

INDIA MARKINGS

Beauty of the Indian girl. Here incarnate was the inspiration

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NEW DELHI - OLD DELHI

By the time Air-India Flight #110 touched down in New Delhi our senses had been entrenched with suggestions of India. Turbaned Sikhs, saried stewardesses with red-dotted foreheads and fellow passengers named Shapur and Yasmin combined with meals such as paneer salad, chicken tandoori, chappati, biriani and dhal. In twenty-four hours we thus had been initiated into the country that inspired Mark Twain to rave about. "There is only one India . . . the land of dreams and romance . . . of fabulous wealth and fabulous poverty . . . of splendour and rags," he once wrote.

After a short revival at beautiful Hotel Oberoi
Continental we were whisked away by our Sikh guide, Avatar
Singh, bearded and turbaned. A special kind of serenity
marked the parishioners' mien at the Cathedral of the Sacred
Heart. The church was cooled by many two-bladed ceiling
fans and fluttering birds' wings which flew around unnoticed
by anyone but us. Another distraction was the striking
beauty of the Indian girl. Here incarnate was the inspiration
of Gupta sculptors -- girls with long, black polished hair;
dark, deep eyes enhanced even more by kohl; naked midriffs
sari-draped up around the tops and down around waists and hips.

Delhi is new and Delhi is old. Old Delhi bears the uneradicated impression of Shah Jahan, the Emperor of Mughal

India, who had a penchant for building beautiful monuments. The Shah built the Red Fort -- one of old Delhi's finest landmarks -- in 1648. First sight of it evokes Mogul power and elegance.

One star-studded night, hot and humid with only a sliver of a moon to cool, we sat within red sandstone walls of the fort to hear echoes of the past at the Son et Lumiere spectacle. Past and present were effectively tied together. History was traced chronologically from the day Emperor Shah Jahan chose the site for the fort until August 15, 1947 when Jawaharlal Nehru delivered his great Independence Day oration from its ramparts.

Spacious grounds of the "Delhi of Shah Jahan" provide a perfect setting for the elegant Mughal Court chambers and audience halls. Strikingly beautiful interior walls are made of marble panels which are decorated with delicate drawings inlaid with precious stones. Rajahs and foreign envoys of the past approached the Grand Moghul with "their eyes bent downwards and their hands crossed."

On this particular evening in the twentieth century, guide Avatar Singh and his band of intrepid travelers charged forthrightly into the Diwan-i-Khas or Hall of Private Audience. Here on the world-famous Peacock Throne once "glittered the dazzling figure of the Grand Moghul, a figure to strike terror, for a frown meant death." Sapphires, rubies, emeralds and pearls were arranged to simulate the colors and

form of a peacock's tail on the Shah's gold inlaid throne.

A similar throne (or the same one) can be found today in

Iran at the Golestan Palace. Specialists are still quarreling
about whether this throne was taken from Delhi by Persian

Nadir Shah, confiscated by Afghan conqueror Ahmed Shah

Durrani or made around 1820 by Iranian craftsmen in honor of
the favorite wife of Fath Ali Shah who was known as "The

Lady of the Peacocks". Sentiments of Shah Jahan are

memorialized: a Persian couplet written in letters of gold
over both arched entrances of the audience hall translates,

"If a paradise be on the face of the earth, it is this, it
is this, it is this."

Jama Mosjid, India's largest mosque is another old
Delhi sight to see. Shah Jahan built it of red sandstone
and white marble. Distinctive use of striping -- either red
or black on white -- creates a striking effect. Its shaped
domes and tapering minarets are characteristically Mogul.

New Delhi, the national capital, had two planners.

Sir Edwin Luytens loved European Renaissance and Viceroy

Lord Hardinge preferred a more Oriental style. Compromise

resulted in a charming perspective. Two main landmarks of

New Delhi are the Secretariat and the Viceroy's Houses, now

the Presidential Palace and known as Rashtrapati Bhavan. The

Central Vista (Rajpath) is a wide, impressive avenue which

runs from Purana Qila (an early Moghul fort) to the

Presidential Palace.

Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi is presently the head of India. My guidebook cover bears the inscription "Rajiv Gandhi, October 8, 1976". At the time this younger son of the Prime Minister piloted our plane from Udaipur to Jaipur. Quiet, modest and unassuming, this handsome young man graciously walked through the aisle to greet his passengers. He later became Prime Minister by a stroke of fate. Sanjay, the older son, who had been expected to replace his mother, was killed in a plane crash. The pilot-son was elevated.

In the states that we visited we were reminded of Prime Minister Indira Gandhi's iron hand. A state of emergency was declared in 1975. Ubiquitous signs dotted countrysides. "Emergency is a phase of self-discipline", "Work more, talk less", "Nation is on the Move", "To be courteous is to bring love", "Eat more eggs and drink more milk" -- loving advice of a devoted leader.

However, one of the harshest critics of her niece's stance was Vijaya Lakshmi Pandit. Mrs. Pandit is the sister of the late Jawaharlal Nehru, formerly the Prime Minister of India, and the father of Indira Gandhi. She was profoundly troubled at the direction that India was taking. "If there are no civil liberties and no dissent, then where is the democracy we fought for? It is far more repressive today, in many ways, than it was under the British. The essence of democracy has always been the right to dissent and it was working in India, though slowly, and perhaps

awkwardly. Mohandas K. Gandhi made us Indians into big
people but when a man loses his right to speak out, he
becomes a little person, and we are now becoming a little
people."

Mrs. Gandhi denied that she had established a dictatorship in India and to her critics she said simply, "The word dictatorship has been frequently bandied about since more than a year before the emergency, especially by the people who themselves have shown dictatorial tendencies over the years. Not only our system but our methods of working leave little room for authoritarianism."

Indian dancers fascinate. Voluptuous Omor Sharam captivated her audience at the Triveni Theater as she beguilingly communicated with her eyes and with tinkle bells on her ankles and concealed around her hips. Indian classical dance form dates back 3000 years when it was an important religious ritual. Each temple had its Devadasies, the "servants of gods". Dancers at the Triveni exhibited the nine rasas -- devotion, humor, pathos, heroism, fury, terror, disgust, wonderment and peace.

The technique used to express these various moods is called abhinaya which literally means "to carry forward".

Through various postures, gaits, hand gestures, and head movements the messages are brought out. The term bhava means expression and rasa (mood) is conveyed through dance in this manner. The idea is "where the hand is, there the

mind is, where the mind is, there is bhava and where there's bhava, there is rasa." Today the four major classical dance forms are Bharata-Natayam (in the South East), Kathakali (in the South West), Manipuri (in the North East) and Kathak (in the North).

A deep connection with the past can be made at New Delhi's stately National Museum. Treasures range over art and archaeology, anthropology, decorative arts, epigraphy and textiles. Collections found on the ground floor begin with prehistory in India. Five window cases have examples of successive types of Indian stone tools with graphic illustrations of the life of which they were a part. They trace the evolution of man in India from possibly half a million years ago to about 10,000 B.C. Important representations of proto-history -- the Harappan or Indus Valley culture -- are, also, on the first floor. This period began about 2500 B.C. Harappa and Mohenjo-Daro, now in Pakistan, were the first sites to be discovered. The famous site at Harappa gives its name to the culture.

The Mauryan period (the period of Ashoka, 3rd century B.C.) shows an evolution in Indian art. It is celebrated for the animal capitals of monumental pillars often bearing inscriptions with Ashoka's edicts. A bronze cast of his famous inscription on the rock at Girnar advocating morality, humanity and piety has been placed on the lawn directly opposite the National Museum's entrance.

Among other important representations in the museum are a monumental "Elephant" surmounted by a damaged rider of the Sunga dynasty (2nd century B.C.) and red sandstone "Heads" from Brahmanic as well as Buddhist sources (predominantly 2nd century A.D.).

A terracotta head of "Siva" from Unnao in the gallery devoted to the Gupta period (5th to 6th century A.D.) is eye-catching. Many art scholars believe that art did not become truly Indian until the arrival of the Gupta dynasty (320-600). Qualities of calm, poised assurance and balance, technical skill and idealized expression are components of the classic Gupta style. From them came the "international" image of Buddha -- tightly curled hair and knotted on the top of the head. Gupta sculptors not only excelled in stone but, also, in metal casting by the technically advanced cire perdue (lost wax) process.

Painting had a prominent place in the lives of Moghul monarchs. A chronological review of miniature painting in India is presented in the National Museum. Notable are the examples of Rajasthani painting from the west and the Deccani and Mughal schools which drew on Persian styles and techniques. Although Pahari and Rajput painting became increasingly influenced by the Persians, they retained their favorite themes of Krishna and his legend as well as other great Indian epics. Coins, manuscripts, lamps and bronze objects, arms, wood carvings, costumes and textiles, also, contribute

to the vast wealth of the National Gallery.

New Delhi was the first stop in our passage to

India. Sights and sounds intrigued us and lingered with us
as we traversed the country. History was absorbed at the

Son et Lumiere show and at the rich museum. I learned
enough to know that I needed a Kashmir shawl!

UDAIPUR

Indira Gandhi once said, "If you wish to know something about India you must empty your mind of all preconceived notions . . . India is different and, exasperating as it may seem, would like to remain so . . ."

Udaipur, at first sight, astonishes; hopefully, it will never change. Maharana Udai Singh founded this Rajasthan city in 1568 on the shores of Lake Pichola. He encircled it with a bastioned wall with five main gates, each armed with iron spikes as a protection against ramming. The massive granite and marble City Palace where the Maharana lived faces the lake. Our guide remarked that a former maharani still resides in one of the sumptuous apartments. The large palace is luminous with tile and mirror inlays, mosaics of peacocks and paintings.

From the vantage point of one of the handsome carved outer windows of the palace there is an unforgettable view: set in the middle of the steel-blue lake like a gem on its own island is a lake palace. Known as Jag Nivas it occupies every inch of the four-acre spread. It was built by Maharana Jagat Singh II in 1746.

Lake Pichola emerged as a figment of a maharana's imagination. It was artificially created in the 14th century and is dotted with islands. Jag Nivas is now the Lake Palace

Hotel. Here at dawn one day my belief that early risers are treated with unusual pleasures was reconfirmed.

I awoke early one morning and quietly walked to the end of the hotel wharf. Soon a waiter brought me a tray with coffee. As I savored the strong coffee it became clear why Udaipur is called "The City of Sunrise". The sun rose, brilliant and sparkling, like a jewel above the palace like no sun had ever risen before, or so it seemed.

With the soul of a maharani I relished this delicious Rajasthan experience. A wharfside seat became highly involved with sounds and sights. Hindu bathers emerged from ghats about 800 feet away for early morning religious ablutions. Undoleful chants resounded from shores surrounding the hotel island. Nearby a stone statue of a full breasted woman (an apsara by a modern-day Chandella sculptor?) with a stone water-jug moored to her head, and immersed to her waist in the lake, stared. She and I and the pigeons perched on her head were silent, mesmerized.

Jag Mandir is another island-palace near the southern end of Lake Pichola. Marble elephants guard the three-storied round tower of yellow sandstone. It is lined inside with marble slabs and crowned by a handsome dome. Here Prince Khurram (later Emperor Shahjahan) who immortalized his wife with the Taj Mahal sought asylum while in revolt against his father, Jahangir.

Reluctantly we left the city of sunrise which resembles

an Italian coastal town and which has, also, been called "Venice of the East". Backward glances were lingering as we saw tops of minarets with colored glass of amber and pale jade -- brightened by the sunrise -- sparkling over Udaipur.

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JATPUR-AMBER

Jaipur is an hour from Udaipur by air. Excitement rippled through our plane the morning of October 8, 1976.

Word was out that the son of Prime Minister Indira Gandhi was our pilot. This son, Rajiv Gandhi, is now Prime Minister of India. Destiny interfered with his personal simple ambition to fly planes across oceans. Older son, Sanjay, had been picked to replace his mother but he was killed in a plane crash. This younger son was next in line to lead his people. A handsome, modest, unassuming young pilot quietly walked through the aisle greeting his passengers. Hastily, I handed him my "Fodor's India". Today I treasure the book's inside cover with the inscription "Rajiv Gandhi, 8th Oct. '76".

Jaipur is popularly known as the "pink city" and in historical writings as the "tone of the autumn sunset". The capital city of Rajasthan is built of the local rose-pink colored stone. Maharaja Jai Singh designed and founded Jaipur in 1927. The city is enclosed in battlemented walls; the crenelated wall has eight gateways. Its main streets are divided into blocks; some of the streets are more than 110 feet wide. At sunset pink and orange hues of buildings take on a magical quality.

A curious pink five-storied building is the hallmark

of Jaipur. The Hawa Mahal (Palace of the Winds) is elaborate and fanciful yet it is, also, controlled in exquisite

Oriental taste. Semi-octagonal overhanging windows, each with its perforated screen, give the building a special quality. This high and intricately carved wall was designed so women could sit sequestered to watch parades and processions.

Maharaja Jai Singh was multi-talented. He was a fierce Rajput warrior who drove the moguls out of his city; his other talents were in astronomy and science. Within his own city he erected a fantastic open-air observatory which still bears witness to his scientific genius. His expertise was, also, used to build observatories in other Indian cities.

Amber is seven miles from Jaipur. For six centuries it was the capital of Rajasthan -- before Jai Singh founded Jaipur. Our driver Bana took us to visit the palace. At one point he stopped and an elephant took over to make the ascent to the fort. The elephant's caparison was not as bright and decorative as I had imagined but the colorful spread covering the back and under the howdah served its purpose. The elephant missed not one step as it clambered up the incline, its howdah and contents swaying from side to side.

Mogul influence is strongly marked in the 17th century palace. It retains an aura of great beauty. Jaipur workmanship -- alabaster panels with fine inlay work, mirrored mosaics, stonecutting and enamelling, lacquer

work -- is typical of the Mogul period. The rooms for the most part are small and intimate.

The reigning family of Rajasthan, the Kachhawas, formed a friendly alliance with Babur, the first Mogul emperor. It was strengthened in time through marriages, and both the Hindu Rajputs and the Great Moguls profited greatly from a peaceful alliance.

In the evening as we lingered in the beautiful garden of the Rambagh Palace Hotel -- formerly one of the Maharaja's residences -- we mulled over our Jaipur-Amber experiences.

Our Jaipur memory mosaic is made up of exquisite bits and pieces.

AGRA

A primary goal of tourists in India is to see -a boon to even the most jaded traveler -- Agra's Taj Mahal.
River Jumna flows from Delhi to Agra revealing along the
way Hindu ghats on both banks and precious Hindu shrines.
Hindu pilgrims flock to Brindaban -- 82 miles south of
Delhi -- to seek traces of Krishna, an avatar to Vishnu,
and to Mathura, Krishna's birthplace. The history of this
old city can be traced back even before the days of the
Maurya dynasty which ruled India from 325 to 184 B.C.
Mogul history buffs travel six miles north of Agra to
Sikandra to visit the tomb of Akbar the Great. His son
Jahangir built the imposing mausoleum in 1613.

Baber, the first Mogul conqueror, captured Agra in 1526. If his grandson Akbar the Great made it great, his great-grandson Jahangir made Agra greater by contributing to its wealth of buildings. It was left, however, for Jahangir's son, Shahjahan, to breathe into the place its soul. Moguls had come to India in the early part of the 16th century and brought their Persian civilization with them. Hindu architects and artisans built in the Persian style to please their conquerors.

Agra was the seat of the Mogul empire and because of a woman it became a "legend of love". Her name was

Arjuman Banu. In 1612 she became the second wife of Emperor Shahjahan and became known as Mumtaz Mahal, the Exalted of the Palace, and Mumtazul-Zamani, the Wonder of the Age. An old Persian manuscript tells the story that one day Mumtaz repeated her dream of a "wondrous building" to her husband.

Shahjahan's beloved wife died giving birth to their fourteenth child when the emperor had been on his throne for only three years. She left behind not only a broken-hearted husband but a "wondrous building" as a legacy of their love for one another. For after her death the emperor sought throughout all India for an architect who would draw plans from the description of his wife's dream. One day an old religious man advised Shahjahan, "I can help you to obtain what you seek." He gave a mysterious drug to one of the architects and under its magic spell the man worked feverishly until he completed the plan of a "wondrous building" down to its last detail.

Shahjahan, the artist of the Mogul emperors, built the Taj Mahal ("gem of buildings") in 1630 to express his undying love for Mumtaz. Virtuosic builders worked on the Taj and the neighboring palace and mosque for 22 years at a cost estimated then to be \$20,000,000 to \$50,000,000. Romance is enshrined within the walls of the Taj Mahal -- the tomb of Mumtaz and the cri de coeur of Shahjahan.

Agra -- 125 miles south of Delhi -- is 45 minutes

away by air. In late afternoon we settled in at Hotel Clark Shiraz and proceeded with our plans. Bent on romance several of us dressed in long skirts from Jaipur, wore flowers in our hair, and Shalimar perfume for our first glimpse of the "wondrous building". Only a ghazal of the Shiraz poet Hafez could lend enough lyrical depth to describe first sight of the Taj Mahal flooded by moonlight to do it justice. I will remember forever that on the night of October 12, 1976 lights mingled with moonbeams to glimmer on the long pool in front of the Taj Mahal in a manner to take one's breath away. Illuminated by moonlight or touched by early morning mist the Taj evokes an aura of etherealness.

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In brilliant sunshine Shahjahan's masterpiece glozes in full-blown maturity. The eight-sided white marble building rests on two bases. One is of red sandstone and the other is a white marble platform 313 feet square. The decorated structure stretches nearly 200 feet high to the top of the huge dome. Two slender marble minarets 130 feet tall flank the building on each side.

Cenotaphs of Mumtaz Mahal and Shahjahan are placed inside the building in a chamber where sunlight filters through six foot high alabaster screens which encircle them. Bedazzling beauty is created as the jeweled cenotaphs are lighted up by sunrays peeking through the intricately wrought -- delicate as lace -- screens. Real tombs of the

royal pair are side by side in a vaulted chamber below -- unadorned.

Happy jinns might have guided the hands of Hindu artisans as they decorated the cenotaphs and the interior walls -- shades of "Arabian Nights"! Through the brilliant mass of jeweled inlaid floral decorations of agate, bloodstone, carnelian, jasper, and lapis lazuli on the cenotaphs runs a delicate Persian script -- each letter is a gem -- telling the love story of Mumtaz Mahal and Shahjahan. Delicate arabesques and verses from the Koran in inlaid black marble run like vines around each archway. This detailed and fine inlay work (called pietra dura) is exquisite; even the most sensitive finger cannot feel the break between marble and semi-precious stone. Costs for repair of this pietra dura inlay work are prohibitive and there are few artisans left to do it. Our guide told us that to repair a tiny 100-square centimeter patch costs \$625.

One approaches the Taj Mahal and leaves it in a state of reverent awe. Perhaps Julia Margaret Cameron had this wondrous building in mind in "Annals of My Glass House" when she wrote, "I longed to arrest all beauty that came before me, and at length the longing has been satisfied."

Two considerations cause slight puzzlement. How could this massive building appear to be essentially so delicate? How could the tender-hearted Shahjahan have

descended from a warlike Mogul ruler like the dreaded

Tamerlane of Central Asia? However, if a dichotomy exists
in the Persian soul between vicious, mighty strength and
delicate, sensitive beauty it is not evident at Agra Fort.

For here a symbiosis took place -- might and beauty joined
forces as successfully as did red sandstone and white
marble.

Agra Fort is older than the Taj Mahal. Its building spanned the reigns of three (Akbar, Jahangir and Shahjahan) Mogul emperors. The fort is protected by seventy-foot high rusty-red sandstone walls on three sides and the Jumna River on the fourth. Massive moats encircle the walls. This Mogul "strong box" is two miles in circumference. Sacred treasures of the empire were kept within the labyrinth of palaces, halls, mosque, passageways and pavilions.

Beautiful Indian girls posing on the broad steps of Diwan-i-Am (Hall of Public Audience) made a striking picture. In this impressive hall the petitioner with lowered eyes was informed by a herald that he was standing in the presence of the "Sun of the World". French traveler Bernier wrote of his personal glimpse there, "The monarch, every day about noon, sits upon his throne with some of his sons at his right and left, while eunuchs, standing about the royal persons, flap away flies with peacock tails, agitate the air with large fans or wait with profound

humility to perform the different services allotted to them."

Diwan-i-Khas (Hall of Private Audience) is a superb example of the beautiful combination of red sand-stone and white marble. Shahjahan built it in 1636 and he used Jahangir's black throne (cut from one block) which has a white marble railing around it. The throne sits on a marble platform overlooking the Jumna. Shahjahan used his white marble throne (cut from several blocks) when he watched the Indian sport of elephant-fights performed in the fort.

Near the fort's Amar Singh Gate is the chaste white Moti Masjid (Pearl Mosque) which took Shahjahan seven years to build. Enclosed arcades with perfectly proportioned arches face a huge white marble courtyard. A Persian inscription over the arches of the prayer chamber likened the mosque to a pearl. Shahjahan, also, built a private mosque, the Nagina Masjid, near the Hall of Private Audience to be used by nobles and royal family members.

In building the huge Jahangir Mahal, the palace Akbar built for his son, the emperor strikingly blended Hindu and Mogul architecture. It, also, contained rooms for Jodh Bai (Jahangir's Hindu mother) and Nur Jehan (Jahangir's wife). Shahjahan's pièce de résistance was his white marble Khas Mahal (Private Palace) which he built in 1637. Its three pavilions of decorated white marble and

red sandstone overlook the Jumna River. A builder with vision, Shahjahan had a staircase lead to cool underground rooms -- 17th century air-conditioning -- for use during summer months.

A writer likened the exquisite Musamman Burj Shahjahan built for his wife Mumtaz to "a fairy tower hanging over grim ramparts". The octagonal, tall tower near the Hall of Private Audience was decorated with delicate lattices of marble. A beautifully carved fountain stands in the center of the courtyard which is paved with octagonal marble slabs. Shahjahan died in this building in 1666. Here behind a marble screen we stood looking below at the antics of gibbons, the present population of Agra Fort. We gazed silently -- as Shahjahan once did -at the Jumna River and, in the distance, the Taj Mahal. It was sad to remember that the Mogul emperor who epitomized the idea of combined Persian beauty and Persian strength spent the last seven years of his life here -- deposed, dethroned and imprisoned -- by his fanatical son Aurangzeb. Conversely, it was comforting to know that his daughter Jahanara (at whose birth Mumtaz died) remained with her father through his bitter imprisonment.

FATEHPUR SIKRI

III)

Swarms of vultures, writhing cobras in baskets, and a settlement of bear wallahs who keep Himalayan bears, train them to dance on their hind legs and sit up to beg entertain visitors along the 25-mile ride from Agra to Fatehpur Sikri. At the village of Sikri we watched stone cutters at the occupation of their ancestors. Akbar the Great moved his capital to the place which is now deserted and called the "silent city of victory".

Akbar's capital continues, strangely, to evoke a spirit of power though it is now "peopled" only by monkeys that cavort playfully about their palaces and parapets. The red sandstone capital was built in 1569 and deserted in 1585 because of a water-supply shortage. The fortresscity is six miles in circumference and is bordered by three powerful stone walls and an artificial lake. A New Delhi correspondent wrote that "the city built by Akbar, the most ecumenical and enlightened of the Mogul emperors, and its sandstone and marble architecture combine elements of Hindu style with the Mogul geometry that itself was mellowed by Sufi mysticism."

Agra Fort was splendid. A fascinating story explains that Akbar was desperate for an heir so he consulted a religious holy man, Shaikh Salim Chisti, to intercede.

Through his powerful prayers, Jahangir soon made his appearance in the world. Gratitude prompted Akbar to build this additional magnificent city -- an epic poem in red sandstone -- in the village of Salim Chisti.

Among its stunning buildings is Jami Masjid. The imperial mosque was built to hold 10,000 worshipers. The 134 foot high Buland Darwaza (Victory Gateway) leads to the huge, perfectly symmetrical mosque. Beyond the mosque is a courtyard with a mausoleum. Inside -- behind walls of marble lace -- is the tomb of Shaikh Salim Chisti. With the "miracle" of Jahangir in mind, thousands of childless Hindu and Moslem women make pilgrimages to Chisti's tomb and tie bits of string in the marble screen to implore the holy man for a similar favor.

Akbar sat on his throne in the 350 foot long
Diwan-i-Am (Hall of Public Audience) as he judged his
subjects. His lighter side showed on the Parcheesi
Courtyard behind this hall. He is alleged to have played
the game using harem women as living pieces.

It is known that the enlightened Akbar engaged in ecumenical debate. He received religious leaders as well as foreign ambassadors and dignitaries in the Diwan-i-Khas (Hall of Private Audience). His quixotic-like throne did not appear to be designed for intimate polemical discussions with his Hindu, Moslem, and Christian brethren. The lofty seat opens up like a tulip in full bloom on top of a high

stone column. Four stone bridges like spokes connect the throne to surrounding galleries.

Moslem and Hindu architecture meet easily in the palace of Jodh Bai, the Hindu daughter-in-law of Akbar, wife of Jahangir, and mother of Shahjahan. Mogul domes and Hindu sculpture complement each other. An upper-story room called "Palace of the Winds" is completely walled in by red sandstone screens.

Miriam, the Christian wife of Akbar, received the title Mariyam-uzzaman after her marriage to the Grand Mogul in 1562. She was the mother of the heir to the throne, Jahangir. Her building was known as the Sunhera Mahal (Golden House) because it was decorated with frescoes in gold and brilliant miniatures. Some scholars believe that a fresco -- long defaced -- shows a hint of angels' wings which might have been a depiction of the "Annunciation".

The Panch Mahal is five-storied; each story is built smaller than the one beneath it. Its architecture is essentially Hindu, yet the structure is built in the style of a Buddhist Vihara. Fifty-six carved stone pillars 8 feet tall hold up the first floor. Each pillar is carved in a unique fashion (intertwined elephant trunks, fruits, trees, flowers, birds) and no two are alike. A cupola at the top of the building provides shaded privacy for picnicers, loiterers or lovers.

While staring at a few playful gibbons on top of

the Panch Mahal I ruminated over the glorious history of Agra Fort and Fatehpur Sikri. In my imagination I saw through the eyes of Ralph Finch, an Englishman who long ago visited both places. "Agra is a very great city and populous, built with stone, with a fair river running by it. It hath a fair castle with a large ditch. From there, we went to Fatehpur Sikri, which is the place where the king kept his court. The town is larger than Agra but the houses and streets are not so good. The king hath in Agra and Fatehpur Sikri, 100 elephants, 30,000 horses, 1400 tame deer, 800 concubines and such store of leopard, tiger, buffaloes, cocks and hawks, that it is very strange to see. He keepeth a great court. Agra and Fatehpur are very great cities, either of them much greater than London."

