

22 TALK ART, MUSIC, STYLE, FOOD



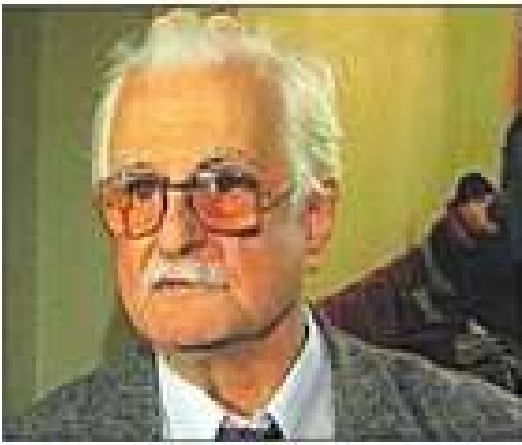
COMING TOGETHER
 Legendary rock band Metallica will collaborate with The San Francisco Symphony for a special concert marking the 20th anniversary of their collaborative album *S&M* (pictured). The one-night-only eponymous show will take place in September.

SNAP SHOTS



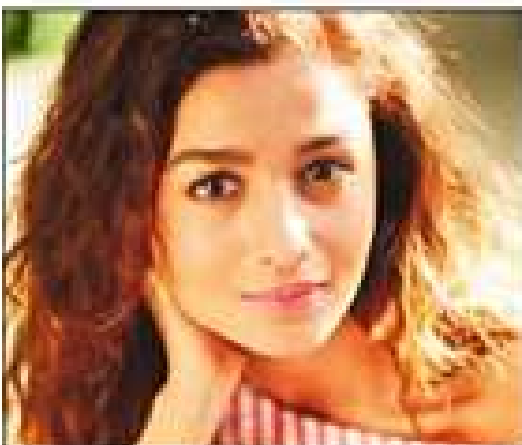
Artist's Muse

ARTIST MF Husain painted a portrait of Indira Gandhi after her rise to power as the President of the National Congress Party in 1959. The work *Portrait of a Girl* (pictured) was exhibited the next year at his solo show in Germany. On March 27 and 28, Astaguru Auction House will put this work, among others, under the hammer at their Modern Indian Art Auction, which is estimated between Rs 80,00,000 and Rs 1,20,00,000.



In Memoriam

MARLEN KHUTSIEV, well-known Soviet-era filmmaker, one of the most influential post-war directors, has died at the age of 93. The Georgian-born was famous for cult films that captured Soviet society's mood in the '50s and '60s. His works included *Spring on Zarechnaya Street* (1956) and *I am Twenty* (1965). His career of six decades earned the admiration of Federico Fellini, Jean-Luc Godard and other film greats.



Star Power

ALIA BHATT and Salman Khan will star in Sanjay Leela Bhansali's next, *Inshallah*. "It's been 20 years but I am glad Sanjay and I are finally back... Looking forward to work with Alia and *inshallah* we will all be blessed on this journey..." Khan wrote on Twitter. The filmmaker made his directorial debut with 1996 film *Khamoshi: The Musical*, which starred Khan, who also featured in the director-producer's classic *Hum Dil De Chuke Sanam*.

Work by Hand

THE EXHIBITION "Meanings, Metaphor — Handspun and Handwoven in the 21st Century", which will be held in Bengaluru, presents fabrics and saris that were first commissioned for "Khadi — The Fabric of Freedom", a series of exhibitions curated by the late Martand Singh in 2000. These exhibitions were developed within a broader set of initiatives led by textile experts Rahul Jain, Rta Kapur Chishti and Rakesh Thakore, and raised questions about the relevance of hand-spun and hand-woven cotton fabric. Third in a series presented by The Registry of Sarees, an organisation that enables writing, curatorial and design projects in Indian textiles, the show curated by Mayank Mansingh Kaul, opens on March 30.



Colours of the Earth

With Holi around the corner, we turn to the hills from where nature announces the arrival of spring



SHINY VARGHESE

MOHAN SINGH KARKI remembers the time as a child, when he would return home with lips and tongue red, having feasted on buransh or rhododendron flowers. It was not uncommon for children to eat these flowers when they went into the Uttarakhand jungles to fetch firewood, graze cattle or play with friends. Somewhere between the cedar and pine landscape, buransh would welcome spring with its bright clusters, dotting the green-grey-white landscape with a flourish of red. What people call a cultural motif of Uttarakhand, is also the state's national tree.

Holi, celebrated as the festival of spring, is *prakriti ka utsav*, says Karki. "*Prakriti mein naayi umang, naya utsah hota hai* (There's new hope and joy in nature). From buransh that grows on trees to piyuli, a yellow flower that grows as a creeper along the road, and the blooming of peach, apricot, plum and

pear in orchards, there's a natural vibrancy and colour everywhere," he says. Holi was more a festival of flowers and songs than the use of colour itself, recalls Karki, who manages the community radio station, Kumaon Vani, in Mukteshwar. Shekhar Pathak, Founder, People's Association for Himalaya Area Research, affirms, "Even before the songs and colour, nature itself proclaims the arrival of spring in the hills. Our fields are lush with wheat and mustard harvests, lime trees are in full bloom, and an abundance of wild flowers everywhere tell that the festival is here."

Artificial colours are new to villages, says 52-year-old Karki. "In our childhood, if we wanted yellow, we used haldi in water or lime juice, which doesn't rub off easily. We would boil buransh or tesu flowers for the red or yellowish orange colour. It was a week of celebrations, which continue even to this day," he says.

The festival is celebrated in three parts — baithki holi, khari holi and mahila holi.

While baithki begins from the temples, it often ends in people's courtyards, where *holi-yars* (*banjarans* or singers) sing with musical instruments, with a focus on the rich classical ragas of the region. "*Raag ka uttar-chadav* (the dips and crescendos of a raag) would depend on the time of day. As the night draws closer the music lulls, but with the break of dawn, *raag khilne lagti hai* (it comes alive)," says Pathak, quite literally in the midst of a baithki as we speak to him.

Khari holi, sung by villagers involves going door-to-door singing hymns and blessing people in every home. Pathak remembers a time when he was witness to a mahila holi, where only the women congregated. "They imitated the elders and prominent people of the village, through theatre and music, which was quite a revelation for me as a child," he says.

Much before Holi though, children bring flowers and sweets, laying the petals before every door, and in return are treated to food or clothes. It's a way of inviting blessings and announcing the arrival of the season.

Karki recalls how entertainment was more community driven, where the dependence was more on each other, than external elements. "People used local means to make colour, prepare food and entertain one another. The idea of the collective was very strong. Even in our songs, you could tell of our lives through the way the songs were written. They would tell of the environment, of the birds and trees, of what we ate and what we did. It proclaimed our oneness with nature. We were closer to the earth," he says.

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AROUND TOWN THIS HOLI

Food Fiesta

HOLI IS an excuse to eat foods that awaken the senses and keep your spirits high. Savour dishes that have been a part of the celebrations since ages and are considered synonymous with the festival, such as *khashta pakori*, *rang birangi paneer ki seekh*, *kathal masaledaar*, *lagan ki boti*, and *gunjiya*. On till March 24, lunch from 12.30 pm to 2.45 pm, dinner from 7 pm to 11.45 pm, at Paranda, Vivanta Surajkund, Shooting Range Road, Surajkund, Faridabad.

Play Along

CELEBRATE THE festival of Holi at the "Village in the City" Surajgarh Gurgaon, with puppet shows, pottery, turban tying, magic show, folk dance, camel and bullock cart rides, a variety of food, and rain dance. The artistes in performance include Raghu Dixit Project, Kutle Khan Project, Roohani Sisters, Chizai, and flautist Ritesh Prasanna. On March 21, 11 am to 6 pm, at Golf Course Ext Rd, Sector 59, Gurugram. Entry fee: Rs 599 for children, Rs 1,999 for adults and Rs 3,799 for couples.

Festive Notes

ADDING MUSIC to the festival of colours, Sangeeta Gaur will present 'Holi ke Geet', along with Mohit Sharma on the pad, Sandy Singh on guitar, Anil Mishra on tabla, Vikas on key board, and Rajendera Semwal on flute. Gaur is associated with the Asmita Theatre Group as the music director and specialises in *haveli sangeet*, *thumri*, *chaiti*, *hori* and *sufiana-kalam*. On March 20, 7 pm at Sri Ram Centre, Mandi House.



Notes that Bind

Holi, the festival that has dispelled many social conventions, has been extensively explored through poetry and music in Islam

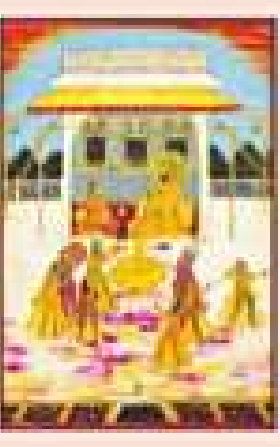
SUANSHU KHURANA

Aaj rang hai ri ma rang hai ri, Moray, mehboob kay ghar rang hai ri
 (There's colour today, O mother, there's a glow today, in my beloved's home, there's new colour today)

Everywhere in the world, when a qawwali concert concludes, the space is filled with this Amir Khusrau piece, a tribute to his peer, Nizamuddin Auliya. A composition in raag Mishra Khamaj, a popular raga for thumris and tappas, it's difficult to get past the version that Ustad Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan

Hinduism and the tales of Radha and Krishna, it has also been an integral part of Islam for centuries.

While there are references to Holi in most of the Mughal reign, they are very prominent in the times of Emperor Akbar, Jehangir and Bahadur Shah Zafar, who celebrated the festival as Eid-e-Gulab-Pashi, where colours were created with tesu and roses. Mir Taqi Mir, who was in the court of Nawab Asaf-ud-Daulah wrote in praise of Jashne-e-Holi. Wajid Ali Shah, the last Nawab of Awadh, who considered himself to be the embodiment of Krishna, is known to have celebrated the festival with much fervour. One time when Holi and Muharram fell on the same day, he made



exponent Shobha Gurtu recorded it. Bollywood also immortalised it in *Sardari Begum* (1996).

Sufism and Holi, too, have been closely linked. Baba Bulleshah, equally revered in India and Pakistan, wrote: *Hori khelungi, keh bismillah; Nam nabi ki ratn chadi, boond padi allah allah; Rang rangeeli ohi khilave, jis seekhi ho fanaa fi allah*. (I will play Holi, while saying bismillah; Like a precious stone in Prophet's name, Every drop falls with the rhythm of Allah, Allah; Only he who has learnt to lose himself in Allah, may play with these colours.)

Another piece that comes to mind but hasn't been a popular recording is *Khelo re chistiyon Holi khelo, khwaja nijam ke bhes mein aayo* (All the Chistis, play Holi; Khwaja (Moinuddin Chisti) has come in the disguise of the Nizam).

A YouTube version of Munawar Masoom's qawwali is doing the rounds. Somewhere in a village in Gujarat, under a tin shed packed with audience, Ahmedabad-



based Osman Mir sings *Mera murshid khele Hori, Yaara rang hai uska nyaara; Ishq da rang hai nyaara, Tere ishq da rang hai nyaara* (My mentor plays holi, friend, his colour is unique; the colour of love is unique, the colour of your love is unique). Lyricist Niranjan lyangar's stunning poetry, paired with refrain from harmonium and claps, has

the qualities of a classic. Based on raag Desh with touches of Adaana, the emotionally charged song with alaaps and refrains woven with the undercurrent of the tabla, takes us back to the original Shankar Ehsaan Loy, which has a unique whiff of the past, when everyone celebrated a festival together despite their gods and customs.

The Flame that Cools

The subtly-flavoured palash or tesu flower not only has medicinal properties, but makes for cooling summer sherbets too



Sangeeta Khanna

POOJA PILLAI

IN THE unrelenting heat of summer, one of the ways in which Astrid Rao likes to refresh herself is by drinking a sherbet made from the flower of the palash tree (*Butea monosperma*). Rao did not grow up familiar with this tree. But when she purchased her farm in Kamshet, near Pune, 25 years ago, she had just read an article by naturalist Winin Pereira, which advocated the propagation of native flora, and so, one of the first things Rao did was take a walk through her land and acquaint herself with it. That is how she became familiar with the palash tree which, even today, stands tall on her land and is, right now, lit up with bright red flowers that cause it to be called Flame of the Forest.

Palash or tesu, with their striking hue, are most associated with Holi. The flowers, soaked in water, produce a colour that has traditionally been used to celebrate this festival. For centuries, they've also been appreciated for their medicinal uses (as have other parts of the tree, like the bark and the seeds). But like a number of other flowers, such as banana, moringa, rose and marigold, they've also been put to culinary use in India, most frequently to prepare cooling drinks.

Food blogger and nutrition consultant Sangeeta Khanna says, the flower has a very mild floral taste, with an earthy bitter undertone. Because of this, it goes well with other ingredients such as saunf, khas or mint. "I usually make the sherbet with saunf and khadi sakar," says Rao.

Like many under-appreciated indigenous ingredients, palash has recently caught the attention of chefs, mixologists and other food professionals. Khanna, who grew up familiar with the uses of palash in her native Varanasi, makes a Tesu aur Khas ka Sherbet, which she had once served at a Banaras ka Khana food festival at The Oberoi Gurgaon. "Later Anamika Singh of Anandini teas introduced a tea blend with palash petals," she says.

TESU AUR KHAS KA SHERBET

- 100 gm khas roots
- 25 gm tesu flowers
- 20 ml lime juice
- 300 gm sugar
- Mint leaves for garnish

- Simmer khas roots and tesu flowers in 2 litres of water and sugar for 20 minutes and keep covered till cold
- Strain and chill the syrup
- Add lime juice, add ice or chilled water to adjust sweetness
- Serve with fresh mint

FROM SANGEETA KHANNA