Heritage, Humour at Habitat by Manohar Khushalani

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CULTURE COCKTAIL

Manohar Khushalani

Habitat World is on e of the most happening places in town; with live performances of theatre and dance, art and photo exhibitions, seminars, talks and celebrations. However, the basic mandate of the Habitat India is, as its very name suggests, to preserve the heritage of Delhi.

In synergy with its objectives Habitat World took an initiative for beginning a movement to involve 'concerned' corporate citizens in restoration and conservation efforts by inviting eminent artists to sketch some of these prominent but depleted structures.

This initiative, launched in April 2000 by Chief Minister Sheila Dixit, is being taken forward each year with a host of talks, seminars and workshops by people who have been closely involved with preservation in one way or the other.

Artists such as Shamshad Hussain, Naresh Kapuria and Gopi Gajwani were commissioned to contribute towards this cause: Amongst the monuments that have already been sketched are: Subz Burz, Purana Quila and Lal Quila.

As part of the ongoing World Heritage Day celebrations, Habitat Heritage Initiative launched Vision Impossible - Photographic *'Delhiscapes'*, an exhibition of panorama prints of Delhi's monuments by photographer Amit Pasricha, last week. The name sounds familiar? Yes he is the son of the well-known photographer Avinash Pasricha. The exhibition displayed a cycloramic fish eye view — ranging from 180 to 360 degrees of Qutab Minar, Lodhi Tomb and Safdarjung Tomb. This was achieved by stitching together a series of pictures taken continuously using a Nikon Digital Camera with a 6 mega pixel resolution. Since the pictures are in digital format it becomes easy to merge the edges using a host of computer software such as Photoshop. Pasricha has perfected the technique while working with the Aga Khan Foundation on the Humayun's Tomb Restoration Project. This technique, with added innovations, has been used to photograph Delhi's other monuments.

While it may not be possible to judge the versatility of the photographer or the range of this format, since all the pictures were taken in daylight, there was a remarkable clarity of details in the pictures which perhaps appear to be superior to even the analog format of silveroxide prints. Amit cleverly used an ideal time to take the pictures - at sunrise or sunset — when the light is naturally soft.

One difficulty that comes up with such panoramic photographs is that they can be viewed only at an exhibition, but are cannot be used for publishing since they have an odd aspect ratio; as low as 1:8.

Another event at the Habitat was the readings of short stories of the late Navtej Singh, who was the former editor of the progressive Punjabi magazine, *Preet Lari*, founded in 1933.

Four of his short stories were read out by Madan Gopal Singh, Sumita Didi, Navtej Singh Johar and Poonam Singh, the present editor of the magazine.

They were accompanied by musical compositions of Amrit Kent.

Madan regaled the audience with *Sufi* songs, Navtej Singh Johar with a classical dance and Poonam with a solo performance of *Dil Di Than Jandiya*. However, it was Sumita Didi who stole the show through a dramatic presentation of an old Punjabi woman trying to get into a bus.

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