



The Blue Moon

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Women in Diplomacy and Business Pioneers and Innovators

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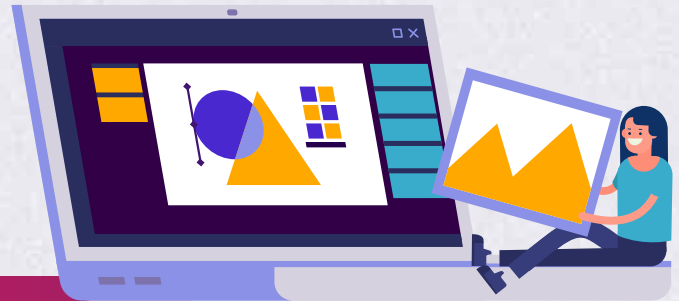
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on International Trade,
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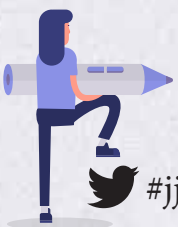
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Shahnaz Husain

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Empowering Women

Navigating Dreams in India

India is going through a period of substantial change for women, with opportunities becoming available but challenges still existing. Whether women opt for the structured path of employment or pursue entrepreneurship, their journeys are characterised by resilience, ambition, and the pursuit of validation.

In the professional sphere, women often encounter self-imposed constraints while trying to juggle work, family and societal expectations. Maya Vishwakarma, known as the 'PADWOMAN of India,' demonstrates determination through the establishment of the Sukarma Foundation to advocate for menstrual hygiene. Similarly, Kiran Mazumdar-Shaw, the founder of Biocon Limited, turned a small startup into a global biopharmaceutical leader, showcasing innovation and resilience.

A small percentage of Indian women, including PV Sindhu and Laxmi Agarwal, have a clear sense of direction and inspire others with their dedication and bravery. PV Sindhu made history as the first Indian woman to win an Olympic silver medal, while Laxmi Agarwal, an acid attack survivor, actively campaigns against acid violence and advocates for stricter laws.

Empowering women in India necessitates overcoming societal expectations, gaining access to quality education, achieving financial independence and establishing safe work environments. Initiatives like Beti Bachao Beti Padhao and Mudra Yojana seek to support women's education and entrepreneurship, but more targeted programs are required.

Mentorship and networking play a critical role in professional development. Connecting with successful female mentors and participating in networking events can offer guidance and create new opportunities. Stories like that of Chandro Tomar, who became a sharpshooter in her 60s, underscore the significance of resilience and persistence.

As the sun rises over India, women find themselves at a crossroads. Let's amplify their voices, empower their dreams and build an inclusive future.

Jjuliaa Gangwani
Chief Consulting Editor

Empowering Women in Diplomacy

by Jjuliaa Gangwani

The Blue Moon had the chance to interview the influential Ambassador Lucienne about women in diplomacy. She has actively participated in high-level meetings and international forums, making significant contributions to important conferences and advocating for good governance. Additionally, she has been involved in training programs, cultural exchange initiatives, and facilitating bilateral cooperation, as well as engaging in global collaborations.



H.E. Ms. Dillah Lucienne
Chad Ambassador to India

Q. How does the Chadian government support and promote the participation of competent women in diplomatic roles? Can you provide more details on the specific challenges experienced by women diplomats in Chad?

H.E. Yes, the challenges faced by married women diplomats were similar to those faced by women in India at the beginning of their careers. However, given the low number of Chadian women diplomats, the highest authorities often encourage competent women in the field by appointing them to diplomatic and consular missions to address this challenge. In addition, the Chadian government grants a 30% quota for women in elective and nominative positions, which is expected to gradually move towards gender parity.

Q. What qualities or achievements of any woman leader have inspired you the most?

H.E. The woman diplomat who has inspired me the most in Chad is Ambassador Mrs AZIZA BAROUD. A Chadian politician, former parliamentarian, and Minister, she served as Chad's Ambassador to the European Union, the United Kingdom, and the Benelux countries with residence in Brussels in 2017, and as Chad's Permanent Representative to the United Nations with residence in New York in 2019. Throughout her various appointments, she worked tirelessly and selflessly to elevate the flag of Chad.

Q. How has your experience with the group of female ambassadors influenced your professional journey?

H.E. Currently, there are 25 female ambassadors, and this group of female ambassadors has been a great inspiration to me. There is a cordial understanding among us. They are very serene and diligent in their duties, and I have learned a lot from them since my arrival. So, I have become part of a large professional family.

Seven Foreign Ambassadors presented credentials to President Droupadi Murmu at Rashtrapati Bhavan in New Delhi on 31st May, 2024



H.E. Mr Xu Feihong
Ambassador of the People's Republic of China



H.E. Mr Fernando Xavier Bucheli Vargas
Ambassador of the Republic of Ecuador



H.E. Mr Jagannath Sami
High Commissioner of the Republic of Fiji



H.E. Mr Alassane Conte
Ambassador of the Republic of Guinea



H.E. Mr Meshal Mustafa J Alshemali
Ambassador of the State of Kuwait



H.E. Mr Patrick John Rata
High Commissioner of New Zealand

H.E. Mrs Lindy Elizabeth Cameron
High Commissioner of the United Kingdom



At the 22nd Annual Summit in Russia, President Vladimir Putin and Prime Minister Narendra Modi primarily discussed economic issues and set a bilateral trade target to increase bilateral trade

to \$100 billion dollars by 2030, including the use of national currencies to circumvent Western sanctions.

Addressing a press

conference in New Delhi Russian Charge d'Affaires in India Roman Babushkin said trade has grown by 10 per cent as compared to the corresponding period of the previous year. The target which has been established by the leaders the new one to achieve 100 billion US dollars in bilateral trade by 2030 seems quite realistic for the benefit of the two Nations the most important point in the joint statement is that we have decided to go ahead with the establishment of the national currencies settlement.

We will also continue with the issues of quick payments for alternatives to Swift with the focus on digital instruments especially when it comes to the digital currencies of central banks.

We will train the Indian seafarers to better and deeper explore the area that would also cover the Northern SE road

navigation and hydrocarbon supplies through the Eastern Maritime Corridor and of course, when it comes to regional connectivity remains our priority area by the way according to the estimates by

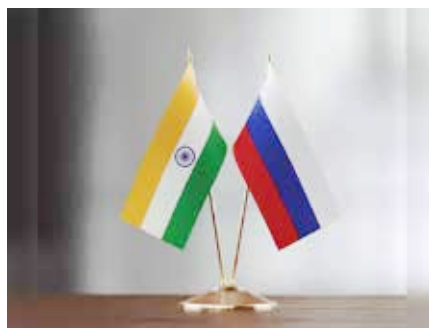
intense NSA level contacts you have seen how big is the part dedicated to counterterrorism in the joint statement so we have quite a serious convergence in this area and serious commitment to go

India and Russia to boost bilateral trade to \$100 billion by 2030

by Amit Mittal

ahead and cooperate bilaterally and multilaterally.

The leaders have condemned terroristic attacks which were



the year 2030 the kg volume will double by approximately small modular reactors, nuclear medicine Force generation of Technologies fast breeder reactors and many other areas.

Russia has the most advanced competitors with the safest Technologies in order to meet the growing Indian demands in this area. we need to identify a second side for the nuclear power plants along with the kudankulam nuclear power plant which we are successfully implementing along with that there were a lot of other areas which would make our strategic partnership comprehensive we will resume our inter-parliamentarian cooperation will continue

committed on the territories of both countries recently. The new and very promising Dimension would be related to our labour Mobility which is all already happening that is a new dimension, it is able to become a new dimension in our People contacts and business opportunities relevant documents are in the pipeline to make this area more regulated we are working.

We have committed ourselves to fulfilling all obligations, and there is a clear understanding that Russia's active involvement in various areas contributes significantly to boosting local defence production in India. Another crucial aspect I'd like to highlight pertains to education. In April of this year, we hosted the first Russia-India Education Summit. It's essential to capitalize on this momentum and engage more universities. Specifically, we need to proceed with a dialogue on mutual recognition of diplomas. This step aligns with the facilitation of the visa regime—a desired

trend. Additionally, we've extended an offer for a visa-free group tourist agreement. This proposal originated in 2022 when President Putin first discussed it with Prime Minister Modi. We hope for an early conclusion to this agreement, demonstrating our serious commitment to bilateral and multilateral cooperation.

Regarding recent events, both leaders have unequivocally condemned terrorist attacks on our respective territories. A promising new dimension lies in labor mobility, which is already underway. By year-end, we anticipate further cooperation in spare parts, joint ventures, servicing, technology exchange and localization.

Internationally, our close coordination continues within the UN, G20 and BRICS frameworks. Our focus remains on democratizing global governance, including reforming the United Nations Security Council. Russia reaffirms its unwavering support for India's permanent membership in the Security Council. In summary, the outcomes of this summit, driven by strong mutual political will, aim to expand, deepen, and diversify trade, economic cooperation, and strategic partnerships for the best interests of our friendly nations.

Regarding Indians in the Russian army, Babushkin clarifies: 'We have never sought Indian recruits for the Russian army.' Neither the Defense

Ministry websites nor any embassies have expressed such intentions. While a small number—50 to 60 or even 100—may be present, they play no significant role in conflicts. Russia has ample volunteers, rendering foreign recruits unnecessary. These individuals primarily seek commercial opportunities and advantages, including facilitated Russian citizenship. The Russian army has not actively recruited them. Most are on an illegal basis, holding student, tourist or business visas that do not permit contractual obligations. President Putin's proposal for visa-free group tourist visas is currently on the table in India. We eagerly await progress. As for education, the potential is vast. Despite having around 25,000 to 30,000 Indian students in Russia, this number pales in comparison to the real demand, underscoring the untapped potential of Russian universities.

Both India and Russia are actively discussing ways to diversify their trade basket, aiming to reduce the trade deficit. Among the exciting prospects on the horizon is the possibility of a long-term contract for liquefied natural gas (LNG) and petrochemicals between Indian and Russian companies.

The past year witnessed remarkable growth in these sectors. In 2023, the results were staggering: 90 million tons of LNG, 45 million tons of crude oil. To put this in perspective,

just before February 2021, the annual figure stood at a mere 2.5 million tons. The surge in crude oil exports has been explosive and India now enjoys a stable share of crude oil imports from Russia, covering approximately 30%.

While the situation with the Gaspro contract remains complex, there's a clear trend: Indian companies are increasingly demanding LNG. Despite the challenges, further contracts between Russian suppliers and Indian consumers are under consideration. The next five to seven years could witness significant developments in this area.

India's petrochemical industry grows at an impressive rate of over 10% annually. Recognizing this, Russia has actively provided technology support. Notably, our Reliance project paved the way and now Nayara is executing a project in Vadinar—a crucial step after refineries. The focus is on polyolefins and there's immense potential for collaboration in various petrochemical technologies.

In summary, India and Russia are poised to strengthen their economic ties, leveraging LNG, crude oil, and petrochemicals. These strategic partnerships benefit both nations and contribute to their shared prosperity.

Know more About Algeria

by TBM Correspondent

A celebration was organized by the Algerian Embassy, New Delhi in honour of Algeria's National Day. The event aimed to provide students and scholars with a better understanding of Algeria's rich cultural heritage and historical significance. Interactive sessions were held to explore various aspects of Algerian history, culture and diplomacy.

During the event, a special film screening showcasing Algeria's cinematic achievements took place. H.E. Mr. Ali Achoui, Ambassador of Algeria to India, delivered a speech emphasizing the enduring ties between India and



(in the centre) H.E. Mr. Ali Achoui, Ambassador of Algeria to India speaking with the students



H.E. Mr. Ali Achoui, Ambassador of Algeria to India, along with professors from different universities.



H.E. Mr. Ali Achoui, Ambassador of Algeria to India, with professors and students. H.E. Mr. Ali Achoui, Ambassador of Algeria to India, with professors and students.

Algeria. He highlighted the significance of cultural exchange and collaboration in strengthening the relationship between the two nations. The Ambassador's speech emphasized the mutual respect and understanding that have characterized India-Algeria relations since their inception. This celebration not only emphasized Algeria's dedication to education and cultural exchange but also reinforced the bonds of friendship and cooperation between India and Algeria.

Photos by Kapoor Photographer

Cultural Diplomacy in Action

Dr. Alena Remizova's Vision for India-Russia Relations

In an exclusive interview with The Blue Moon magazine, Dr. Alena Remizova, Head of the Representation and Director of the Russian House in New Delhi, shares her insights and experiences in promoting cultural diplomacy between India and Russia. Born in St. Petersburg, the cultural capital of Russia, Dr. Remizova has a deep-rooted connection with Indian culture that began in her childhood. With a rich background in cultural exchange and a passion for fostering international relations, she discusses her plans to enhance cultural collaboration, empower women and engage the youth in both countries. Join us as we delve into her journey, challenges and vision for the future of India-Russia cultural ties.

by Jjuliaa Gangwani



Dr. Alena Remizova

Head of the Representation and Director of the Russian House in New Delhi

and a half years in Mumbai, heading the Russian House there and hopes her activities and those of her colleagues will be more visible in Delhi.

Cultural Diplomacy

Dr. Remizova emphasizes the importance of cultural ties, which have always been one of the main pillars of India-Russia relations. In Russia, there is a high interest in Indian culture. Many people practice yoga, travel to India for vacations, and explore its vast wildlife, which is quite similar to Russia's. Comparing the two cultures reveals many common points where coordination and interaction can occur. Cultural activities from both sides are crucial in maintaining and strengthening the bond between the two nations.

Balancing Heritage and

Dr. Alena Remizova, Head of the Representation and Director of the Russian House in New Delhi, was born in St. Petersburg, Russia, often referred to as the cultural capital of the country. Engaging with culture is a great honour and holds significant importance, especially in fostering relations between countries like India and Russia. Traditionally, India has always welcomed Russians warmly. Dr. Remizova recalls from her childhood, around 1986, a major festival of India in

the Soviet Union, followed by a festival of the Soviet Union in India the next year. This sparked a growing interest in India. Many Russian children, including Dr. Remizova, watched Indian films and were fascinated by Indian culture. This interest led her parents to enrol her in the only school in Russia where children learn Hindi and Indian culture from the first grade. India has been a part of her life since childhood, and she is delighted to be in Delhi. She previously spent two



Тамара Дулизина
Udmurt national costume
Izhovak

Modern Trends

Balancing traditional heritage and modern trends is essential. In Dr. Remizova's view, modern trends cannot exist without a foundation in heritage. Preserving heritage is vital, especially in countries like India and Russia, which have rich cultural and civilizational legacies. Both nations are like civilizations in their own right, with deep-rooted traditions that must be preserved even as they embrace modernity. A Russian proverb states, "Every new trend is an old trend that was good," highlighting that many new trends are revivals of past ones.

Women in Diplomacy and Cultural Exchange

As the first woman to hold her post, Dr. Remizova believes women can bring a unique touch to their work, paying more attention to specific issues. In India, she has noticed a significant movement for women's empowerment and education, which she is eager to support. Events are planned in

these areas because they are crucial. Additionally, two years ago, Russia enshrined traditional values in its constitution, emphasizing the importance of family and women. The aim is to attract more women to the Russian Cultural Center and support their initiatives.

Cultural exchange between India and Russia often involves high-level agreements, such as those between the Ministers of Culture. However, on the ground, the goal is to provide space for women to promote



Александр Мамонкин
Russian folk costumes
Krasnoyarsk region, Pos. Shubenskoe

themselves and establish connections. In Russia, a significant forum led by Valentina Matvienko, head of the upper chamber of the parliament, is dedicated to women's empowerment. Women from India are invited to participate and the next forum will be in St. Petersburg in September. A program in India is planned for these women to share their experiences and ideas, fostering further collaboration.

Business Collaborations

Dr. Remizova has met several women from both countries who lead or represent companies interested in the Russian market. While there hasn't been a specific focus on this area yet, plans are in place to organize a forum dedicated to women's entrepreneurship and business participation. This initiative will help strengthen business ties and support women entrepreneurs in both countries.

Challenges and Achievements

Dr. Remizova hasn't faced significant challenges as a woman leader in cultural diplomacy. Societal perceptions of women can occasionally be an issue, but it doesn't affect her work. Her promotion suggests her superiors in Moscow view her positively. In Russia, gender doesn't matter as long as one performs their job well.



Екатерина Елчинова
Chuvash national costume
Chuvash Republic p. Kugon

In Mumbai, Dr. Remizova spearheaded a literature club for lovers of Russian literature, discussing classics like Pushkin,



Dostoevsky and Tolstoy, as well as modern writers. She plans to organize a similar club in Delhi, inviting Indian writers to collaborate. Joint presentations and live discussions will highlight current literary trends. While ballet and folk dance are popular, literature often remains hidden. Exhibitions are also held and this year, the Jubilee of the Relics family will be celebrated with presentations from both Indian and Russian sides.

Standout Events

The literature club was a significant event during Dr. Remizova’s tenure in Mumbai, but various exhibitions and performances by different collectives were also well-received. These cultural offerings will continue to be presented in Delhi.

Cultural Collaboration and Cuisine

Food is an integral part of culture, and both Indians and Russians pay a lot of attention to it. Plans are in place to invite

Russian companies to India and organize a series of culinary events in Delhi, Mumbai, Chennai and Kolkata. These events will be held at Russian Houses across India, likely starting in February. One challenge is the availability of specific Russian products in India, but solutions are being sought. Similarly, Indians in Russia face the same issue, but it can be overcome together.



Future Plans and Upcoming Events

The main festival this year will be in October at the Museum, a significant event. Additionally, Russia, as the president of BRICS, has numerous events planned. Traditionally, there are cultural forums and youth

cultural forums in St. Petersburg and other locations. Over the next two months, about six major events will be hosted in Russia, inviting Indian participants.

In Delhi and across India, the goal is to operate as a unified body rather than separate regions. Different parts of India have unique requirements, so colleagues will be connected to gather information from various regions. India is like a civilization with diverse languages, cuisines, and cultures every 200 kilometres. Thorough preparation is needed, and once plans are finalized, they will be shared.

Promoting Russian Culture in Delhi Schools

Efforts have started to work with Delhi schools, colleges, and universities. The future lies with the youth, and it’s crucial to speak more about friendship and traditions. The Russian Cultural Center is always open to everyone, and Indian children are invited to visit various studios, including art, chess, and music. These efforts will continue with schools.

Advice for Aspiring Women Leaders

Education is the foundation of everything. Continuous self-education throughout life is important. Staying updated with new trends and thinking about how to implement them is crucial. Self-confidence is key, and one shouldn’t pay too much attention to what others say if they believe in their path. Being open to people around is also

Continued on page 24

From Child Bride to Business Tycoon

The Phoenix Rising from the Ashes

I first met Kalpana Saroj at an event focused on Women's Day. Her simplicity, persistence, resilience and determination left an indelible mark on me. Listening to her recount the challenges she faced and overcame gave me goosebumps and I am sure others in the room felt the same. Since that day, this Iron Lady has been on my mind and it is my honour to bring her story to the readers of "The Blue Moon." Here is the tale of a woman who fought for her dreams and achieved what she set out to do.

by TBM Correspondent

From Despair to Determination

Kalpana Saroj's story begins in a small village in Maharashtra, where she was born into a Dalit family. Her early life was a harsh lesson in societal discrimination and poverty. At just 12 years old, she was married off, only to face severe abuse from her in-laws. The young girl, who once dreamed of education and a better life, found herself trapped in a cycle of violence and despair.

Kalpana recalls, "I was just a child, but I had to endure unimaginable hardships. Every day was a battle for survival."

A Turning Point

Rescued by her father, Kalpana returned to her village, but the stigma of a failed marriage weighed heavily on her. In a moment of utter hopelessness, she attempted to end her life. Surviving this attempt became a pivotal moment. Determined to change her fate, she moved to Mumbai, where she started working in a garment factory.



Ms. Kalpana saroj

Chairperson of Kamani Tubes

With sheer determination, she saved enough to start a small tailoring business, which soon expanded into a furniture store.

"The young girl, who once dreamed of education and a better life, found herself trapped in a cycle of violence and despair."

Reflecting on this period, she says, "Mumbai was my city of dreams. It gave me the chance to rebuild my life from scratch."

The Rise of a Business Mogul

Kalpana's entrepreneurial spirit

truly shone when she took over the ailing Kamani Tubes. The company was on the brink of liquidation and many doubted her ability to revive it. But Kalpana's vision and relentless hard work turned the tide. She restructured the company, streamlined operations and brought it back to profitability. Today, Kamani Tubes stands as a testament to her business acumen and indomitable spirit.

"Taking over Kamani

Tubes was a daunting task, but I believed in my vision. Failure was not an option," she asserts.

A Beacon of Hope

Kalpana Saroj's journey from a child bride to a successful entrepreneur is not just a story of personal triumph but a beacon of hope for many. Her achievements have earned her numerous accolades, including the Padma Shri, one of India's highest civilian honours. She serves on various boards, contributing to the empowerment of women and marginalized communities.



“Empowering others is my mission. I want to ensure that no one has to go through what I did,” she emphasizes.

“Failure was not an option,”

Inspiring Generations

For diplomats, corporate leaders and students, Kalpana’s story is a powerful reminder that resilience, determination and hard work can overcome even the most daunting challenges. Her life encourages us to look beyond our circumstances and strive for excellence, no matter the odds.

Kalpana Saroj’s journey is a testament to the human spirit’s capacity to rise, inspire, and transform. As we navigate our own paths, may her story serve

“Your circumstances do not define your destiny. It’s your determination and hard work that shape your future,” she concludes.”

as a guiding light, reminding us that greatness often emerges from the most unlikely places.

“Your circumstances do not define your destiny. It’s your determination and hard work that shape your future,” she concludes.

The Unseen Pillars

Stories of Strength and Resilience

In the realm of diplomacy, business management, and higher education, focus is frequently directed at the forefront figures. However, there are equally extraordinary individuals behind these influential leaders. Their tales of fortitude, perseverance, and unassuming resolve warrant recognition. These individuals are the partners of diplomatic heads, business executives, and university students, who manage their distinct challenges while bolstering their partners’ demanding professions.

by TBM Correspondent

A Diplomatic Spouse’s Experience: Navigating Global Circumstances with Elegance

Say hello to Priya, the spouse of an Indian diplomat. Her journey involves continual adjustment and resilience. Relocating from one country to another every couple of years, Priya has

necessary to flourish in the ever-evolving realm of diplomacy.

The Partner of a Corporate Leader: Balancing Ambitions and Realities

Anita, married to a high-ranking executive in a multinational corporation, has



perfected the skill of creating a home from the ground up, immersing herself in unfamiliar cultures and establishing enduring friendships. Despite the frequent moves, she has pursued her passion for education by volunteering at local schools and teaching underprivileged children. Priya’s narrative underscores the strength and adaptability

encountered obstacles. With her husband’s demanding timetable, Anita often managed multiple roles—mother, homemaker and at times even a sole parent. Nonetheless, she never let go of her aspirations. Anita initiated a small home-based enterprise, which has now evolved into a successful online endeavour.

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From Baguettes to Business Brilliance

The L'Opéra Story

Christian Samandari, one of the driving forces behind L'Opéra, transformed Delhi's culinary landscape with a dash of French elegance. From humble beginnings to a celebrated brand, her journey is a symphony of passion, persistence and pastry.

by Jjuliaa Gangwani



Ms. Christine Samandari

Co-Founder and Promoter of L'Opéra

became a family project, and it took us over one and a half years of detailed market studies and research, business planning, pilot production, focus group sessions before we finally decided to proceed to the next phase.

As a French family who had recently moved to India, a country with immense possibilities and needs and Laurent having identified this niche and our desire to share our French (culinary) culture with our host country, L'Opéra appeared to be an ideal collective, family project.

Q. How do you maintain the delicate balance between French culinary traditions and Indian sensibilities at L'Opéra?

At the onset of our operations, we committed to an absolute adhesion to French authenticity and lifestyle, best expressed in the expression "joie de vivre à la française" roughly translating into French-style happiness and joy of life. This meant, that we wanted not only to bring authentic French products to India but to also create an atmosphere which transported

Q. Could you share the story behind L'Opéra's inception? What inspired you to bring authentic French flavours to India?

As often in life, it was a combination of several elements and circumstances which led to the creation of L'Opéra. At the core of it was the love of my husband and me for our two and half years old grandson and naturally our daughter who was expecting her second child. My daughter, Caroline and her family had moved to India from Paris in 2005 and we missed her, our son-in-law and our first grandchild dearly. It was

therefore a no-brainer when the opportunity presented itself for me, our son and my husband to move to India. We did not hesitate for a moment and decided to shift our base to Delhi in 2008, notwithstanding the fact that my husband continued to spend less than half of his time at home due to business trips.

L'Opéra, was the brainchild of our son Laurent, who at that time was just completing his business degree in France and was spending six months in India as part of his mandatory overseas internship. From that moment onwards, L'Opéra

our patrons to the heart of our capital, Paris, each time they entered one of our outlets. Given this objective, we made a selection of the products which satisfied the needs of the Indian palate and customers but never compromised on the recipes and the original taste of our products. The French pastry and bakery offering is so vast that we could chose those products which were best suited for India – if one can generalise all the regions of this vast country – without having to lose their authenticity. For instance, we introduced a very rich eggless range of offerings, adapted the sweetness level of the products to the local taste, presented our products in hampers and gift boxes for Indian festivities and celebrations, offered chilli and spices on the side, promoted more sourdough breads, etc. In parallel, we developed some new products sought after in India using traditional French techniques. L’Opéra’s much-appreciated Berry Mousse Cheesecake and our range of seasonal Mango-based products are just two examples of this.

Q. L’Opéra is known for its high-quality pastries and bread. How do you ensure authenticity while adapting to local tastes?

This constant effort has been and continues to be made possible thanks to the presence of a French Executive Pastry Chef in our organisation at all times and a conscious effort to maintain the authenticity of our products, resisting all

commercial temptations to sacrifice the nature and quality of our offering in exchange for more revenues.

Furthermore, we are continuously endeavouring to create a French microcosm within the company whereby our operations follow the processes and traditions we were used to back home in addition to a number of principles which we have defined as “L’Opéra’s 10 Core



Values”. They are Commitment to Excellence & Quality; Truthfulness, Honesty & Transparency; Gender Equality; Meritocracy & Equal Opportunity; Courtesy; Collaboration & Mutual Respect; Consultation; Ownership & Accountability; Spirit of Service; Responsible and Sustainable Growth.

Q. Beyond delicious treats, L’Opéra has become a cultural hub. How do you engage with the local community?

The short answer to this

question is engagement, interaction and commitment. As I mentioned earlier, L’Opéra is more than just a shop where you buy your pastries and breads and have a meal. L’Opéra is in the words of several French ambassadors to India, the largest popular symbol of French culture in India interacting with thousands of Indians every day. It brings, the tastes, colours, decoration, furniture, music, smell, ambience and experience of

France each time a patron steps inside one of the L’Opéra outlets. There is yet another element to that, which is the constant presence and interaction of our family and our French staff with the community. Both L’Opéra as an institution and we individually have woven into the fabric of the local society through artistic, charitable, intellectual, academic, humanitarian, spiritual and social exchanges and activities. And more recently, the L’Opéra Art Cafés

Continued on page 22

Painting Across Continents

An Artist's Diplomatic Voyage

Art has the unique power to transcend borders, and this is beautifully exemplified by Anita Gopaul, the spouse of the High Commissioner of Trinidad and Tobago. The Blue Moon had the privilege of speaking with Mrs. Gopaul for our special edition of Women in Diplomacy and Business, in the section "ART INSIDE." Born and raised in Trinidad and Tobago, West Indies, Anita Gopaul is an emerging artist who has been working with both acrylics and oil since 2017. As she travels with her husband, she expresses her views and experiences through her art, capturing the beauty of her homeland and beyond on canvas with a striking sense of realism. A self-taught artist, she is passionate about educating and inspiring others through her work. In addition to her artistic pursuits, Ms. Gopaul is a published author of four books, a skilled pianist, and a qualified member of the Association of Chartered Certified Accountants (ACCA).

by Jjuliaa Gangwani



Mrs Anita Gopaul

Spouse of the High Commissioner of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago to India

Q. Can you share with us your journey as an artist? When did you first discover your passion for Art?

Firstly, before I answer your question I would like to thank you for this wonderful opportunity to connect with your readers and share my story. My journey as an artist started when my husband and I were sent on our first diplomatic posting to Pretoria, South Africa approximately eight years ago. It was there that I decided to explore my interest in art. It

was always something I wished I could have pursued before but was unable to because of work commitments and other life obligations. I remember the first time I held a paintbrush and painted my first piece. There was an immediate connection and it was an amazing feeling. Over the years that passion for art never changed but actually grew and I realised that it wasn't just in the final result but also in the process. For me personally, the process of painting is both stress relieving and therapeutic.

It's a wonderful feeling to create something beautiful that I could appreciate and share with others. In 2020 we were posted to India where I continue to explore different painting styles and mediums. Over the years, I've produced many pieces using both acrylic and oil mediums. I am delighted to say that I have participated in numerous exhibitions in both South Africa and India.

Q. How has living in Trinidad and Tobago influenced your art? Are there elements of your home country that you incorporate into your work?

Title: *Limbo - Fires of Hope*, 2022

Medium: *Oil on Canvas* | Artwork Size: 20 x 16

Artist: Anita Gopaul



Like most diplomats, living in different countries is an amazing and life changing experience. Each country has a beauty that is unique and phenomenal. As a diplomat, you get the chance to fully immerse yourself in the different cultures, people, places, food and traditions of that particular country. Most artists tend to capture these differences and distinctions in their artwork and see it blossom to life on canvas. For example, in my journey from Africa to India I've experienced the beautiful red and orange hues of an African sunset to the majestic blues of the Himalayas. While I admired the beauty of these countries with which I was now surrounded, it also made me appreciate more of my homeland. Trinidad and Tobago has greatly influenced my art as I use it as my way of capturing and preserving my country. As a result, most of my artwork tends to depict some aspects of Trinidad and Tobago. I've done paintings that included the Scarlet Ibis which is the national bird of Trinidad, the limbo dance which originated in our twin island of Tobago, and buildings of historical importance like Stollmeyers Castle and Temple in The Sea among

others.

Q. As the wife of the High Commissioner, how do you balance your diplomatic responsibilities with your artistic pursuits? Do you find that one influences the other?

My pursuit of art initially stemmed from my passion and interest and was undertaken for my personal growth and development. It was a personal decision that did not connect in any way to my position as the spouse of a High Commissioner or my diplomatic responsibilities. However during my journey I've realised that a relation does exist between both the diplomatic and the artistic world. A large part of diplomacy is about creating and maintaining relations. I've found that art helps to facilitate and build connections between different cultures. My artistic pursuits have never



Artist: Anita Gopaul

Title: *Scarlet Beauty*, 2023

Medium: *Acrylic on Canvas* | Artwork Size: 20 x 26

Title: Parliament Building of Trinidad and Tobago, 2024
Medium: Acrylic on Canvas | Artwork Size: 30 x 40

Artist: Anita Gopaul



hindered my diplomatic responsibilities but in fact is actually an avenue which I've used to aid in achieving this objective.

Q. As a woman in the art world, what challenges have you faced and how have you overcome them? What advice would you give to other women who are pursuing a career in Art?

As with almost every career in the world challenges are always present. Healthy challenges I believe are natural and necessary as this is what makes us grow and learn and become better at what we do. Some challenges, however are not natural and being a woman in the world of art comes with a few. While I have not personally faced discrimination within the art fraternity I am aware that it is an issue that many other female artists face. They are not being adequately recognised and awarded based simply on the fact that they are women. I think this mindset has changed a lot and is less prevalent nowadays from let's say a decade ago, as many governments and international groups have been campaigning the issue of gender bias and discrimination. We have come a long way in eliminating this and the increased awareness of these issues has begun to show as we are seeing positive results where recognition is given based on talent and merit and not gender.

My advice to women, who may be interested in art as a career, is to not let these challenges discourage you in following your dream. Believe in yourself, persevere and let your talent shine through.

Q. Could you tell us about the piece that would be featured in our "Art Inside" section? What inspired it, and what do you hope viewers will take away from it?

This 30 x 40 piece is entitled

"Lord Rama's Welcome" and is done in acrylics. It features the Parliament building of Trinidad and Tobago also known as the Red House which was built in 1907. My inspiration stemmed from my desire to create one artwork which infused both the culture of Trinidad and Tobago and India showing the impact of one on the other. Unlike my other pieces which showcase Trinidad and Tobago I wanted to also incorporate aspects of India's influence on our culture. For those of you who may not know, India and Trinidad share a very deep history which began in 1845 with Indians arriving in Trinidad to work in the sugar cane plantations as indentured labourers. After the Indian indenture period ended in 1917, the Indians remained in Trinidad thereby greatly influencing the cultural landscape of our country. In the year 1966 the government declared Diwali a public holiday and this piece shows our red house beautifully being lit with clay lamps that also welcomed Lord Ram to Ayodha. I hope that this piece would educate viewers as to the historical, cultural and diplomatic linkages between our countries.

Q. How do you see Art playing a role in cultural exchange and diplomacy? Can you share any experiences where your art has opened doors for diplomatic or business opportunities?

There are many different aspects in which diplomatic ties can be built between countries. Countries connect through similarities in sport, culture, business, education and other shared interests and also through the differences which

help us to grow and learn. I believe that art plays an important role in that cultural exchange and expressions of countries. The various art forms, on a much larger scale, be it fine art, dance or music all brilliantly showcases the history, customs, culture and mindset of a people. We can learn a tremendous amount from art which is a vital tool in the world of diplomacy.

Q. Are there any upcoming projects or exhibitions that our readers should look out for?

As you would be aware, India is currently celebrating the year of Lord Rama and an international exhibition is going to be held by ICCR which will display artworks that depicts the impact of Lord Ram or the Ramayana on different countries of the world. Although the final date has not yet been released, this exhibition will be held in the coming months and one of my pieces will be on display. The piece entitled “Lord Rama’s Welcome” is an acrylic painting of the Parliament building of Trinidad and Tobago also known as the Red house with clay lamps (deyas) leading the way to the building. In the year 1966 it was decided by Parliament to declare Divali a public holiday in Trinidad and Tobago. As you would know, Divali is the festival of lights which welcomes Lord Ram back to Ayodha. It is an honour for me to display this particular piece as it shows the amalgamation of both countries, Trinidad and Tobago

and India.

Q. Finally, is there any message you would like to convey to our readers, particularly those interested in art and diplomacy?

The one message I would like to leave with your readers is simply to find your passion. Whether it is in art or diplomacy or totally unrelated, once you have the passion and follow through with it you would be amazed at what you could accomplish. It is the passion that drives you to go that one step further and do what would otherwise seem impossible. It is the passion that makes you put out the extra effort without even realising it and it is the passion that makes the process an enjoyable journey.

Artist : Suruchi Jamkar



*Beautiful Indian Girl
 24 inch x 27 inch
 Acrylics on Canvas*

Artist : Viveek Sharma



*Trance
 54 inch x 54 inch
 Oil on Canvas Year : 2013-14*

London Through the Eyes of Shahnaz Husain

A Journey of Memories and Discoveries

Step into the world of Shahnaz Husain as she takes you on a captivating tour of London. From the bustling streets of Covent Garden to the tranquil corners of Hyde Park, her travel diary offers a glimpse into the city's rich history, culture and the personal moments that make London her second home

by Shahnaz Husain

I have traveled all over the world for work and vacation, but London is my second home, says Shahnaz Husain, a renowned entrepreneur, beauty



Shahnaz Husain feeding the swans and pigeons at Serpentine Lake, Hyde park in London

expert and global trotter. Whenever she is in the city, she love to explore it with all her heart. London is more than a destination, it's a feeling, a sense of belonging to Shahnaz that has evolved over the time. "As I navigate its streets, savor its flavors, and absorb its culture, I can't help but feel grateful for the second home I've found in this city.

London is my favourite shopping destination. High-end stores on Oxford Street and Carnaby Street are the best places to go for shopping. Also, Sunday shopping at Petticoat Lane is an unforgettable experience. From clothes to household goods, knick-knacks, one can pick great stuff at a bargain!" explains Shahnaz as she spilled beans about her favourite pastime in London.

London has been special in my life for a very long time. I have had beautiful memories with my family vacationing here. I vividly remember, when I was

roaming around in the city with I spotted a traditional English merry-go-round with brightly painted horses. This merry-go-round at Covent Garden became such a fun spot

for me and my family. I wanted to have the same thing in our house in India. In my house, my daughter has made 'Mummy Corner' where she'd put all the gifts. One of my favourites is still that musical merry-go-round which always brings back beautiful memories. This is why, Covent Garden is close to my heart. It is a place which is so vibrant and it's a historic area that seamlessly blends rich heritage with contemporary charm.

Covent Garden is renowned for its diverse culinary scene. The area is home to a plethora of restaurants, cafes, and pubs serving a wide range of cuisines, from traditional British fare to international delights. Covent Garden is surrounded by numerous theaters, including the Royal Opera House and the West End theaters.

One of the aspects that makes London feel like a second home is its unparalleled historical richness. The city's architecture, from the medieval Tower of London to the modern Shard, serves as a visual timeline of centuries past.

The best thing about traveling to London is that there are some things you won't know until you experience them in person, like how peaceful green spaces can be in such a busy city, or how specific different neighborhoods can feel. The heartbeat of London is its people, a vibrant tapestry of cultures and backgrounds that come together to create a truly global community. Walking through the streets of London, you can hear a symphony of languages, encounter a kaleidoscope of





Shahnaz Husain & Mr. R.K. Puri in Hyde Park London

faces, and taste the world's flavors in its diverse cuisine. From the historic streets of Westminster to the trendy markets of Shoreditch, every neighborhood tells a unique story, and I've come to cherish each chapter.

London's culture is a kaleidoscope of diversity, seamlessly blending tradition with a dynamic and ever-evolving contemporary spirit.

"I just love exploring London city through its culture as well as food," says Shahnaz. One cannot explore London's food culture without delving into its iconic markets. Borough Market, showcases the best of British and international produce. From artisan cheeses to exotic spices, the market is a feast for the senses, offering a snapshot of London's culinary diversity. The vibrant colours and enticing aromas draw food enthusiasts from every corner of the city, creating a bustling hub of gastronomic exploration.

In the tapestry of London's streets, I discovered a city that invites exploration, celebrates diversity, and embraces the magic of its storied past. In London, I've found not just a city but a community, a place where strangers become friends, and every street corner holds

the promise of a new discovery. Whether it's sipping tea in a cozy cafe in Notting Hill or exploring the vibrant street art of East London, every experience adds another layer to the love affair I have with this remarkable city.

Continued from page 16

– still in their early stages of development – reinforce our engagement with the local community.

Q. Could you share a memorable challenge you faced during L'Opéra's journey and how you overcame it?

Undoubtedly, the most critical challenge during L'Opéra's journey – as probably for many other companies in the hospitality industry – was the Covid pandemic. Thanks to our very strict internal procedures, we did not suffer any casualties and a very few cases among our employees, however, the business implications were overwhelming. We were only able to surmount the challenges associated with this calamity thanks to the dedication, commitment and resilience of our staff, the patience and sacrifices of our shareholders and the steady and wise management of the company's leadership.

Q. Where do you see L'Opéra in the next few years? Any exciting plans or expansions?

Indeed, we see a very bright future for L'Opéra in the coming years. Now that we have established a brand which is highly successful, respected and accepted by the customers in

Delhi NCR, we have embarked on the planning of our expansion pan-India over the next 8-10 years. We are currently putting the last touches to the massive expansion plan which will see scores of L'Opéra Pâtisserie-Boulangeries and Salon de Thé's (French-style Tea Room Cafés) in dozens of cities across India.

Q. What advice would you give to budding entrepreneurs, especially those venturing into the food industry today?

There is so much I would like to share with young entrepreneurs. Here are some ideas off the top of my head. Come up with a unique idea and do not just copy somebody else; solve a true problem and satisfy a genuine need; prepare and plan well your project; ensure that you have all the necessary resources; work very hard; do not take any shortcuts; take a long-term view; be patient and persevere; never consider financial success as your main objective; do the right thing and financial success will follow.

The Food & Beverage sector in India is a major source of employment and a rewarding activity with a significant growth potential which brings joy and happiness to patrons. By building a solid industry through educating the staff, engaging in healthy practices and consistent endeavours, the entrepreneurs venturing into this industry can make a significant contribution to the development of the country.

Breaking Barriers

The only limits we have are the ones we place on ourselves

In this special edition of “Women in Diplomacy and Business,” we are thrilled to highlight not only the remarkable achievements of women in these fields but also to feature a para-athlete who embodies the very essence of determination and resilience. Ekta Bhyan’s story unfolds as a powerful testament to human resilience and determination.

Born on June 7, 1985, in Hisar, Haryana, Ekta’s life took a dramatic turn in 2003 when a road accident resulted in a severe spinal cord injury, leaving her paralyzed from the waist down. Despite this life-altering event, Ekta’s spirit remained unbroken.

by TBM Correspondent

Ms. Ekta Bhyan *para-athlete*



Early Life and Challenges

Ekta’s journey began with immense challenges. The accident not only confined her to a wheelchair but also brought with it a host of physical and emotional hurdles. However, with unwavering support from her family and an indomitable will, Ekta pursued her education, completing her graduation and post-graduation in English. She also cleared the Haryana Civil Services exam, becoming an assistant employment officer.

Turning Point

The turning point in Ekta’s life came in 2015 when she met Amit Saroha, an Arjuna Awardee and fellow para-athlete. Inspired by his

journey, Ekta decided to take up para-athletics. She began training in club throw and discus throw events, dedicating herself to rigorous training sessions despite her physical limitations. “His journey and his words inspired me. He told me that the only limits we have are the ones we place on ourselves,” she recalls.

Achievements and Recognition

Ekta’s hard work and perseverance paid off. She won her first gold medal in the club throw event at the 2018 Asian Para Games in Jakarta. Her success continued as she represented India at various international competitions, including the World Para Athletics Championships and

“Ekta often says, “A little change in mindsets can bring a big change in the lives of millions who have locked themselves up in four walls.” Her words resonate deeply, reflecting her belief in the power of positive thinking and perseverance.”

the IPC Grand Prix. Ekta’s achievements have earned her numerous accolades, including the prestigious Arjuna Award and the National Award for Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities.

Motivational Quote

Ekta often says, “A little change in mindsets can bring a big

change in the lives of millions who have locked themselves up in four walls.” Her words resonate deeply, reflecting her belief in the power of positive thinking and perseverance.

Lessons in Resilience

Ekta’s story stands in stark contrast to those who give up in the face of adversity. While many might see insurmountable obstacles, Ekta saw opportunities to redefine her life. Her journey is a reminder that challenges are not roadblocks but stepping stones to success. Her resilience and determination serve as an inspiration to all, proving that with the right mindset, anything is possible.

The Journey Ahead

Looking ahead, Ekta aims to break more records and inspire a new generation of para-athletes. “I want to show the world that disability is not a limitation,” she says.

A Legacy of Strength

Ekta Bhyan’s journey is a shining example of overcoming the most daunting challenges with courage and determination. Her story is not just about winning medals but about breaking barriers and redefining what is possible. In a world where many are quick to find excuses, Ekta’s life is a powerful reminder that true strength lies in perseverance and an unwavering belief in oneself.

Celebrating Resilience in Para-Athletics

“Looking ahead, Ekta aims to break more records and inspire a new generation of para-athletes. “I want to show the world that disability is not a limitation,” she says.”

Ekta’s story is just one among many. Across the world, countless para-athletes are breaking barriers and redefining what is possible. Their dreams are growing bigger and bigger, fueled by their spirit of determination and success. These athletes do not focus on their limitations but on their potential, inspiring us all to push beyond our boundaries and achieve greatness.

Continued from page 12

very important.

Final Thoughts and Announcements

In the near future, conferences on international relations will be organized, similar to successful events in Mumbai. Professors and students interested in India-Russia relations, Russian foreign policy or Eurasian issues are invited to participate. India and Russia are superpowers in Eurasia and focusing on making the region stable and secure is essential. Students are welcome to present their papers at these events, which is very important.

This concludes the interview with Dr. Alena Remizova, highlighting her efforts and vision for fostering India-Russia cultural relations.

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Diplomacy's First Lady

The Unyielding Spirit of Vijaya Lakshmi Pandit

by TBM Correspondent



Vijaya Lakshmi Pandit

First Indian Woman as Ambassador

When we talk about women in diplomacy and business in India, the first name that comes to mind is Vijaya Lakshmi Pandit. How can we forget the remarkable journey of this pioneering woman who broke barriers and set new standards in the world of international relations?

Vijaya Lakshmi Pandit, born into the illustrious Nehru family, was not just the sister of India's first Prime Minister, Jawaharlal Nehru but a formidable force in her own right. Her life was a testament to resilience, determination, and an unwavering commitment to public service.

In 1947, she made history by becoming the first Indian woman ambassador, representing India in the Soviet Union. Her diplomatic career was marked by several key postings, including her roles as Ambassador to the United States

and Mexico, High Commissioner to the United Kingdom and Ambassador to Ireland and Spain. Each of these positions came with its own set of challenges, which she navigated with grace and tenacity.

One of her most notable achievements was serving as the President of the United Nations General Assembly from 1953 to 1954, the first woman to hold this prestigious position. Her leadership at the UN was instrumental in advocating for peace, human rights and international cooperation.

Vijaya Lakshmi Pandit's autobiography, "**The Scope of Happiness: A Personal Memoir**" offers profound insights into her life and career. Here are a few key takeaways

she mentioned a long time back; it's time to re-read them:

Key Takeaways from Vijaya Lakshmi Pandit's Memoir

1. Perseverance and Resilience

- Vijaya Lakshmi Pandit's life was marked by numerous

challenges, from her involvement in the Indian independence movement to her diplomatic career. She faced gender biases and political complexities but remained steadfast in her goals. Her story teaches the importance of perseverance and resilience in the face of adversity.

2. Commitment to Principles

- Throughout her career, she remained committed to her principles of justice, equality and peace. Her dedication to

these values guided her actions and decisions, even in difficult situations. Aspiring

diplomats can learn the importance of staying true to their principles and values.

3. Breaking Barriers

- As the first Indian woman ambassador and the first woman President of the UN General Assembly, Vijaya Lakshmi Pandit broke

The scope of happiness lies within us, in our ability to face life's challenges with courage and grace.

numerous barriers. Her achievements demonstrate that with determination and hard work, it is possible to overcome societal and professional obstacles.

4. Importance of Education and Knowledge

- She emphasized the importance of education and continuous learning. Her intellectual curiosity and desire to understand global issues deeply contributed to her success. Aspiring professionals should prioritize education and lifelong learning to excel in their careers.

5. Empathy and Understanding

- Her diplomatic success was partly due to her ability to empathize with others and understand different perspectives. Building strong relationships and fostering mutual respect are crucial skills for anyone in diplomacy or leadership roles.

6. Balancing Personal and Professional Life

- Vijaya Lakshmi Pandit managed to balance her demanding career with her personal life. She often spoke about the importance of family support and finding a balance between professional responsibilities and personal well-being.

7. Courage to Speak Up

- She was never afraid to voice her opinions and stand up for what she believed in, even in the face of opposition. This courage to speak up and advocate for one’s beliefs is essential for making a meaningful impact.

One of her quotes from the book that resonates deeply is: “The scope of happiness lies within us, in our ability to face life’s challenges with courage and grace.”

Continued from page 14

Her journey epitomizes perseverance and the ability to find equilibrium amid chaos, proving that one can attain personal success while supporting a partner’s career.

The Backbone of a College Student: Collaboratively Forging Futures

Ravi, a college student and his wife Meera have a story that resonates with numerous young couples. Tying the knot while still in college, they encountered financial constraints and the pressures of academic life. Meera undertook multiple part-time jobs to back Ravi’s education, all while managing their household. Her steadfast support and confidence in Ravi’s potential have been the cornerstone of his academic triumph. Meera’s narrative serves as a powerful reminder of the sacrifices and dedication that are often overlooked but are pivotal in constructing a brighter future together.

These anecdotes underscore the extraordinary strength, resilience and resolve of those who work behind the scenes. They prompt us to recall that success is frequently a collective endeavor, built on the unwavering support and sacrifices of loved ones. As we

applaud the accomplishments of diplomatic leaders, corporate executives and college students, let us also pay tribute to the inspiring journeys of their spouses, who are the unseen pillars of their success.

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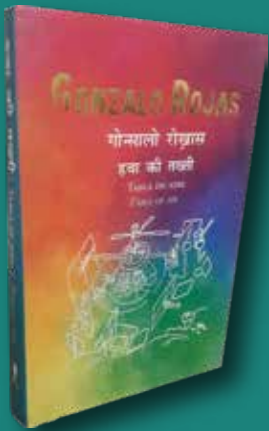
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