyday and the commonplace is also the passion of artist **Priyanka Banerjee**, although her medium and choice of subjects do not carry a visibly common link with the earlier artist mentioned. For her the fascination lies in glorifying the everydayness of life through the images of people one comes



The thatched hut

across. Her portrait of an old woman in the work titled 'Attitude', is a striking example of her expertise. The wrinkled details, the compressed lips due to her toothless condition and her piercing looks reveal her attitude towards the world more sharply than one could, through a million words. Similarly the troubled creases lining the facial features of the subject in the work titled 'Bent, but not Broken' convey an entire narrative tale of fighting one's adverse circumstances and coming out a winner, although the experience has left the individual with a creased forehead and a troubled pair of eyes. These atypical faces, are a specialty in which the artist seems to excel, and which she has made her liet motif.



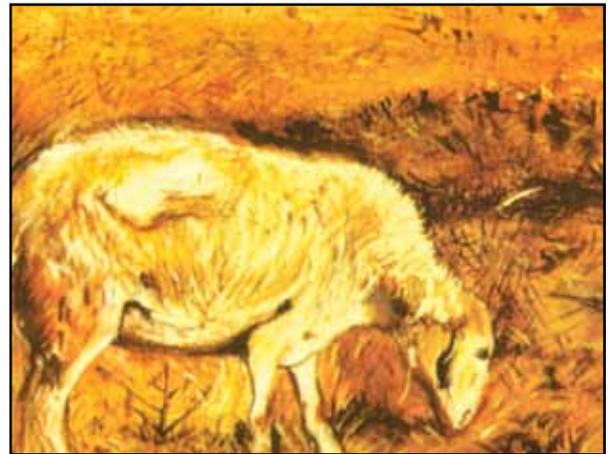
James Bond of Nainital

Even when she shifts to landscape work, the overall contemplative attitude, the vision to look beyond the obvious, the ability to pry out a hidden aspect through her art, predominates. Thus her compositional settings are not those of pretty pictures but of derelict ruins that have seen better days and where the relics, like peeling plaster, faded drapery, an unlit lantern on a window ledge, are milestones recording the passage of time and the ravages of destruction writ large

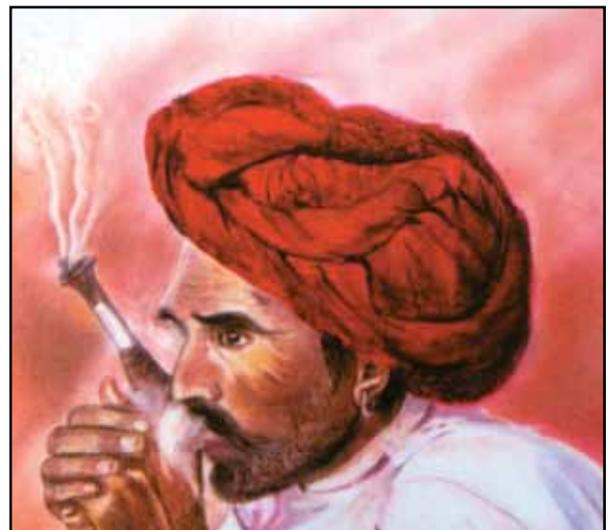


An old lady of Tibet

across such reminders of the bygone years. Yet the artist manages to infuse as much meticulousness into these architectural creations as she does with her facial forms for the common thread linking her art is her ability to concentrate on the details. In fact, there is a hint of the painstaking exactitude of a miniature underlying her works, for every wisp of straggling hair on an urchin's head, every small crack in a wall, the intricate floral painting adorning a palace ceiling is reproduced with the same attention to minutia. Her art therefore carries in its content the ability to tug our memories and reiterate the familiar, to examine the beauty of small things and to see the world around us with greater perceptiveness.

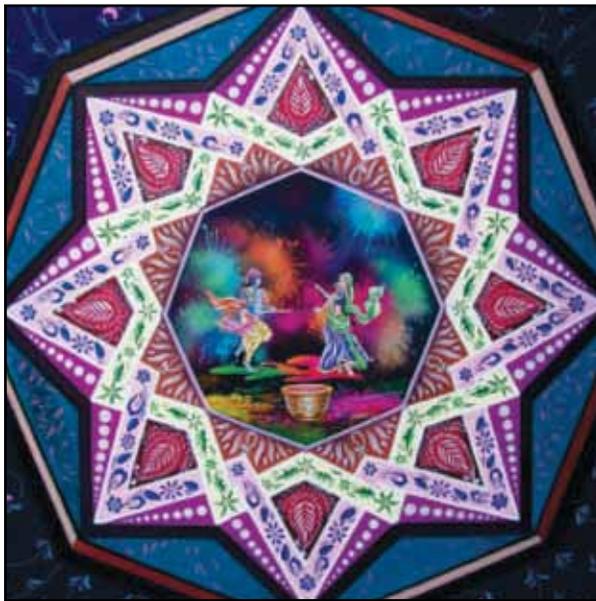


The lonely lamb



Hookah

The exhibition of the folk art of Braja, titled 'Sanjhi' was both a novelty due to the unusual nature of the works and an acknowledgement of our traditional skills at art making. Artist **Sumit Goswami** who is the inheritor of this tradition states that the Sanjhi school that he belongs to, goes back sixteen generations, to the 16th century, in his family. According to him, the tradition traces its beginnings to the worship of Shri



Sanjhi - 1

Radha Ramana whose worship was entrusted to their ancestor, one of the associates of the Vaishnava saint Shri Chaitanya. Thus the making of Sanjhi paintings, which according to the artist is an indigenous form, was first adopted by the Vaisnava temples at Vrindavan and has continued with little or no changes so that its purity remains unsullied and fresh, across the centuries.

Of course, the predominant features of these works is their brilliant colour sense, where pink and magenta, purple and orange, blue and ochre or moss green and sky blue, are paired into a basic hexagonal geometry. With the outer boundaries in place, the spaces are made more fitted with borders interwoven around the hexagon leaving a core space in the centre wherein the artist uses his expertise to illustrate an episode from the life of the Lord. His consort Radhika,



Sanjhi - 2



Sanjhi - 3

is always at his side, giving the viewer a sense of solace for one is bound to correlate the presence of Radha as the symbolism of the human soul and the earthy conviviality is at once transformed into an ethereal depiction of the devotee in the presence of the Lord. As the images are proportionately reduced to be contained within the central octagonal area in the centre, the viewer is drawn towards the art



Sanjhi - 4

and to observe the care taken to depict the facial features to evoke a rare feeling of harmony and calm that is hankered after, in our hurried, worldly lifestyle of today. Thus the paintings exude an aura, which instinctively bonded with every viewer at the exhibition.

Though at first glance one is likely to dismiss this art as a clever imitation of the courtly masterpieces



Sanjhi - 5

of the Mughal and Rajput Schools, a closer look will reveal the differences in clearer terms. The flora and fauna in these works uses indigenous flowers and leaf patterns completing bypassing the more familiar iris and pomegranate blossom of the miniature schools. The bull, the snake and the lotus are depicted symbolically, as ornamentation of borders or spaces around the central portraiture. There are no indoor scenes in the central portraiture, for the divine pair is shown in gardens or in the groves, or beside a lake, instead of a balcony or a darbar hall, holding court. Thus there are no architectural angles, such as courtyards and chetris, jaali covered partitions etc, surrounding the central figures. They are usually surrounded by a bower of flowering blossoms, with peacocks flocking around them, in the foreground. The drapery too, needs mentioning, for Krishna in these works never abandons the 'pitambar' lower garment and does not don the courtly pyjama and upper garment of the courtly style. Also, the works are depicted in a square framework, instead of the rectangular format of the miniature schools.

Viewers are also likely to be mesmerized by the intrinsic link of this art to its courtly counterpart, from the numerous Ragamala series as both the Sanjhi, and the raga depictions are aimed to draw the mind into inner contemplation for deciphering a deeper meaning from within one's personal experiences. One can thus pronounce judgement on its authenticity in terms of how deep it has touched the inner core of one's being. In this aspect though, the Sanjhi style of Braja painting, I am sure, will not be found wanting.



Sanjhi - 6

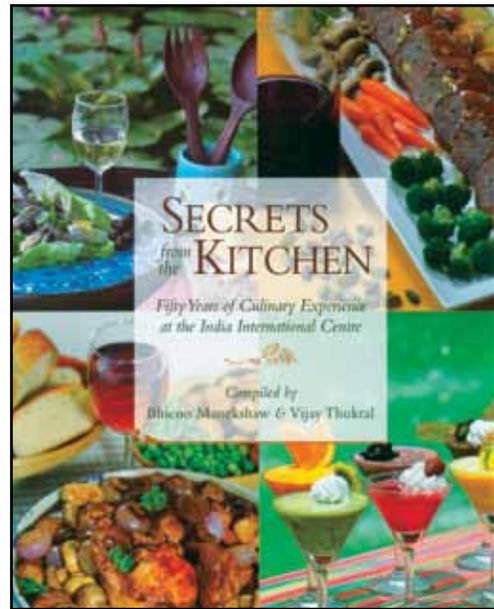
Secrets from the Kitchen

Compiled by: Bhicoo Manekshaw & Vijay Thukral

Publishers: Niyogi Books

Price: 995

Year of publication: 2013



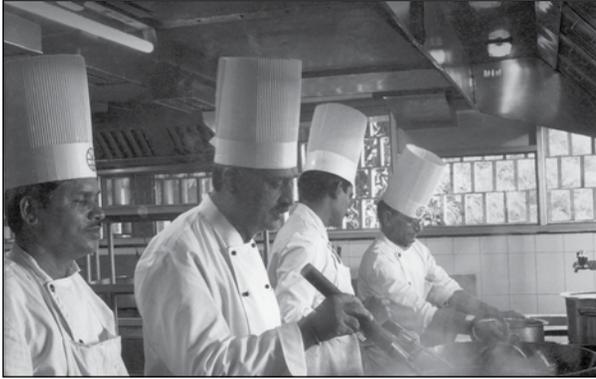
Review by Subhra Mazumdar

The India International Centre in its half century and more, of existence, has been at the hub for promoting cultural exchanges, eclectic views of experts and commoners, and global visions. In all this intellectual humdrum, few have noted that the vital conduit for these goings-on has been through a rich culinary experience serviced from the kitchens of the Indian International Centre and its two kingpin operators Chef Vijay Thukral and Catering Consultant Bhicoo Manekshaw. Both these people have been serving the hospitality arm of the IIC with their invaluable inputs over hot stoves and steaming pans but now there is a difference. Publishers Niyogi Books have taken the initiative of getting these experts to compile their recipes, as well as the various anecdotes linked with their half-century culinary journey at the IIC into a publication, aptly titled *Secrets from the Kitchen*. And the reader will be missing the point if he/she does not read the fine print alongside: *Fifty Years of Culinary Experience at the India International Centre*.

Indeed, the entire dining experience at the IIC, has been more than just a matter of recipes and plating

and serving, but also a journey through its existence. It is clear from the contents that every addition to its menu is trimmed with anecdotal memoirs, of how it came to be introduced on the Centre's menu, and at what special dinner it was served to the VIP to enhance the dining experience over all. Thus the volume comes peppered with delightful anecdotes and garnished with flourish in the polished accents of smart editing, elegant prose springing right out of the Memsahib's drawing room social get-together, with each incident expressed in elegant flourish. While other cookery tomes concentrate on the recipe segment and their plating, this work scores brownie points by giving to its readers interesting snippets about how dishes came to be christened at the Centre. Thus the much talked about Indira Gataeu for instance, owes its nomenclature to a cold December night when the late Prime Minister was hosting a dinner at the Centre for a few select guests.

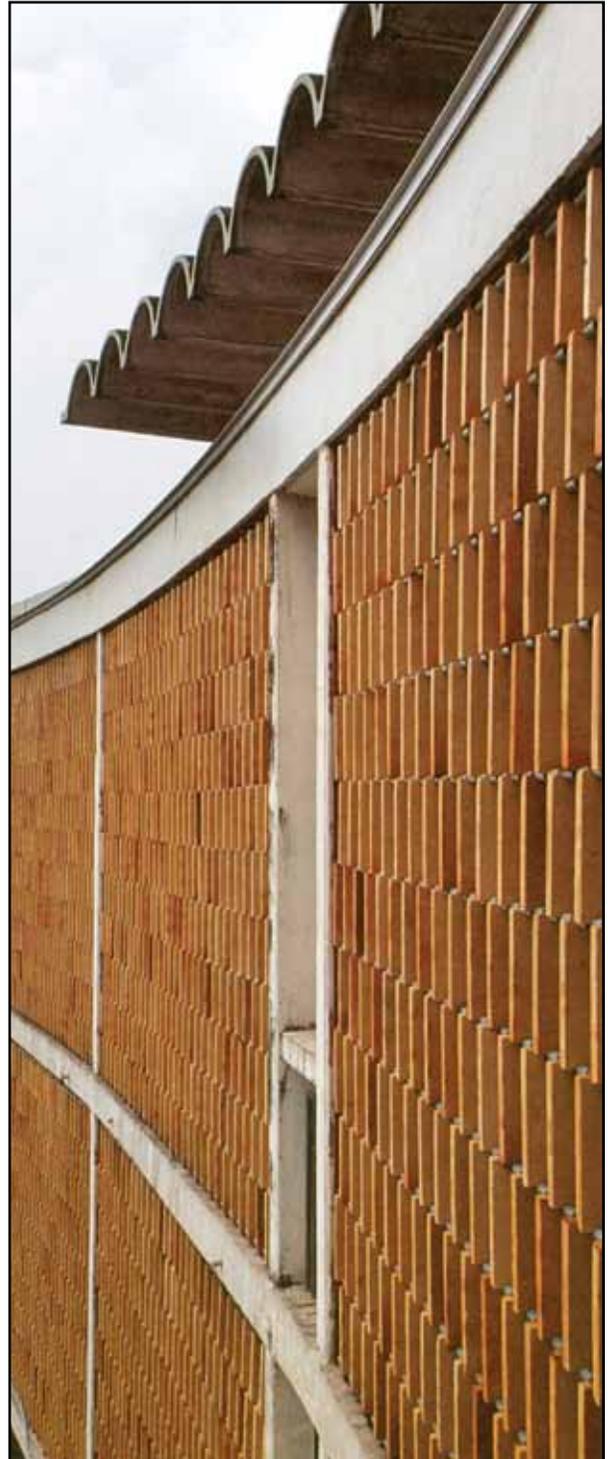
'A cold dessert was out of the question and Mrs Gandhi did not like hot puddings. What could it be? Of course! Meringue!. So I created a vacharin.



While the dessert was being served, the head butler asked me its name; The Prime Minister wanted to know! At the spur of the moment I replied, 'Gateau Indira,' writes Bhicoo Manekshaw. And the name has stuck to this day. Likewise there are scores of such insider moments that have surfaced for the readers of the book making the reading experience as delectable as the recipes and methodology it has on offer. Not only does it tempt every prospective cook with an urge to try out things, but also works for the seasoned housewife who is faced with the dilemma of what to serve for that special meal she is hosting. Though the recipe may be had from the net or her well thumbed cookery guide, this particular offer has an edge over the others with its anecdotal inclusion. One can recall a recipe along with the incident linked to it and that makes cooking much more exciting and worthwhile. It even offers readymade anecdotes to share with guests at one's dinner table when the dish comes on view.

Coming to its hard core recipe section, what is noteworthy is the highly doable nature of the recipes on offer. The step-by-step explanation, makes it seem as if the chef and the consultant are standing at one's shoulder directing every stage of the cooking and providing that reassuring extra, that nothing can go wrong and that the final product will wow one and all. There is honesty, forthrightness and no extraneous frills hiding the essence of a particular preparation. There are no hints on how to 'dress' the dish or on how to enhance the dish with exotic ingredients or long preparatory rigmarole to turn away prospective

enthusiasts from flexing their culinary muscles. The honesty of approach is a distinctive USP that makes the volume a must-have for even those who keep well off the kitchen premises.



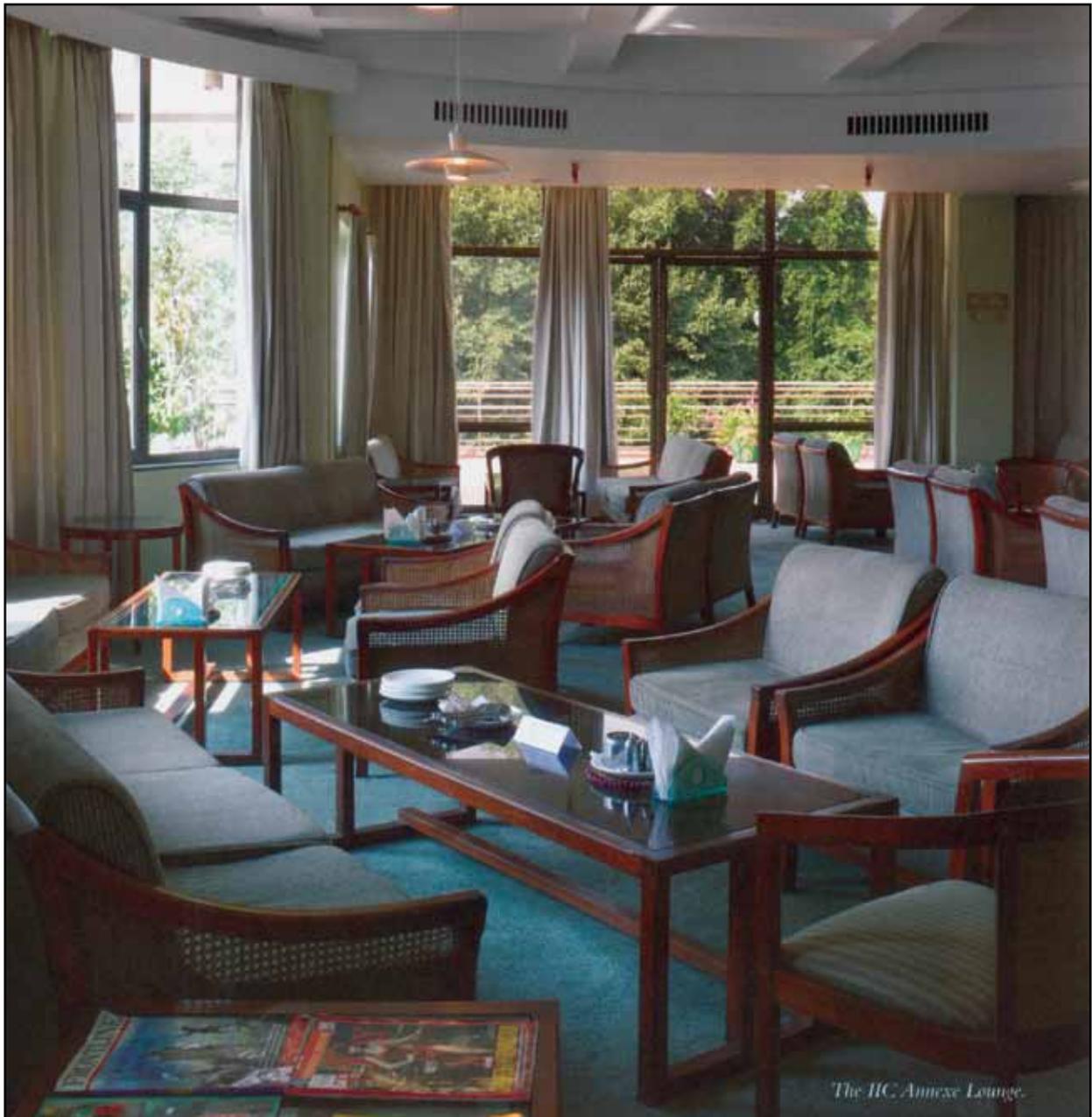
The book also has also adopted a sympathetic approach towards the vegetarian diner as even the diehard non-vegetarian constant Dhan sak has been given a twist and was served to none other than the late CD Deshmukh the founder Director of the IIC. His compliment the following morning to Bhicoo, the creator of it was that the taste still lingered in his mouth. Thus making every meal stand out with a personal touch, became that secret ingredient that marks a signature offering from the IIC a memory worth cherishing for its partakers. For Chacko therefore, a cook at the IIC, his magic moment was when he had prepared that specially crisp utthapam for the then Chief Election Commissioner, who liked it so much that he conceded that though his wife was a good cook, he Chacko, had surpassed her by his utthapam offering. At other times, a dish became a memory with a gentleman's intervention, as when Bhicoo had spelt melon with a double 'l' and John Lall, the then Director IIC had said, 'Mrs Manekshaw let's check it in the dictionary' according to Bhicoo. 'He was too much of a gentleman to tell me that I had made a spelling mistake..' she adds.

Besides the inclusion of a series of associations and anecdotes from the kitchen of the IIC, the volume has the makings of a fine keepsake with its choice of photographic inclusions. Besides those of the prepared dishes that are de rigueur in a cookery manual, there are a host of photographs introducing every segment of the book from the annals of the IIC. Thus the early photographs of IIC in the making, when Crown Prince Akhihito and Princess Michiko of Japan had inaugurated the IIC, in 1960, is juxtaposed alongside the preface of the volume, giving it prime relevance. Then as the Centre added more wings and cultural festivals to its list of activities, the landmarks along its growth process have been depicted through telling photographs that appear nostalgic and jolt memories as one turns the pages, much like the taste of the IIC dining experience, which refuses to go away as one sets down one's serviette and scrapes one's chair to make an exit.

Being a book of culinary experiences, it was necessary that readers became acquainted with the makers of its kitchen marvels. Instead of simply serving up a chronological update on the chefs, the writers have recalled the special anecdotes that make readers' associations with them delectable keepsakes. There was a time when Chef Thukral contemplated moving on but then, everyone decided to make him feel special. Mrs Gonsalves had increased his salary and Mr Madhavan gave Chef an Award during one of the many festivals the Centre holds. Soli Sorabjee summoned the chef to the dining room and announced that he would propose a President's Award for him and another director let him into IIC's well kept secret: that people became members of the IIC simply because of the food there! No wonder Chef Rati Ram who has settled in Shimla after retiring when invited to the IIC festival, disclosed that for him coming to the Centre could be likened to a bride returning to her parental home!

Last but not least, the true test of a cookery book is none of the above. It is the recipes and process that are the nuts and bolts of its structure and in that context, the volume is not wanting. Besides providing recipes that an average housewife could try out with success, the dishes are arranged as meal options rather than a series dealing with just chicken or dal or any other item. This is a dual advantage for the meal planner can coordinate an entire menu with the right accessories, for her next party and save herself of the hassle of turning pages of recipe books simply to plan out a single evening's do. Also, the ingredients mentioned are available at the neighbourhood market which adds to the comfort level of an amateur in the kitchen. Fortunately the recipes are not classified into easy or difficult and every one of them is a well tried item tempting people to try their hand at it knowing that it works.

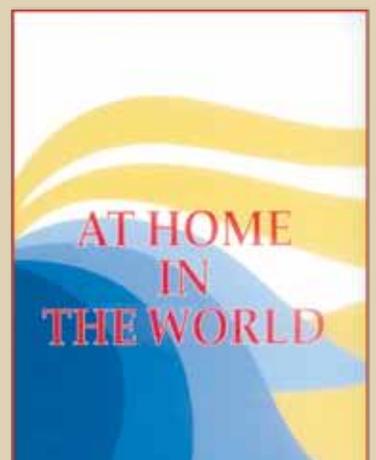
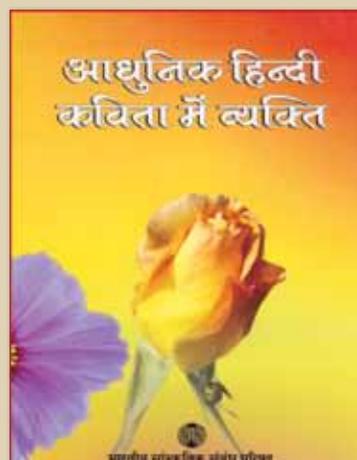
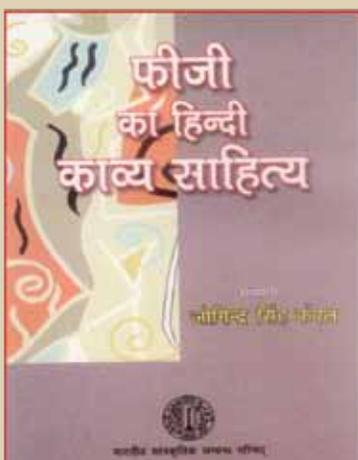
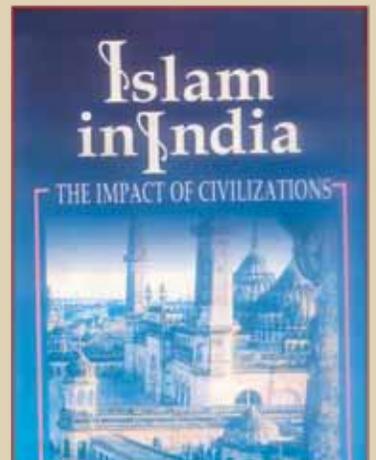
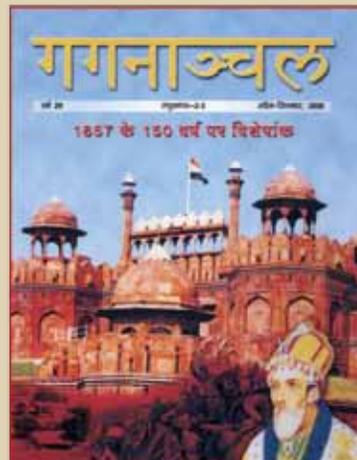
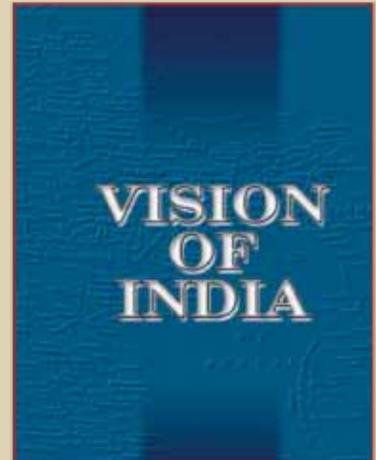
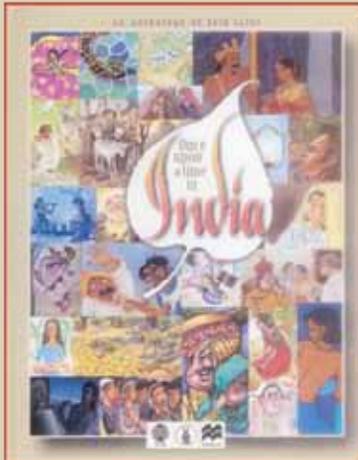
To personalize the volume still further, the contents have a designated section on the IIC Experience, a seven-day bonanza of food and culture with a national and international flavour. The recipes range



from selections from several states of the country to a Middle Eastern fare and also from as far as Latin America. Nearer home and right into the satvik aahar culture of the country is the Navadanya offer, where the amazing diversity of Nature's food basket is prepared, using ingredients such as barnyard millet for a custard and amaranth along with paneer. This potpourri of eating options proves that the IIC Experience is an inclusive effort with foods from our

grassroots level making it to the IIC table with eager partakers convinced that the IIC and its food choices can never go wrong.

The volume, in its hard bound form is a keepsake that is worth possessing. Its easy writing style and honest approach to the art of making food has given the volume an air of authenticity few volumes can achieve.



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