

# COLOURS OF MY SOUL



Rekha Mody





सं २४



## विक्रमशिला हिन्दी विद्यापीठ

(भारतीय अधिकाषण के अन्तर्गत विद्यम सं. ११०२१-८३)  
आजमेनगर, इंदौर, जिला मालवापुर (मिडर)

### विद्यासागर

प्रमाणित किया जाता है कि  
**श्रीमती रेखा मोदी**  
को उनकी सुदीर्घ हिन्दी सेवा, सारस्वत साधना, कला के क्षेत्र में महत्वपूर्ण उपलब्धियों, शैक्षिक प्रयत्नों, महनीय शोधकार्य तथा राष्ट्रीय/अन्तर्राष्ट्रीय प्रतिष्ठा के आधार पर इस विद्यापीठ की अकादमिक परिषद की अनुशंसा पर आज **विद्यासागर** उपाधि प्रदान की जाती है।

दिनांक: १२ अक्टूबर १९९०

कुलपति: *[Signature]*  
डॉ. देवदत्त शर्मा

कुलपति: *[Signature]*  
डॉ. तेजनाथ कुशवाहा

कुलपति: *[Signature]*  
डॉ. सुभाषचंद्र 'काय' शुक्ला

संख्या २४

## मैरठ विश्वविद्यालय



### कला स्नातक

(विश्व कला)

प्रमाणित किया जाता है कि **श्रीमती रेखा मोदी** (अनुक्रमणिका सं. ११०२१-८३) ने इस विश्वविद्यालय के सन् १९८२ की परीक्षा में कला स्नातक (रेखा साहित्य) को उपाधि 'प्रथम' सेनी में प्राप्त की।

परीक्षा के मुख्य विषय: अंग्रेजी साहित्य (English Literature),  
दस्तावेज (History) एवं गणितशास्त्र (Hindi Grammar)

सामान्य विषय: (क) संस्कृत (Sanskrit) (ख) अंग्रेजी साहित्य (English Literature)  
(ग) विज्ञान (Science) (घ) भारतीय संविधान (Indian Constitution)

अध्यक्ष: *[Signature]*  
कुलपति: *[Signature]*

दिनांक: १२ अक्टूबर १९९०

## Pillar of strength

The urge for nation-building is the driving force behind the work of Rekha Modi, social, cultural and educational activist and founder of the Divya Chaya Trust and Stree Shakti. She feels the greatest crisis that contemporary India is facing is the total lack of leadership. "People like us, who want to see the country in its proper place as a superpower, realise that it is a long struggle. The first step is the empowerment of all the people, especially women, who are still second-grade citizens, and children, who need proper help," says Modi.

Modi founded the Divya Chaya Trust in 1985. It was the first step towards creating a support group for under-privileged women and orphaned children by undertaking development activity at the grassroot level. Today, the trust sponsors around 300 children who receive total care in various homes in West Bengal and outside.

"I motivated people by organising interactive seminars, holding events, publishing articles, and

are also plans to introduce a computer centre and a course in English at Rajahat.

Though these schemes are meant for the poor, preference will be given to the girl child. Modi has seen the condition of women in the country and has realised their potential to develop much faster. She feels that helping a girl means helping her entire family. She believes that education in any form always percolate down from the mother to the child. "To connect the villages to the cities is one of our main objectives," she explains.

Modi was born and brought up at Modinagar in Uttar Pradesh. In her childhood, she was inspired by her mother Dayawati Modi, a well-known social worker of north India.

She graduated from Meerut University and came to Kolkata after her marriage. Since childhood, she had seen her mother helping the poor and she decided to start her work from Kolkata.

Along with the Divya Chaya Trust, Modi founded Guruman Pvt Ltd in 1985 to translate quality Indian literature into English and promote them internationally.

Modi relates promotion of art and culture with the improvement of the general masses. She believes that people express their value system and their concern for fellow beings through art and culture.

Perpetuated by this belief, she founded the Habiar Foundation in 1987 to promote contemporary Indian art and traditional craft. She also founded the Genesis Art Gallery on Middleton Street to support upcoming artists.

Stree Shakti, set up by the Habiar Foundation, is a dynamic forum aiming at "networking for action". It plans to bring about social change by releasing the shakti (strength) in stree (women).

The foundation instituted the 'Dayawati Modi Stree Shakti Samman' in 1998 for "women who dared to dream and had the ability to translate the dream into a reality."

Here, local women and girls



**Rekha Modi**  
Photo: Sankar Das

Ranking requests ne time. hours a e, Modi it to be

**Sharda**

DAYAWATI MODI

1915-1994

*Say not in grief that she is no  
more But say in thankfulness  
that she was.*

*Rabindranath Tagore*



## MY MOTHER

Dayawati Modi is a well-known name in India. There are two prominent awards in her memory: Dayawati Modi Stree Shakti Samman and Dayawati Modi Award for Art, Culture and Education. Several educational institutes named after her, have been found in three different towns established by my illustrious father, Rai Bahadur GM Modi - Modi Nagar, Modi Puram, and Modi Citi, located in Uttar Pradesh, one of the largest states in central India . I consider myself fortunate to be their daughter.

Maa was born on 17 November 1915 in a humble family, at small town Kaashgunj, in Etah district, a prominent UP town near Aligarh. Famous for Aligarh Muslim University, it was recently then made infamous for communal violence. Having lost her mother at the young age of four, she often sought refuge in the world of religious books, at the generous library kept by her uncle, although her younger sister, Dharamwati did not share her passion. Maa felt inspired by the mythological stories of Sita, Draupadi, Durga Devi, Radha and many a powerful Indian Goddesses. Maa felt that she had to rely on her spirituality to empower herself; Hence, she started observing religious rituals strictly. She woke up early before sunrise and took her daily bath at four am in the Ganges river. She was quite agile and never hesitated from lending a helping hand to her short tempered aunt in performing household chores. Her generous heart compelled her to often share her food with wandering Sadhus (holy men). One day, a Sadhu was so pleased with her, that he blessed her. He predicted that her luck would turn between ages eighteen and eighty. As they believe in India :

भाग्य तो है ही,

पर सौभाग्य या दुर्भाग्य हमारे कर्म ही निर्धारित करते है।

Arranging a marriage for a motherless girl, especially in the absence of a proper dowry, is not an easily accomplished task in India. On turning seventeen, maa was married on 19 June 1932 to the thirty-year-old Gujar Mal Modi, eldest son of Rai Bahadur Multani, who was a prominent Bania businessman, running a flourishing business of supplies to the Patiala Royal court.



Maa was now a member of a joint family in Patiala with over fifty members. She found her life take a widely different course, as most of the female members were not educated. With concerns limited to household issues, they did not share Maa's perspective of life, which for them was restricted to home, waiting for their men in the evening. They would indulge in systematic quarrels during the days. Organizing themselves into two groups, they would settle on a topic - menial issues, such as overconsumption of milk or curd (in fact, the more menial the topic, the better) - to quarrel over. When Maa was feeling pressured to join their fights, her reluctance convinced them that while she will not join either group, she will serve water to appease their screaming-and-shouting parched throats; Thus, she became the water bearer for both the rival groups.

Maa found her life in Patiala incredibly stifling. Being an avid Hindi newspaper reader she was aware that women had not only joined Mahatma Gandhi in his freedom struggle, but were also active players in the independent movement, responding to his call of Swadeshi by burning imported

clothes. She often recalled her maiden response to Gandhi's call of shunning foreign clothes in favour of Khaadi with pride. She never tired of talking about her participation in a public protest against Shahid Bhagat Singh's hanging in March 1931. The movement had a lasting impact on the mind of young Maa, who was struggling to find her own space in a joint family.

It pained Pitaji deeply to observe Maa succumb under the pressure of the women at home. He loved his wife deeply and appreciated her many gentle qualities. He realized that it would not be possible for her to survive in this uncivilized atmosphere at home. Pitaji also felt restless on the economic front and wanted to earn more; Work in Patiala had its own limitations. Strong willed as he was, he contemplated going elsewhere to start a new life. Without resources, implementing such an idea proved challenging. When he was 31 and his wife was only 18, he decided to take the plunge of leaving home in order to implement his dreams for a brighter future. Maa encouraged his dreams and told him with all sincerity, 'I am sure you will succeed. Devi Lakshmi will smile on us in no time. We will one day have our own house where peace and prosperity will prevail.'

Little did she know that the future was offering her much more than she could ever imagine. One fine day, Pitaji packed his bags and also asked her to do the same. He travelled to his father in law's place in Kaashgunj and left her there, with a promise to return when his prospects improved. Later, a history was in the making as he returned and took her with him to Begumabad, a small town in UP, twenty five miles away from Delhi. Two of his brothers gradually joined him in business; Finally, five of his sons and nine nephews worked under his dynamic leadership. Begumbad was transformed into an industrial township, Modi Nagar, which boasted of scores of factories, schools, colleges, medical facilities, and residential quarters.

Maa found herself again in a joint family which gradually grew to about a hundred members. The only difference was that now as the head, she could shape the atmosphere. Confronted with two options: buy jewellery, including gold and diamonds, or be an active partner in developing Modi

Nagar, she chose the latter and vigorously set out to establish schools not only in Modi Nagar, but also in nearby villages. The government honoured R.B GM Modi with Padam Bhushan in 1963. In our future four generations, no one has risen to his rank in our family.

Love and compassion are natural attributes of a pure soul; selfless action can -not be pursued without a pure mind Maa sought guidance from her spiritual Guru, Anandamayi Ma, and persuaded her family to establish a grand temple, Lakshmi Narayan Temple, in the heart of Modi Nagar. In 1954, the foundation was laid, which was inaugurated in 1963, by a renowned ascetic saint, Maharaj Krishna Ashram Ji. What brought this about is an interesting episode, demonstrating the gentle wisdom of my mother.

छिति जल पावक गगन समीरा। पंच रचित अति अधम सरीरा

My father wanted his own Guru to inaugurate the temple. He located an ascetic who had to be famously pulled out of snow, while he was submerged in meditation. So, a convoy headed by my father travelled to meet him high up in the mountains at Gangotri. However, Maharaj Ji had simply sent him away, not wanting a disciple who was tangled in household duties. It was my mother's intervention which solved the problem. She initially befriended his Brahmacharini, Bhagwat Swarup, who had been staying with him. She then proceeded to quietly cook a meal for him, which eventually led to a meeting, where she argued that he should consider the future of Bhagwat ji, for whom she promised to make arrangements. This appealed to him, whereby he consented to visit Modi Nagar, and inaugurated the temple in a grand ceremony which lasted a week. Later with his blessings, the family went for many a pilgrimage, seeking blessings from saints.

A firm believer in women's self reliance, widow remarriage and education, Maa set up Samaj Kalyan Parishad to serve the needy. Social work turned into her prime obsession. Eventually, she joined the All India Women Conference in New Delhi and hosted a grand reception for international women delegates in Modi Nagar. I remember it distinctly as I was her speech writer .

*Simplicity is ultimate sophistication.' Leonardo Da Vinci*

Attracted by the sophisticated lifestyle of upper-class women, she became a good player of the elite card game, bridge and enjoyed taking summer breaks in her hill station house in Mussorie and Kashmir. She also enjoyed travelling abroad with London being her favourite city. She raised eleven children: five sons and six daughters, over a period of twenty years. She loved them equally and often took it upon herself to solve their personal and social issues. It is to her credit that her children share a sense of solidarity cemented in love. The values that she inculcated shaped each of our lives, inspiring us to stand by each other with amity and compassion. The family still follows the following doctrine.

रहिमन धागा प्रेम का मत तोडो चटकाए,

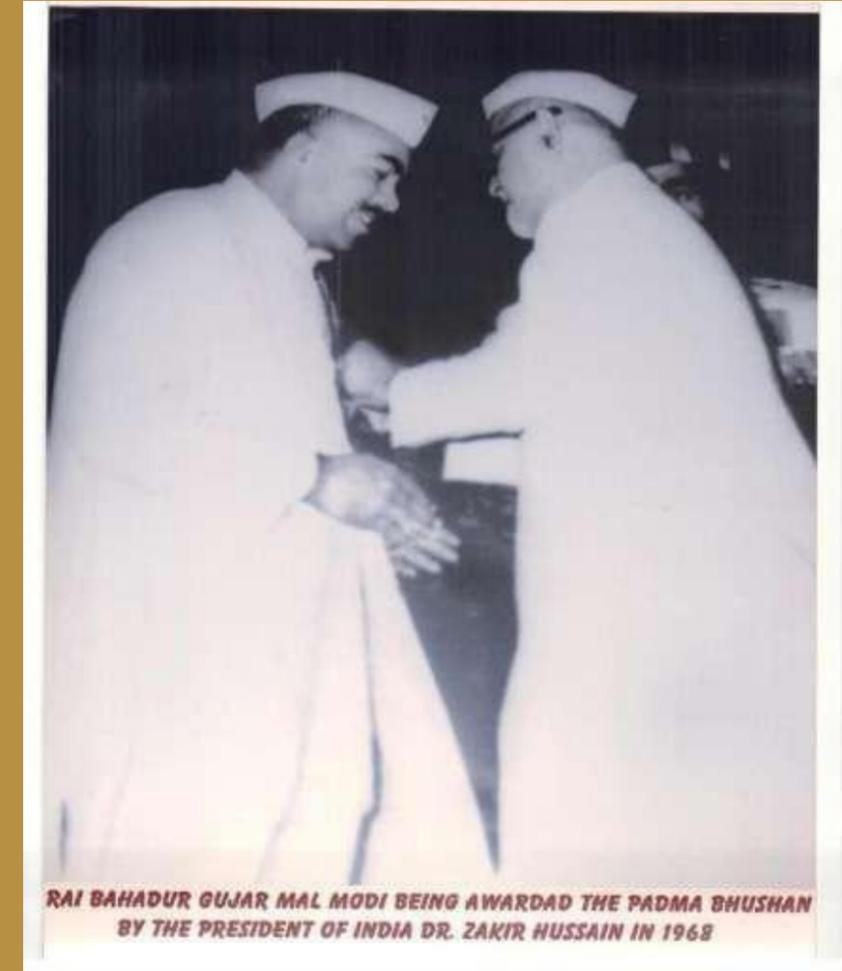
टुटे फिर न जुडे, जुडे गाठ परी जाय ।।

रुठे स्वजन मनाईऐ, जो रुठे सौ बार ,  
रहिमन फिर फिर पोहिऐ, टुटे मुक्ताहार।।

She motivated her family to help develop a multifaceted India. Her driving principal was 'work is worship'. She was included by Cambridge University in their Who's Who of Intellectuals in 1978. In 1982, she received Shirmoni Award for Sikh Studies and in 1986, she was awarded Bharat Seva. Maa had prepared her post-death rituals with meticulous care. I remember how six months before her death, the house had a festive look as everything was rearranged: old silver utensils were melted and hundreds of silver glasses and silver cups were ordered for the pundits and sadhus. Money was kept aside for various rituals and what was astounding was the discovery of a detailed will, instructing the remains of the body (Phul) to be distributed amongst her birth place, Kashgunj, and other Hindu religious places like, Ujjain, Nasik, and Haridwar. She was guided by Sanatan Dharma and believed in the cycle of birth and rebirth. She led a pious life and has left values which will sustain our future generations: sharing, caring and giving. She lived simply with high values, while serving the poor.

An epitome of balance, she led an ideal life focusing equally on the possessions of Lakshmi, knowledge of Saraswati, and shakti of Durga. She was my first Guru .

## MY FATHER





'The traveller has to knock at every alien door  
 To come to his own, and one has to wonder  
 Through all the outer world to reach  
 the innermost shrine.'  
 R. Tagore

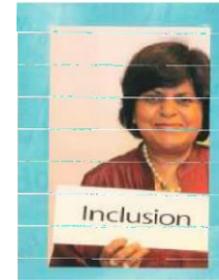


## Global Traveller (Countries, Cities)

Abu Dhabi; Austria- Vienna;  
 Australia- Brisbane, Gold Coast, Melbourne, Sydney;  
 Czechoslovakia- Prague; Denmark- Copenhagen; Dubai  
 England- Amhersham, Bath, Brighton, Bristol,  
 Gloucestershire, London, Lake District, Oxford, Uxbridge,  
 York  
 France- Cannes, Disney World, Niece, Paris, South of  
 France;  
 Germany- Berlin, Cologne, Dusseldorf, Frankfurt, Hamburg,  
 Munich, Wiesbaden  
 Greece- Athens; Hong Kong  
 Italy- Florence, Milan, Rome, Venice; Malaysia- Kuala  
 Lumpur, Mauritius; Nepal- Kathmandu  
 Netherland- Amsterdam, Hertogenbosch, Otterlo  
 Norway- Oslo  
 Pakistan- Lahore, Islamabad Takshishila ; Philippines-  
 Manila;  
 Qatar- Doha; Shenzhen (China)  
 Russia- Moscow, St. Petersburg  
 Spain- Bilbao, Barcelona; Singapore; Sri Lanka- Matara,  
 Colombo;  
 Switzerland- Berne, Geneva, Interlaken, Monteux, Zurich  
 Thailand- Bangkok, Phuket, Taiwan  
 U.S.A.- Atlantic City, Chicago, Los Angeles, Las Vegas,  
 New York, Orlando, San Francisco, Seattle, Syracuse.



With T N Seshan



Rekha Mody Answers - Rapid Fire:

Q. What is your idea of "Perfect Happiness"?

A. Ability to complete a project meticulously.

Q. What do you dislike most in others?

A. Hypocrisy!

Q. What do you dislike most in yourself?

A. Impatience!

Q. What is your most precious possession?

A. People in my life

Q. What is your favourite word?

A. Wonderful

Q. Which were your favourite events ?

A. Frankfurt Book Fair 1986

Art Camps: Kolkatta 1987 -Delhi 1989

Los Angeles India Splendor 2007

Reliving Van Gogh Netherland 2015

Q. Best spiritual Journey

A. Kumbha Bath Prayaag & Haridwar

Yagna at Maun Trith Ujjain

Japan visit with Mauni Baba ji 2000

Millennium Peace Summit, New York - 2000

Q. What is your source of sustenance?

A. New Ideas

Q. What is your greatest regret ?

A. Not worked hard enough.

Q. Who influenced you most ?

A. My mother and My Guru

Q. What is your biggest Satisfaction?

A. To be able to bring up my daughters nicely

Q. How would you like to be remembered ?

A. A creative and a happy person

Q. What do you want to achieve in your autumn years

A. See my next generations grow and prosper

Q. What is your biggest strength

A. To able to travel in third class in train and First class in plane with equal ease

Q. What is your motto in Life

A. Work is worship

## TO PAUSE AND REFLECT

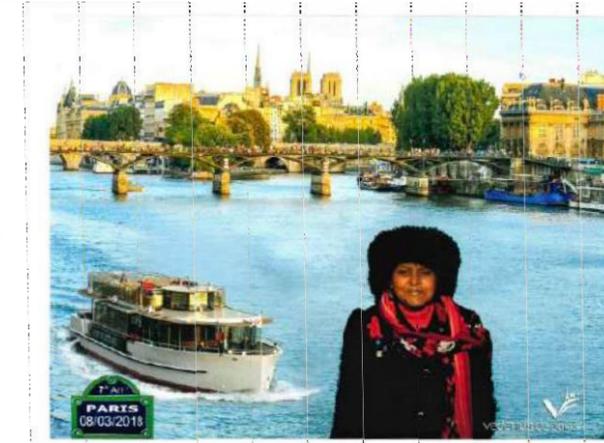
I had a simple realization during my morning walk on a winter morning: My life has been very eventful; you may call it- 'absolutely happening'- full of adventures, extraordinary events, and episodes: experiences of love, hate, adulation, rejection, fame, acceptance, illness, being slow poisoned for three months, children's birth, motherhood, amazing holidays, travels spanning rural India and different countries, International conference in Europe and America with never a dull moment. Watching Bollywood and Hollywood movies has been my favourite hobby. I recall I was in class nine in S.K.V., when my teacher was enquiring after our activities during the summer holiday. I quickly replied that I had seen seventy films in sixty days, which got me thrown out of the class, not giving me a chance to explain how I had indeed watched two movies on some days, during my holidays in Mussorie. Meeting actors was, hence, a natural desire. I have met several famous film actors during holidays in Kashmir: Dilip Kumar, Amitabh Bachchan, Rajesh Khanna, Dharmendra, Hema Malini, Rekha, Zeenat Aman, and Tina Munim, to name a few.

The best of artists have performed in Modi Nagar and my house in Kolkata: Kishore Kumar, Pt. Shiv Kumar Sharma, Ustaad Zakir Hussain, and Guru Kelu Charan Mahapatra. Ghazal singers Reshma and Jagjit Singh, classical singer Kishori Amonkar, dancer Shovana Narayan, Amla Shankar, and Tanushree Shankar have captivated the audience with their sterling performances.

There have been gatherings of prominent painters during five of my successful art camps. I have hosted an art exhibition in the Indian Parliament.

Eminent artists like, A. Ramachandran, Arpita & Paamjeet Singh, Anjoilie Ela Menon, Bose Krishnamachari, C Jagdish, Jatin Das, Rameshwar and Vasundhra Broota, Suruchi Chand, Sakti and Maiti Burman Suhas Ro, Sunil Das have participated in my art events. Famous art director, Mrinal Sen has filmed the art camp at my house in Kolkata in 1987.

I have had the honour to interact with royal families of Ayodhya, Baroda, Gwalior, and Tripura to name a few. I have played bridge with Shri Biju Patnaik, film actor Firoz Khan and many eminent industrialists. I have instituted an annual bridge competition in the name of Padam in classy Bengal Club, Kolkata. T.N. Seshan, at the height of his popularity, has come and spoken at my garden event. I have hosted many celebrities from London at my home, including Jack Straw the important minister for interior from U.K. In-spite of challenges, I lived happily mixing with the galaxy of people from various streams of life, in a world full of imagination and fun, away from the sordid reality of life. Here I would like to share some funny, abrupt, or memorable incidents.



### Pakistan, April, 2005

I was travelling with my friend on a private taxi from Lahore to Islamabad. We were staying at a hotel in Islamabad for a couple of nights. Artist, Gulam Rasool met us, offering a visit to Taksh shila, for which we did not have a permit. Exerting his influence, he took us on the promised visit on a Sunday. Although it was an amazing experience, I did not understand why the hill was not excavated and the Buddhist relics recovered, in-spite of pressure from Buddhist countries.

We requested our hotel to make arrangements for our taxi driver to sleep at night. This surprised the driver very much as he always slept in the taxi. On the way back, he advised us to leave as soon as possible without trusting anyone in Pakistan. During a single trip, we had two totally diverse experiences.

### New York, September 2006

My flight from London landed in New York at night, when it was raining cats and dogs. I left the airport with two pieces of luggage and walked hastily to the taxi stand. A long waiting queue of the passengers disheartened me, when all of a sudden, a black limousine appeared and halted near me. A driver, wearing a blazer, pinned with many medals, emerged and said, "Please use my taxi; as I am returning after dropping a passenger, I will charge you a discounted rate of sixty dollars to take you to New York City Centre." I quickly calculated, before agreeing, as he was only asking for twenty dollars extra. Once I was seated in his taxi, he veered the car off the main road and demanded hundred dollars in exchange of safe passage. I had no choice, but to give him the money, with much anger.

Four days later, I was leaving New York for Los Angeles. I shared my prior experience with the driver, while on a taxi to the airport. When I was ready to pay, he said, "I will not charge you anything, so in the future, when you will narrate the story of cheating, you will also have a story of generosity to share."

*To read is to voyage through time,  
nations, and to understand people.*

# The World of the Books

**Genesis Book Shop:** My love for literature is deep-rooted. As a young girl I had read Hindi, English, and Bengali literature (translated). Some of the books to create a lasting impression on me consisted of Bimal Mitra's *Kharidi Kodyon ke Mol*, Somerset Maugham's *Of Human Bondage*, Thomas Hardy's *Jude the Obscure*, D.H Lawrence's *Sons and Lovers* and Russian Literature translated in English.

On the first given opportunity, after marriage, I opened a book shop next to my home in Kolkata in 1980. I personally handpicked books from leading publishers and distributors. Looking back, a funny incident involving Mr. Mehra, a senior director of Rupa & Company took place in their College Street office, when he had offered to give me books on consignment, asking for a guarantee; Young, unexposed and brash, I had answered back offended: "Sir, you are asking me for a personal guarantee for just one lac rupees, when the watch I am wearing is worth lacs of rupees." Amused, he had asked his office to waive off the guarantee clause.

**Garutman:** This begun my phase of becoming a sponsor for literary books. I began searching for a translator with an objective of introducing Indian Literature into English. A chance meeting with Dr. Baldev Bahri in Kolkata let me know that Sachidanand Heeranand Vatsayan was an ace translator: 'Work with him. If you can manage him, difficult and a recluse, he is the best.'

In the Frankfurt Book Fair of 1986, India was the chief guest on the theme: *Wandel in Tradition* (Change in tradition). A delegation of twenty authors was invited to attend the book fair. Fair Director, Peter Widehass, had visited India six months prior to the fair with an objective of identifying an organisation to conduct panel discussions at the fair. My company, Garutman was conceived as a sponsoring body of Indian literature with Founding Editors: Agyeya, an eminent Hindi writer and Dr. V.N. Misra, a world famous Indologist, with Dr. Ratna Lahiri as Honorary Director. Since it was directly linked with authors, Garutman was selected

and handed over the charge of arranging interactions with authors representing different languages.

Those ten days at Frankfurt are still vivid in my memories. Although we did not establish any international business links, meeting and interacting with the regional authors coming from remote parts of India was a momentous experience. Eminent writers: Mulk Raj Anand, Qurratulain Hyder, Kamla Das, Mahashweta Devi, U.R Anathamurthy, Agyey, Vidya Niwas Ji, Ajit Kaur are only a few names I can recall. Every morning, my colleague, Ratna ji and I would wait in the dining hall at Inter-continental Hotel for Ila Dalmia and Agyey ji to join us. Someone or the other would always join, including one day my husband, who was on his way to London. It was a big dining room with long glass panes and windows with the sun peeping in, creating a warm atmosphere. German coffee is famous and so is the German breakfast. Good food along with the scintillating conversation resulted in breakfast easily stretching over a couple of hours. A delicious spread along with numerous cups of coffee and fresh juice motivated the team to indulge and enjoy.

I wish I had noted all the interactions I had with Agyey Ji, who shared many of his wonderful experiences. He shared stories from his meeting with Rabindranath Tagore in Shanti Niketan, Mahatama Gandhi and other personal experiences. I had been bold enough to ask him about his split with his famous wife, Kapila ji to which he candidly answered, 'She stole my ideas. What else is there, for an author, other than his original thoughts?' I was speechless, returning a vague smile.

*Agyeya ( Sachidanand Hiranand Vatsayayan):*

*An 'intellectual giant' and an eminent Hindi writer, he pioneered modern trends in poetry, fiction, and literary criticism. His characters, Bhuvan and Rekha, from the novel Nadi ke Dweep, share the freshness of those of Sons and Lovers by D.H Lawrence. I had the privilege of hosting him twice in my Kolkata home, where he was a perfect gentleman with a presence radiating immense positive energy. I was charmed by him and still remember him with utmost admiration.*

### On Translations

R.M.: Agyey ji, why is there a hindrance in accepting translations of Indian Literature in English? The Karamazov Brothers is a fine novel by Russian author Fyodor Dostoevsky, which we have read and enjoyed in English; if we can accept that, why do we not have translations of novels like Renu's Jaloos in English?

Agyey: The translation will never be smooth, unless the translator polishes the translation in the receiving language. The native culture poses some restrictions; for example, the Hindi word Lota and Urdu word Hukka would be difficult to explain to a Western audience. Indian culture has its own intricacies, which can pose issues in understanding. Consider English in relation to any Indian language: While the genius of English lies in understatement, all Indian languages tend to elaborate.

RM & Dr. V.N. Mishra

RM: Importance of art in our life?

Dr. Mishra: Art and Literature are interwoven in daily life - its rituals, its so-called humdrum routines, its joys and sorrows. Art is an essence of human existence.

RM: What is your final understanding of life?

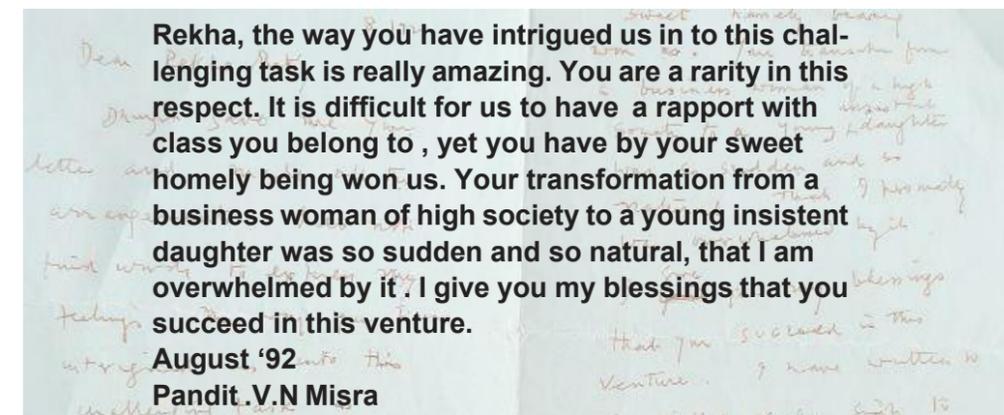
Dr. Mishra: The theory of connectivity states that nothing in the world stands by itself. Every object forms a link in an endless chain and is thus connected with all the other links. This chain of the universe has never been broken. It unites all objects and processes as a single unit and thus has a universal character. We cannot as much as move our little finger without 'disturbing' the whole universe. The life of the universe, its history, lies in an infinite web of connections.

RM: True! Then everything which exists at the micro-level also co-exists at the macro-level. Only, it is for us to perceive. Thank you Babu ji, for guiding me as a mentor.



*Dr Vidya Niwas Mishra:*

*A Hindi Sanskrit litterateur, he edited and authored over a hundred books. I, along with Padam and Ratna ji, attended his Amrit Mahotsav celebration of seventy-five years at the Prime Minister's residence in 2003, when Atal Bihari ji was the PM. The dignity and galaxy of celebrities who attended and spoke in His honour made the occasion unforgettable. In collaboration with Allied Publishers, Garutman published Dr. Mishra's Modern Hindi Poetry: an anthology in 1990. It was originally conceived in Berkeley by a group of talented young poets.*





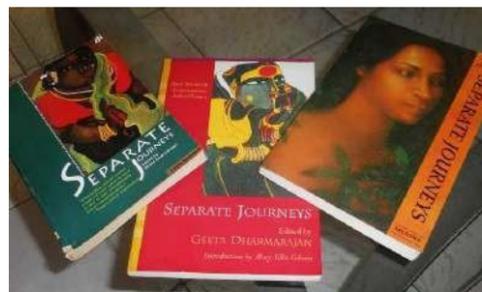
## FRIENDS OF INNER LIFE Women Writers

'We do not want half the sky  
We want a full clear sky'

During my early youth, I learnt about women's suffering mainly by reading literature- poignant narration of several stories about the plight of Bengali widows in the books by Bankim Chandra and Sarat Chandra. Goli by Acharya Chatursen revealed a new world of bonded women in the royal families of Rajasthan.

Unlike the writings of men, those of women have an intimate tone and deeper understanding of women's predicament, an inside perspective. I met Manu Bhandari, Kamla Das, Qurratulain Hyder, and Mahashweta Devi at Frankfurt Book Fair in 1986. Hindi writers maintained a distance from her as Kamla Das was a radical writer. I often heard loud whispers during coffee breaks about her having capitalised on her sexual life. For my part, I enjoyed her bold attitude which reflected through her personality.

Being misinformed by a book agent, Mahashweta ji charged and accosted me of having taken her story without her permission. I was surprised by her allegation and tore the story from my manuscript, before handing her the same. At this, she mellowed down and asked me to go ahead and publish the story. Due to Dr. Ratna Lahiri's initiative, 'Separate Journey', a collection of twenty-two short stories edited by Geeta Dharam Rajan, was published by Garutman, in association with publishers in India, England, and America. It opened up a new world as it described the journeys of many women narrated by top women writers in the regional languages of India.



I had known about Rekha's father, the illustrious Rai Bahadur Gujaral Modi ji through my father, who was associated with engineering projects at Modinagar. We visited the mills at Modinagar, whenever the great Bengali saint Anandamayee Ma was hosted there. Little did I know then that I would have such enriching interactions with the youngest daughter of Modinagar, later in life.

December 1985: I met her for the first time at Ajneya ji's residence, along with Vidyanivas ji. They recommended that I help with representing India at the Frankfurt International Book Fair for Garutman and soon I was helping envisage the logo of Garutman as a literary agent.

January 1986: We met Peter Widehaas, on his way to survey books representing Indian thoughts, as India was being highlighted at the Frankfurt Book Fair that year. We sent a carefully curated list of books by well-known authors, from every region, representing modern Indian literature, from Ananthmurthy, Mahashweta Devi, Mannu Bhandari to Nirmal Varma, to Mr. Widehass at Grand Hotel, Kolkata on the very next day. At the Frankfurt Book Fair, between October 6 and 8, we ensured that at least three authors would always be present for the central podium discussions. The genesis of Stree Shakti in 1998, Divya Chaaya Trust in 1984 - I was witness to them all. I was very impressed by the dedication of the Bengali women, whom I met through her work at Rajarhaat. Always passionate about paintings, she took the plunge of sowing the seeds for a thriving cultural venue by establishing the Habiart Gallery in Delhi. Even with multiple involvements like World Tea Party and other socially enlightening events, Rekha never remained limited to purely art socials. Here was a mind bubbling with new ideas every fortnight, so merely associating with her in both Delhi and Kolkata broadened my horizons.

Now in her mature years, I still find Rekha ever-enthusiastic and full of energy. She has grown in experience, like a Himalayan river gurgling and prancing from rock to rock, receiving Mother Nature's bountiful gifts and slowly becoming a source of life and water for the benefit of others, at the same time, not merging her own expanded horizons.

Dr. Ratna Lahiri

Independent Scholar, Editor and Translator

## **Amrita Preetam**

She was the first prominent female Punjabi poet, novelist and essayist. I recall several meetings with the free thinker during her autumn years. These took place in her Hauz Khas home where she was staying with Imroz, an artist who had decorated the house with love poems painted across the walls. Amrita ji, frail in her old age, used to lie on bed with a pack of cigarettes and an ashtray on the floor. I remember her comparing modern seminars with ancient Indian Yagna; she endorsed interactions during seminars as it gave birth to new ideas. I still regret not talking to her about Sahir.

## **Kobita Sinha**

She was a renowned Bengali poet, novelist and feminist writer. She encouraged me by acknowledging the presence of perseverance in me. We published Kobita's Paurush, a novel on eunuchs as Third Sex in English. A quote from her poem 'When Eve spoke to Adam' reads as:

*'I was the first rebel banished from paradise, exiled.*

*I learned that human life was greater than paradise.*

*I was first to know.'*

## **Dr Kapila Vatsayayan**

Babu ji (Dr. V.N Mishra) arranged Kapila ji's two-day deliberation on Lok Purush under the banner of the famous Asiatic Society in Kolkata. He, along with Yatindera Mishra and Kapila Ji, came to Kolkata. It was during the monsoon season, which in Bengal can sometimes be very aggressive, resulting in drowning of the city. We found ourselves stranded on the second day of Kapila ji's lecture, as Park Street, where the Asiatic Society building is situated, was completely submerged. When this unexpected situation perplexed everyone, Babu ji came up with the unique and simple solution of continuing the lecture at my house, much to my delight. The memory of Kapila ji in my drawing room with an august audience is precious.

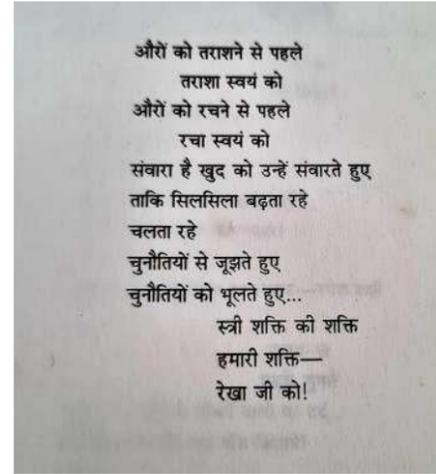
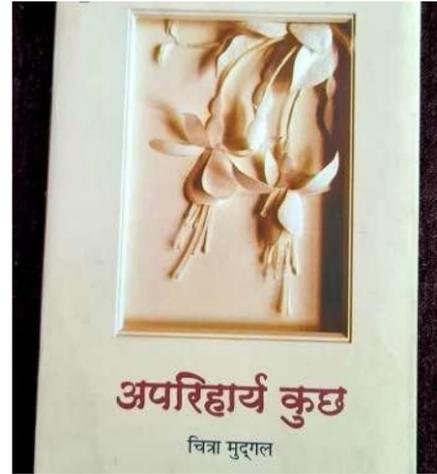
*The irony is that with the projection of wrong sets of value, we were deluded to believe that self sacrifice is the biggest virtue, forgetting that true sin is in living far away from happiness.*

Eminent women poets from Pakistan: Fehmida Riaz and Kishwar Nahid recited poetry at a small gathering in my Delhi home. I had an opportunity to meet the controversial writer from Bangladesh, Taslima Nasreen at a women's meet in 2008, at Dauville, France. Amidst palpable animosity among the women delegates, Taslima was isolated during breakfast, where I joined her and shared a very interesting conversation.

'I only remember that it was October 1986 when India was invited as the host country at the Frankfurt Book Fair. At that time I was not yet working for Swiss National Television but I was writing as a journalist for newspapers. So I had to cover this event for two very known and big Swiss newspapers (NZZ and Tagesanzeiger), I had to write what is going on in the modern literary scene of India. Modern Indian literature was very unknown in Europe then. The prominent writer Qurratulain Hyder was there too, I wanted to interview her. She was not ready and told me that she will be probably at the Hotel bar later and I could meet her there. I couldn't make it. Next day at the press conference suddenly the lady sitting next to me, showed me a note. There was written "Are you Lekha?". I was totally surprised. How did she know? Qurratulain Hyder confused our names. The unknown lady name was Rekha, who met her the bar. We had a big laugh about the story. And this was the beginning of our friendship which lasted until today. There were many more coincidences: Not only are our names similar: Rekha and Lekha (actually I am Chitrlekha, but I was called since childhood Lekha), we have the same age, same interests, we both wanted to promote modern Indian literature and art, Rekha's main home was and is in Kolkata, where my father's family comes from and which I visited often. And many times I was guest at her wonderful home. We are both unconventional, straight and loyal.'

Best regards,

Chitra Lekha Sarkar

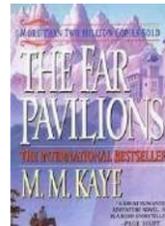


### Chitra Mudgal

*She is an Indian writer and one of the leading literary figures of modern Hindi literature. She is also the first Indian woman to receive the coveted Vyas Samman for her novel Avaan.*

*She was awarded India's highest literary award, the Sahitya Akademi, for her novel Post Box No. in 2019.*

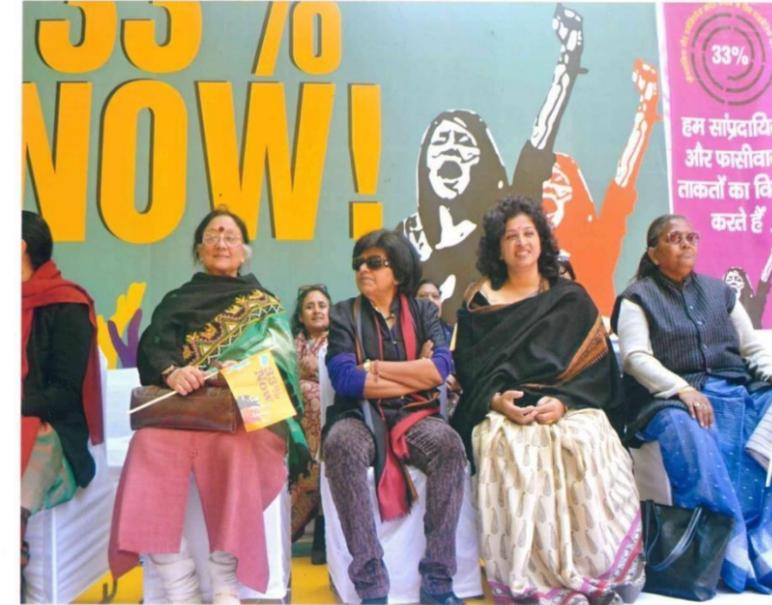
*It was a life-altering moment when in 1998, I met the fire-brand writer in Kolkata. She questioned the supremacy of men through her short stories and novels. Being an activist with trade union leader, Datta Samant since her youth, her novel about the trade union movement, 'Avaan' is unanimously acknowledged as a masterpiece of literary work by critics and stands as a classic novel in Hindi literature. Chitra Ji stood along side me and guided me to expand Stree Shakti –The Parallel Force.*



### M.M Kaye

*She shared a deep link with India. The Far Pavilions, her famous novel released in 1978, had a story about Indian Royal families. Established in 1980, Genesis Book Shop was the only air-conditioned book shop in Kolkata then and was often frequented by publishers with their authors. When Kaye visited us, I arranged a dinner in her honour at my house, where she enjoyed Jalebi, an Indian sweet, while willingly signing books for collectors.*

### With Chitra Mudgal



**Dr. Geraldine Forbes,**

*a distinguished Professor of History at the State University of New York, Oswego, specializes in History of Colonial and Modern India, Women's History, Gender, and Colonial Medicine. I presented her with the first edition of 'Quest' and she readily gave me several suggestions for improvements that we find in the second edition. She also wrote an introduction to enrich the book.*



'I first met Rekha Mody in the summer of 2000 when she took me to visit three projects she was then working with. The three were: The Child Care Home in Salt Lake for abandoned children; DCT Centre Karam bhoomi in Rajrhat, which arranged week-long enrichment programs for children, training programs for women, and a new microcredit program for women; and a Day School for Platform Girls in Sealdah Kolkatta, that is, young girls who lived on the railway platforms. We kept in touch and in August that year, Rekha visited Syracuse, where she spoke to faculty at Syracuse University about her projects, especially Stree Shakti, and about possible collaboration with projects originating in the USA. Rekha had begun Stree Shakti: the Parallel Force in 1998 with the aim of connecting women around the world to further women's rights. While in Central New York, Rekha also visited SUNY Oswego where she attended the ceremony for incoming freshmen and talked with faculty about the dangers of Nuclear Power.

Following our first meeting in 2000, Rekha and I remained in contact, meeting later that year in the USA and subsequently in India during my annual trips to India. About 2005, according to my notes, Rekha and I began emailing about her work on an autobiographical dictionary of Indian women, first published in 1999. Rekha was interested in producing a more ambitious second edition, which she did, entitled Quest for Roots: The Lives of Women Significant in India History in 2009. A book that one reviewer called "a great starting place for doing research on women of India," the biographical sketches of Indian women from the Vedic period to the twentieth century in Quest for Roots are now available on the web.

Rekha's deep and abiding interest in promoting women through social work in India, networking women internationally, recognition of their accomplishments, and recovery of their history is untiring. On the board of Women Founders Collective since 2009, a global support network for the founders of NGOs, Rekha introduced me to the organization and urged me to take it over when the founder Sallie Gratch retired. I did so only after she agreed to continue to help me. The Board of WFC and I are now engaged in compiling a report on how NGOs, especially those that deal with Adolescent Girls and Young Women, are faring under Covid 19 restrictions.

It's now been more than two decades since we met and I am in awe of Rekha's commitment to promote women's causes in India and abroad. She's also a fabulous friend, hostess, and supporter of creative women.'

Geraldine Forbes  
Syracuse, October 2020



**Zerbanoo Gifford:**

*I met Zerbanoo in her home at Harrow in England. She captivated me with her sizzling energy and I was inspired to work with her. Her book, 'The Golden Thread', published in 1990, inspired me to edit my first book, 'A Quest for Roots'. She included me in her list of 300 Asha Women from 60 countries, for which she was awarded a 'NESTA (National Endowment of Science Technology and Arts) Fellowship'. An exhibition of several portraits of Asha women were mounted in the National Portrait Gallery in London, which I attended and still remember with great joy.*

'Rekha is one of those rare women who has dedicated her life to empowering other women. She walks straight and talks straight. Rekha knows where she wants to be and where you should be and how you fit into the larger scheme of things. If she says you must speak at an International Women's Conference you don't argue, you do your duty. If she says you must initiate a global programme for women's wellbeing you just apply yourself to it. No arguments, no delay and certainly no doubts. Rekha is special. She is spiritual but passionately understands the realities of our unfair and silly world order that needs changing. She is determined to see women take their rightful place in the power structures of our world. She is not scared of life. She is clear as to her dharma (duty) and seems to know what your dharma is. Simply to see that women understand and reclaim their right to a good life often denied them. Rekha reminds me of the precious bee who goes about its business taking pollen from one flower to another and thereby making our landscape beautiful and fruitful. The 'Rekha bee' is skilled at networking and whispering to each one how wonderful they are and what important work they must do to enrich the life for others.'

So much love Zerbanoo Gifford  
Asha Women U.K



*There is a fine line between  
Truth, Imagination and Perception.  
Many times what appears to be imagination,  
when perceived keenly, emerges as the Truth.*

*Unveiling the truth  
after seventeen  
centuries*

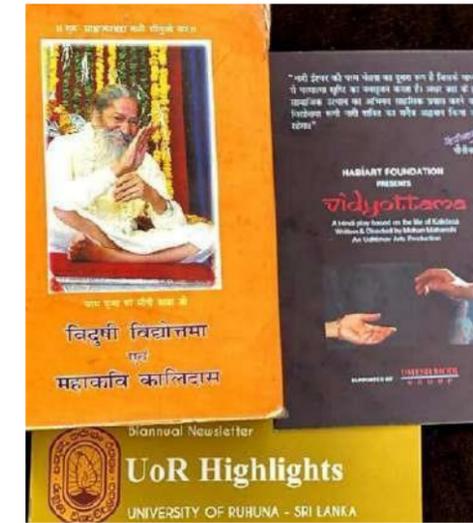
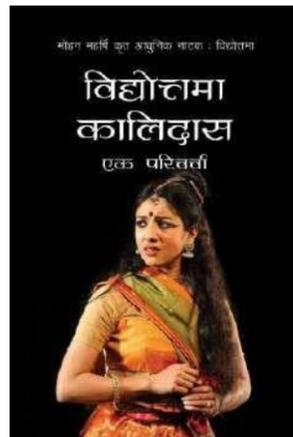
## VIDYOTTAMA. Reaserch Background

The greatest enemy of knowledge is not ignorance; it is the illusion of knowledge

Prostrating in front of my guru, Mauni Baba ji, I asked, “Baba ji, I come to you for spiritual guidance. Why do you always return to the topic of Vidyottama?” He wrote on his slate, “She is lost in the annals of history. She seeks justice. Ujjain has the responsibility of reinstating her. This task has to be done.” I further asked, “What is the proof? Where will we get the evidence required to prove it?” Baba ji wrote, “She is hiding in the literature of Kalidasa. We need to find her there.”

I was confused as I had not read Kalidasa either in translation or in the original Sanskrit. I had an opportunity to read Meghdoot and Abhijan Shakuntalam with Sanskrit scholar, Dr. Kamal Kishor Mishra in 2004. Presently, I became interested to know more about Vidyottama. Baba ji connected my organisation, Stree Shakti to Vidushi Vidyottama Stree Shakti Samman, which further fuelled my interest in the writings of Kalidasa.

In 2007, I commissioned Hindi playwright, Mohan Maharishi to write and direct Vidyottama - a contemporary play with an objective to tell her story and gently bring to light that perhaps it was her and not Kalidasa who was the writer. The play was published as a book, later in 2009.



An interesting incident involved writing a sponsor’s note. I was very perplexed about what to write, as questioning Kalidasa directly, without any substantial evidence, was a challenging task. Early morning, the next day, the following words surprisingly came to me as a poem, With Baba’s blessing, Dr. Kamal Kishor Mishra became interested to conduct an in-depth research on this topic in 2015. Before embarking on research, we organized a conference on the issue at Bhartiya Vidya Bhawan, New Delhi to seek the blessings of fifteen scholars, including Dr. Satyavrat Shastri.

The research took several years to complete and a considerable number of revealing facts now prove, without a doubt, that she is the writer; a clear women’s voice is heard prominently throughout, in spite of the deliberate efforts of the writer to conceal it. The unusual, in-depth understanding of women’s multi-tasking abilities, her varied sentiments, and psychology reverberate through all the works indicating female authorship.

Presently, with Baba’s blessing, the research is complete. I feel honoured to be associated with this amazing project. We are about to establish the true identity of the author, in the works attributed to Mahakavi Kalidasa, and reveal to the world -the very first, woman, creative writer, who chose to go anonymous in fourth century India.

## Who is the author? Kālidāsa or Vidyottamā

### 1. Powerful base narrative - lecture:

Folk tales and oral traditions of India and Sri Lanka: Raja Kumaradas, Kamini and Kalidas.

### 2. Spoken tradition:

Legends have also been considered an important source of ancient Indian history.

### 3. Vidyottama:

Vidyottama, the princess of Benares, has been considered "Vidushi" or "Wise", while her husband Kalidasha has been considered "foolish or unenlightened/ illiterate". She has not been given her due.

### 4. Kalidas:

Against the norms of technical requirements of ancient manuscripts, the appearance of the word Kalidas 51 times as being the author of the works, casts a doubt and raises questions on his authorship.

### 5. Invocation:

In the invocation of seven of the texts, there appears worship of "Ardhanarishvara: ParvatiParmeshwar" but there is a conspicuous absence of Maha Kali, which also raises doubts about Kalidasa being the purported author and which exhorts a deep inquiry.

### 6. Chandravansh and Suryavansh:

Chandra's influence on a woman is self-evident, through its effect on fertility that endows women with her physical countenance, curves, personality, beauty, fertility and sexuality. Of the several dynasties, six were known as Chandravanshi (lunar dynasty) where the moon's influence was palpably visible while others were Suryavanshi (solar dynasty).

### 7. Storyline:

It begins with the purity of King Dilip of the Ikshvaku dynasty and ends with the eroticism king Agnivarman. The sensuality of Agnivarman becomes the cause of his painful death. There upon, his pregnant queen sits on the golden throne. It was during his wife's pregnancy that Agnivarman had become the ruler. In the three plays, Malavikagnimitram, Abhigyanasakuntalam and Vikramorvasiya, Dharini's son Vasumitra, Shakuntala's son Sarvadaman Bharata and Urvashi's son Ayush kumar become rulers over time. Ultimately, all three women get justice.

### 8. Poignant play of Words:

This play of words is evident in the story of Kumar's birth in which Shiva's semen falls into the Ganges causing her to burn, the birth of Shanmukh Kumar through conspiracy

of the hexarchy, in Kush's dream and in the lament of Ayodhya and Indumati's swayamvara in Raghuvansam and in the graceful romance of the seasons starting from Vasant (spring).

### 9. Central role of women:

In the analysis of seven compositions, it was found that there were 88 female protagonists compared to 33 male protagonists. While the male characters speak in Sanskrit, women spoke in two languages namely Prakrit and Sanskrit. The compositions were centered in the creativity of women.

10. All the seven compositions were young women centric, around which events and all characters have been interwoven.

### 11. Male and female:

The companionship between man and woman is amazingly visible in her variegated roles as a housewife, secretary, friend, disciple and embodiment of a fine piece of art - all that makes life perfect...

Grihanī sacivah sakhī mithah priye śisyā lalitah kalāvidhau 67.8 Raghuvamśam

### 12. Royal tradition:

Respect for scholarship, desire and curiosity for wisdom seemed to have been the tradition in royal families. The honour accorded through positions of 'navaratnas' is an expression of the cultural and philosophical aspect of enlightened splendor.

### 13. Majestic Splendor:

The behavior, splendor, ethics, contemplation, gems and jewels, grandeur of palaces, and splendor of the apartments evident in the compositions, introduce the readers to an impressive world.

### 14. Mild nature:

Various seasons and Ritur j Vasant, Varsha and gentle breeze, lyrical words and evocative expressions, along with charming descriptions of tree-vines, cuckoo, peacocks, elephants, rivers, mountain rains, Himalayas, tales of gentle natured sensitive princesses, present an impressive aspect of nature.

### 15. The story of women and youth:

The expression of women, youth and nature is ubiquitous. The importance of woman's latent aspirations and superiority has been accepted.

### 16. Theme of nature, love and young women:

The central focus in the compositions is "nature, work and young women". Nature, a feminine element, is omnipresent with love its permanent expression. In contrast to love,

they also highlight a woman's sensuality, romance and sixteen aspects of adornment.

17. Beauty and romance:

There is a correlation between beauty and love epitomized in the charming persona of a young woman full of beauty and sensuality -

18. Woman:

A woman is the first creation of Brahma -  
Sriṣṭirādyevadhātavah ...

22, Uttar Megha, Meghadūtam

19. Beauty and confidence:

Beauty, that can achieve its beloved fortune, is the basis of confidence.

20. Portrayal of Women as victims:

Women have been portrayed as queens, princesses, heroines, accompanied by advisors, mentors and associates, as described in the enlightened exchange between Princess Indumati and her friends in her swayamvara. On the other hand, the kings are with jesters such as Raja Dushyant of Hastinapur, Raja Agnimitra, Agnivarna, Raja Pururava of Pratishthanpur with court jester Manavak. Due to the practice of polygamy, young women become victim of Kings and noblemen.

21. Swayamvara and marriage:

Swayamvara and the splendor of marriage, the intelligence and description of the princess has been described as the swayamvar of Indumati, the swayamvar of Lakshmi, and the marriage of Parvati and Shiva.

22. The spiritual climax of union:

The elegance of various female characters in all stages of life to the spiritual climax of union has been poetically dealt with in literature, such as in the union of Shiva and Parvati in Kumarasambhava. On the other hand, there is also description of the ruthless orgies of King Agnivarna in Raghuvansham.

23. Justice and Self-Esteem:

Queens, princesses, nymphs, hostesses, lady attendants, heroines and courtesans create a delightful atmosphere which is jarred when their confidence and respect are disturbed, making them raise their voices of protest against injustice, their only ornament, such as Shakuntala addressing King Dushyantas 'non-Aryan'!

Anārya ! Ātmano hridayānumānena prekshase reflecting the self-respect of a woman.

24 - Repentance:

The poignant depiction of a curse, repentance, renunciation, and separation are evident in Rati's lament, in Yakshi-yaksha's pain of separation, in the sacrifice of Shakuntala, in the accursed life of Urvashi, in the intensity of Pururava's emotions, the heartfelt mourn of Aja, in Sita's renunciation and in Parvati's penance ('sadhana').

25. Diplomatic mentoring by women for preservation of self-respect and esteem:

In order to preserve self-respect and esteem, diplomatic mentoring is reflected in the advice of Rani Dharini, Kaushiki, Gautami, lady friends and in the support of nymphs on several occasions.

26. Widowhood:

Against the happiness of a married life, widowhood is full of pain and misery.  
Punarnavikrita vaidhavya dukhayā mayā... (Malvikagnimitram)

27. From tenderness to perfection and fulfillment:

Women have been portrayed as tender and graceful and not as weak. All the heroines are scholarly, virtuous and beautiful. Youth is an ornament at one stage of life while at another stage, it is fulfillment and perfection.

28. Vistas of wisdom and knowledge:

The seven works are replete with the wealth of nobility, gentleness, wisdom and knowledge of the Vedas, Upanishads, Kama-Shastra and Lok-Shastra.

29. Sagacious Vidyotama:

The seven compositions echo the wisdom and deep knowledge of the Vedas and the Upanishads, which express the discipline, pain, pleasure and joy of realization and enlightenment, of the wise Vidyotama. Wise and intelligent Vidyotama became a symbol of Saraswati - wisdom and knowledge: Vidyottamā ityasya vyutpatih bhavati yata uttamā vidyā yasyāh sā athavā vidyāsu uttamā vidyottamā ||

30. Creation:

There is a very fine line between attachment and indifference. In the works, the seer is dominant. If Kalidas, enlightened by divine grace, would have written the beautiful literature, then the emphasis would be on renunciation, spirituality and liberation, rather than puberty, adornment, romance, royalty and indulgence. This is proof of the works being the creations of Vidyushi Vidyotama.

माननीया रेखा मोदी

एक सशक्त विचार, विस्तार और विमर्श



Dr. Kamal K Mishra is an academician and researcher par excellence. He is an expert in the field of Epigraphy, Manuscriptology and Indic Studies, of Sanskrit, Pali and Prakrit Inscriptions and Sanskrit Manuscripts in different eras.

His path breaking work is in Compilation of 11 volumes of Shrimad Bhagavad Gita with 21 Rare Sanskrit Commentaries, released by Hon'ble Prime Minister Sri Narendra Modi on 9.3.2021. Currently he is engaged in another path-breaking research on the astonishing role of Vidyottama, wife of Kalidasa in the titled " Who is the Author: Kalidas or his Learned Wife Vidyottama ?

He has fourteen scholarly publications to his credit. He has received many awards and Fellowships.

He worked on deputation as Director, Indian Cultural Center, High Commission of India at Suva, Republic of Fiji accredited to Cook Islands, Kiribati, Nauru, Tonga, Tuvalu and Vanuatu from 2009 to 2013.

## A Quest for Roots

*Stree Shakti*

*Edited by Rekha Mody*

It is biographical dictionary, a useful reference book to keep on your working table.

*Khushwant Singh*

*The Hindustan Times : 20 Nov. 1999*

Amazing tales ... So much strength, disappointment and tragedy ... A lot of beauty too.

*Thomas Easely*

"A Wonderful Contribution"

*Dr. Kiran Bedi*

There is common thread that binds all these achievers : they succeeded in transcending the constraints of a patriarchal society in their own ways. It is a collector's item.

*Book Club*

*The Asian Age : 20 Nov. 1999*

It is the story of women who have shaped India's history. It presents pen portraits of women from ancient to modern times and across caste, community and religion.

*Movers and Shapers*

*The Telegraph : 19 Nov. 1999*

The latest addition to its activities is an investigation of the world of the woman in A Quest for Roots, a Stree Shakti compilation of experiences from earliest recorded times to the middle of the 20th Century.

*Calcutta Note Book*

*The Statesman : 15 Nov. 1999*

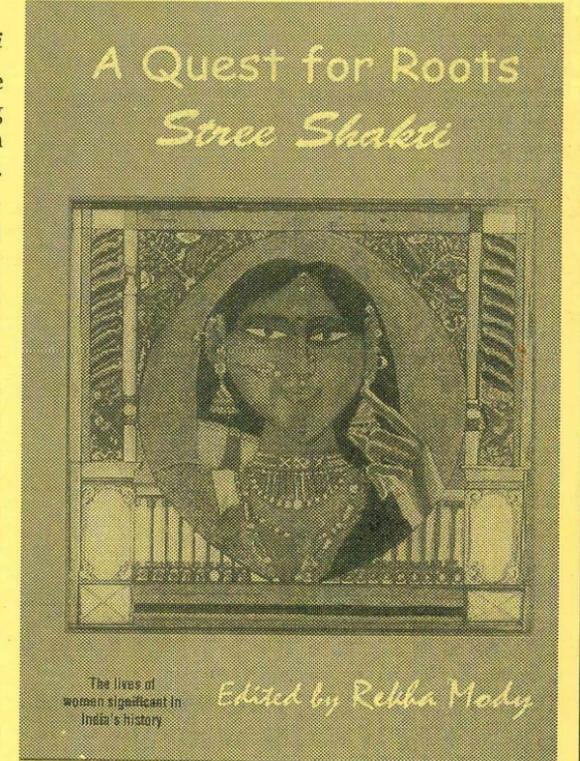
Profiles of great Indian women through the ages. Seeks highlight the female contribution to Indian society.

*India Today*

A Quest for Roots, edited by Rekha Mody contextualises the experience of women in India from the earliest recorded times to the mid-20th century. From Prabha Devi to Indira Gandhi, from Razia Sultana to Mother Teresa, from Amrapali to Smita Patil, from Gargi to Begum Rokeya Sakhawat Hossein, .... In reveals that in spite of various social constraints imposed by discriminating perspective norms, the women of India could carve out a space for themselves. They not only played the game in man's terms and excelled, but often went beyond.

*Recommended*

*The Telegraph : 14 Nov. 1999*



**A Stree Shakti Publication**

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**Priced at Rs. : 175**

## SEMINAR ON VIDUSHI VIDYOTTAMA



## VIDDYOTAMA BOOK RELEASE





With Kiran Bedi



With Dr Nazma Heptullah

# Women Empowerment

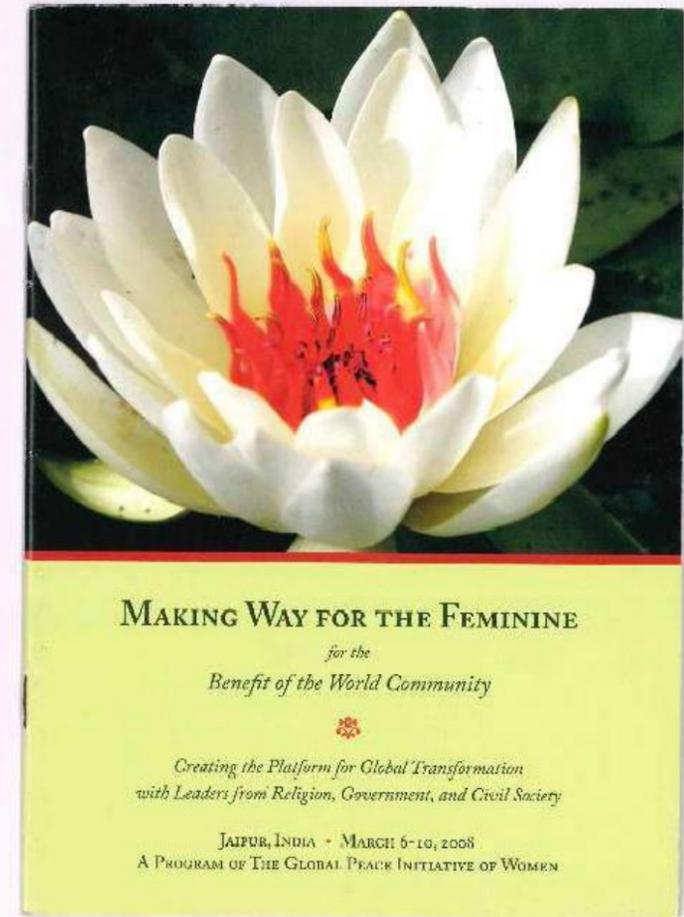


With Sheila Dixit

**Gandhi ji wrote, "If only the women of the world would come together they could display such heroic non-violence as to kick away the atom bomb like a mere ball. Women have been so gifted by God"**

Rekha Mody belongs to the illustrious industrial family of Modys who held almost imperial sway in Modinagar in Uttar Pradesh. But inspired by her mother who was a great woman, Rekha Mody involved herself in the development of the concept of "Street Shakti". Women, she wrote, were not just tender creepers, they independently developed initiatives. The best of them had such vigour and life in them that they were like mighty, multi-stemmed *bodhi* trees, spreading the soft shade of their nurturing attention over many initiatives, organizations, causes, works and visions. That is why Rekha Mody attached such great importance to the evolution of Street Shakti and in an earlier interview to *Business Economics*, expressed her views with candour.

# "Bring about change by empowering women": Rekha Mody



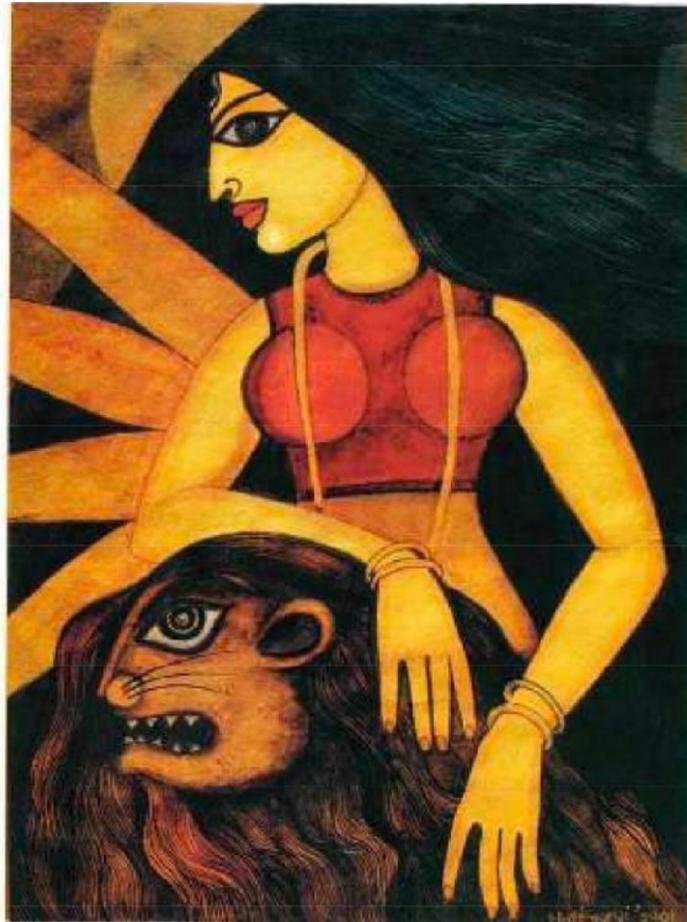
## GLOBAL NETWORKING



Q: What brought on this idea of "Street Shakti"?  
 A: India needs a parallel force to change its entire setup. The women of our country are its latent power and it is the best way to bring about change among women.  
 Q: What is Street Shakti?  
 A: A Street Shakti is a network of Bharatiya Shakti therefore it does not work as a power from human.  
 Q: Tell me about the networking movement.  
 A: Our movement does not ask its associates to help with funds, etc. but what we demand is time. Every associate of "Street Shakti" is required to commit time: one hour a week, or four hours monthly or fifty two hours annually.  
 Q: As a networking movement what are the areas that you focus on?  
 A: Right now we are focusing lot on individuals but on power which emanates from her.  
 Q: What do you think about the constitutional 73rd Amendment 33 per cent reservation for women?  
 A: We need this self-reliance in our democracy is unique unlike the other democracies of the world. So far there is only eight per cent participation. The women of our country are too shy and need a certain pull; maybe with this they will be encouraged.

# PLACE UNDER THE SKY

Women artists and intellectuals get together for a show, and to campaign for the rights of women to the margins of society.



Great revolutions are born out of great resolutions and the coming together of people for a cause is a celebration in itself. Unification of Germany, the breakup of the Soviet Union, and closer home the formation of the states of Uttarakhand, Chhattisgarh and Jharkhand are recent examples of popular endeavour. So Rekha Mody, who wears more than one hat, of entrepreneur, connoisseur of art and women's campaigner, has reason to feel good about the growing response to the Stree Shakti movement, started by her in 1996. "Don't club me as a feminist in an aggressive sort of way. We are actually a parallel force, we want to work with men," says Mody, while inaugurating an exhibition of 20 women artists, on the Stree Shakti theme, at Habitat Gallery, India Habitat Centre.

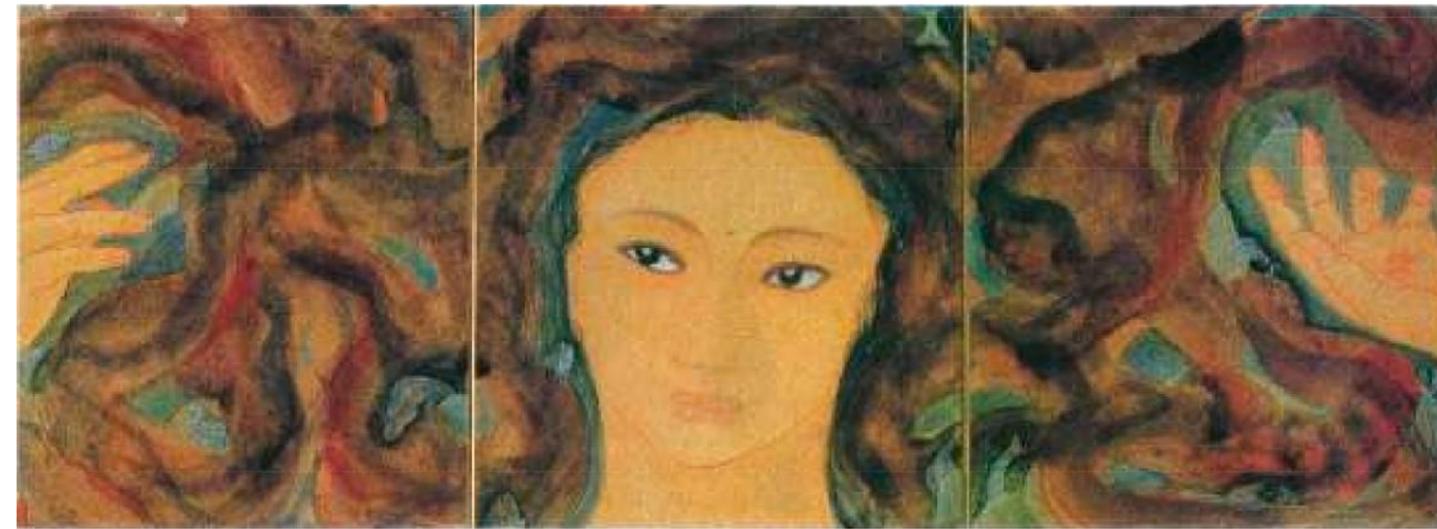
But why club art with a campaign? "Artists don't live in a frozen world. They react to their surroundings and

though all the artists participating in the show are painters first, they are also women, and paint subjects close to their heart, like motherhood and creativity. Moreover, art attracts the best minds, so people who get together for an art show know why they are here and what they should be doing," says Mody.

Her point was well taken. Parliamentarians, writers, independent thinking women, and some of the best names in art and literature

got together for the show that featured artists like Anila Sharker, Anjolie Ela Menon, Catherine Young, Vasundhara Tewari, Bulbul Sharma and Kanchan Chander. "There are layers and layers that make a woman. Women have both a tranquil side and a side that relates with Ma Shakti. Women can be both powerful and silent; and that is what I portray in my work," says Kanchan, better known for painting torsos.

For Kyoto-born Yuriko Lochan,



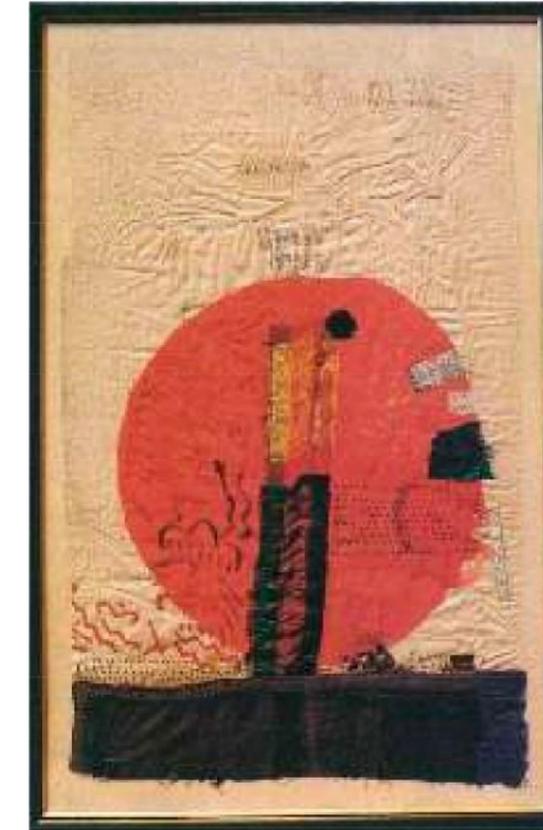
Facing page: Maitreyi Kar's 'Stree Shakti'. Above: Yuriko Lochan's 'Fish in the water'; Iti S. Chatterjee's 'The Fish in the Water'; Iti S. Chatterjee's 'The Fish in the Water'; Iti S. Chatterjee's 'The Fish in the Water'.



who paints women surrounded by flowers and nature. "Women are women in any part of the world, the same issues and the same concerns bind them all together. Even in Japan, women have to make an extra effort to fulfill their roles at home and to earn a living."

The opening of the exhibition was

followed by a poetry reading session in which Seema Qasim, Rachna Joshi and Lakshmi Kannan read selected works. Member of Parliament from Kurukshetra Kailash Devi said: "We know that we are no less than men in any field, and movements like Stree Shakti are to be congratulated for the commendable efforts they are making



in enabling the less fortunate."

For Stree Shakti, the most important agenda for the coming year is to establish an Equal Opportunity Commission. "However, we believe in networking with NGOs as well as with the corporate world, apart from working at the grassroots level. So everybody can rejoice in our achievements, the most important of which is a life of dignity for those who are pushed to the margins of society," says Mody.

**"Women paint subjects close to their heart like motherhood and creativity," says Mody.**

# A Quest for Roots

*Stree Shakti*

Edited by Rekha Mody



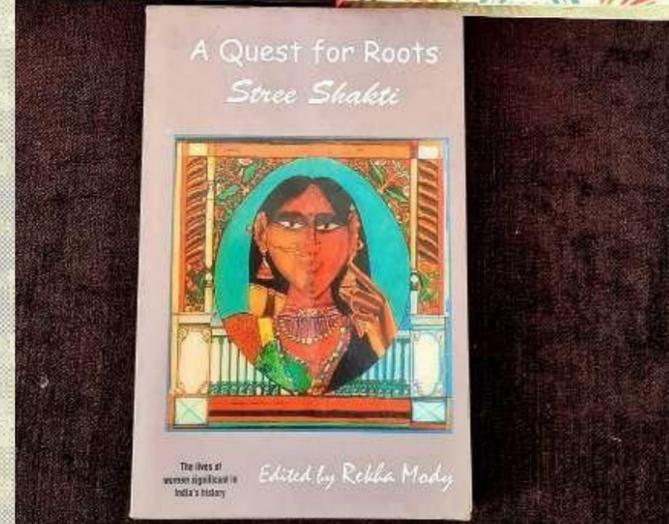
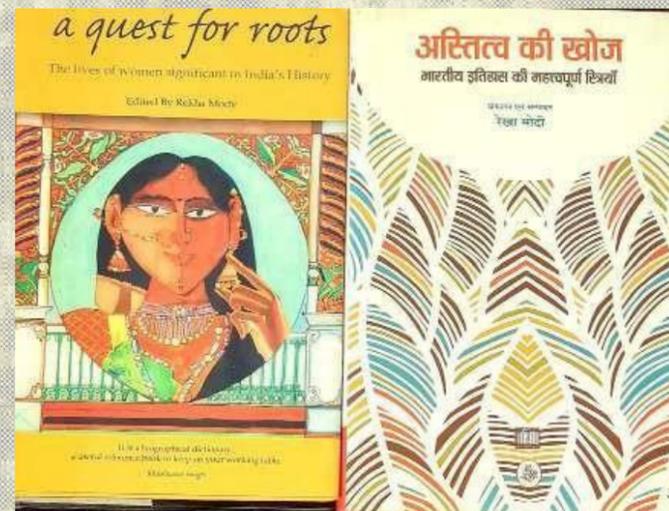
reference book to keep on your working table.

*Khushwant Singh*

*The Hindustan Times* : 20 Nov. 1999

appointment and tragedy... A lot of beauty too.

*Thomas Easely*



*Book Club*

*The Asian Age* : 20 Nov. 1999

It is the story of women who have shaped India's history. It presents pen portraits of women from ancient to modern times and across caste, community and religion.

*Movers and Shapers*

*The Telegraph* : 19 Nov. 1999

The latest addition to its activities is an investigation of the world of the woman in A Quest for Roots, a Stree Shakti compilation of experiences from earliest recorded times to the middle of the 20th Century.

*Calcutta Note Book*

*The Statesman* : 15 Nov. 1999

Profiles of great Indian women through the ages. Seeks highlight the female contribution to Indian society.

*India Today*

A Quest for Roots, edited by Rekha Mody contextualises the experience of women in India from the earliest recorded times to the mid-20th century. From Prabha Devi to Indira Gandhi, from Razia Sultana to Mother Teresa, from Annapali to Smita Patil, from Gargi to Begum Rokeya Sakhawat Hossain, ... It reveals that in spite of various social constraints imposed by discriminating perspective norms, the women of India could carve out a space for themselves. They not only played the game in man's terms and excelled, but often went beyond.

*Recommended*

*The Telegraph* : 14 Nov. 1999

A Stree Shakti Publication

Priced at Rs. 175

## NETWORKING



# BREAKING BARRIERS

## **STREE SHAKTI DEMANDED FREE TRAVEL FOR WOMEN IN INDIA IN STATE TRANSPORT BUSES. DELHI, PUNJAB AND TAMILNADU PROVIDED, LOBBING WITH OTHER STATES**

Creating a Global women's voice

Rekha Mody with her persistent intent and purpose, is passionate about women issues be it elderly citizens, widows, orphans, underprivileged and vulnerable women. Rekha has been the voice for these marginalised women and amplifying their causes on various national and international forums. She has been relentlessly working towards their development through policy and program interventions. With her strong spiritual and cultural inclination, she has created a path and involved number of organizations in this space to achieve the objective of social cohesiveness and harmony.

Rekha has been an influencing person and through her innate capability and network can energise and convince people at the grass-root and policy level, with this blend of rare combination, she has the power to create positive change towards the betterment of the community.

With much appreciation and love,  
Dr Nirja Mattoo SPJ Mumbai

The meaning of Rekha in Sanskrit is Line- and the One who walks a straight line- meaning they adhere to a plan, protocol, or train of thought without any deviation or distraction, but not Rekha Mody!

She is this strong multi faceted woman, with diverse interests and knowledge. As a tribe leader, she sees it, as her responsibility to support her tribe, making a difference and rocking the globe! Her vision is to build up women, from different walks of life and support them to think big and reach high!

Elevating other women with determination, consciously and deliberately, Rekha believes that we grow together for the better! She loves challenges, is open to new ideas and nurtures her dreams as well as the dreams of other women. She celebrates other women's success, their efforts and her mission is to create a community of women who are achievers, grow together and pay it forward.

If you are around Rekha, she is happy for your accomplishments, actively encourages your goals and challenges!

As a fellow sister, I am honored to have Rekha as my dear friend.

Monica Lakhmana  
Former Vice President Stree Shakti

Stree Shakti an organization dedicated to empower women

Stree Shakti is unique to me as of many reasons. I happen to meet the founder, visionary leader of this organization in Kolkata and came to know about its role in caring elderly women in India. I was fascinated to hear about its innovative practices in helping women who have seen life as a struggle due to various reasons. The second is the role played by Mrs Rekha Modi, the visionary leader of Stree Shakti. If I have seen anyone committed to welfare of women that much and empowering them honestly, to me Mrs Rekha Modi is a role model. Third is the initiative taken by Stree Shakti to motivate women how have taken leadership to safeguard rights women. Just one example. Rabindranath Tagore Memorial Auditorium of the University of Ruhuna is a symbolic gift by Government of India to the people of Sri Lanka. At the opening ceremony Dayawati Modi Stree Shakti Samman for 2017-2018 was awarded to a Sri Lankan writer Mrs Anula de Silva on the recommendation of the University of Ruhuna. This award is in recognition of the role played by Dayawati Modi, the mother or Rekha Modi who has played a significant role in empowering women to be able to stand up for themselves. That was a stimulation to the Sri Lankan women who have dedicated their life to make a voice on social freedom of women. Lastly pronunciation and the meaning of the word "Stree Shakti" are same in Sinhala language because of its Sanskrit origin, that was taught to me by my good friend Professor Kamal Kishor Mishra, Professor of Oriental Studies, Calcutta University who is currently engaged in a research project on Kalidasa, poet who came to Sri Lanka in 5th century, supported by Stree Shakti. Having an organization of this nature is a matter of utmost pride and gratitude. Thank you for dedicating your amazing years of work.

Let me wish Stree Shakti all the best for future endeavours!

Tilak Priyadarshana DG, Professor and Director, UGC  
Sri Lanka

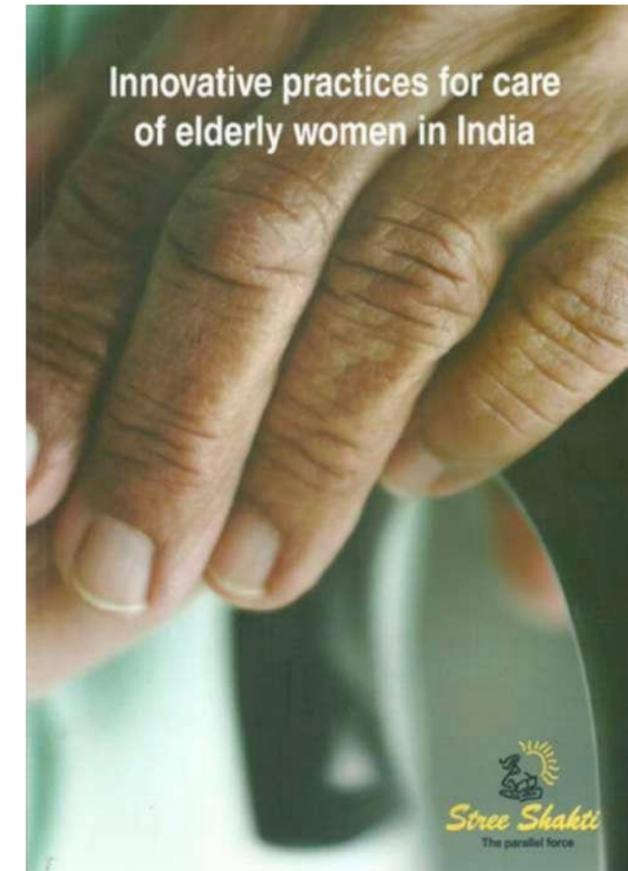
I have known Rekha for over 21 years. During this time, I have been impressed by her many qualities - a tremendous grit, a strong sense of confidence, an immense capacity to organize, and, above all, well-sorted out priorities. Rekha treads where few women have tread, by building an organization, "Streeshakti", from the ground up single-handedly and running it effectively till this day. I have been associated with this organization from its early days and have therefore observed first-hand how Rekha oversees everything, right from setting up seminars on a range of topics to finding the most apt person to lead a specific initiative. Rekha has always worked on giving due recognition to women scientists and social workers. Here's hoping that her dreams regarding the upliftment of women are fulfilled. Our world needs people like her to fight for such causes.

Dr. Sarmistha Chakrabarti, Hon'y Secretary Stree Shakti  
Associate Professor (Retired)

# DAYAWATI MODI STREE SHAKTI SAMMAN



# LIFE CYCLE APPROACH WITH A FOCUS ON THE ISSUE OF AGEING WOMEN



## GENDER EQUALITY



With President of India, Pratibha Devisingh Patil ji



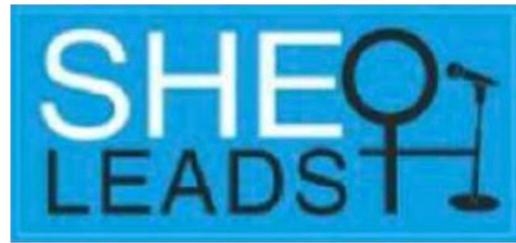
With the speaker of Lok Sabha, Sumitra Mahajan ji



Receiving The Inspiring Women Worldwide Award from Minister of Social Justice and Empowerment Kumari Selja ji and Congress Leader Panabaka Lakshmi ji



With President of Nepal, Bidhya Devi Bhandari ji



## Preparing women for political life



### Programme Partners





**Divya Chaya Trust**

**established:1984**



DIVYA CHAYA TRUST - where every individual is dedicated  
'Go alone if you want to go fast, If you want to go far go together'

Living in India, being cut off from the plight of two third of the population does not work. That is precisely where DCT comes in. The children from the initial years taught us to grow beautifully, despite adversity. DCT is a field-work project that started by catering to child care. DCT balances the fine art of giving, sharing, and caring. Although the first steps were tentative, we never wavered, remaining firm and determined. As our biggest teacher, DCT has taught us values of selfless service. Love, happiness, sanctification, meaning, and fulfilment have been our dividends. Today, we have community centres across four states.

West Bengal: Trust builds Karam Bhoomi (land of action). We support the underserved at the Rajarhat Bishnupur area with services like pre-school and digital training.

Haryana: Chiranjiv Karam Bhoomi Care Home, Palam Vihar serves as an old age home and tuition center.

Uttar Pradesh: Govardhan has a dedicated school for village children Delhi: We have a community centre that fulfils DCT's objectives.

The project has surely impacted many lives, including mine. I am thankful to God for providing me this unique opportunity which has transformed me. I plan to continue with this work for as long as I live.

SAVE A CHILD, UK

In 1987, I got an opportunity to help start SAC UK and work very closely with Mrs. Joan Bond over three decades to help children find sponsorships. Due to changes and the accidental death of Barbara Lloyd, we decided to gradually part ways. It was a wonderful experience and I learnt a lot.



Mrs Rekha Mody is the founder trustee of Divya Chaya Trust. She is a true visionary and a great philanthropist. With numerous accolades to her credit, through her leadership she bring together like minded and resourceful women to contribute towards helping the underprivileged. I reminiscence my first meeting with her in 1989 in Kolkata in a social gathering. Her vision, her commitment and unlimited energy motivated me to associate myself with Divya Chaya Trust. The Divine Grace of the almighty helped her to succeed as her motives are right and efforts are sincere.

'Let God use you as his instruments to spread his love, compassion and concern to all, specially the underprivileged.

GOD BLESS YOU

Kamal Chugh, DCT Trustee

**Chaya Trust aims to empower destitute children and women, Stree Shakti, a sister concern, promotes female achievements.**

age, and qualified psychologists look after the women's mental health. They are helped to secure loans to set up their own businesses, the trust has helped to set up a school in Sevilah—and a major portion of the UK through Save-a-Child.

Obviously the many success stories. A child, finished her schooling and is now a confident, bright young lady. She has started a course to improve her professional skills. 21, who came from a poor family, recently went to Gujarat to offer her services to the quake victims. "Divya Chaya has taught me to pass on kindness, I do my best to help those in need," he says with a smile.

But that's not all. In November '86, Rekha founded Stree Shakti—an institute supported by the Habsart Foundation, a charitable trust, working for the promotion of contemporary art and traditional crafts. Stree Shakti has been actively networking with social and educational institutions throughout India. Quite simply, it seeks to empower women. "I am an eminent Indian woman who set up the Daya, a village centre in West Bengal. Here, the women receive formal and vocational education, are educated about their legal rights, and even taught banking and finance. A medical centre and hostel rooms have also been set up at the village. They seem more eager to lend a helping hand." Stree Shakti of Divya Chaya can be contacted through Rekha Mody, RA Middleton Street, Calcutta 700071; fax: 22938895; e-mail: streshakti@hotmail.com; phone: 2293886. ■

My association with Rekha ji has panned over four decades and it is very difficult to encapsulate it in words. She has enriched my life both personally and professionally, from adding to my laughter lines to building DCT. She has always been a visionary and a compassionate person. Together we dreamt and she had the capacity to implement it. She has been a lamp, adding light to my life. She personifies how a friend in need is a friend indeed.

Amrit Agarwal, DCT Trustee

Rekha and Amrit wanted to start a new chapter of that NGO in Delhi. The very first day I was very much impressed by Rekha: her dedication, her energy, and her future plans inspired me and I immediately joined the NGO. During one fund raising programme, while other members were offering money, I along with Sushil Ji donated a plot land in Palam Vihar, Gurugram for a home for senior citizens. In heart of hearts, it was my dream of earnest desire to create a home for the lonely and neglected seniors who had no place to spend peacefully last days of their lives peacefully and comfortably. We enjoyed working together, traveled together many times to Vrindavan where a school was raised for children of snake charmers and Dalit community. Rekha inspired me, I learnt a lot from her. Her enthusiasm filled me with conviction and will to carry on - As she like James Baldwin believed "the challenge is in the moment, the time is always now". Our old age home is an ideal home for the senior citizens name 'Chiranjiv Karam Bhoomi'. Her helping hand and determination turned every stone from an obstacle to a stepping stone. Whenever I met her I think of the famous Chinese proverb.

"A bird does not sing because it has an answer, it sings because it has a song."

Dr.Kusum Ansal, DCT Trustee

Congratulation Rekha ji! It has been a wonderful association with you! Loved and learnt through it! What DCT is today is because of your guts too! We dreamt together and are achieving it!

Prabha Agarwal, DCT Trustee

10 years ago I was looking for the right cause and an organization that would provide me with a meaningful channel to connect with my community. That's when I came in contact with Rekha ji who gave me the wonderful opportunity to associate myself with the Govardhan School and the last 10 years have been nothing short of a rewarding experience. Knowing that you made a positive impact on less privileged children has truly been an emotionally uplifting experience. This association has not only helped me make a difference in the lives of these children and their families, but also given me a personal sense of achievement, pride and identity. And none of this would have been possible without the guidance, leadership and support of Rekha ji. She has been a great mentor to me during this journey and her guidance and advice have always been valuable. The principles that the institution is built upon are a reflection of her core values. Thank you Rekha ji for giving me a chance to give back and I look forward to continuing this journey with you!

Rita Narula Convenor Govardhan DCT

I feel privileged for being a part of DCT for more than twenty years. I have seen an excellent combination of dedication, hard work and worthy causes that DCT attends to. The commitment of our trustees, members, staff and volunteers is indeed praise worthy. I truly wish that all the good work being done carries on for all times to come.

Veena Thapar Co-convenor Goavrdhan and Palam Vihar



“Shared joy is a double joy; shared sorrow is half sorrow.”-

Friends & colleagues:

I am fortunate to enjoy the friendship of diverse people in my life. Is it a coincidence that all of them became my colleagues? They enriched my life and supported my work. They joined me to work for various organizations, like Stree Shakti, Divya Chaya Trust, or Habiart, depending on their interests. I am happy to have become a catalyst to provide them a forum for impactful work. It is a win win situation as work becomes more enjoyable and friendship become more meaningful. They say, You have three types of friends in life: Friends for a reason, friends for a season, and friends for a lifetime. With work they become Friends for Life .

Friendship is the essence of life. Its a selfless relationship, only adding and never subtracting.

I am truly blessed. It is like a dream job to work with your friends.

Everyone can dream but weaving dreams , Into a cohesive pattern is an art.

In gratitude,  
Rekha Mody



I began voluntary work in India in 1987.

The date marks a crossroads in my life. I had a good job, my children were almost all at university and I felt ready for a new challenge. I had always wanted to go to India, but somehow the idea of going as a western tourist to what was then a relatively poor, but fast developing country was unappealing. I wanted to get to know the country in depth, at all levels.

It was about this time that Mrs. Rekha Mody founded Divya Chaya Trust, a charity aimed at getting justice for the many children in prison in Kolkata. She hoped to get western donors on board, and her plan was covered by The Independent newspaper in the UK, where an article appealed for volunteers.

I was one of 67 applicants. Two were chosen. The other was a young graduate interested in Indian textiles. I was middle aged, had no experience of Asia, but was keen to learn. It was thus that I arrived in Calcutta, to meet Mrs. Rekha Mody for the first time. To cut a very long story short, I quickly became involved in her project, and continued to work with her and many others, both in India and the UK for the next 30 years, visiting India more than 31 times in the course of the work. I shall always be indebted to Rekha for offering me this unique opportunity, and for inspiration and steadfast friendship through many years of working together.

I made annual visits to monitor sponsored children, raised money for several orphanages, was involved in setting up a women's co-operative for textile workers, ran a pioneering health camp for a mission school infected with scabies, led a party of Girl Guides into the hills below Darjeeling on the equivalent of the Duke of Edinburgh's award hike, and cooked an English dinner with a Maharani of Tripura, besides partaking in many other adventures.

In 2016, I was honoured to receive an award for humanitarian work given by the Ramakrishna Vivekananda Mission, Barrackpore.

My work in India has been life-changing, and I continue to feel great gratitude to the woman who gave me that first chance. It remains the case that many aid volunteers are young, with idealism, a sense of adventure and perhaps a gap year driving them on. To get such a chance in middle age was quite unusual, especially in the 1980's. The advent of the Covid19 pandemic has temporarily put a stop to visits to India. However I remain involved with two schools in Bihar, and continue to be in touch with Mrs Mody and her family, who welcomed me so warmly all those years ago. Rekha has been especially generous in giving me introductions to people in India who I would never have met without her help. It has been a great privilege to work with her, and I wish her every success with her humanitarian efforts in the future.

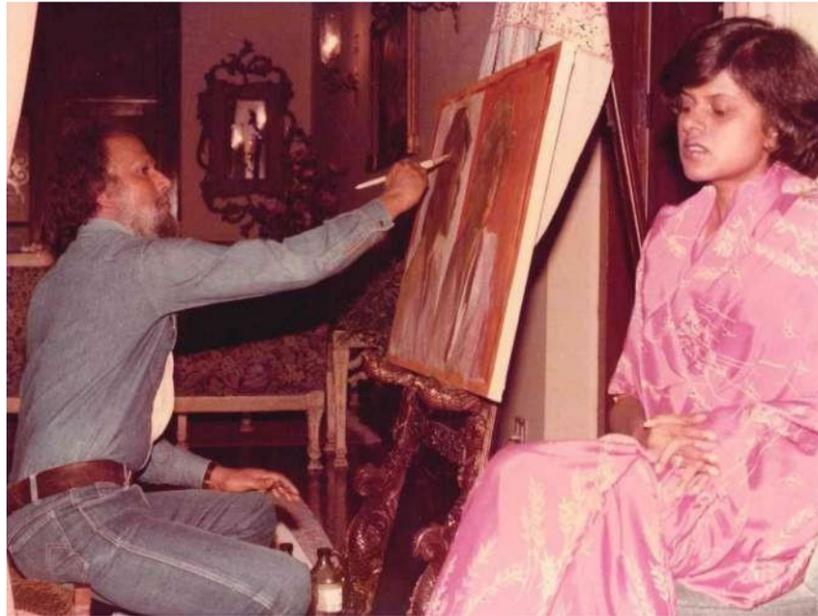
Joan Bond Save A Child London





# The World of Art

# Jatin Das Painting Portrait



Genesis Art Gallery, Kolkata



## Painting the way

Senior and junior artists interacted at the Calcutta art camp

In Calcutta, the cooler December winds always blow in cultural events; and so, with the advent of winter, Calcutta was once again the scene of a string of seminars, expositions, debates and workshops.

One such event was the ten-day Artists' Workshop, jointly sponsored by the Housing and Urban Development Corporation (HUDCO) and the Genesis Art Gallery, between 17 and 27 December.

Twenty four artists from all over the country participated in the workshop, which was divided into 'studio' and 'camp'. Senior artists like Jatin Das, Suhas Roy, Jai Jharotia and Suruchi

among the artists themselves."

No doubt, the camp fulfilled the first two objectives. That it satisfied the third was evident throughout the event. Artists such as Sunil Das and Jai Jharotia actively interacted with others of the ilk. Younger artists, too, were seen hovering around their seniors, questioning them about their techniques.

For Sunil Das, the experience, though welcome, was nothing new. A regular participant at art camps since the early Sixties, he feels such workshops will encourage artists and give younger painters an opportunity to pick up tips from their elders. When asked if the reverse could also be true and senior artists

Jain, wife of the *Times of India* chairman Ashok Jain, dropped by, an impromptu, stimulating discussion would result, with artists like Suhas Roy explaining their relationship to their canvases.

For Bombay painter Suruchi Chand, who has organised and attended half a dozen such camps, it was enough to just be with other painters. "Where's the need to talk or have discussions? It is enough to just watch each other paint. Half the time we seem to be splitting in each other's eyes," she said. "It's so nice to meet in pleasanter surroundings."

But for all the enthusiasm that the senior artists displayed, it was the younger painters who benefited from the camp in the truest sense. For Ashok Mallick (30), the camp provided an opportunity to watch long-admired artists like Suhas Roy and Navjot work on their canvases, and for P.K. Kolay (27), it meant being advised by Jatin Das on his methods of sketching.

Each artist was left free to paint as many canvases as he wanted to, but expected to contribute to one large communal canvas. Most artists painted two canvases. All works were displayed at an exhibition between 27 December and 5 January, organised by the Genesis Art Gallery. Besides the camp and the exhibition, there was also a seminar, held to discuss 'Art in Habitat', and an audio-visual by Rajiv Sethi on *Nehru Kala Kunj*, well attended by Calcutta's cultural glitterati.

Art camps are not a new phenomenon. One of the first, according to



Participants at the Artists' Workshop: all contributed to

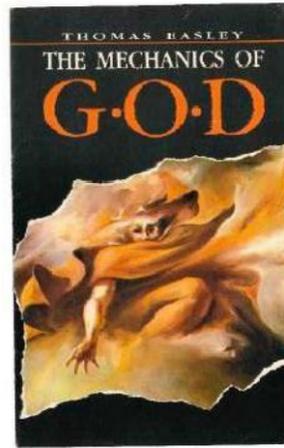
Chand painted on the lawns adjoining the gallery, while younger artists like Kanchan Chandra and Indrapuri Mistiri worked within the confines of the gallery.

According to Rekha Mody, owner of Genesis Art Gallery and an avid collector herself, there were three prime reasons for hosting the camp. "Firstly, we wanted to generate publicity for the gallery which was started a few years ago," she says candidly. "Then, we wanted to establish a relationship between the artist and the collector. We found that collectors tended to buy regionally, not having been exposed to a national perspective. And thirdly, we wanted to foster a feeling of fraternity

might newer held trees, establish

The evolve would invigo Some togeth Tewa farth line critics tiptoe vases Some





Rekha is a dear friend, one of my dearest friends, but friendship does not encompass all she means to me.

I have laughed with Rekha, learned from her, traveled with her, worked with her, reveled in her celebrations, and suffered her losses. Through all she carries a light heart eager to share her honesty, her faithful resilience. Rekha is something right in a world much in need of correction. Her life tells the story of what can be if we care enough for others to see ourselves in them, to see ourselves through them into a world without us in it. And it's this, this sometimes abstracted but always rewarding greater scale-of-vision perspective, that holds me to Rekha, and her to me.

How many years have passed by since I met Rekha? Mostly, I don't remember, but many. Usually I just think many, but factually, it was Calcutta, 1987, some 33 years ago, and still, whenever we meet it's as if we were again talking for the first time. Time seems to give no age to our friendship, it's as a fruit ever-ripe but never falling from the tree.

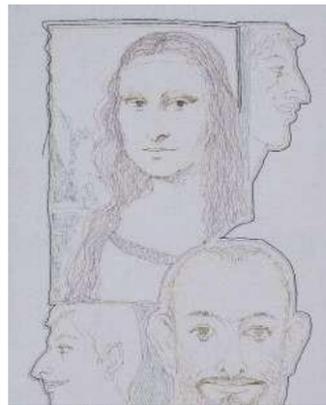
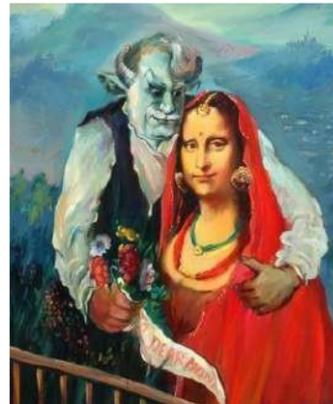
I remember reading somewhere that we can never have too many friends. I've always agreed with that. Friends buy and sell with the currency of good-will. Mutual respect guides them. And there are levels, diverse levels of trust that friends exchange on. In Rekha I have a friend I can be completely honest with without fear of covert reprisal or misunderstanding.

I trust Rekha with any thought I have, any idea, any feeling, knowing, in an exchange with her, that she will add value to whatever my curious nature has unearthed.

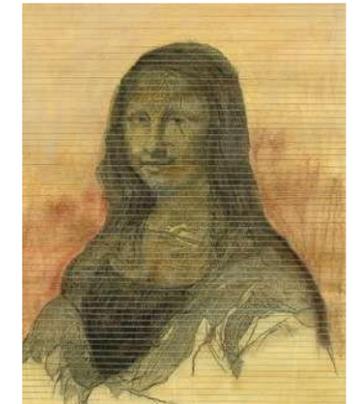
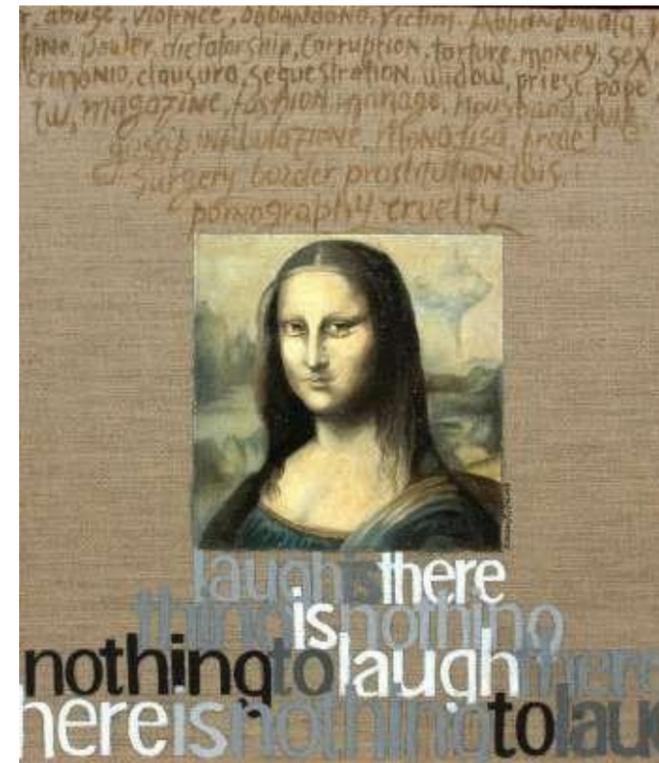
Thomas Easley

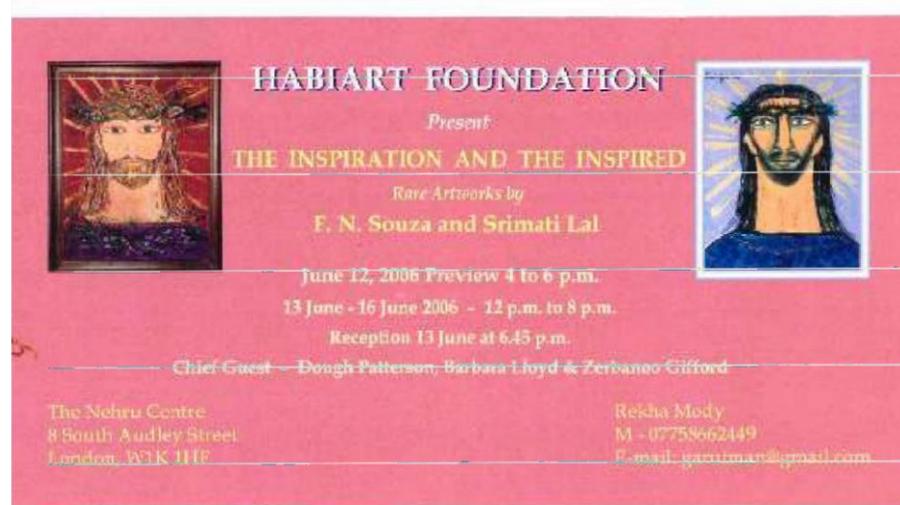
To celebrate 500 years of Mona Lisa the famous work of Leonard Da Vinci, Habiart commissioned twelve artists from India, Pakistan, Nepal, Italy, and USA to interpret Mona Lisa in a contemporary style in 2006.





# Hello Mona Lisa





I have been taking photographs in India for many years. A favourite subject has always been women. Indian women are often exceptionally beautiful and I wanted to show women carrying their power with them, women being themselves. In 2013, Rekha encouraged me to show my photos which, up till then, I had kept for myself. She offered me exhibition space in Calcutta and the resulting show was a sell-out, with all the profits going to support the Gyandeeep School in Gurgaon which was a project initiated by Stree Shakti, Rekha's charity. Through Rekha a change was initiated in my life....

- Jenny Mulder

I met Rekha Mody in the early 1980's at her Genesis Gallery in Kolkata while I was researching Contemporary Indian Art. She was immediately welcoming, knowledgeable and friendly. She invited me to her beautiful home next door for tea. Since then we meet regularly and often, collaborating on art and cultural events.

Rekha has a wide range of interests, from art, literature, her many charitable and cultural projects. I participated in several large Art Fairs she organized in Kolkata and New Delhi showing calligraphic based works and presenting versions of my ongoing World Tea Party project.

Over the years we have done World Tea manifestations for numerous events; numerous Shri Sakti Women Leader Award Ceremonies, Literary and Charitable events, at the Russian Cultural Center in New Delhi. Rekha-ji has a wonderful energy for organizing events and looking after details.

Over the years I have had the pleasure of getting to know her family and extensive network of creative friends. I did a number of World Tea Party events with her brother B. K. Modi, during inter-spiritual gatherings and pilgrimages to sacred sites.

I have traveled with Rekha to numerous sacred sites in India, Jowala Devi in Himachal, Bodh Gaya and Vashali in Bihar to attend ceremonies and the opening of Nunneries. We meet in London to promote books she was publishing with her Garutman Literary Agents, and attend art exhibitions.

Rekha-ji is always ready to explore new cultural experiences and has a keen eye open to the most experimental artistic explorations.

Overall these, almost forty, years now, Rekha remains and loyal, inspired enthusiastic friend and trusted colleague who is truly dedicated to promoting and expanding the role of Indian Art and Culture around the country and world. It has been an honor and privilege to collaborate with Rekha-ji, while enjoying her trusted friendship.

Bryan Mulvihill  
 Artist and Founding Director of World Tea Party Society  
 Vancouver Canada  
 September 2020

### The art of tea



TEA TIME Bryan Mulvihill flanked by Rekha Mody and Isha Mody PHOTO: RAJEEV BHATT

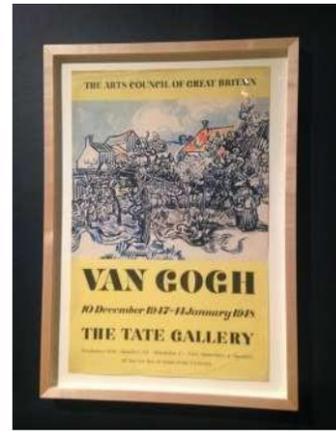
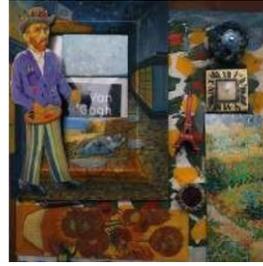
Imagine a tea party for only artists and sculptors and works of art based on only tea. This is what is going to happen this Saturday at Trivancore Art Gallery at 8 p.m. This event, India's first, is also the beginning of a global concept of World Tea Party (WTF) organized by Canadian-based international organizer of World Tea Party, Bryan Mulvihill. This party arranged in association with Habiart Foundation is two-staged at "gathering like-minded people in art as well as creating awareness about tea-related works of art and artefacts, the history and development all over the world, art of traditional and ceremonial tea making and much more."

as Isha Mody, director of the art fair, states. Adds Bryan, known as the Tea Man across the globe, "India is the largest tea producer and drinker in the world. So it made sense to initiate the concept in India. I organized the world's first tea party in 1990 at the National Gallery of Canada, followed by Mindscape Museum in Japan in 1997, Los Angeles in 1999 and Royal Academy of London in 2006 at the London Biennale. I am going to organize the next one at Eiffel Tower in Paris in May 2008."

On April 15, he is going to organize tea party at Dharamshala for all monks, sadhus and road-siders "to initiate a dialogue on peace". RANA SIDDIQUI



# Reliving VanGogh



## Experience the spirit of Van Gogh at IIC

THE ASIAN AGE | RAJKUMAR TANKHA  
Published: Feb 15, 2018, 2:14 am IST  
Updated: Feb 15, 2018, 2:14 am IST

The second part shows the works he produced after he had moved in Paris (1869-85) where he did many of his iconic oil paintings.

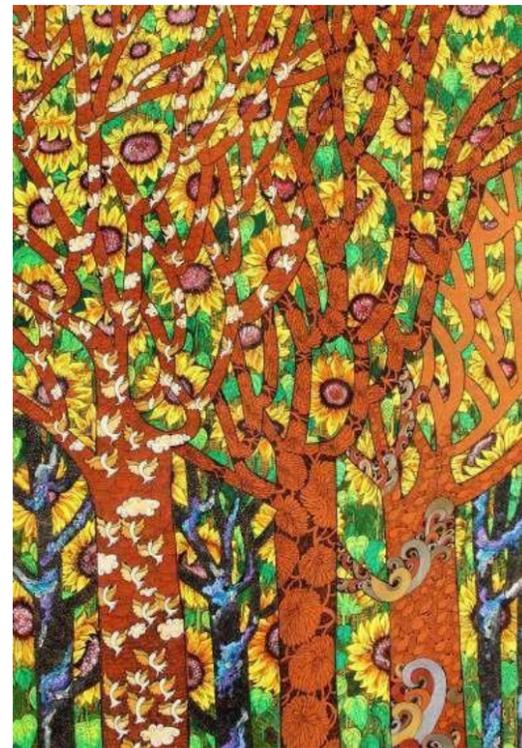


Kohli has created Sunflowers using acrylics and ink on canvas with silver leaf.

Want to experience the spirit of Van Gogh? Visit India International Centre, Habitat Foundation is hosting Reliving Van Gogh's Art Exhibition at the India International Centre, 1st floor, 477, Connaught Place, New Delhi, on Feb 17. And if you want to understand the spirit of Van Gogh, attend the interactive session Potatoes Eaters Party that's held every evening, at 4 pm.

On display are the artworks of Jyoti Ghosh, one from India, Seeta Kohli and two from Bangladesh, Begum Tahsina Lipi and Mainabur Rahman.

It was in 2015 that these three artists visited three museums about Van Gogh: Museum in Amsterdam, The Kröller-Müller Museum in Otterlo and Eet Noodderbier's Museum in The Netherlands, and studied the works of the celebrated artist. Motivated by this, they created artworks inspired by Van Gogh's creation, such as 'The Potato Eaters' and 'Almond Blossom'. The trip was supported by Habitat Foundation, involved in promotion art for nearly three decades now. "I was an art admirer, a painter's friend in the agency and mainstream of Van Gogh's work," says Kohli, who conceptualised and curated the show.



Inspired by Van Gogh's

The Potato Eaters,  
1885



and Almond Blossom,  
1890





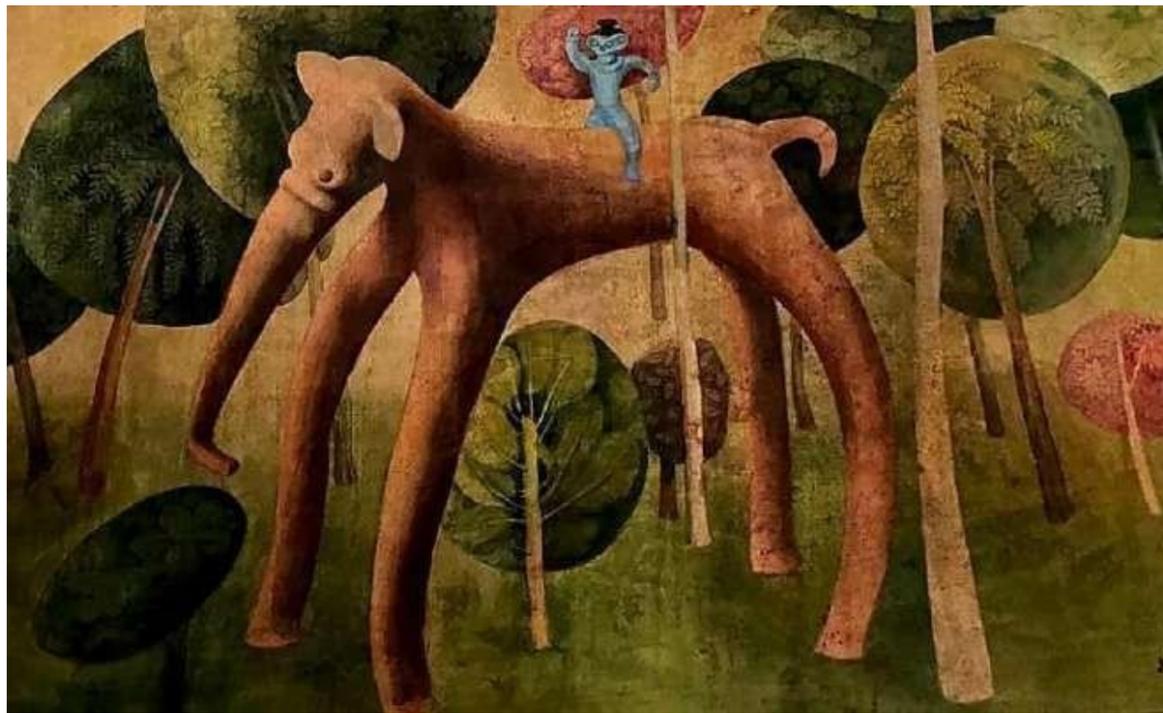
Amla Shankar

July 24, 2020: Amla Di, at the age of 101, has left for her heavenly abode. Many memories rush to my mind, 1990 a chance meeting at Gorky Sadan's director Mr foshkin's apartment , dressed in natural tussar saari wearing a rudarksh mala in her neck and with white chandan tika on her forehead she with her warmth immediately became my friend ; we agreed to meet again and soon she visited me at my art gallery Genesis and expressed her desire to stage Uday Shankar's famous shadow play Maha Manav . As if bewitched by her i started following her command and arranged with ITC to sponsor her show at Nazrul Manch. The show was a great success and at the age of seventy Amla Di played the role of Buddha . She invited me to visit her apartment and showed me her beautiful hand painted glass slides which were used to reflect the background in dance drama. She did not use a brush , with her fingers painted , the outcome was mesmerising. She invited me to her flat in BallyGunje and showed her mini glass paintings she had done for Budha -Shadow play done by legendary Uday Shankar . Her technique was mesmerizing as she did not use paint brush, she painted with her nails and fingers. The paintings had a mystic atmosphere, I asked her if I could exhibit her works and she followed my every suggestion and within three months we could mount her exhibition in 1992 in Genesis Kolkatta and Habiart New Delhi.... she was a divine soul ...

'This is not my first exhibition. Earlier Rekha Mody of "Stree Shakti" had organised one in 1992 perhaps in Kolkata and Delhi with a few of my works. I am thankful to Rekha because she was the one to bring me into the world of painting. It is very fulfilling to draw a picture which has my philosophy embedded in it..'

Amla Shankar 2001





Manik Lal Bannerjee  
Art Shows - Delhi, Kolkata, Shanti Niketan

# Habitat auction to raise funds for aged

By N. S. Srinivasan

**D**ISEASED and crippled baby Habitat Foundation is about to set up its first art auction, in association with Helpage India. The sale is scheduled for the 20th and 21st of next month at the Shanti Niketan, Kolkata. The auction, which is a joint venture of Habitat and Helpage, will see the funds going to the aged.

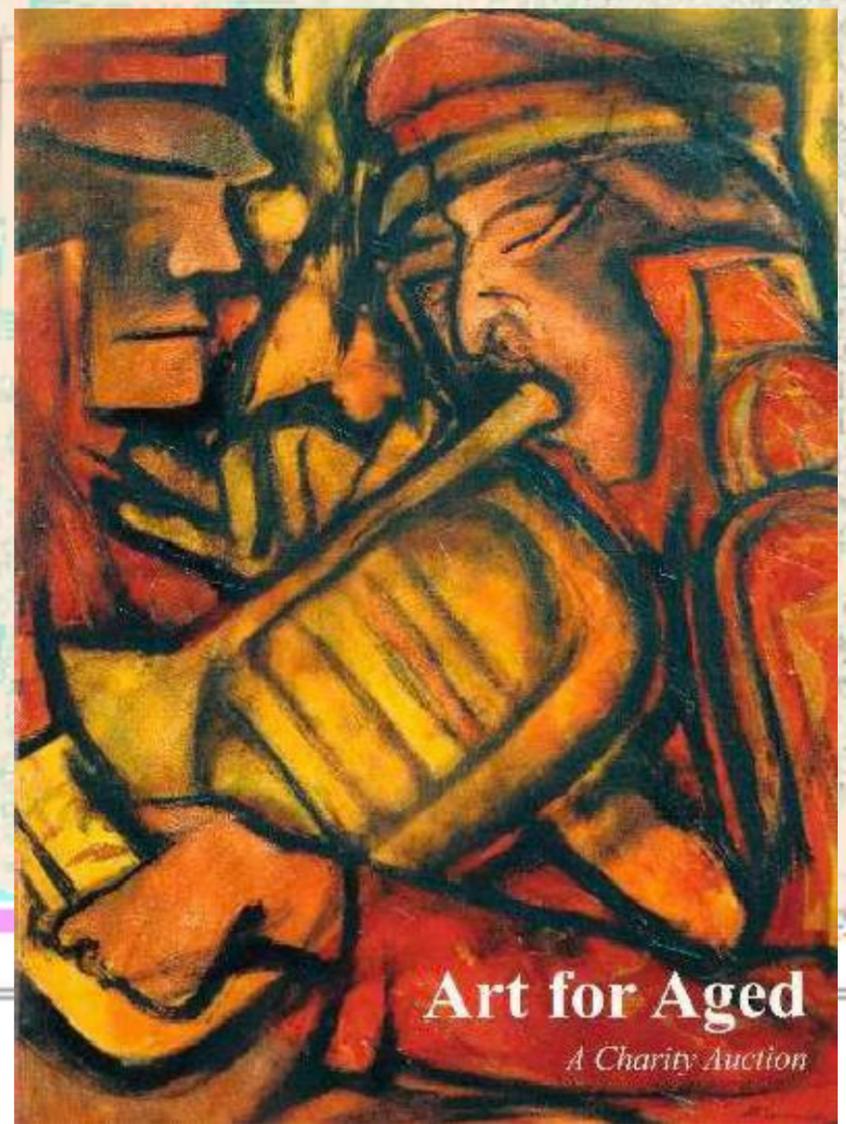
Habitat and Helpage have been working for the aged for many years. Habitat, which was set up in 1982, has a long record of work in the field of the aged. It has been a pioneer in the field of the aged in India. It has been a pioneer in the field of the aged in India. It has been a pioneer in the field of the aged in India.

Habitat, the aid is being given to the aged. It is being given to the aged.

It is being given to the aged. It is being given to the aged. It is being given to the aged. It is being given to the aged. It is being given to the aged.

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**Art for Aged**  
*A Charity Auction*

Driving down from my home to the Tridant at 6.30 Am in the morning to have morning tea, croissants, steaming snacks ,exotic fruit platter!looking out at the fresh sea vista in front thru the large Oberoi windows and talking thousands of ideas! plus husbands,paintings,books and poetry.! not to forget boy friends too! White marble floor with a red shining lacqured piano.! an exquisely crafted piece of workmanship.

I could always rely on Rekha to be always by my side for important shows weddings of my children, to spend the night or day whenever or where ever I may want it! Her love for mauni baba and companionship to accompany him to Japan, London, Paris and so many places in India and dutifully perform whatever role was assigned to her! Her ability to adjust with her daughters to stay in one large room with so many of their friends and put me there too as I had checked out of my hotel as I was ready to leave n go to Mumbai when I suddenly surprisingly met her in Paris on the day I was leaving for India!

Holiday in London! Yes that was realy fun travelling to the museums and Tate gallery , sitting in bars having meals with drinks, going to the casino seeing Rekha relax with gambling! Then Rekha showing me her membership to so many other casinos! Vow that was really neet for me!! Could not imagine that at all !

Change over her-? Yes she is suddenly a glamorous grandmother to a very cute and bright grand daughter who is a better friend of hers than me!

The most interning person I met with her was a very bright young art critic manosij and two others , Amla Shanker was another person I really liked a lot.!

Rekha in one word would d be a perfect ideas lady with a charecter all her own! Her writing, her spirit and her warmth that gave so many Colors to her personality! Shall I call her colourful support to the world in many many fields.Reading writing, social work, and Bhakti to so many supportive causes.

Suruchi Chand





It was our common love for art that brought us together. Among other things, Rekha also ran an art gallery in a building next to her home in Calcutta's Middleton Street. And this little haven became a meeting place for several upcoming artists who were encouraged to display their work at exhibitions sponsored by her. Knowing Rekha, this venture was a pure act of love. Like several other ventures she undertook - always path-breaking, but business duds! But to Rekha, it was the dream that mattered. It always has. When I was on a British Council grant to study filmmaking in London, Rekha paid for part of my air ticket. She pushed me into buying a beautiful Sakti Burman litho at a price that was ridiculous. And over the years she has fed me some of the most delicious meals I have had the privilege of partaking in her gracious home.

Coming from one of India's most illustrious business families, I think Rekha's bent of mind is more akin to her mother's - fiercely private and spiritual; always fighting for the underdog; a rebel with several causes that she is not afraid to support. Among the multitudes one meets in this city, I will always count Rekha as someone who stands unconditionally by her friends through thick and thin. And I continue to remain humbled by her social work and her generosity.

For me, Rekha will always be special.

Jayabroto

In protest of the destruction of Bamiyan Buddha, Habiart organized a creative protest involving over 108 artists in six cities: Kolkata, New Delhi, Hyderabad, Mumbai, Bhopal, and Kathmandu in 2001. The works were displayed in the Indian Parliament and at the prestigious World Economic Forum Meet at Davos.



ART AGAINST TERROR  
by Anjolie Ela Menon, Jatin Das, Suresh, Fokhrul  
13.12.2002

# Paintings depict trauma

# Dec. 13 attack

**By Our Correspondent**

New Delhi, Dec. 13: To protest against the attack on Indian democracy — exactly a year ago — artists and designers got together to stage a creative protest against violence and terrorism. They joined hands to create a series of paintings and designs, along with artists from Nepal took part in this peace project. They used the brush skillful to ask people to denounce all acts of violence.

These works were showcased at an exhibition aptly titled *Spote* — a

series of terraces. Over 100 artists and designers, along with artists from Nepal took part in this peace project. They used the brush skillful to ask people to denounce all acts of violence.

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Times News Network

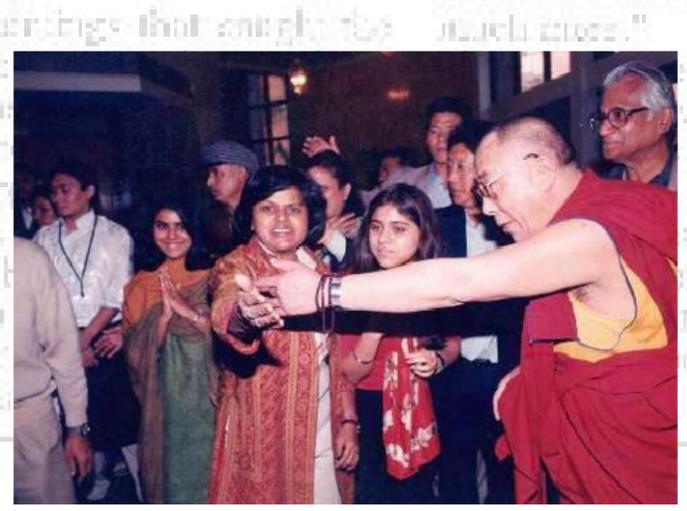
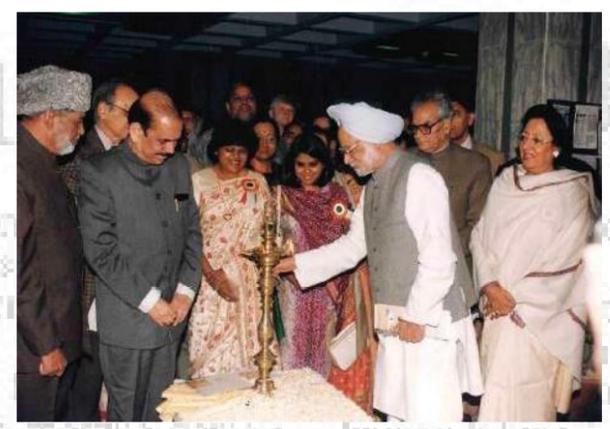


PHOTO BY...

New Delhi: A brush with peace. To forge the art to violence and terrorism on the day Parliament was attacked. There was an exhibition paintings and artists of the together to create their works of art on a white canvas in the Capital.

While on the wall images of peace were being painted, Vice President Ishratul Singh, Sarkhaty, Deputy prime minister L.K. Advani, Bharu Narsingh Mehta, chairman of National Book Trust, New Delhi, and...

...to his eye for the... In the... painting... Suneel Chopra's... narrative story of terror in society, where... designer Aki Narula had done a paper drawing of a distorted Buddha.

"It was moving to see the creative ideas artists had come up with against terror and violence," said collector Kalpana Chopra.

There were some 14 paintings done by artists, designers and designers in various workshops organized by Tibetan Foundation in the

# an act of terror



## From Art To Air



Rekha Mody: Tully time

● Guess who has got the ace's voice in India to move to air? None other than **Rekha Mody**, the 32-year-old sister of Modi Xerox coo B.K. Modi, who runs the Genesis Art Gallery in Calcutta. Mody has now teamed up with Mark Tully to float Radio Network, which is bidding to present radio shows on air's air channels in Calcutta. Says Mody: "Our programmes are sure to be a hit." For Rekha Mody, this is Mark Tully.

■ Rekha Mody brows a trendy new line of business when she sees one. She has been in publishing, run a bookshop and an even an art gallery. Now, she is in her 30s, and has decided that the smart money is in

STANDARD

mal Modi, Rekha Mody has always struck out on her own and she thanks her mother for giving her inspiration. Back in the late '70s, when women from her class and community in Calcutta were still comparatively housebound, Mody decided to open the first air-conditioned bookshop in the city, called Genesis.

Why did she venture into the uncertain world of bookselling? "I wanted to do something interesting with my time and at the same time, something that was commercially viable." However, when the bookshop did not do well Mody had no qualms about closing it down. And she moved quickly to her next line of business and turned the bookshop into an art gallery.

Towards the mid-'80s, she began her imprint, Garimaa, in Delhi which published translations of regional language literature. She also collaborated with Hudco to mount exhibitions for the Habitat gallery in Delhi. Her tie-up with Sotheby's, however, was not as successful as she had hoped it might be.

Undeterred, she plunged into the new company, Radio Network with the star broadcaster Mark Tully, Satish Jacob, Kamana Prasad, a leading member of Delhi's smart set as co-shareholders. Retired civil servant Gopi Arora is the chairman of the board. Radio Network will beam its first programmes on the newly started Calcutta FM channel from Monday. "I wanted to enter the electronic media."

Having bagged three hours of prime time in the morning, afternoon and evening for Bengali, English and Hindi programmes, Mody and her fellow-directors are all set to beam peppy broadcasts. One of the highlights will be a high profile slot, Tully Times, where Mark Tully will interview someone in the news. There will be a lot of swinging music and snappy information as well as interviews.

While Mark Tully will bring in his broadcasting expertise and Rekha Mody will look after the Calcutta end of opera-

tions, Kamana Prasad will oversee activities in Delhi. Dressed with ethnic chic, the tall slim Prasad, has been making films for Doodarshan. A close friend of Husain, Prasad had also shot a video film of the maverick artist. And now she has taken to radio like a duck to water. With a team like this, Mody could be well set to rule the radio waves.

## Radio Network, 1994:

When FM radio licences were being allotted on the same frequency, I jumped at the opportunity with BBC veteran Mark Tully and Kamana Prasad, as my partners, with M.F. Hussain designing the logo and music director Salil Choudhury composing the signature tune. On the day of the launch party in August, 1994, I sacked seventy percent of the hired radio jockeys, owing to their nervousness and below-standard performance. A new team was quickly identified, which included Gautam Bhimani and Derek O'Brein. I hired Om Puri's wife, Nandita to run the Mumbai office. Despite having access to brands, such as Tata, Coca Cola, and Philips, I had to sell the channel after two years on a premium to Times of India (TOI). I was unable to sustain TOI's aggressive policy of offering free advertising against my rate of Rs. 330 per ten seconds. It made financial sense to disinvest with a five-time-premium.

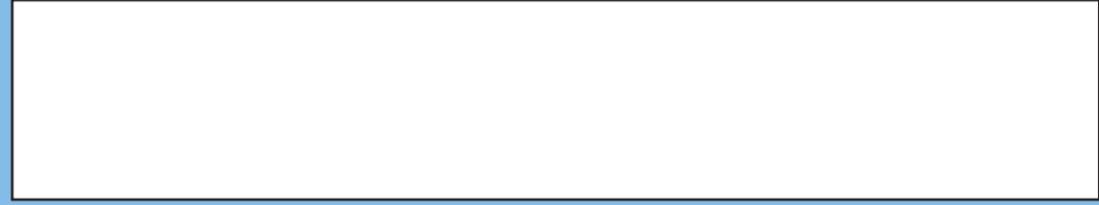
They run the channel. Among her partners are ex-BBC broadcasters Mark Tully and Satish Jacob. In Delhi the leading radio station will be taken by sociable Kamana Prasad, who is the wife of former bureau chief Michael Batye.

Wife of industrialist Padam Modi and daughter of the Modisagar patriarch, Gajra-

## Metro Pink Pages, 1994:

With an objective to start a business venture, I collaborated with Peerless and started a project in MPP, on creating a service directory of four Metros - Delhi, Kolkata, Mumbai, and Chennai. Mr. P.C. Sen of Peerless had provided his unflinching support. Forty thousand copies were printed, with Standard Charter Bank distributing complimentary copies to their clients. It was a lot of hard work and learning. However, with the advent of Google, phone directories lost their relevance and the project folded.





**Realm of God**



**Laxmi Narayan Temple, Modi Nagar (1954 to 1963)**

I was born with an awareness of whirling cosmos. The shining Moon and the Sun always attracted me to think beyond the boundaries of physical Life. Newton, Carl Sagan, and the Indian Gurus with their mystical powers compelled me to travel to take mental flights in the mysterious universe.

My parents had built a temple in my home town in 1963. Hence, I grew up on a big dose of rituals and pilgrimages. This, in turn, made me seek more proof of God's existence, wishing to directly experience the super natural. This led to a period of two or three years during my youth, when I had started rejecting the idea of God. Even then, I always repeated the lines of Lord Tennyson: There is more faith in an honest doubt than in half the creed.

My genuine doubt in God made me seek answers to my many questions. During this time, I had started seeking future forecasts from astrologers, who frequented my house. My logic was simple: If there is a plan, then there has to be a planner.

I, however, was dumb not to see the plan all around me, in Nature and in Life.

A firm believer in rebirth, it was very clear to me that I would not be able to make spiritual progress without the guidance of a Guru. I had read 'An Autobiography of a Yogi' and was desperate for a Guru. The intellectual books of J Krishnamurthy inculcated a search, but did not offer any experience. I read about Vivekanand's experience with Sri Ram Krishan Paramhans and yearned for a similar Guru. Meeting my Guru, Braham Rishi Mauni Baba in 1993, finally, led me to understand the powers of God and his mysterious ways.

An astrologer I had met when I was fourteen, predicted my future through a simple story. He told me that although I would marry a nice gentleman and complete many projects successfully, my real work life would not begin until sixty. On turning sixty, I lost Padam on 18 March 2014 and finally understood the real meaning of this prophecy.

'Freedom from the desire for an answer is essential to the understanding of a problem'



**1968, Maharishi Mahesh Yogi, Rishikesh**

The Beatles were visiting Rishikesh and inspired by transcendental meditation, were putting up in Maharishi's ashram. Meanwhile, with my parents, I was visiting the sages around Modi Bhawan, Haridwar, for fifteen days. On hearing about the Beatles, I went to Maharishi's ashram and was fortunate to receive both his darshan and meet the Beatles, at the same time. In 2018, as they were commemorating the Beatles' visit of 1968 in Rishikesh, I travelled once again to visit the cave of Maharishi.



**1976, Anandmoyi Maa, Modi Nagar**

Anandmoyi Maa was my mother's Guru. This is why I have been fortunate with her regular darshan, in Kankhal, Vrindavan, and Delhi, since childhood. My father's death in 1976 prompted her to shower her blessings on the family and she stayed in Modi Nagar, Sikri Bagh for thirteen days. It was a rare honour; Her presence gave the family strength to tide over the crisis.

**1982, Kolkata lunch with Spiritual Guru Jiddu Krishnamurti**

Philosopher Jiddu Krishnamurti was a philosopher, speaker, and writer. Although he was groomed to be a new World Teacher during his early life, he rejected this mantle later, withdrawing from the Theosophy organization. Having eagerly followed his writings, I had an opportunity to share lunch with him, along with a couple of local industrialists, in 1982. I was very excited and had many questions; When I poured them out, I was greatly disappointed with his refusal to acknowledge even one. During the same evening, he was addressing the public at an open garden in Alipore,

which I went to attend. I was so pleasantly surprised when he answered all my questions without referring to me. My take away was: 'Freedom eludes a conditioned mind'.

**1987, Sri Sri - Art of Living, Vizag**

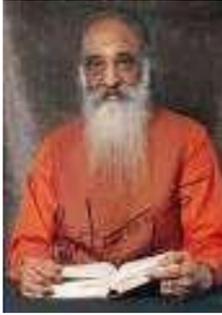
August 1987 was traumatic for me, with Padam's nephews, who resided in our house, filing a court case against us, with an objective to demolish the house. Exhausted, I wanted out. Fortunately, my sister, Promila Saraf invited me to Vizag for the opening of Yoga Village, an extension of Andhra University. I jumped at the opportunity. Amongst all the assembled dignitaries at Vizag, I was instantly attracted to a young sadhu from South India known as Sri Sri.

My interaction with him has carried on for years. I have hosted him multiple times over lunch at my house in Kolkata, and also met him in Delhi and Los Angeles. On our thirty-fifth marriage anniversary, I visited his ashram near Bangalore with Padam, my daughter Isha, and nephew Shashwat. It was a night to remember as melodious bhajans continued until four am in the morning at their lotus shaped auditorium.

**1989, Kumbh at Prayag Raj : Deoraha Baba**

Maha Kumbh is a religious congregation, a Hindu festival held every twelve years on Prayag Triveni Sangam. Approximately 50 to 30 million people attend this mela. I had gone to take a holy dip with my brother, Dr M and my friend, Dr Ratna Lahiri. On waking up at four am, we went to the river bank, which was populated with thousands of pilgrims, Naga Sadhu, and also people from different religious sects. It was quite chaotic, but charged with religious fervour we pushed our way into the river and took the bath. It was a most exhilarating experience and charged me with sacred energy.

When I discovered that ageless Mahayogi Deoraha Baba was present in his thatched cottage, situated at a height on bamboo stilts, I refused to return to the camp. I requested Ratnaji, instead, to go for his darshan. As she quickly agreed, we walked the few kilometers to reach his cottage; But, to our dismay we were informed that Baba was no longer available for Darshan. At our repeated request, he



miraculously appeared and much to our souls' satisfaction, we received his divine blessings.

#### **1990 Dinner with Spiritual guru Swami Chinmayanand ji**

Swami Chinmayananda Saraswati, commonly referred to as Swami Chinmayananda, was a Hindu spiritual leader and a teacher who inspired the formation of Chinmaya Mission, a worldwide non-profit organisation, to spread the knowledge of Advaita Vedanta, the Bhagavad Gita, the Upanishads, and other ancient Hindu scriptures.

In 1990, I was visiting my mother and my sister, Promila Saraf, at the latter's house in Vizag. Swami ji was also visiting the city. We had an opportunity to have his Darshan. My sister kept informing my mother that Swami ji was an intellectual giant and very different from sages she had met so far; maa ji just smiled and asked her to prepare dinner for Swami ji in her house. She was surprised as Swami ji had not yet confirmed; when we met Swami ji he greeted her very fondly with her first name Daya. Apparently Maa ji knew her from the time of his Guru in Haridwar. It was a spiritually uplifting dinner experience for me and a great memory to narrate.

#### **1999, Sathya Sai Bab, Puttaparthy**

Famous dancer Amla Shankar and Tanushree Shankar were travelling to Sathya Sai to partake in his birthday celebration. Having heard about several miracles of Baba I was very keen to have his Darshan. I went along with them and stayed for two days in his ashram. Bharat Ratan recipient, Subba Laxmi, Hollywood actress, Goldie Hawn, and many important women were attending the function. We were allotted one small room with two beds. It perplexed me as were three of us saeingsharing the room , to my utter surprise Tanusree declared that she will sleep under the bed cot . Until today with all humility, I remember her support

#### **2000, New York Tirth Millennium Peace Summit**

On 28 August through the year 2000, two thousand of the world's preeminent religious and spiritual leaders representing multiple faiths and traditions, gathered at the United Nations for a Millennium World Peace Summit of Religious and Spiritual Leaders. I had the opportunity to

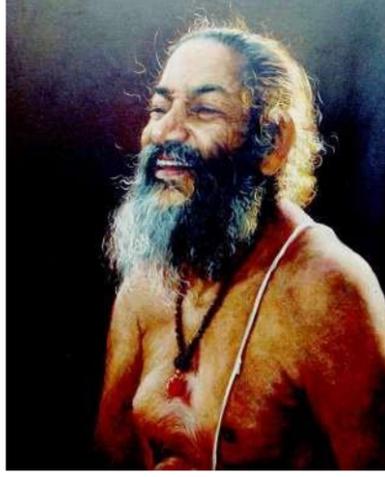
attend as an observer, as my brother Dr. M had involved Aditi to work for it; It was stupendous experience. The meet took place in the UN building and a few sessions were organised in the magnificent Waldorf Astoria. I met with Amma, Sri Sri from Art of Living, Dadi Janaki Braham Kumari, Founder, and many spiritual leaders from different faiths. Dr Karan Singh and Narendra Modi were some of the distinguished delegates. I was staying at Intercontinental Hotel and had invited Ratna Ji and Zerbanoo to attend the summit. His Holiness, Dalai Lama could not attend due to unavoidable reasons.

It was a blessed afternoon. Post the Millennium Peace Conference, deliberations were taking place in up-mark hotel, Waldorf Astoria, which I had gone to attend. As I had been going up the lift to a room on the sixth floor, the lift stopped on the third floor, and lo and behold, the founder of Brahamkumari, Dadi Janaki appeared. She pulled me out and we walked the corridor, sharing a conversation, for twenty minutes. After that, I took the lift to resume my original journey, when to my utter surprise, Sri Sri from Art of Living was standing with his four disciples. He laughed and said, "Where are you going? Come with me". I joined him, not believing my luck, and attended his public meeting in New York". It was one of the best afternoons of my life, when I received blessings from two religious leaders.

#### **2008 Women's Spiritual meet in Jaipur**

##### **Making way for the Feminine**

On March 6 2008, in Jaipur, many women leaders assembled to attend the conference: Making way for Feminine, organised by Global Peace Initiative for Women. It was inaugurated by Amma, who came in with hundreds of followers. There was a dinner arrangement by Braham Kumaris, where I had the good fortune to meet Buddhist leader Jetsunma Tenzin Palmo. Jetsunma is President of Sakyadhita International Association of Buddhist Women, Founding Director of the Alliance of Non Himalayan Nuns; Honorary Advisor to the International Network of Engaged Buddhists and Founding Member of the Committee for Bhiksuni Ordination. It inspired me to make Waiting for Ananda a small documentary on orientation ceremony of Samaneri's.



मंझैं,  
सुनत है,  
आसुं ह्य

रिहै रुर् रुक्ता म्हा,  
असुं ह्य  
अरो रिं रुं उत म्हा  
रुतही अहुय सारा

रुं तसुं ह्यो ह्यै, र  
रुक्ता ही म्हा  
अधुं अतुं ह्यै, ससुं  
रुं ह्यै

ससुं रिं ह्यै  
रुं ह्यै अरुं  
रुं श्रुं रुं सारुं न  
रुं ह्यै म्हा ह्यै तुमसे  
है अरुं ह्यै

## Mauni Baba of Ujjain

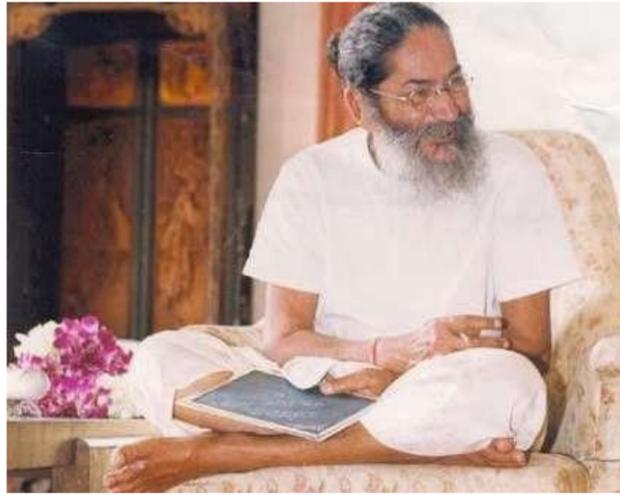
A silent sage, extremely communicative through his writings with chalk on slate, piercing gaze and infectious child-like laughter, my Guru, my spiritual guide who has influenced and shaped my life with his benign compassion since December 1993. I received the opportunities to travel with him to Japan, Nepal, Rishikesh, and Dwarka Ji. I stayed at his Ashram, Muan Tirth in Ujjain several times and performed Yagya.

They say you do not find your Guru; He reaches out to you when the time comes. I had met him in Kolkata in December 1993, before my mother's death in February 1994.

After my mother's passing away, I felt comforted in his presence. To sum up, Baba ji preached that one learnt to become an observer of daily food and daily thoughts. His famous words were: 'Depend on me and be fearless. Taper your food and thoughts and be free of worries as they are a silent killer.' He insisted on regular hydration of body by sipping water throughout the day. He encouraged me to be an introvert and focus on my work.

Kyoto & Tokyo Japan with Braham Rishi Mauni Baba Ji, 2000 I, along with two of his disciples, travelled with Mauni Baba ji to Japan. I was very nervous as I had no clue what it would entail and the duties I would be expected to perform. To my utter surprise, learning to be free from a constant sense of responsibility was a joyous experience. We had travelled to Kyoto on invitation from our local guest, Venerable Uchida. Lunch had been organized in a small restaurant. A strong smell of cooked fish had greeted us on entering. This was repulsive to me. Baba ji had smiled, while writing on the slate that it is their way of offering hospitality, and that we should be grateful and accept it. I was humbled and learnt a lesson on acceptance and understanding, while not creating a fuss, as everyone is different.

I had accompanied Braham Rishi Mauni Baba ji on a ten-day trip to Japan. We travelled through three cities - Osaka, Tokyo, and Kyoto. Both locals and Indians used to visit us for Babaji's darshan, seeking counselling, during evenings. I used to join those meetings as an interpreter; Baba Ji, being a silent sage, did not speak, choosing to write on a



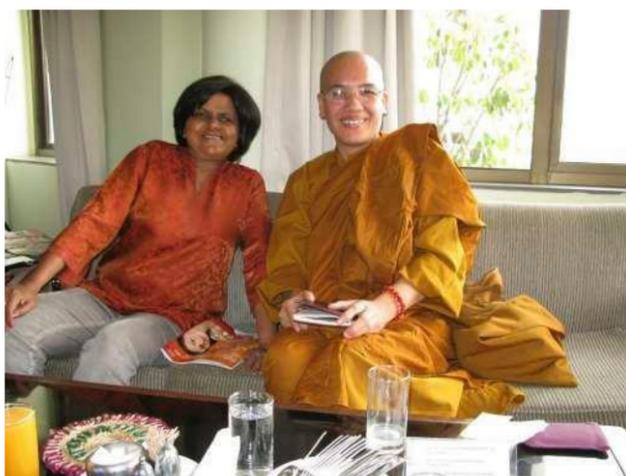
slate instead. I would like to narrate two remarkable incidents.

The first involved a public meeting, arranged by a Japanese association, at a five star hotel in Tokyo. After the host delivered the welcome speech, it was Baba ji's turn to deliver a message, whereby He begun by quoting Bahadur Shah Zafar, the last Mogul King. 'The greatness of a civilization is judged by how it treats its dead; since Japan pays careful respect to its dead, it must be a great country like India.'

The second incident was both a bit funny and confusing. A police officer's wife appeared for counselling one evening. She related her unhappiness at having both a husband and a lover, not knowing which to choose. Baba ji's answer left me speechless for a while, whilst I hesitated before reading, "Baba Ji advises that you should enjoy both and remain peaceful." Meanwhile, I asked Baba ji, in Hindi, "How can you say this? Is it not immoral?" He laughed at this, while writing, "She needs both at the moment. With time, only one will remain in her life."

He left his physical body in March 2018; He is still around me blessing me, and protecting me .

**'Just as treasures are  
uncovered from the earth  
So virtue appears from good deeds  
And wisdom appears from a pure  
and peaceful mind'  
Lord Buddha**



## WAITING FOR ANANDA

### A Note on Ordination Ceremony in Vaishali (Bihar)

Ordination of Women will take place in Vaishali (Bihar) in memory of Mahaprajapati Gautami next month. It will be inaugurated by Ven. Prof. Dr. Bhikkhu Satyapalji, Head, Department of Buddhist Studies, University of Delhi, Delhi on 28th July, 2012.

A large number of Nuns and Bhikunis from Japan, Korea, Vietnam and other countries will gather in Vaishali to attend the three month Training program of the Bhikhnis from all over the world including India.

If we go into history of Buddhism in India, the ordination of women have taken place a number of times. During Buddha's time itself and there after ordination of women took place a number of times in India. During the period of Ashoka the Great, large number of ordination of women took place in India.

It is for the first time in Vaishali, since Independence that an ordination program on a large scale is being organised in Vaishali. Earlier, about 15 years ago an ordination of women took place in Buddha Gaya in Bihar where a large number of Indian and foreign women were ordinate. This program was held under the patronship of His Holiness the

Dalai Lama. The Maha Bodhi Society of India was one of the co-organisers of this program.

More than 300 women from all over India, mainly from Maharashtra, Uttar Pradesh, Bihar and Orissa will participate in the ordination program.

The Ordination of Women is organised to get them Social, Mental and Intellectual Freedom. Whereas women are generally considered only to be the home makers and their main duty is considered to give birth to children, their bringing up and looking after the domestic affairs only. It is only in the Orindation Programs that they are taught that they have right to have the social, mental, intellectual and spiritual freedom. They are taught how they can be useful for the society throughout the world.

After the completion of Training for three months in the Ordination Program, the women dedicate themselves for the cause of the society and Buddhism. Most of the women participating in the Vaishali Oridination Program are married yet a large number of them are unmarried girls opting to be Nuns or Bhikunis.

Even after the training is over in case any women wants to go back to her home she is allowed to so the others can continue to lead a life of Nuns.

### The Documentary: Waiting For Ananda

A documentation showcasing patrons and women who have contributed to Buddhism in nunneries, in prayer, in meditation, in working for society. The film documents ordination carried out by nuns from six countries, India, Tibet, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Vietnam, Malaysia.

A large number of Nuns and Bhikunis from different countries gathered for the ordination. Ordination at Maha pajapati Nunnery at Vietnam Temple at Vaishali (Bihar built in memory of Mahaprajapati Gautami). The ceremony was inaugurated by Ven. Prof. Dr. Bhikkhu Satyapalji, Head, Department of Buddhist Studies, University of Delhi, on 28th July, 2012.

Habiart Foundation team Rekha Mody, Bryan Mulvihill and artist Seema Kohli visited Vaishali and made a ten minute documentary with direct interviews and ceremonies. Waiting for Ananda film captures the essence of women's contribution to Buddhism. It is for the first time since Independence that an ordination program on a large scale was organised in Vaishali.



With Shankarcharya of Dwarka Dheesh

सात्विक बुद्धि से मनुष्य विनय प्राप्त करता है और विनय से उसमें पात्रता आती है, जिससे वह धन प्राप्त करता है। धन से धर्म और धर्म से उसे सुख प्राप्त होता है।

विद्या ददाति विनयं विनयाद्याति पात्रताम् ।

पात्रत्वाधनमाप्नोति धनाधर्मं ततः सुखम् ॥



With Brahmarishi Maunibabaji