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Sandesh

A Newsletter from IndUS of Fox Valley

From Editors' Desk

Consistent with the theme of Indian Architecture, Sandesh is happy to bring you short articles on various architectural landmarks of India. These are only few of the many wonders from India. There will be more presented at our annual event, IndUS 2004 at University of Wisconsin – Oshkosh on Saturday, November 6th. An exhibit, a banquet and a multimedia entertainment show will all focus on India's architectural contributions.

IndUS is dedicated to creating cultural awareness. Sandesh is your forum to express your ideas on any topics of general interest. We invite your suggestions, ideas and write-ups. We are ambitious and wish to make it enjoyable reading material online and in print.

Sandesh

An IndUS of Fox Valley
Publication

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Welcome to Mumbai - Gateway of India

By Sandhya Sridhar

The Gateway of India is one of the most distinguished landmarks of Mumbai. Set on the edge of Apollo Bunder and Arabian Sea, it is a majestic monument created to commemorate the first-ever visit in 1911 of a British Monarch to India, King George V and his queen Mary on their way to a durbar in Delhi.

As a Mumbaikar, I have mixed feelings when I see its images. On one hand it represents our collective slavishness to the British Imperial Rule, and on the other, it is a remarkable piece of architecture that combines Indo-Saracenic style with Gothic flamboyance. True to its cosmopolitan character, like that of Mumbai, it also shows influence of Gujarati Muslim 16th century architectural style. This is a great contribution of George Wittet (1878-1926), a Scotsman who helped popularize such an architectural style.

The Gateway is a huge stone Arch built of yellow Kharodi basalt from nearby quarries. The central dome has a diameter of 48 ft. It is 83 ft high. Underneath is a central hall with great archways, turrets, and side halls. It can accommodate 600 people (www.orientalarchitecture.com). The whole harbor front was realigned with a planned esplanade, which would sweep down to the center of the town. It took the Government of India a dozen years after the royal visit to complete this monument. It cost Rs. 21 lakhs that is over two million dollars. It was such a huge cost of construction that due to lack of funds the approaching road was never built; forget other parts of that plan.

In my childhood, we lived in Colaba, a



stone's throw from the monument. I have happy childhood memories of leisurely evening strolls with my parents and Ashok, a toddler brother in tow. I remember running under the gateway through a bunch of pigeons cooing and eating grains of rice. The moment I was near them they took a short flight in the air and were immediately back to picking grains. Ashok tried catching them. Our parents bought us roasted peanuts in conically folded newspaper-rolls for a treat.

They also told us stories of how the gate was built to welcome the king and queen of England. My Dad even sang a little song school kids were taught to welcome them. It went in Sanskrit, " Bho, bho, Pancham George ...". My Dad then wore only Khadi. Like many of his generation he was devoted to the cause of freedom from the British. To my mind there was nothing incongruent with his attire and content of the song, I now know that Rabindranath Tagore wrote "Jana Gana Mana", which later became the national anthem of India, especially for this royal visit.

On my last visit to India I had a chance to revisit the place. As I stood near the magnificent archway, old memories came rushing back.

The place looks more crowded, but this

Gateway still reminds us of the past, so inextricably linked with the British Raj, and all its civilizing glory and also its exploitative imperialism.

Irony is that it is the same Gateway that

the last British troops formally passed through when they finally quit India in February 1948. Today for many people it is simply a symbol that says, "Welcome to India."

The Victoria Memorial of Kolkata

By Manjari Chatterji

The Victoria Memorial—sometimes given the affectionate soubriquet "Mem", as in memsahib,—is an embodiment of converging historical forces that echo larger confluences in India's complex history. Conceived by the unpopular Lord Curzon as a legacy of imperial rule, it was nevertheless modeled on the unmistakable lines of the *Taj Mahal* from the same Makrana marble favored by Shah Jahan, and funded by India's industrial elite. Its architect, Sir William Emerson, President of the British Institute of Architects, is well known in India from his other earlier works: the *Crawford Markets* in Mumbai, the *Senate House* in Chennai, the *Taktsinghji Hospital* in Bhavnagar, Gujarat, and, more familiar to me, the Indo-Sarcacenic style *Muir College* in Allahabad. The actual construction was supervised by Vincent J. Esch, who is responsible for many of Calcutta's other colonial landmarks: the *Allahabad Bank*, the *Bengal Club and Turf Club*, the railway headquarters at Garden Reach and others.

According to the official website, the *Victoria Memorial* is 184 ft high, and topped by the revolving figure of Victory, which is an additional 16ft high and weighs 3 tons. Built of pure white marble, it has a central great dome, clustered with 4 subsidiary, octagonal domed chattris surrounding terraces, and 4 outlying domed corner towers. The groups of figures above the north porch represent Motherhood, Prudence and Learning, which for a State that worships so many female goddesses



seems appropriate, even if unintended. Other figures represent Art, Architecture, Justice, Charity etc. The King George V laid the foundation stone, and the colorful and romantic Edward VIII performed the inaugural ceremonies. The monument sits on 64 acres of land, which along with the maidan, the racecourse, and further, the open spaces of Fort William constitute the much-needed "lungs" of a modern metropolis fighting against overcrowding, pollution and an ever horizon-changing cityscape.

The Victoria Memorial is also a museum and houses collections of art, mughal miniatures, rare books and manuscripts, including illustrated Shakespeare plays, *Arabian Nights* and the *Rubbaiyat* of Omar Khaiyyam, lithographs and aquatints, letters, armors and other memorabilia from the days of the Raj. These may be seen online, and offer a wonderful glimpse of an India now vanished.

Two interesting things I discovered while reading for this project were *one*,

the not very savory haggling that went on about the funding for the monument, and the firm but tactful coercion that the Raj exerted on the mercantile community, Princes and the Chamber of Commerce. Clearly, Britain did not pay a penny for this homage to Victoria or her "jewel in the crown."

The *other*, a somewhat wry discovery was that, although prominent Indians were invited to offer suggestions for themes to be incorporated in the monument, none were actually accepted, through a number of adroit evasions. Sir Gurudas Banerjee had suggested inclusion of objects representing India's heritage such as the Epics, and Sir Surendranath Benerjee, quite characteristically, emphasized India's nationalist aspirations by including ethnic groups such as the Marathas and Rajasthanis. Needless to say, the 1920s were not the most propitious times to wrest favors from the Raj in the matter of indigenous representation.

The Mem is 83 years old this year. She gets a periodic facelift, but she is always quite ravishing at sunset, as a child driving past with my parents, hoping to catch the angel atop actually revolving. In the 80s the black bronze angel needed help, and some engineers were able to fix the problem. Italians designed this statue as well as the gardens. Today,

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Calcuttans are thinking of charging a small fee to early morning walkers for the use of the gardens. The Bengal Rose Society has offered its services to refurbish the gardens. After a flurry

of nationalist sentiment that banished many magnificent statues of British dignitaries to the vaults of the Calcutta museum, more recent attempts to restore colonial history have led to

recognizing the artistic enrichments of monuments like *St. Paul's Cathedral*, *Prinsep Ghat*, and of course, the *Victoria Memorial*.

Bada Imambada of Lucknow

By Kamal Varma

There are many monuments in Lucknow that represent the rich cultural heritage of the medieval era. But Bada Imambara, because of its extra ordinary features, has acquired a unique place in history. While I write about it, scenes from my childhood move in front of my eyes. Visiting the Imambara as a family was quite the event with preparations starting right in the morning, as we would spend the whole day there. Besides snacks and beverages, mom used to pack a big picnic lunch for my six siblings, my father, my aunt and herself. As a child I used to enjoy the trip with the family but did not appreciate the history of Imambara. As I grew older I went often with visiting families and it started to fascinate me more and more. Every time I went, I would close my eyes and feel I could hear voices of the masons and the noise of their heavy tools chiseling the stones.

Nawab Asaf-Ud-Daula built this gigantic and elegant building and hence it is also known as *Asafai Imambara*. Here the Nawab used to hold his durbar or public hearings. It was built as a famine relief program in 1784 and it took six years to complete the structure. The legend goes that every day the masons would erect the walls and in the night the Nawab would order them torn down so that he could continue providing work to the poor people. He was very much loved by his people for his generosity. The chant '*ja ko na de maula, usko de Asaf-ud-daula*' (the one who does not receive even from God, gets it from

Asaf-ud-daula) still resonates in people's memory. The rickshaw pullers and tonga drivers take pride in telling these stories to the visitors of Lucknow. Their narration is so passionate and sounds so authentic, it seems as if they themselves had witnessed it.

As you enter the building there is a hall almost 165 feet long (more than half of the length of a football field) and 55 feet wide. As soon as you walk in this giant hall on a hot summer day the cool breeze welcomes you with a soft whisper in your ears. The architecture of this 50-foot high room is very unique and unparalleled. It is said that, this hall is the world's largest arched room without any pillars. An interesting and amusing feature of this great hall is its acoustics. When you visit, your guide will surely ask you to stand in a balcony on one end of the hall with your ear to the wall as he goes to a similar balcony on the opposite side of the hall. He then tears a piece of paper or lights a matchstick, which you can hear loud and clear. If you move from that exact spot to another area of the hall, you can no longer hear the sound. This 'trick' is accomplished because the ceiling of the hall is elliptical and the balconies are the focal points of the ellipse. This phenomenon is known as 'whispering gallery'.

The upper part of this building is in shape of a honeycomb and is surrounded by the famous '*Bhul Bhulliya*' (a labyrinth). It has got



numerous steps and there are 489 door-less galleries that are similar in appearance. Once you enter in this amazing maze you will take hours to come out. It is easy to get lost in these galleries although your guide keeps popping up from everywhere to make sure that that does not happen. In the courtyard of Bada Imambara is the Shahi Masjid, which stands tall on a platform. By the side of the Shahi Masjid there is a *babri* (a water reservoir). The Bada Imambara also houses the tomb of Asaf-Ud-Daulla.

When you visit Lucknow, the Bada Imambara should definitely be on your list of places to visit as it is not only an important part of the Avadh history, but one of the great prides of Lucknow.

IndUS 2004

Architecture of India

Saturday
November 6

At
University of Wisconsin Oshkosh

The Golden Temple

By H. S. Dugal



The Golden Temple, also called Hari Mandir (Temple of God), is the most holy temple of the Sikhs. It is located in the city of Amritsar. The name Amritsar is derived from the words Amrit Sarower (Tank of Nectar).

It is said that long, long ago the present location of Amritsar was a dense forest with a small water pond. Lord Buddha is believed to have stopped here a while and wanted to make it a meditation place for Buddhist monks but the efforts never fully materialized. Guru Nanak, the first Guru of the Sikhs, who lived here for some time in 1532 succeeded

in making it a holy site.

The excavation began in 1574 and the water pond was enlarged and converted into a much larger tank by 1589. A Muslim saint, Mian Mir, a friend and admirer of the 5th Guru, Guru Arjan Dev, laid the foundation of the Temple. The construction of the temple was started in 1589 and completed in 1601.

During the Mughal invasions, the Temple was desecrated and destroyed again and again. In 1767, it was recovered and rebuilt. During his reign, Maharaja Ranjit Singh (1780-1839) beautified the upper half of the temple with gold and lower half with Indian marble and semiprecious stones. Therefore the name Golden Temple!

The architecture of the Golden Temple is a blend of Hindu and Muslim artistic traditions. It stands in the

midst of a pool of constantly changing water supplied primarily by natural springs. The steps on the east side lead to waters of the sacred tank. These steps are called Hari-ki-Pauri (God's steps).

Hymns from the holy book are sung without a break all the time in the Temple and no formal ritualistic worship exists. It is the desire of every Sikh to pay at least one visit to Golden Temple in his lifetime.

All visitors are welcome. Tours, meals, and lodging are available free of charge to all; irrespective of caste, creed, and nationality. Meals are served twice a day; Lodging is also available in a 221-room hostel, with 12 big halls (limit 4 days per lodger at a time).

It is a place to be seen!

The Basilica of Bom Jesus

By Blasco De' Almeida



Visitors from India and overseas flock to the Basilica of Bom Jesus situated along the Mandovi river in the town of Old Goa. Old Goa was once the center of power for the Portuguese in India and the Far East and was abandoned in 1843, when the capital was shifted to Panaji. This cathedral, which was built in 1605, and now declared a World Heritage Monument, is dedicated to the infant Jesus. The word 'bom' in Portuguese is the same as 'bon' in French, thus it is also known as the "church of good Jesus". The center of attraction in this cathedral however, is the sacred remains of St. Francis

Xavier, who died while on a sea voyage to China on December 2, 1552. His body lies in an airtight silver casket, fashioned by a 17th century Florentine jeweler, placed on a marble mausoleum that is located in a side chapel to the right of the main altar. In accordance with his wishes, St. Francis's body was brought to Goa almost 150 years after his death. It was a gift from Medici, Cosimo III, the Grand Duke of Tuscany. It is said that the saint's body was as fresh as the day when it was buried. This miraculous phenomenon attracts huge number of devotees from all over the world, especially during the



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public viewing of his body every ten years. The last exposition of his body was in 1994. Since the saint is believed to have miraculous powers of healing, the prayers and the pilgrimages still continue, although church authorities have decided not to display the body any more, to guard against deterioration.



In 1946, it became the first church of India to be elevated to the status of Minor Basilica. One of the richest churches in Goa, it is covered with

marble and inlaid with precious stones and paintings depicting the life of St. Francis Xavier. The basilica, where the mortal remains of St. Francis

Xavier are kept, is the best specimen of baroque architecture in India.

Sawai Jai Singh's Observatories – The Jantar Mantars

By Virendra Sharma

Sawai Jai Singh (1688 -1743), the astronomer ruler of Jaipur, India, designed astronomical instruments and built five observatories in cities of north India. His observatories, popularly known as *Jantar Mantars*, are still extant at New Delhi, Jaipur, Varanasi and Ujjain. They attract large number of visitors every year including serious astronomers, artists, and common people. His instruments, constructed out of stone and masonry are graceful in design and aesthetically pleasing to the eye. They range anywhere from a few feet to 74 ft in



height, and they were designed and built carefully to have a tolerance within 1/8 inch. His *Samrat Yantra* of Jaipur is the largest sundial in the world, and it was designed to measure

time with an accuracy of ± 2 seconds.

Jai Singh's instruments were functional in design and did not have any unnecessary adornments and decorations. In this regard the instruments were surprisingly modern. The surviving specimens of his instruments are excellent examples of the art of constructing large instruments in masonry and stone that became obsolete with the arrival of the telescope.

News, News, News ...

Honors & Recognition

Sujatha Kailas, MD, a Board Certified Internist and Gastroenterologist, at Agnesian Healthcare, Fond du Lac, has been nominated by Governor Doyle and confirmed by the Senate, to serve a three-year term on the Wisconsin State Medical Examining Board. Our hearty congratulations and best wishes to Sujatha who has served IndUS as a founding

Board and continues to be a big source of support and inspiration to our organization.

Board Meeting

IndUS Board Meeting: Two Important Initiatives

IndUS Board at its semi-annual meeting held on September 23, 2004, has identified two major issues

requiring community input and some inspirational leadership:

(a) IndUS Future Fund was established with a view to create an endowment that would generate income to fund programs and activities that benefit the community. Currently, the fund has accumulated approximately, \$ 11500. Our stated target is to reach \$ 100,000 by the

The Board of Directors:

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Member-at-Large

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year 2008. Please note that we will be contacting you in the near future to solicit your input. We welcome idea-champions who can mobilize the community to reach this ambitious and worthy goal.

(b) With increasing cost of medical care both access and cost of healthcare has become important issues. IndUS has been approached to assist in ascertaining the need of the people from Indian subcontinent who have made Fox Valley their home. We once again welcome volunteers who would like to assume initiative and address this important issue.

The following is the schedule of IndUS Meetings.

IndUS Executive: November 20, 2004;
Jan 29 & Mar 26, 2005

IndUS Board: Feb 26, 2005
Annual General Body Meeting: March 26, 2005.

All meetings will be at 2 p.m. and exact locations and agenda will be announced from time to time. These meetings are open meetings.

Seva and SAMP – Our Volunteers are ever so Giving

Seva commenced its twelfth year of service at Salvation Army, Appleton, where every Saturday our volunteers serve lunch to the needy. Volunteers are formed into teams. Once every six or seven weeks your team will have the opportunity to serve meals. It has been a truly rewarding experience for all those involved.

Sharing Around the World Medical Project (SAMP) involves packing surplus medical supplies and packing them for dispatch to countries in Africa, Asia and Eastern Europe.

Volunteers gather at Ralph Shriner Center, Appleton, on the last Tuesday of the month, from 6:30-8 p.m. to pack

medical supplies. The Rotary Club of Appleton manages the project and IndUS has been a very active collaborator. IndUS volunteers attended a Rotary luncheon on Tuesday, August 3, at 11:45 a.m. at Radisson Valley Hotel, Appleton. Following the lunch, Dr. Stoughton, a native of Shawano, Wisconsin, who works as a physician in Zimbabwe, underscored the importance of SAMP to recipients of aid in that country.

If you and your family would like to get involved with either of the above volunteer opportunities please contact Sridhar at sridhar@uwosh.edu or 920/749-4911.

Food of All Nations

On September 18th Appleton downtown saw a celebration of growing diversity in the Fox Valley. Organized by Towards Community (TC) and Fox Cities Rotary Multi-Cultural Center (FCRMC), it was like a huge outdoor party in a miniature world. A picture-perfect sunny day made memorable with cultural entertainment, music and cuisine from twenty nations. The central theme was *Diversity: The Spice of Life*. Tim Hanna, Mayor of Appleton and Joe Laux, Mayor of Menasha welcomed the audience. Manoj Dadi, an elementary student won the poster contest. His poster was used for the cover-page of the program showing a “global jamun”. The audience enjoyed many dances: Kathak, Bhangara and contemporary dances from India, flamboyant Mexican folk dances, amazing Native American Hoop Dance and African American Step Dance, varied music from Jewish, Indo-Portuguese origins and from Menasha High School band filled the air. Special guests that afternoon were three groups of Taiko drummers who had come all the way from Japan. They wowed the audience with their drumming skills. Hundreds of volunteers including several IndUS members helped in making this event a huge success. The

steering committee included IndUS members: Ramakant and Aruna Shet, Kamalesh Varma and Sandhya Sridhar along with Nancy Hykes, Jeff Keupper, David Tyrrell, Joe Laux and Sara Druckery.

Hungry Stones

On Saturday, August 14, 2004 IndUS of Fox Valley presented Nobel laureate Rabindranath Tagore's *The Hungry Stones* produced and performed by the Katha Dance Theatre (KDT) of Minneapolis at Grand Opera House, Oshkosh. This was the second appearance of KDT in the Fox cities. In 2003 IndUS had brought their production *Unveiling* to the area. Like the last time *The Hungry Stones* received a great accolade from the audience. Several people found it to be of the stature of Broadway shows.

IndUS is committed to bringing shows like this, which not only enrich the cultural life of the valley, but also give new dimension to the cultural diversity.

Participation in FCRMC's Celebration

On September 20, 2004 Fox Cities Rotary Multicultural Center presented *Remarkable Rhythms* at the Fox Cities Performing Arts Center in Appleton. This event also included a reception for the donors and supporters of FCRMC. Before the concert and also during the intermission member organizations of the Center had display booths. This provided an opportunity to the concert goers to learn more about these

organizations, their goals and missions, activities, and the service they provide to the community at large. IndUS of Fox Valley (a patron of FCRMC) and India Association N.E.W. (a member of FCRMC) joined hands in displaying the role these two sister organizations play in the Fox Cities community

IndUS Programs Ahead:

Pandit Vishwa Mohan Bhatt in

Concert: IndUS is pleased to announce a great concert by world renowned, Grammy-winning artist. Padmashri Pandit Vishwa Mohan Bhatt, one of the foremost disciples of Pandit Ravi Shankar, will perform Indian classical music on his Mohan Veena (adapted slide-guitar), on **Friday, April 22, 2005**. He will be accompanied by Subhen Chatterjee on tabla (percussion). The exact venue, time and admission information will be made available in due course.

Indian Film Festival: IndUS, in collaboration with Green Bay Film Society, is planning a Festival of Indian films. A number of films of artistic merit and entertainment value will be featured at this festival that is tentatively scheduled for **January 2005**.

Pravasi Bharatiya Divas

The Third Pravasi Bharatiya Divas will be celebrated January 7-9, 2005, in Mumbai, India. This largest gathering of Indian Diaspora from around the world seeks to forge a constructive relationship between India and the adopted countries of people of Indian origin. For more information please visit: www.indiaday.org.

Dr. Francis Barboza and

Ballet: In March 2005, IndUS is planning to present Dr. Francis Barboza and his troupe performing ballet featuring Christian and Indian mythologies employing the sophisticated dance idiom, grammar and syntax of Bharata Natyam, the ancient form of Indian classical dance. Dr. Barboza obtained his Ph.D. in dance from M.S. University, Baroda, India, and has invented the gestures (mudras), expressions (abhinaya) and movements (nritya). Dr. Barboza's ballets highlight the commonalities shared by world religions and celebrate the unity of spirit across cultures. Please await more details.

India Association N.E.W.

Events:

Children's Talent Show and Annual Elections

Place: Webster Stanley Elementary School Auditorium, Oshkosh.

Date: Saturday November 20, 2004

Time: 2 pm to 8 pm

Catered food at Cost

Get-together on occasion of Diwali

India Association N.E.W. is in process of getting this organized around first part of December. Please check your email for the details that was sent out on Oct. 6th. Your RSVP is very important.

New Year's Eve Party

Place: The River Commons Hall (208 Osceola Street, Oshkosh) at UW-Oshkosh

Date: Friday December 31, 2004

Time: 8 pm to 1 AM

approximately.

The Association will provide music, snacks and drinks.

