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INDOMITABLE
Spirit
- Masoom Shankar

'EVERY DAY IS
A GOOD DAY
FOR ME'
- Amika Shail

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Beholder
- Anirban Sadhu

BABY
NO
MORE
-ANAND
DEVARAKONDA

THE QUEEN OF POP & BEYOND

Jonita Gandhi

Letter From the

Editor

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very now and then there are times when we want to shut down and reboot. Taking small breaks helps me to find clarity about my own life. Especially during this time of the year, when it's August, my birthday month, I always start looking inwards to look at the true meaning of life. My visit to a wellness retreat this month

really helped me connect to my soul. Do read about my experience in this issue.

I'm all about doing things that touch the soul. If you listen to our cover girl Jonita Gandhi's voice, I bet it will touch all the right chords and make you want to continue listening to her on loop. She has worked with maestros like AR Rahman, Arijit Singh, Sonu Nigam, Anirudh Ravichander and her latest hit song for Karan Johar's film has been all the rage. Read about the queen of pop's journey, straight from the horse's mouth. She has carved her own niche and will soon be seen donning an actor's hat too.

In our other star interviews we catch up with Vijay Devarakonda's brother Anand Devarakonda, open up about his body of work and what keeps him going. We also



have singer turned actor Amika Shail, another promising star, who got two million views for her maiden cover song, and is among the top YouTube singers in the country. Then there's Masoom Shankar who has worked in some wonderful Tamil projects and seems to have a busy calendar ahead. Do also read up about Lehar Khan's dreams come true as she will soon be in a film with Shah Rukh Khan, Nayanthara, Vijay Sethupati and Priyamani.

Our columns are always well worded and make for a very informative and interesting read, so don't miss out on them. Also, catch up on the launch soirees of the season and then some.

Love & Light! #StayProvoked!

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Eye of the Beholder

REVISITING 2500 YEARS OF INDIAN ART HISTORY

Basel, in Switzerland, known globally as a scientific and pharmaceutical hub, is an unlikely destination for an Indian art collection to be located. Yet, the collection featured in the poignantly named book “Eye of the Beholder” is based in Basel. The book is a compilation of a part of the private collection of two Doctors – Dr. Anirban

and Dr. Rejina Sadhu, based in Basel, Switzerland. A substantial portion of the collection comprises paintings and sculptures- most of which are featured there. In addition, the Sadhu collection contains other objects of historic and cultural importance like rare books, manuscripts, historically important coins, natural history curiosities like Taxidermy

etc.

It is a narrative of 2500 years of Indian art history told through the objects in the private collection of Dr. Anirban and Rejina Sadhu. The book appeals to a diverse audience. In its approach, it is partly scholastic, partly informative, but wholly entertaining. It is designed

to arouse interest from a reader with an itinerant fascination for Indian art, as much as from the one with a dedicated and sustained interest. A common theme underlies the apparent diversity of focus of the collection. All the objects have strong resonance with the history of India.

Dr. Anirban and Rejina have been calling Switzerland their home for the last 23 years, though India resides in their heart, thought and lifestyle. Originally from India, both are alumni of the prestigious Tata Institute of Fundamental Research, and neurobiologists by academic training. Today, they hold senior positions in the international pharmaceutical industry in the field of drug development. For Anirban, vocation and passion have been twin pillars providing sustenance, succor and fulfillment to life. And the passion in their lives has always been India.

Unlike many other collections that have received recognition in the recent past, the Sadhu collection distinguishes itself in being primarily academic focused. "I never buy anything that I fully understand" - says Anirban, "and in that sense I am proudly old fashioned". The collection arose out of the couple's interest in Indian history and culture. As a result, the collection mirrors the chronology of Indian history, without any regard for prevailing trends, fashion or investment potential.

The earliest pieces date from the dusk of pre-history - a set of clay pottery from the Indus valley civilization, originating from Mehrgarh. Following close in the heels is a stunning basalt bust of a Buddhist Avalokiteshwara in the Gandhara style from the Indo Greek period from the region around Swat and Afghanistan. Other objects representing the flowering of Indian civilization in successive centuries and dynasties represent the rest of the collection - a gold coin (Mohur) from the Maurya dynasty, another representing the Kushan Dynasty, a 15th century miniature painting as a testament to the emergence of the art in India, successive schools of miniature paintings in India, Colonial Indian art, Bengal school paintings representing the Swadeshi movement, and paintings representative of important movements in the post-independence era. There are few other private collections that can claim to represent 10,000 years of cultural achievements of the Indian subcontinent.

Accumulated over a period of 20 years, and sourced from private dealers, auction houses and galleries all over the world, the pursuit of art has taken Anirban all over the world and forged friendships and spawned mysteries. There are so many hilarious anecdotes, nail-biting suspense and tales of chance discoveries that a sequel to the 'Art of the Beholder' is already in the planning. All objects in the collection have been painstakingly researched, published and cataloged. Over the years, some objects have left the collection, and today find a place of eminence in prestigious art galleries and important sovereign collections.

"India occupies all of our lives", Anirban says sitting in his garden next to a lifesize Shiva and Parvati from Mahabalipuram. "As we discover more, there is more that beckons us. At 15, my daughter has been training in Indian classical music for the last many years. At the age of 12, my son can recite chapters from the Bhagavad



Gita effortlessly and is training formally to be a Sanskrit scholar. Both of them take a keen interest in the collection, and weigh in with their input on decisions related to acquisition and de-accessioning."

There is so much that is wonderful and collectible in the world. Did they ever venture into collecting something else? "Yes, there have been some occasional obsessions with other things" - Anirban says, pointing to a grand complication Patek Philippe watch on his wrist. Watches and clocks fascinate me. Some years ago, I bought a 'repeater' wall clock from the 1840s from a very precious pedigree in Vienna. Before the era of electronic wall clocks, these were among the most precise mechanical clocks in the world. I love the workmanship that goes into complicated watches - represented by the kinds of Rolex and Patek Phillippe, and own a few. "But", he says musingly as an afterthought, "a watch is after all a

machine. Art is where the Heart is."

This book is the culmination of two decades of collecting. It is intended to be a testament to the genesis of the collection - partly autographical, partly scholastic, and partly entertaining - wholly interesting. I started collecting when I had hardly any income, no disposable income at all, and no wall to hang the paintings on. My first acquisition was a painting bought for 25 shekels while loitering the streets of Tel Aviv in the year 2000. Perhaps this is the reason why unlike many other collectors, I have made fewer mistakes while building up my collection. Chronic shortage of acquisition funds meant that I had to spend a lot of time contemplating and researching a purchase before actually going ahead with it. Twenty two years on from that first acquisition in Israel, I look back on this journey with considerable nostalgia and pride. It has taken me to different parts of the world in search of paintings, introduced me to interesting and knowledgeable people and enabled interesting discoveries. Kushan sculptures in backrooms of galleries in Beijing to Indian miniatures deep down in London basements or iconic pieces in vernissages in Old Bond Street - these moments of discovery and thrill will never really leave me! Perhaps another book is needed for narrating the discoveries in flea markets, or that of finding a Daniell Print from Oriental Scenery behind another one on opening the picture frame. One important feature of this collection is that it was put together from a purely academic standpoint, with scant regard for trends or prevailing fashion.

Each piece has been assiduously studied, vetted against expert opinion, and in many cases researched and published. I take this opportunity to thank the numerous dealers, galleries, academics and specially the two dealers that I have had a chance to work with closely. Through this connection the idea of a book came to fruition. My belief is that this book will appeal to a diverse audience. Those interested in a serious understanding of Indian art history will be able to do so through the academic rigour of the academic writing. Others that have a passing interest in the subject will be able to treat themselves to a history of Indian art told through 100 objects, and the anecdotal inputs by me.

The Eye of the Beholder is a recently published book on Indian Art.