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September 2011

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Special Report – Jews in God’s Own Country

Tribal India – Randhir Khare

Fast tracking with Carmen Roberts BBC

Anti-war lyricism from Terry McDonagh

Saleem Haji – A voice from Jammu & Kashmir, India



September 2011

Shukreya Contributors and Readers,

In this September issue we have some interesting and informative articles.

A different perspective of the Jews in God's Own Country with a brief historical perspective of Jews in India.

Tribal India by Randhir Khare, a well known award winning writer.

A Working Holiday with Carmen Roberts of Fast Track BBC.

Natalie Wood gives us a ring side seat at the International Dance Festival, Karmiel.

Terry McDonagh's contribution is an anti-war poem which attempts to see the stupidity of war from the perspective of a young person at school.

Saleem Haji is the sane voice that speaks from Jammu & Kashmir, India. I hope the powers that be read what he has to say.

Bobby Chinn shares with us the experience he had eating man's best friend

Om Shanti Shanti Shanti Om

Mark Ulyseas

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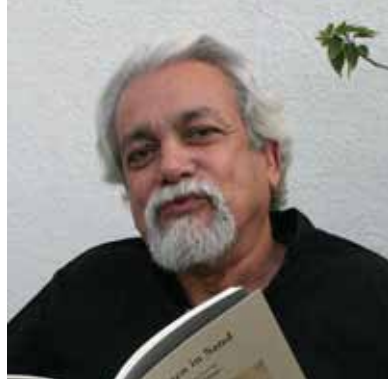


Special Report

The Jews in God's Own Country by Mark Ulyseas

A meeting with the enchanting Jewess Sarah Cohen, the senior most resident of the few remaining Jews in Jew Town, Mattancherri, Cochin, Kerala, India; And a brief historical perspective of Jews in God's Own Country courtesy of the 443 year old Paradesi Synagogue in Jew Town.

www.marculyseas.wordpress.com



Tribal India

Dhangars, Their Map of Life by Randhir Khare

Randhir Khare is an award winning author of twenty one volumes of non-fiction, fiction, translation and poetry. He is the Executive Editor of Heritage India, the International Culture Journal and Visiting Professor of Literature at Poona College. Recently he was given The Residency Award by The Sahitya Akademi (India's National Academy of Letters) for his contribution to Indian Literature and has been given the Human Rights Award for his efforts to preserve and celebrate marginal and minority cultures.

www.khare-bullough.com/randhir/randhir.html



Fast track BBC

Carmen Roberts on a Working Holiday!

Carmen Roberts is an award winning journalist for Fast Track, BBC World's flagship travel programme since 2003 and has reported from over 60 countries. After the Asian Tsunami on Boxing Day 2004, Carmen cut short her holiday in Langkawi, Malaysia to report from the devastated resort town of Phuket.

www.bbc.com/fasttrack www.carmenroberts.com



International Dance Festival, Karmiel

Natalie Wood gives us a front row seat!

Born in Birmingham, U.K. Natalie began working in journalism a month prior to the outbreak of the 1973 Yom Kippur War. She continued in regional Jewish journalism for more than 20 years and left full time writing to assist her husband open a bargain books business. A year ago, Natalie emigrated to Israel. She can be contacted on - www.alwayswriteagain.blogspot.com - my.telegraph.co.uk/perfectlywriteinIsrael/



Terry McDonagh

Irish poet and dramatist, writes an anti-war poem

Terry McDonagh, poet and dramatist, has published four collections of poetry; a play; a book of letters and a novel and poetry for children. His work has been translated into Indonesian and German, funded by Ireland Literature Exchange.

www.terry-mcdonagh.com



Interview

Saleem Haji

The voice of sanity from J & K, India

Haji, the Sarpanch of a village near Doda, discusses the situation prevailing in his area; the misconceptions of people due to the warped image the media has presented; and more importantly on the state of women's rights, education, agriculture and industry. All this from a man of peace who is actively involved in helping his own people.



Portrait of an enigmatic Photographer

Jill Gocher

"What motives me to take photographs? The answer to this is my continual quest to portray the beauty of people or a situation. When photographing people I try to get past the façade and to make a connection with that person; to get through to the Self, the soul and the essence of that person."

www.marculyseas.wordpress



Bobby Chinn

Wild, Wild East, Recipes & Stories from Vietnam.

Bobby Chinn is half Chinese, half Egyptian, raised in England, lived in San Francisco and New York and now based in Hanoi. He is one of the most respected chefs in Asia. His series on Asia is being filmed for Discovery. He has also appeared in the UK on BBC2's Saturday Kitchen and Full On Food. A must read is his best selling book Wild, Wild East, Recipes & Stories from Vietnam. www.bobbychinn.com



Ubud

Tropical Strings by John Chester Lewis

John Chester Lewis was born in Southern California and began writing poetry during university in Colorado. He lives in Ubud, Bali, Indonesia where he works on his poetry, music, and painting, when not running JL Galleries fine art.

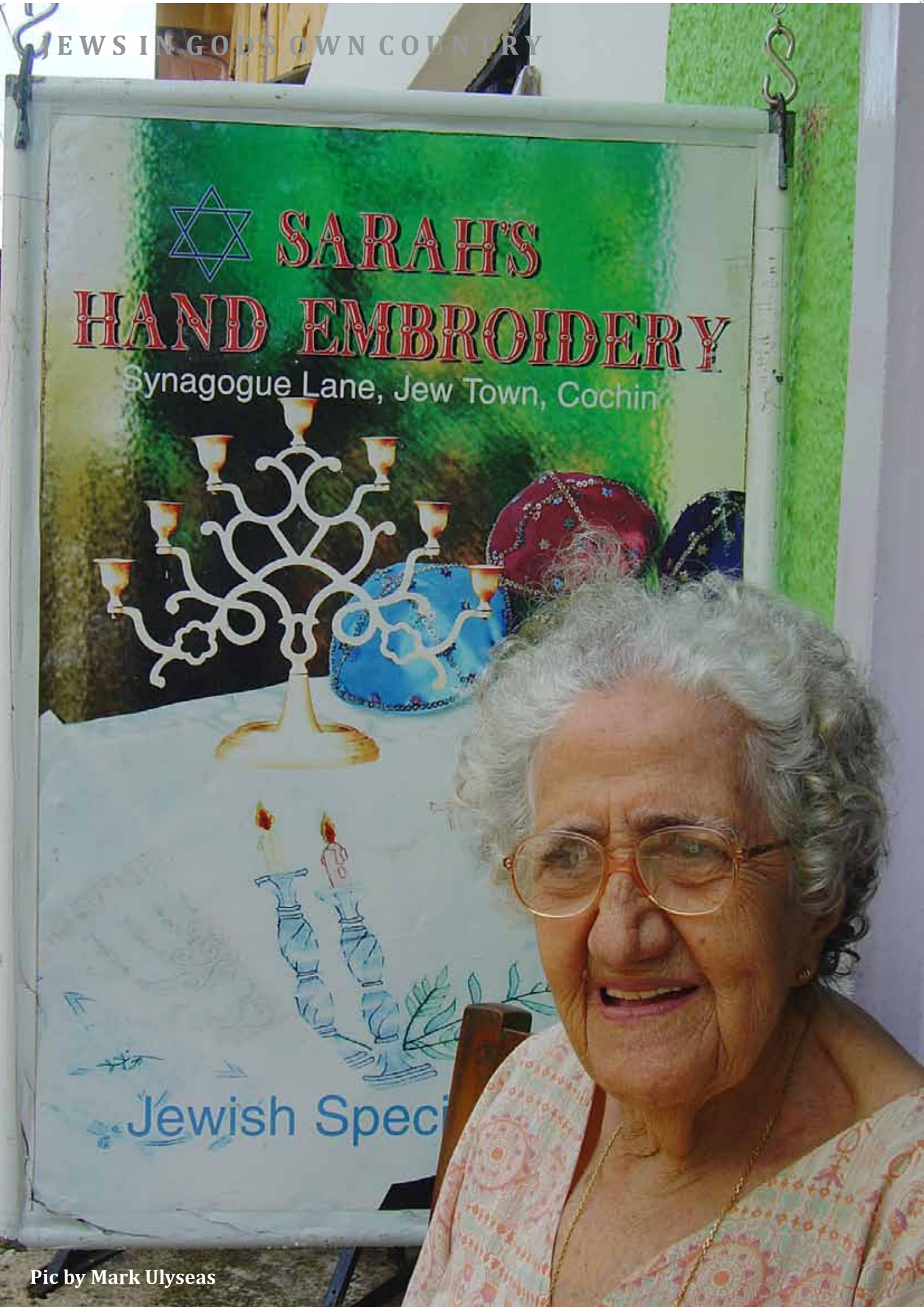
www.poempress.com - www.jlgalleries.com - www.johnniechester.com



2012 - Are we ready?

Vasumi Zjika

Vasumi Zjika has been a student of the Mayan Calendar for the past 13 years, sharing through workshops, lectures, seminars, sacred theatre and readings. She has worked and studied with some of the world's finest teachers including Jose Arguelles, Drunvalo Melchizedek. As a devotee of Ramana Maharshi she had her strongest awakening which led her to the Mayan Calendar and its deep wisdom. She is also an avid astrologer and student of both paths, Vedic and Western. www.vasumi.com/home.html



Jews in God's Own Country

by Mark Ulyseas

"India, she the grim Stepmother of our kind", wrote Rudyard Kipling in his poem Christmas in India. He couldn't have been further from the truth for history bears witness to India's benign acceptance of all those that arrive on its shores seeking a haven to practice their religion in peace, free of persecution. The earliest known instance is the arrival of Jews in India around 2500 years ago.

However, I shall not talk about history and instead share with you dear readers my visit to the historical Jew Town in Mattancherri, Cochin, Kerala, and my meeting with the eldest member of the dwindling Jewish community, the sprightly octogenarian Sarah Cohen, who resides a stone's throw from the four hundred and forty three year old Paradesi Synagogue.

Sarah Cohen's Life and Times in Jew Town

Born September 04, 1922, Jew Town, Cochin, very close to where she lives now. She has two brothers and two sisters. Her mother Khatoon Cohen died when she was very young so her father, Abraham Cohen, sent her to live with her grandparents in Jew Town. Unfortunately, they were uneducated and didn't know what it meant to be a Jew. She studied in St. Teresa's Convent in Ernakulam and completed 10th Standard where the medium of instruction was Malayalam. So she never learned to speak Hebrew, nor read it.

"I read prayers but don't understand the prayers because there is no Master to teach me. Our Rabbi's wife is teaching me now. And in turn I teach her Malayalam. But I am a Jew, you understand what I am saying. It's in my blood. All my life I have faithfully followed my Faith, I have kept the Shabbad. I have never eaten outside food and never even tasted meat of an animal that has not been killed by a Shochet.

Our present Rabbi has specially brought a Shochet from Israel to 'cut meat', which is stored in a large freezer kept in the Rabbi's home. This is distributed to us so that we can follow the principles of our Faith.

Who was my first love and when did I get married, you ask?

When I was in school I fell in love with the boy next door, Jakob Cohen. A highly educated man who worked as an Indian Government Tax inspector/lawyer and later as a consultant for many local businesses. He spoke fluent Hebrew, had studied our holy book and could speak on any subject. But Jakob was a poor man. His family was so poor that his two sisters could never get married. They died spinsters.



Jakob & Sarah. Pic courtesy Sarah Cohen.

“My father was very angry when he came to know of our affair and forcibly took me to Bombay. He arrogantly took me that Jakob was a poor man and that I could get a better man (as my father was a wealthy businessman). I told him that I didn't want a rich man. I wanted a poor man and Jakob was the only man I would marry. Eventually he gave in and we got married in 1942 in the synagogue in Byculla (Bombay). My father drove me to The Magen David Synagogue and after the ceremony abandoned me.

We left the synagogue and stayed with some friends and departed for Jew Town on the 11th day.

Everyone here (Jew Town) was against our marriage so other then the ritual of garlanding us with flowers on our arrival, there were no festivities. But as time went by everything settled down and I have lived a peaceful and happy life here

Why I didn't go to Israel and settle down there?

In 1972 Jakob took me to Tel Aviv, Haifa, Ashdod and Jerusalem. It was a humbling and beautiful experience. But we returned as India is our home. I am not saying Israel is not important to us. It is, but we were born and we grew up here so this is our home. I speak Mayalam not Hebrew though I follow my Faith, faithfully.

My husband always said that the birth of Israel was the doom of Jew Town because most of our community left for Israel in 1947-48 around the same time as India's Independence.”



Jakob & Sarah. Pic courtesy Sarah Cohen.



Visit to Israel in 1972. Pic courtesy Sarah Cohen.



Sarah & Thaha. Pic by Mark Ulyseas Playing cards with friends on the street in Jew Town. Pic courtesy Sarah Cohen.

You see that building opposite my house; it was the Tekumbagun Synagogue of the Black Jews. They also had another one down the road called the Kadavunbagun Synagogue. But it all closed now as the Black Jews left for Israel a long time ago. I heard that on arrival they were given the job of tiling the soil... agriculture. Being good workers they have become wealthy. The synagogue of the White Jews is the Paradesi Synagogue to which I belong. It is hundreds of years old.

I still remember all the festivals and how we would decorate the walls of our synagogue with flowers that the Hindus used to put on their heads. “

Just then the Chai Karan (tea seller) stopped at the window and poured us tea in two plastic cups from a stainless steel container. From a cloth bag he removed some hot Uliwarta (fried onion pakoras) and handed them to us on a piece of paper. We sat in silence sipping the tea.

Sarah suddenly spoke, her voice breaking, “Mark, please visit me as often as you can. It is very lonely. There are so few of us left and I have no one to speak to. All my loved ones, including my beloved husband Jakob are dead. Have you been to the cemetery, our cemetery? My Jakob is buried there. How I miss him. He taught me what it meant to be a Jew. He loved India and always saw this as his home, his country. This house in which I live is Jakob’s. I think it’s a few hundred years old.”

“You have a business that should keep you busy, Sarah?” I asked hesitantly.

“Hahaha...yes, yes of course but I am too old to do any embroidery. I used to hand embroider Hala Covers, Kippahs, Table cloths and even some clothes,” she replied while gentling playing with her gold pendant inscribed with the word “Shaddai”, the Hebrew name of God.

She got up and walked to a counter that displayed all the textiles that are presently produced by the friend of the family, Thaha Ibrahim, a Sunni Muslim.

“Thaha does all my work, he looks after me. Anything I need, any help. He even helps to make all these things. Sometime ago he restored priceless fabrics, curtains of the synagogue. I sent them all to Israel. He always tells me – You are the Chosen people of God that’s why we love you.

Whenever a new shop or business establishment opens members of our community are always invited to the inauguration. We are seated in the front row along with a Syrian Orthodox or Catholic Priest. Often we sing a religious song as a blessing.”

“Why do you think people have become aggressive when it comes to religion,”

“I don’t think they are aggressive, I think they are possessive about their religion. That’s why problems occur. Indians celebrate all religious festivals with great fervor. There is so much sharing during these festivals. During Hanukkah — Festival of Lights, Thaha, his family and friends help us to light the oil lamps outside the synagogue, as most of us are too sick or too old to do much physical work.”

“Could you share with us some of your recipes, Sarah”, I asked.

“Yes, write it down”, she replied pointing to the notepad in my hand.

So here is a very brief and sketchy version of Sarah Cohen’s recipes. *There are Spanish, Iraqi (Baghdadi) and German influences in the recipes, which also include local ingredients like coconut, mango, tamarind etc. Meat and milk are never mixed. Fish should always have scales. Tamarind is an important ingredient as it is a natural preservative. Therefore, it is used in food cooked on Friday as on Saturday, the Shabbad cooking/any work is forbidden.*

SNACKS

KADATHALA – A spring roll. The wrapper is made with rice flour, egg, water, coconut milk and is wafer thin. The filling is either meat, fowl, fish but now it is usually egg; hard boiled eggs, potatoes, green chilies, coriander leaves, onion, turmeric. The wrapper is filled and then deep fried. Made for all festivals.

BUREKA – Cheese Puff. Short crust pastry filled with cheese.

SOUPS

FISH/MEAT MARAK – (Marak is the Hebrew word for soup) Cook meat/fish, potato, tomato, onion, carrot to a semi-thick soup. Add salt and pepper.



Pics by Mark Ulyseas

MAIN DISHES

UNDA CURRY – Jewish Fish Kofta Curry. Chop fish fillet and extract the juice. Mix ground onion, tamarind, vinegar, sugar, tomato sauce to the juice. Set aside. Make balls out of the fish and deep fry in coconut oil. Drop the fish balls into the spicy sauce.

MEENILAKAL – Fish Curry. Any scaled fish. Follow the above recipe.

CHUTTULLI MEEN – It is made with shallots, red chillies (dried) and charcoal grilled fish.

MEAT DISHES

KUBBA – Baghdadi influenced dish (Still cooked in the Middle East). Chicken filled dumpling in curry.

MULAKIRACHI - Chili meat – mutton or Chicken, lots of green chilies or capsicum.

KURKIRACHI – Fried potatoes in chicken stock.

UNAKKIVEYICHATH – Dried and cooked finely cut carrot put in chicken stock.

JEWISH CHICKEN CURRY – Diced chicken fried till brown with roasted spice – pepper, garam masala, coriander powder. Add chicken stock. Top with vinegar.

RICE – Turmeric flavored rice cooked in chicken stock.

DESSERTS

MUTTA SALADE – Sweet noodle dish. Cardamom is added to hot sugar syrup and simmer. Then take a wooden ladle made of a coconut shell with a hole in the middle. Pour beaten egg yolk through the hole into the simmering sugar syrup. After that the 'strings' formed from the egg yolk are removed and kept on a tray. It is served on auspicious occasions like marriages. It is actually a Malabari Muslim dish called "Mutta Maala"

KODITHIYAL – Like Chikki, made with cashew nuts/sesame seeds.

ORAL – Whole wheat is soaked overnight and then made into paste. Lots of water is added to this and mixed well and then kept for two days. The water on the top is thrown away and more water is added. At the end of the second day when the water becomes clear it is thrown away. The whole wheat paste that has settled at the bottom of the vessel is cooked with little water and lots of sugar till it becomes translucent with the consistency of a halwa. Add cardamom or rose water or vanilla flavoring .



Paradesi Synagogue. Pic courtesy Sarah Cohen.

After another cup of tea from the Chai Karan and some hot Kadathala that Sarah's house help had made and a warm motherly hug from Sarah and a promise to return, I departed down the street that was lined with shops selling spices, perfumes and antiques.

It was my last night in Cochin. But it was a long night reflecting on the gracious octogenarian Jewess who represented a community that had come to India nearly twenty five centuries ago.

Would this community fade into the stone pathway to the Paradesi synagogue or will others come to take their place, to keep an ancient community alive.

Whatever the future may bring, one thing is for sure, the Jews will always find a home in India...a haven...an acceptance...a freedom to practice their Faith in peace without persecution.

Shalom my dear friend Sarah Cohen.

May God be always with you.





A brief historical perspective of Jews in India

The following information has been transcribed from the souvenir that the Paradesi Synagogue in Jew Town sells at the entrance for Indian Rupees Ten. I hope this helps readers understand the special position that Jews hold in Indian History and Society.



Kerala and Her Jews

This short history is compiled from a paper by Mr. S.S.Koder before the Kerala History Association in 1965, his article in the souvenir printed on the occasion of the inauguration of the Nehru Memorial Town Hall, Mattancherri in 1968 and Miss Fiona Hallegua's thesis "The Jewish Community of Cochin" – its twilight years" for her Master's degree in Sociology written in 1984.

In attempting to speak on the history of the Jews in Kerala one becomes at once conscious of the difficulty of the task as many important and interesting facts connected with this ancient colony on the South-West coast of India are shrouded in mystery. How and when they arrived in the ancient port of Cranganore or Shingly as the Jews called their old settlement are still some of the unsettled problems of their ancient history, but whatever be the date of their first settlement, it is an undisputed fact of history that from the 5th to the 15th Century, the Jews of Cranganore have had virtually an independent principality ruled over by a Prince of their own race and choice.

The fame of this little Jewish kingdom spread far and wide.

Rabbi Nissim, a 14th Century Hebrew poet and traveler, had this to say...

*I have travelled from Spain,
I had heard of the city of Shingly
I longed to see an Israel King
Him, I saw with my own eyes.*



Cranganore, known as Muzhiris to the Greeks and Shingly to the Jews was the only seaport in India known to the outside world. It was to this port, therefore, the Jews turned for a haven of refuge and a centre for trade. The destruction of Cranganore is often compared to the devastation of Palestine in miniature and the consequent dispersal of Jews from their Holy Land. The majority of the Jews even now avoid visiting Cranganore, and, if business brings a Jew hither, he hurriedly leaves the place before sunset.

A small hill known as "Jooda Kunnu", a tank known as "Jooda Kulam", the Jewish copper plates and the Syrian Christian plates with the signature of four Jewish witnesses in Judeo-Persian, which incidently is the second oldest inscription in Judeo-Persian in the world, are a few of the ancient relics that can still be seen to remind one of the glorious past of the forgotten outpost of the Jewish world.

As to the probable date of the first Jewish settlement in Shingly, opinion is sharply divided among many schools of thought. The early intercourse between the East and West makes it probable, according to Basnage, that the first Jews arrived in Kerala in King Solomon's merchant fleet. The close resemblance between Tamil names for the South Indian ape and peacock and their Hebrew equivalents tend to support this view.

"The oldest word found in any written record in the world", says Dr.Caldwell, "appears to the word for peacock in the Hebrew text of the Books of the Kings and Chronicles. The old Tamil word 'Takai' became in Hebrew 'Tuki'. Just holds that the first colonization of Jews in CRanganore was the result of the exodus of the Jews from Persia in the 5th Century during the reign of King Kobad. Another theory is that the Kerala Jews are descendants of the tribes taken into captivity by Shalmanezar and that after being released they came to Cranganore or, as another historian would have it, that they are the descendants of the Jews taken to Babylon by Nebuchandnezar.

In his book, 'Noticias dos Judeos de Cochim' the oldest printed book on Cochin Jewish History, Moses de Paiva, a Dutch Jew who visited Cochin on the 21st November 1686, asserts that seventy to eighty thousand Jews arrived on the Malabar Coast in 370 A.D. from Myorca, where their forefathers had been taken as captives by Titus Vespasianus. Rabbi Rabinovitz is of the opinion that the first clear evidence of a Jewish community in India dates from the period of Mohammedan rule and the activity of the Radanites. The tradition of the Cochin Jews on the other hand, maintains that soon after the destruction of the second Temple in the 1st Century, ten thousand were graciously received by the then Hindu Ruler and were allowed to settle in different parts of the country of which the majority made their home in Cranganore.

Amidst the confusing thoughts and the conflicting theories about the date of the first settlement in Cranganore, there are at least a few instances of direct evidence of Jewish settlement on the South-West coast of India during the 1st Century of the Christian era. In a wedding song of the ancient Christians of Malabar, mention is made of one Habban, a Jewish merchant, who was sent by a Royal decree to fetch a man who would build a temple more beautiful than the one King Solomon had built in Palestine. Habban accompanied by St. Thomas arrived in Cranganore in 55 A.D., St.Thomas was welcomed by a Jewish flue girl. He stayed in the Jewish quarter of the town and some Jews are said to have been baptized by him in Cranganore.

A Roman merchant ship that plied regularly between Myes Hormes on the Red Sea and Arabia, Ceylon and Malabar found a Jewish Colony in Cranganore in the 2nd Century. The Babylonian Talmud compiled in Babylon between the 3rd and 6th Century refers to a Rabbi Judah, a Hindu convert to Judaism who was held in high esteem. As there were now more Jews then in any other part of India, the conversion must necessarily have taken place in Cranganore. Like the date of the first Jewish settlement, the exact date of the Jewish copper plates and their correct translation of the



the 'Vattezhuthu' characters – the original Tamil alphabet once prevalent in all parts of the peninsula south of Tanjore, and also in South Malabar and Travancore – are also under dispute among scholars. The Dutch Governor, Moens gives the date of the grant of the Jewish plates as 426 A.D. ; Dr. Buchanan 490 A.D. ; Bishop Middleton 508 A.D. ; Lawson 750 A.D. ; Paolins 10th Century ; and the Cochin Jews 379 A.D.

The following is the translation of the plates adopted by the Jews of Cochin :

"Hail, and Prosperity! The following gift was graciously made by him who had assumed the title of the King of Kings.

His Majesty the King Sri Parkaran Iravi Vanmar, whose ancestors have been wielding the scepter for many hundred thousand years, in the thirty-sixth year after the second year year on the day on which he dwelt in Muviricote, was pleased to make the following gifts. We have granted to Joseph Rabban the village of Anjuvannam together with the seventy two proprietary rights, tolls on boats and carts, the revenue and the title of Anjuvannam, the lamp of the day cloth spread in front to walk on a palanquin, a parasol, a Vaduga (i.e. Telegu) drum, trumpet, a gateway, a garland, decoration with festoons and so forth. We have granted him the land tax and weight tax; moreover we have sanctioned with these copper plates that he need not pay the dues which the inhabitants of the other cities pay the Royal Palace, and that he may enjoy the benefits which they enjoy. To Joseph Rabban the Prince of Anjuvannam and to his descendants, sons and daughters, and to his nephews, and to the sons-in-law who married his daughters in natural succession, so long as the world and moon exist, Anjuvannam shall be his heriditary possession.

With the knowledge of: Goverthan Marthandam, Chief of Venadu
Kodaj Chirikandan, Chief of Venappallinadu

Manavepala Manavian, Chief of Vallunadu

Kodai Iravi, Chief of Nedumpurayurnadu

Moorkan Chathan, Sub Commander of the Forces

Vandalacheri Kandan, The Prime Minister

According to Thurston, there is a peculiarity in the Jewish plates which is absent in the other charters and that is Jews alone were permitted, among other privileges to (1) fire three salutes at the break of day ; (2) fire an equal number of salutes on the day of a marriage feast of one who entered upon the marriage state. These privileges have always been reserved, even to the present day, to the Kings of Cochin only.

The existence of Jews in India long before the Christian era was first brought to the lime-light of history by Anquitol Du Perron. In his book, Zent Avesta, mention is made of his meeting a rich Jew who informed him that a colony of his co-religionists had settled in Malabar and that certain privileges have been conferred on them by a Hindu Ruler. Mediaeval travelers beginning with Abbu'I Kassim Ubaidullah Abdullah b Khurdadaba and others in the 9th Century and Nicolo Conti a Venetian merchant traveler in the 15th Century, mention Jewish settlements in Malabar and Ceylon. According to them, the Jewish colony was between two places called Friar Odoric as Cyngilin and Flandrina. It is also seen from the writing of mediaeval travelers that Cyngilin was a sea coast town in Malabar. Friar Jordanus mentions the King of Cyngilin besides the King of Molibar (Malabar) who reigns over the whole coast. It is agreed generally that Cyngilin is identified with Cranganore, though it is difficult to prove the similarity between these two names on etymological grounds.



According to Abdlfeda’s geography, Shinkaly was situated near Shalvat, which is in the vicinity of Cranganore of today. Both these towns are mentioned as centers of Jewish settlements, Cyngilin according to mediaeval travelers and Cranganore by writers of the 16th Century. It is interesting to learn that even today some of the hymns chanted in the synagogues especially on Jewish Holy days are called Shingly melodies.

The second great centre of Jews in Malabar was Flandarina, which is also known under various names. Flandarina is identified with Pandarini by the 16th Century writers. Marvel is mentioned as the third centre of Jews by mediaeval travelers. This was only a village, a suburb of a better known place known as Mount Delly or Elimala of Malayalam writers. Travellers of the 15th and 16th centuries speak of Jews in Calicut. Ibn Batuta, who travelled from Calicut to Quilon through the backwaters, refers to Kanjarakara as a Jewish town under a Jewish Governor who pays tribute to the Ruler of Quilon. Marco Polo and other ancient travelers mention Jews in Quilon.

The Jewish settlers enriched by an influx of Jews from Spain and other European countries continued to prosper for more than a thousand years under the grant of the Copper Plates. Tradition has it that renowned Jewish poets and scholars visited the little Jewish kingdom of Shingly. With the extinction of the line of Joseph Rabban, dissension arose between two brothers of a noble family for the Chieftainship of the principality of Anjuvannum. The younger brother backed by his converted slaves killed many of those who came under his elder brother. The neighboring princes intervened and dispossessed the Jews of their principality of Anjuvannum.

In 1471, the younger brother escaped to Cochin by swimming across the back waters with his wife on his shoulders. He was followed soon after by his elder brother and his followers. In 1524, on the pretext that the Jews were tampering with the pepper trade, the Moors made an onslaught on the Jews, burning their houses and synagogues. The destruction was so complete that when the Portuguese arrived in Cranganore in the beginning of the 16th Century they found only a few destitute Jews, who continued to eke out a miserable existence for forty years more. Due to the devastation of the country by fire and sword the Jews finally deserted their ancient settlement in Anjuvannum and fled to Cochin and placed themselves under the protection of the Hindu Rajah of Cochin, who in the words of an English historian, “with a liberality that can hardly be understood” granted them a site for a town by the side of his own palace and temple. Jew Town was built in 1567 and the synagogue in 1568.

In the year 1500 A.D the Portuguese arrived in Malabar, and soon began persecuting and torturing the Jews. The hundred and sixty years of the Portuguese occupation of Cochin were the darkest period in the history of the Jews of Malabar. The spirit of the age exhibited in a letter written by Albuquerque in which he brought to the attention of the King of Portugal that there were at that time a large influx of Portuguese and Castilian Jews and enquired of His Majesty whether permission would be given to exterminate them one by one as he came across them.

The Portuguese not only completed destruction of the already shattered Jewish principality in Cranganore but also sacked Jew Town in Cochin with its houses and Synagogues. The original documents pertaining to the history of this ancient community were lost in the Portuguese loot and destruction. According to the Portuguese, the Rajah’s best fighting men were the Jews and consequently a battle had to be postponed in 1550 because the Jews did not offer battle on their Sabbath day. The Rajah was therefore called by early Portuguese writers as King of the Jews. When the Dutch appeared in Cochin in 1661, Jews openly supported them for which action they paid a heavy penalty in blood when the Dutch were forced to withdraw to Ceylon. With the reappearance of the Dutch in Cochin in 1663, the scattered remnants returned to their settlement and regained their past glory under the tolerant of the Protestant Dutch.



During the one hundred and thirty two years of Dutch supremacy, the Jews of Malabar continued to be prosperous. Interesting accounts of their condition are available from the memoirs of Dutch Governors and Jewish travelers. The presence of the Jews in Cochin aroused the interest of the Jewish community in Amsterdam. A delegation headed by Moses de Paiva was sent to Cochin in 1686. His report is the first of the most important historical documents of the Jews of Cochin ever written or published. According to this rare report, there are only 135 copies in existence, there were 4 synagogues and 128 families in Cochin; 2 synagogues and 150 people in Angiceymal; one synagogue and 100 well to do people in Palur; 1 synagogue and 10 families in Parur; 1 synagogue and 50 well to do people in Chenot; and in Muttam 1 synagogue and 35 families.

In 1795 the country passed into the hands of the British under whose rule the Jews continued to live in peace and happiness.

The tolerant rule of the Perumals was continued with zeal by the Ruler of Cochin. The Jews not only enjoyed complete religious toleration but their holy days and Sabbaths were gazette holidays for them in the State.

In 1968 the Paradesi Synagogue in Jew Town celebrated its 400th anniversary. When the State of Israel was born in 1947, there was a mass exodus of Jews from India to Israel. Among the reasons for emigration were; religious sentiment, lack of marriage partners and employment opportunities.

C.E. 072	Advent of Jews to India and colonization of Cranganore
C.E. 379	Grant of the Copper Plates to Joseph Rabban
C.E.490-518	Advent of more Jews from Babylon and Persia
C.E.900	Jewish colony in Cranganore contacts China
C.E.1141	Arrival in Cranganore of Hachamim including Judah Halevi
C.E.1344	Advent of Joseph Azaar to Cochin Town
C.E. 1345	Building of Kochangadi Synagogue
C.E.1492	Expulsion of Jews from Spain
C.E.1511	Arrival of Castiel family in Cochin
C.E.1514	Arrival of more Spanish Jews
C.E.1524	Moorish attack on Jews in Cranganore
C.E.1565	Final expulsion of Jews in Cranganore by the Portuguese
C.E.1567	Jew Town built and occupied
C.E.1568	Building of the Cochin Synagogue
C.E.1570	Appointment of the 1st Mudaliar
C.E.1600	Maharikash’s response
C.E.1662	Partial destruction of the Cochin Synagogue by the Portuguese
C.E.1664	Rebuilding of the Cochin Synagogue
C.E.1760	Building of the Clock Tower by Ezekiel Rahabi
C.E.1762	Tiling of the Synagogue with tiles from Canton by Ezekiel Rahabi
C.E.1805	Presentation of a Gold Crown to the Synagogue by the Maharaja of Travancore
C.E.1968	Celebration of the 400th anniversary of the Synagogue



DHANGARS THEIR MAP OF LIFE

by Randhir Khare

This robust caste-cluster once survived and flourished as shepherds, buffalo, cattle and horse keepers and weavers, the pastoralists among them mapping immense and intricate patterns of movement in search of pasturelands. In fact they were even said to have been creators of dynasties and builders of empires. Today that way of life is being challenged.

The story of pastoralists goes far back to the time when they moved with their flocks and herds from place to place, driven by the search for fresh pasturelands, guided by the shifting seasons. They shared a symbiotic relationship with their animals and evolved in the process a lore, social and community systems, rites and rituals and an acceptable code of conduct – all of which together contributed to their sense of identity and being. As their very survival depended so necessarily on ‘movement’, all these aspects of their life and living also depended on it. Over the years, their ‘movement’ developed into a definite pattern, forming as it were, a map of migration. So the Gaddis, Gujjars and Botiyas of the high north, the Maldharis and Rabaris of the west, the Todas of the deep south and the numerous other pastoral and semi-pastoral communities that dot the Indian peninsular, have defined over the ages very clear cut movement maps which have been closely related to physical locations.

DHANGARS



Grassy patches amidst forest cover offer excellent crops of pasture



Dhangar families camped under the open sky

In this manner, the Dhangar shepherds of Maharashtra and parts of the adjoining states too have defined, over the centuries, their own spaces. Their repeated migratory patterns have made them a common sight even in cities and towns of the region today, passing as they do on their way in search of pasturelands. Unlike most of the other pastoralists, however, the Dhangars share an unusual relationship with farming communities. By camping and grazing on farmland they ensure that their sheep and goats provide the land with droppings that enrich the soil.

Over the years, they have developed a well-planned arrangement with farmers which entitles them to graze their flocks as well as receive returns in the form of cash, edible commodities or after harvest stubble for grazing in exchange for the manure that they provide. Negotiations are done in advance by a senior representative of the shepherds who have been moving together as a single group. The deal is struck and the flocks are guided to the location. Almost always, they are not alone but are accompanied by their families along with children, household paraphernalia, chickens, dogs, lambs, kid goats, camping equipment like bamboo poles, canvas, cloth or animal skins for shade and cover and sacred artefacts for everyday worship. All of this is usually strapped to the backs of horses or ponies.

Whilst such an entourage may not seem unusual in a rural setting, it gains a measure of drama as it weaves its way through the traffic, undeterred by the overwhelming presence of mechanized

urbanity. Only sometimes do the shepherds and their flocks travel along with the entourage. They move ahead or behind it.

Once at the site, camp is set up within an hour with individual family units securing their independent spaces. Shelters are erected and temporary households come alive. More or less, the centre space is occupied by a netted pen in which the sheep and goats are secured. Guard dogs take charge at night, keeping a watch on the camp. The next morning is spent organizing the flock and preparing it for the day's grazing.

And so the cycles of days and nights continue as the seasonal visitors go about their everyday tasks. Their presence is never a threat because they have come to fulfil a purpose and move on. So their relationships in most cases with settled communities are fairly positive. Like agents of nature, they arrive, play their parts and move on.

However, even though their relationships with settled people are not abrasive, life nevertheless in a camp or on the move is difficult. Inclement weather, lack of security, the threat of illness and accident is always present. Long ago, the threat also included wild animals and predators, today of course snakes and scorpions still prove to be a menace. In addition to this mosquitoes swarm their sites. In the case of stormy weather, it is not the rain that is a threat but lightning bolts.

The stay at any one camp site varies from a week to ten or fifteen days depending on need



Farmers pay Dhangar herdsmen to graze their flocks on their land so that animal dung enriches the soil

and the possible arrangement that has been made. And then they break camp and move on to the next location, following the invisible lines on the map of movement.

Apart from keeping traditional patterns alive, these shepherds had until not long ago retained other age-old practices. For example, for a considerable period of time they had been known to supplement their diet by gathering wild food, hunt and fish on the move like their early forefathers would have done. Their traditional art of making tools also belonged to an ancient tradition. Records show, for example, that when they created tools they used tree gum or lime that had not been slaked mixed with the blood of their animals as adhesives. And like their forefathers, used sharp microliths to remove the flesh and sinews from the hide of animals whilst cleaning and curing them for future use. In fact, till not very long ago, Dhangars still pursued an age old Mesolithic practice – using a flint knife to castrate rams. Apparently using stone prevented infection of any kind. But then times have changed and most Dhangar shepherds now use metal knives.

Their age-old beliefs have persisted and are kept alive by innumerable shrines and temples of their deities who, though they have identities and powers of their own, are most times fairly closely connected with the deities of the settled ones. This reflects their relationship with settled communities. On the other hand, their folk hero-gods (as in the case of innumerable traditional communities) retain their individual powers. It is said that a memorial to Babir who is a hero-god

TRIBAL INDIA



still remains at Rai-Rui. Apart from this a number of 'hero' or memorial stones dedicated to him may also be found. Then there are the temples of Kaba and Baji that are located in Phaltan. These and other sacred sites and all their attendant beliefs and rites and rituals provide Dhangars with anchors that prevent them from being cut adrift by the vagaries of change.

Of course, Dhangars are not perpetually on the move. They have a home base and maintain from there a rhythmic network of seasonal movement. This pattern of survival has provided them with a variety of sustenance coupled with the attendant energies passed on by contact with other communities not through random experience but a steady persistence of exposure over an immense period of time.



Farmers pay Dhangar herdsmen to graze their flocks on their land so that animal dung enriches the soil



Wild cactus often used by Dhangar for medicinal and other purposes.

Though, commonly, Dhangars tend to be associated with shepherding, in reality it is not exactly so. The Dhangar is actually a caste-cluster of people who pursue a number of different animal-rearing occupations (in some cases they don't even rear animals). This caste cluster is made up of the sheep-keeping Gadhari-Dhengar, Hande, Hatkar, Hattikankan, Kannade and Kurmar-Hattikankan; the sheep-keeping and wool-weaving Ahirs, Gadhri-Nikhar, Halmat, Khutekar, Kumar-Unikankan, Mendhe, Shegar, Iclaangi, Unnikankan and Zade; the buffalo-keeping Dange; the meat-selling Khatik; the sheep-keeping and cotton weaving Ladhse and Varhade; Sangar – the wool weavers; Tellari – the keepers of sheep and cattle and the Zende who are keepers of sheep and horses. The last mentioned were said to have bred horses for the Army.

Much has been written about the Dhangars – even that they were said to have been around since the times of the Mahabharata, that they were the founders of the Vijayanagara Empire as well as the Hoysala, Rashtrakuta, Pallava, Holkar and Maurya Dynasties. In fact it is even claimed that Kalidasa and Kanakadasa were Dhangars.

History, myth and legend apart, today, though the Dhangar caste clusters are still spread throughout Maharashtra and parts of adjoining states, much of their traditional way of life and occupation has been altered. This has happened for predominantly two reasons – a radical shift in land use and changing market needs. The impact of the former is perhaps more noticeable.

With growing urbanization, the traditional routes that make up the map of movement for migrating shepherds have either been sealed off or narrowed, drastically reducing the scope of movement. Restricted movement means restricted opportunities to either perpetuate a pattern of economic exchange or restrict possibilities for social and cultural interplay and growth. Further, with more and more rural land coming under the plough, pastures are rapidly shrinking and those that remain get over-grazed. What was once a somewhat healthy interplay and interdependence has now become open competition.

Many Dhangar communities depend on a mixed economy of cattle/buffalo or sheep/goat rearing combined with marginal farming. But the other communities that they live cheek by jowl with now prefer to them hemmed in. Wilfully started grassland fires spread dangerously and damage Dhangar domestic property and livestock. An underbelly of friction remains present. This has put the pressure on Dhangars to take increasingly to agriculture based economic activities.

The cotton or wool weaving Dhangars who once thrived on a wholesome market now face the increasing pressure as markets are being rapidly taken over by mechanized production and demands have shrunk from affluent buyers. Low income buyers are now so impoverished that their buying power does not permit them to purchase Dhangar blankets as other cheaper varieties are now available for nearly half the price. This has forced them to retreat from their traditional way of earning a livelihood and fall back on unskilled labour in order to survive.



The Koyna River passes through extensive grazing lands.

Of course, the inherent 'drive' in the Dhangar, has taken some into other more contemporary professions and it is not uncommon to come across young people today opting to study, work and live in urban areas and visit their family homes as a matter of course, forming as it were a whole new contextual set of movement maps.

Apart from this inherent 'drive' to survive and reach the light at the end of the tunnel, Dhangars by and large still retain a strong sense of community selfhood and identity. They still carry with them their sacred lore and identify strongly with their ancestral roots and sense of 'belonging'. This is manifest in their awareness of the stories of their mythic heritage. So long as this remains relevant, the last bastion of community strength and identity holds out.



Text & Pics @ Randhir Khare



A working holiday...

The phenomenon of a 24/7 workplace has led to hyper-connectivity and faster turnaround times...

It's an occupation hazard, if you work on a travel program – invariably you land up working on your so-called 'holiday'. I just can't help myself. This was especially the case when I was young and single, and I didn't have a partner with whom I could enjoy an idyllic holiday. But I have to admit, it's almost become second nature – and it's made little difference now that I'm attached. Just ask my boyfriend and he'll attest to the number of vacations where he's helped me carry the camera and tripod, or worse still, had to be an extra.

I recently squeezed in a day's work while we were in Bali for a friend's wedding. But the irony is, the report I was filming was about the rise in the number of employees across Asia who felt obliged to work on holiday.

My report was based on a recent survey by recruitment firm Robert Half, which showed that 69% of Singaporeans and 77% of Hong Kong employees felt compelled to work outside normal working hours and most alarmingly, on their holiday. The survey also showed that over 90% of bosses expected their staff to be connected and available in an emergency while on leave.

I set about interviewing employees in Singapore to find out what the work ethic was like here. Singapore is of course a service based work environment, supporting markets in Europe, the US and of course China. And every country has their different public holidays and leave times. So for instance, during Golden Week in China, the US and European markets are still working, while over the Christmas period, many

69% of Singaporeans and 77% of Hong Kong employees felt compelled to work outside normal working hours and most alarmingly, on their holiday.

businesses in the US and Europe shut down for at least a week, but the Chinese and Japanese remain work focused. Many people I spoke to, thought that figure of 69% was actually quite low and that the remaining 31% of respondents weren't entirely truthful.

So is technology to blame?

The increase in connectivity around the world has made it so much easier to check-in with the office with a simple email or text message. And of course, it's just as easy for your boss or colleagues to drop you a quick line or phone call while you're on leave. After all, there are very few places left in the world where you can't get a mobile signal or wi-fi connection.

When I travel, I take my camera, laptop and two smart phones as a bare minimum and I'll often ring ahead to find out if there's a good (and hopefully free) wi-fi connection at the hotel we are staying at. In fact, most business travellers would argue that wi-fi at hotels is more important than the obligatory turn down service. And, so, more and more hotels are recognizing this as an opportunity. The Intercontinental Hotel group is one of the first hotels to introduce the use of free iPads for their executive guests, seizing on the fact that most people these days mix business with pleasure.

So while my boyfriend was playing golf on our brief sojourn to Bali, I slipped out to film at the InterContinental Resort in Bali to catch these workaholics red-handed. Bear in mind, this isn't a business hotel but a beach resort and yet, almost every second person, either by the their mobile phone or hand-held device.

Most of these swimwear-clad executives confessed that it was actually less stressful to check their work emails while they were away, rather than having to come back from a relaxing holiday to face hundreds of emails that had been left to pile up over the last week. While others said that they found it simply impossible to switch off.

The phenomenon of a 24/7 workplace has led to hyper-connectivity and faster turnaround times, which is of course great for business in a competitive world. But what does this say about the work-life balance here in Asia? Many people think it has led to an increase in stress and a decline in the quality of life.

Without going so far as to test the stress levels of employees across the region, majority of workers in Singapore and Hong Kong aren't complaining about working after hours or on holiday. Some confessed that they feared they would lose their jobs if they didn't conform. But most took these lengthy working hours as a given.

So, perhaps the work life balance is slightly skewed in Asia, due to the nature of the work environment here and maybe in part, because of its geographical location. This survey also goes a long way to enforcing the stereotype that Asian employees are more conscientious than their western counterparts.

On the flip side, only 6% of employees in New Zealand expected their staff to be available out of office hours. Maybe it's time I started scanning the job classifieds in New Zealand.

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Dancing with road rage at Israeli Fest!

by Natalie Wood



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Karmiel does not have a hospital. I find this really aggravating as our town in the Upper Galilee, Israel boasts a population of 50,000 and is larger than either nearby Nahariya or Tzfat, both of which do!

Indeed I would be surprised if even a few of the **estimated visiting 5,000 performers and 30,000 tourists who packed in for last week's 24th three-day annual International Dance Festival** did not require occasional medical aid. Many people frolicked into the wee hours, well after the official programmes ended and then had to seek overnight refuge in the local parks for want of more conventional bed and board.

Our yearly fest is supposedly modelled on an ancient Jewish holiday 'Tu B'Av' which marked the start of the grape harvest and gave unmarried girls a chance to dress fetchingly in white and go dancing in the vineyards in order to find a husband!

No wonder the latter-day version – falling this year on Sunday 14 August - has become a Jewish 'Valentine's Day' and is also a popular date – especially among the religious - for weddings, proposals and general romance.

But the Karmieli version can also bring out the worst in the best of us due to traffic jams, diversions and a general lack of parking space. So I found myself fairly dancing with road rage when an officious woman stood in a parking bay to prevent our using it just as we were about to stop near the hall where **Michaela Harari and chums from Double Step** were due to stomp their stuff. First keeping us waiting for an unexplained and annoying 20 minutes, US-born Harari (originally 'Hardy') and three colleagues then engaged and enchanted during a non-stop 35 minutes of enfevered flamenco artistry.

Performing on an empty, black stage – occasionally bare-foot - with only their skirts and shawls for props, the women created worlds within worlds, coquettish, fiery, harsh and romantic by turn. The performance concluded with a five-minute Q and A in Hebrew. This was understandable but a little disappointing as Harari could easily have translated into English. Perhaps she will consider this courtesy for future performances before international crowds.

Her group has been going since the early 2000s and she is to be congratulated, not only for forming one of Israel's leading flamenco bands but, as her website explains, for "trying to spread the art of flamenco in children, the elderly, new immigrants and in development towns."

Her troupe collaborates with other artistes - including Arabs and Gypsies - employing various styles. Members also spend months at a time engaged in intense study with experts in Madrid, Seville and Granada.

The festival ended as it had begun - with a massive open-air concert at knock-down prices in the municipal amphitheatre, topped off with a stupendous fireworks finale.

If that's what is meant by 'bread and circuses' I'll have another helping. But not until next year...!

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The Primary Puppet

While bombs were falling on Asian soil,
the puppet class was called upon to down tools
and listen to the President's master plan
in case of a bomb threat:

We will run to an open field.

You will be safe in that field.

It is a model battlefield, he assured them.

There are flags everywhere.

He had his directives from on high.

One bemused girl asked if they could wear masks
as a form of protection. The President said:

Yes, a novel idea.

There could be blackened faces like brave soldiers
and gas masks in case of fallout.

They all giggled. He didn't.

War is a serious business. It will always be with us.

A senior student suggested they read poetry
and sang in the open field – and it might rain.
The President clicked his heels and said
there would be no talking, noise or absurdities
in public – in particular on fields of battle
and, as a senior student, she should know
that poetry and singing belonged to choirs and classrooms:
*if you want to be silly later in life,
you can join a theatre company.*

They were now at school learning the hard facts.
When the war was over visual arts students
would be working on a monument to an unknown soldier
and young poets could write laments to their dead heroes.

One student took a puppet out of his pocket
and held it up for all to see.

- *And what is that, young man?*

- *It's a puppet, Sir.*

- *It looks like a soldier.*

- *It is a soldier, Sir.*

The President scratched his head. He was happy to say
there would be an information screen with
honours lists and military updates along the hedgerows.

A small boy made his way to the front, raised his hand
and politely asked where the field was. The President
looked confused but reassured the boy it was on its way
and it would do us proud.

All but one of the class took out their puppets

Tree Music

There's a young beech
in the heart
of our wild garden
and
this morning as
summer sun pierced
the thick outer hedge
to
light up the tree,
you just knew there
was a god of a kind
and
when a light breeze
joined in
I couldn't choose to hear
or not to hear.



Message from the Poet:

The Primary Puppet

Is an anti-war poem. which attempts to see the stupidity of war
from the perspective of a young person at school.

Tree Music

Could be anywhere. It is simply an observation.

Shri Saleem Haji

Sarpanch of a village in Jammu & Kashmir, India
speaks to Mark Ulyseas



Saleem Haji in his ancestral village, 1977.

“The status of the women in the villages is quite ideal. They actively participate in all social activities, including elections. In fact, in the Panchayat elections, there was a 33% reservation for women. Surpassing that, 40% that won the elections were women. Although the women are given equal status, the idea of educating them has just started gaining popularity. In the long run, nothing will prove more beneficial for women than this.” - Saleem Haji

MU - What is your role as Sarpanch of the village? And why have you chosen to become Sarpanch? What is your Mission Statement?

SH - As Sarpanch of a village, the overall development of the village is the first and foremost agenda that falls under the purview of my responsibilities. This development is inclusive of secondary as well as higher education, rural development, health-care, employment, forest, and revenue.

Given the prevalent scenario in the past, it was apparent that development in, and of, the village was negligible. On paper, it was said that lots of funds were sent by the Central Government, but in actuality nothing was received. There were so many ways in which value could have been added to the lives of the residents of the village, but there was no one to represent them. When it became obvious to me that the potential of my village and its people was going to waste, I decided to stand for the Panchayat elections – to give back to my village and its people what they rightly deserved. It was important to bridge the gap between the local villagers and the inaccessible government.

Mission statement: To ensure the overall development of my village, and its people, in the truest sense.

MU - What is the state of development in your area – agriculture, education and employment? And what are your views on the present status of these three areas? Any success stories?

SH - Like I mentioned before, the development in my area is negligible in every aspect, be it agriculture, education, or employment. Most of the farmers are subsistence farmers. There are a large number of government schools without proper staffing. **For example, there is a government high school here that has approximately two hundred students, and only two teachers.** In terms of employment, when the residents of the village are not subject to sound education, how will they manage to procure jobs of value?

My view on the present status is that there is a lot of potential for development; however, much work needs to be done, with special emphasis on education. I understand that development cannot happen instantly, but one has to start somewhere, and lay the foundation.

Success story: The Haji Amina Trust recently opened three private schools in three villages of this area. The schools are affiliated to the J&K State Board of Education, which means that the education that a child receives in any one of these village schools will be the same as a child who goes to school in the city. This school provides free education, books, and toys to its students. The school has been a great success so far, and we’re looking to develop it even more, with special emphasis on secondary and higher education for girls.

MU - Is there sufficient government assistance for your area in terms of budgetary contributions and micro/macro loans for agriculture, industry and education?

There is a lot of proposed government assistance, however nothing actually materializes. Even if funds are said to be provided, the paperwork takes so long that procuring these funds becomes almost impossible. So, no.

...the first step to tackle these problems is to have a transparent Government, and transparent allocation of funds. It is imperative that Panchayat elections are held, so that villagers can choose their representative democratically, the way it was intended. Elections can fill the void between the overlooked citizens in the villages, and government.

MU - What is the status of women? Do they participate in the Panchayat and/or other public activities?

SH - The status of the women in the villages is quite ideal. They actively participate in all social activities, including elections. In fact, in the Panchayat elections, there was a 33% reservation for women. Surpassing that, 40% that won the elections were women. Although the women are given equal status, the idea of educating them has just started gaining popularity. In the long run, nothing will prove more beneficial for women than this.

MU - Do children have free books/free uniforms/free schooling?

SH - Yes, in the government schools, free schooling, books, and uniforms are provided. However, without proper staffing, the value of all this is negated.

MU - It is believed that the State of J & K has the highest budget per capita of all States in India but most of it goes towards defence – please clarify, if possible with details.

SH - J&K does have the highest budget per capita of all the States in India, however I do not have details as to how these funds are allocated. These decisions and details lie with the Central and State Governments, and not lower down the hierarchy.

MU - What is the state of education, agriculture, women's rights and industry in J & K? In your view how can problems in these areas be solved? Any success stories?

SH - We have begun to see a lot of changes in the said industries in the last few years. One of the major shortcomings of the villages was that proper education was not available. However, things are beginning to look up. Women rights are respected here, and do not have to be demanded, for the most part. The industries are not doing so well, and a major reason could be the way J&K is portrayed in the media.

In my view, the first step to tackle these problems is to have a transparent government, and transparent allocation of funds. It is imperative that Panchayat elections are held, so that villagers can choose their representative democratically, the way it was intended. These elections can fill the void between the overlooked citizens in the villages, and the government. Also, once again, I must stress on how important education is to the future of the village, the state, and the country.

...development in my area is negligible in every aspect, be it agriculture, education, or employment. Most of the farmers are subsistence farmers. ...a large number of government schools without proper staffing. **..there is a government high school here that has approximately two hundred students, and only two teachers.**

MU - What is your message to prospective investors and tourists?

SH - I understand that investors are dissuaded because of the way J&K is portrayed in the media. In actuality, it is not as bad as it seems. Investors are most welcome. J&K has huge potential. They will not be disappointed. However, a word of caution – be careful about procedures with the government. As long as you demand transparency, and follow protocol, there is no reason that should deter you from investing.

To the tourists, all I can say is that J&K was once called 'Paradise on Earth'. That paradise still remains. Do not let the media with their news on militancy deter you. If it was as bad as they showed in on TV, it would be impossible for locals to live here at all. It is one of the few untainted places left in this world, and to miss out on this experience would be a shame. The people of this state are very hospitable, and you would find yourselves welcome guests in our homes.



Shri Saleem Haji was born in the village of Breswana, J&K, in 1948. He attended the local village school and completed his graduation from M.A.M. College, Jammu where he studied Bachelor of Arts, with a major in Political Science. Saleem was an active member of the N.C.C. during college and captained his college cricket team for three years. After completing his graduation, he returned to his village to start a timber business. In 1980, Mr. Saleem Haji got married, moved to the United Arab Emirates, where he worked for 22 years in the shipping industry. In 2002, he returned to J&K with his family to the ancestral village and became involved in social service. Saleem Haji played a pivotal role in the setting up of The Haji Amina Trust; and remains an active member. The Haji Amina Trust has set up three private schools in the villages of Breswana, Parsholla, and Shaadivan, providing free education, books, and toys to the local children. The Trust also provides medical aid to the people in the region, as well as, aid to the local widows and orphans. Mr. Saleem Haji stood for the first Panchayat elections of the region in 2011, and is currently the Sarpanch of the Parsholla Panchayat.

Text @ Mark Ulyseas Pics @ Shri Saleem Haji



Here is an artist who has given photography another avatar
- that of a scribe...recording for posterity dying cultures
and the “constant” in the rapidly changing social fabric
of peoples across Asia.

Jill Gocher

Profile of an enigmatic photographer by Mark Ulyseas

To understand Jill’s work I decided to instigate her to talk extempore
without little or no inane questions and in the moment,
just like her photographs that capture the true essence of living life
devoid of facades.

“One thing I have discovered in my travels is that people
are the same everywhere. And respond to the same basic stimuli.
Whether photographing a beautiful woman or a Tibetan nomad or a Sarawak
tribesman it’s all the same. The basic human element is there.”

Read on...



Sitting at her small dining table outside the kitchen in her home overlooking the river surrounded by lush greenery in Ubud and being serenading by her dog Ube I commence by asking her about culture per se. Here's what she has to say.

"When I lived in Oz long time ago people from Europe would say that it had no culture and I didn't understand what they meant. I thought what are they talking about we have theatre, music opera etc., what do they mean? It was only later when I spent time in Indonesia I discovered what a living culture is all about. Then I became a culture junkie," **She replied to the sound of sizzling bacon, and went on to add, "I went to art school in Oz a long time ago. Although I was always interested in photography it was only after seeing Antonioni's movie Blow Up that I decided that is what I wanted to do with my life. Of course, all the art schools in Melbourne doubled their intake after this movie. But actually after stints working in studios photographing dog food and chocolates it wasn't totally satisfying.** Fashion and portraits were always good but it was travelling and meeting with tribal people that were truly exciting and stimulating experiences. Sarawak, Tibet, Indonesia and India are the places that hold the most meaning to me."

She exits the kitchen with a plate of eggs, bacon and a dish of tomato, herbs and mushrooms sautéed in olive oil. And while I eat my breakfast washing it down with fine Darjeeling tea I give her the floor. And the floodgates open to the soul that probably Jill inherited from a traveller out of the pages of history.

"One thing I have discovered in my travels is that people are the same everywhere. And respond to the same basic stimuli. Whether photographing a beautiful woman or a Tibetan nomad or a Sarawak tribesman it's all the same. The basic human element is there.

You just asked me if I recall an incident that has now become a part from my stream of consciousness? Yes, I have a story here for you. **While I was sitting in a video café in Ligiang in Southern China I watched a video playing of some traditionally dressed rugged Tibetan men with long black hair wrapped around their heads riding mountain ponies doing the most extraordinary acrobatic feats. I was smitten. I sat there for three hours watching reruns.** Then I discovered these were the mysterious Khampa Nomads that the famous Victorian Era French explorer Alexandra David-Neel had encountered a 100 years before. And she had labelled them the gentlemen brigands. **I had to go and meet these legends. And they seemed untouched by the Cultural Revolution. The first time was in 2003. We stayed in the nomad camp...it was during the Tibetan Summer Festival where nomads from the surrounding communities all came together to test their horsemanship and display their prowess and dance. This gave me an opportunity to record a dying culture with the only paintbrush I had – my Hasselblad.** A book on these enchanting people is in progress.

What motives me to take photographs? The answer to this is my continual quest to portray the beauty of people or a situation. When photographing people I try to get past the façade and to make a connection with that person; to get through to the Self, the soul and the essence of that person. When I held an exhibition in Kathmandu of my portraits of Tibetan nomads, people actually stood for minutes looking at each one. Portraits give us licence to scrutinise a face without being intrusive."

"So where did your saga commence?" I asked.

"Singapore became my base in 1981 from where I travelled all over Asia...in particular Kathmandu where I lived for several years and became interested in Tibetan Buddhism – to Mustang, an ancient Tibetan kingdom in Nepal. And to the Pushkar Camel Fair in India where I was confronted by the myriad faces of the Thar Desert...the famous Rajput tribes in their colourful turbans, garments and astounding moustaches. Much earlier, just after Vietnam reopened its doors to the world, I spent a lot of time in Vietnam working for the Vietnam Airlines magazine and had an opportunity to see the country before it began gentrified by tourism."

"When did Bali embrace you?"

"I first came to Bali in the early seventies and instantly fell in love. I always wanted to live here but unfortunately time and circumstance took me in other directions but I was also always a bit circumspect about living here because of the incredible energy that Bali has... people's karma is magnified and I questioned mine...last year I felt it was finally time and I moved here and things that enhance my life continue to fall into place. I feel totally blessed to be able to live here and everyday brings with it a host of new perspectives and insights," she answered with passion."

"And what are your future plans, Jill?"

"With all this travel I've been doing for over twenty-five years I am very happy to stand still in Bali. I've just spent six consecutive months in Bali, which is the longest time I've spent in one place. And my project du jour is to make a series of pictures and portraits of Bali from a different perspective."

Books by Jill Gocher:

Asia's Legendary Hotels (Periplus), September 2007.

Australia – the land down under – a coffee table book (Times, Singapore - in English and French)

Cirebon – (Times, Singapore)

Indonesia: Islands of the Imagination by Michael Vatikiotis and Jill Gocher (Hardcover – Feb 15 2006)

Adventure Travellers South East Asia (AA Adventure Travellers) by Sam Hart, Jill Gocher, Christopher Knowles and Ben Davies (Paperback, February, 2000)

Indonesia: The Last Paradise by Jill Gocher (Times, Singapore 1997)

Traveler's Companion Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia by Derek Maitland, Jill Gocher

Indonesia: The Last Paradise by Jill Gocher

(Both the above books published by Times 1997 paperback)

Frommer's Adventure Guides; India, Pakistan and the Himalayas – 1st edition by Steve Watkins, Des Hannigan and Jill Gocher (Paperback – March 2001)

Editor – I met Bobby when he convulsed into spasms and shades of Lenny Bruce while demonstrating how he prepared Wagyu beef steaks and his signature dish, crab cakes, at a hotel in Bali. His captivating cuisine and equally enchanting true stories of his ongoing sojourn through the Asian Diaspora makes him a culinary magician. As an exotic treat we bring you, by special permission of Bobby Chinn and his publishers, a chapter from his bestselling book–

Wild, Wild East, Recipes & Stories from Vietnam.



HAIR OF THE DOG *by Bobby Chinn*

A friend of mine, Mark McDonald, a regular at my last restaurant in Hanoi, knew a young tour guide whose father cooked dog for a living. A regular dog caterer, in fact...grilled, braised, kebabs, schnitzel, soup, satay, stew – you name it, he cooked it.

The kid was regaling my friend with his father’s tales of hardship during ‘The American War’: living in the jungle, suffering from malaria, lack of shelter, shooting tigers, and other wild animals for food, that kind of thing. The war, of course, was a living nightmare for everybody who went through it, whether they were in the jungle or the city.

Eventually he got on to the subject of how his father, a common Viet Cong foot soldier, had come across a dead American pilot who was caught hanging in a tree by his parachute. Since the old man was doing the cooking for his troop, and since they were suffering from serious fatigue and a lack of protein, he decided to cut a piece of flesh from the pilot’s thigh. He simply dropped it into the soup he was making that night. When the troops ate the soup, many of them didn’t like the flavour. ‘Too strong’, they said. ‘Too gamey.’

Now, twenty-five years later, the father is one of the great dog chefs of Vietnam. The kid invited us over for dinner with the promise that his father would prepare dog the customary and legendary seventeen different ways – a full-on buffet, doggie-style.

My pal, a reporter, asked his photographer and me to come along. He suggested I ask culinary questions during the dinner so it would appear that the story was about canine cuisine, although his real interest was in the gory tales of the war. What better way to talk about eating a side of a man than over a little dinner of dog?

The dinner took place in the old man’s house in a working-class district on the outskirts of Hanoi. The house was hidden behind a bunch of storefronts that were selling cheap pottery, electrical gadgets and various plumbing supplies that were laced in a thin layer of dust. I arrived late, and had to walk through a maze of scattered pots, PVC pipes, an array of coils and wires, and Soviet electrical gizmos that would best be described as really bad junk.

Everyone was waiting patiently, quietly sipping cups of bitter green tea. As I entered, I apologized for being late,



‘Bobby Chinn, chef, long time resident of South East Asia, television personality, hustler, International Man of Mystery...what Bobby doesn’t know about Southeast Asian food is not worth knowing.’ - Anthony Bourdain

but could not figure out why my friends were looking so tense. The faint sound of traffic was punctuated with the sound of two dogs – one howling, one barking – in the backyard.

‘With all seriousness, I have to ask, is that dinner?’

‘With all seriousness, I have no idea,’ Mark responded, blushing either with nerves or embarrassment, I could not really tell.

Dining on man’s best friend is a strange emotional dilemma and the three of us were petrified.

While the food was being prepared out of sight, in a kitchen out back, I started to run through all the culinary questions that I could muster in my head. We sat there speechless as the sound of a moaning dog filled the air like a cruel winter wind.

After about twenty minutes our host finally arrived and greeted us. He apologised for not having enough time to prepare all seventeen versions of dog. I think it’s fair to say he was a real expert. You know how people always say there are ninety-nine ways to skin a cat, but nobody can tell you ‘the way’ to skin it? If anyone could, it would be this guy.

The table was graced with sliced dog, stir-fried dog with lemon grass, and a dog soup, which contained what appeared to be the shank of the dog.

Like many Vietnamese dishes, dog is accompanied with a dipping sauce to complement the flavours and tie the dish together. Eating dog without the dipping sauce is rather like eating sushi without soya sauce and wasabi. Unfortunately this light purple sauce with the consistency of watery ketchup smells bad and tastes worse. It is the closest thing to fermented shrimp shit you can get and seems to continue fermenting in front of your eyes as fine white bubbles coat the inside of the dipping bowl. It has taken me eight years to acquire a taste for it, and I still do not really like it.

As we sized up the dishes, we darted looks at each other, knowing that the moment of truth had arrived. Wondering which one of us would start, visions of my first dog started to run through my head. Then all my friends’ dogs. They say that when you die, you watch images of your life hurtle by. When you eat dog, the experience is rather similar. You think about every dog you’ve ever been close to. The thought struck me: What the hell am I doing? Have I lost my mind?

Our host, wanting to honour his foreign guests at Tet, the lunar New Year, graciously pointed out the three boiled pigs’ eyes. They were sitting in a bowl, like Cyclops – a real treat here, especially during Tet. Tet does that to people – they are generally much more generous and thoughtful during this very special time. But having three eyes – with detached retinas – staring at us was more than a little eerie and I quickly retreated to my Islamic upbringing.

It was me who started eating first, under the pretence that I was the most adventurous one, when in fact I was just quickest to detect the smallest portion of boiled dog available. It sat there in front of me on an oval plastic platter – thinly sliced and fanned nicely over the plate, free of garnishes and vegetables. It was nothing, I reasoned, but beef.

I proceeded to remove the fat from the meat, peeling it away and placing it on the side of the plate. It reminded me of the fat from a breast of a duck, except it was slightly charred. I turned to our hosts, gave the most superficial smile I could muster, then dropped the meat in my mouth and started to chew quickly. As the flavours released, the tastes took me right back to English boarding school. The dog tasted exactly like the roast beef they used to serve every Sunday with Yorkshire pudding: dry, overcooked, and chewy except the dog had no large exposed blood vessels. I quickly washed it down with beer, but the taste lingered heavily on my palate. I needed to reassure the other guys that the dog was actually edible and we are all just facing an emotional barrier. ‘Tastes a little like roast beef,’ I said, ‘but if you put roast beef next to it, I am sure I would be able to tell the difference’.



Next was fried dog. Just as I put it into my mouth my friend frowned and complained that it was very strong, which it was. It was hard to spit it out, so I manipulated it to the back of my tongue, reached for a beer and tried to wash it down. Gamey would be an understatement: ‘doggie’ would be a better description.

Then we went for the soup. Our hosts were both feverishly chowing down. As I watched them shovel up pieces of dog, like famished construction workers with a limited lunch break, I could only think to myself that we (the Americans) never had a chance here. The meal for us was pretty much over within three minutes. We were like three anorexics just doing face time at a dinner table. Conversation during a Vietnamese meal is usually very limited. The table usually falls into silence, with the exception of slurps and the ploughing of rice bowls and chopsticks. This was the opportune moment to ask all my questions and thereby avoid the food. I would learn that the best dogs for eating are six months to one year old, and the young females are best of all. The Chinese and Koreans, true connoisseurs, buy a lot of dogs from Vietnam.

When I asked our host if there was any part of the dog that couldn’t be eaten, he didn’t miss a beat. ‘The hair,’ he said, without the slightest trace of humour or irony. Surely the paws couldn’t be eaten? No, they’re savoured in soups and stocks. There is no prized cut from a dog, apparently, although cooking techniques and execution are critical.

The normal diet for a dog is rice and leftovers which sounds perfect for a Vietnamese pet, but the dogs raised for eating are special. They’re a strange half-breed that’s older and fatter than the normal Vietnamese house-dog, but strangely favoured by expatriates. I know some who have gone out of their way to save a dog, which they will then feed and fatten up only for the poor thing to be dog-napped by someone.

Curiously, those who eat dog only eat a certain type – an intellectual justification for those who regard the little darlings as part of the family. **The chef said other dogs do not taste like the mutts he cooks. He made a point of telling me that**

‘the German dog’ is not good for eating. What? When was this guy in Germany? It sounded like he must have eaten a German shepherd. I imagine that during the hardships of war, they were forced to take on the K-9 corps of the US army. Hell, if he could eat a piece of leg from a dead pilot hanging from a tree, then dogs that were wounded or dead on the battlefield must have seemed like fair game.

On the Yin-Yang chart of hot and cold foods, dog makes you hot. It is a winter dish, eaten in northern areas, where the winters get very cold. When you eat dog in summer, it’s said that you release a strange smell when you sweat. Dogs, apparently, can pick up on the scent, and I suspect they think you’re some kind of werewolf.

Dog meat is more expensive than chicken, but cheaper than beef, and the price fluctuates according to the whole lunar calendar of karma and superstition. It is eaten for good luck during the last two weeks of a calendar month. Our dinner took place around Tet, when dog is in very high demand, and costs about \$1.25 a pound.

There were just five of us at dinner that night, so the neighbours were given the dog’s head. Others were awarded the intestines, liver and stomach. Thank God for neighbours. The chef asked us if we had a problem eating dog, which was very difficult to answer given that the guy had not only eaten a piece of American pilot, but had also cooked him.

As our hosts continued to work their way through the dog dishes, the rest of us were content to eat the bread and drink the warm beer. A small cat began to rub up against us, mewling and whining and twitching. When our hosts finished their meal and cleared the table, they fed the leftovers to the cat, which sent the scrawny feline into a kind of sexual rapture.

Yes, indeed, it’s dog-eat-dog world. Actually, it is worse than that. Man eats monkey brains, cat eats dog, cows eat sheep, and vegetarians are starting to make much more sense to me by the minute.



Tropical Strings

Poetic Tales Of Life In Bali

BY
John Chester Lewis

Eye Awning

She placed the elbows
Of her outstretched arms
Atop his shoulders
And with her hands
Adjoined at his brow
She created a visor
A functional eye awning
Guarding his vision
From the bee sting sensation
Of miniature kamikaze hydro bombs
Flooding sky
And lubricating earth
As it rotates
Beneath the tires
Of his motorbike

Glide

Miniature Horseshoes
Curled unto death
Caterpillar carcass
Glide
Seemingly upon their own accord
Across the tile
The smallest of ants
Marching go on

Stillness

Were I taken sway
In the broad expectations of grandeur
Awash in the polarities of politicking
Ne'er a word would I take in consolation
Surrendering the intent of my rostrum
Fettered by the ever floating illusion in rotary
Words stolen in the night from beauty
Never bedding a concept of their own

Rather explore and embrace
The fullness of a single grain
For it is in stillness
That the frangipani may utter prolific
And in times such as these
What more far bestowed dream
Wanders to seduce itself
In the durations of passion,
Though she falters in brevity,
Embracing the musings
Of a thousand adolescent songbirds
Silenced in unison
By recorded delusion,
And the battles of ever-was

2012 - Are we ready

by Vasumi Zjikaa

We are in the greatest times of the last 26,000 years; Times when anything could happen and probably will. We are in a time when uncertainty is the name of the game and the more fluid we are in our attachments to anything the happier we will be.

Everything is fragile right now, the financial system, the ground we walk upon, our relationships - the only way out is in!

To find the centre of ourselves and attempt to stay there, to let go attachments to all that is outside us is the only way. This does not mean to stop loving and cherishing all the beings in our lives, but to know that we must all be deeply centered in every interaction we have with life.

By the Mayan Dreamspell - as brought into the mainstream by Jose Arguelles, who recently passed on 22 March this year - we have just completed the year of Red Overtone Moon guided by the Earth, in the cycle of the Serpent. This gave us a year where we all learned of the power of water and really felt what survival feels like. Even if we were not directly affected, the news of the catastrophes delivered by water and earth travelled the globe, and we all felt the reverberations of this. The collective energy was one of preparing ourselves psychically for anything to happen.

So this work done and the beginning of the new year - a 13 month/28 day year running from July 26 (representing the Heliacal rising of Sirius or Sirius rising with the Sun) to July 25, we are now in the running for the next step in the evolutionary rung of Timeship Earth 2013 - this year is named White Overtone Wizard, in the cycle of the Moon.

As the Moon represents water it feels that again we are working with fluidity, but this time we are asked to become sensitive to the flow of consciousness.

What this means is that because last year we became accustomed to attuning to what survival really means, this has taught us to become ever more sensitive to the planetary vibrations, because our survival depends on this. To illustrate this, feel back into who you were, a year and a half ago, and now to who you are now, in this time, you may sense that your antennae have become more finely tuned to what is going on around you and also what is going on around the globe. This has been the teaching of the past year, to more finely attune our senses to the vibrations around us, to empower our connection to the Earth, so that we may be in more respect of her. Many have listened, sadly a few who are overcome by greed have not; it will be harder in the long run for these beings.

For those of us who are heeding the call and taking the steps to make our footprint upon our Mother Earth more gentle, we will become more and more sensitized to what that means, and this year will be a year of grounding ourselves deeply within our own bodies, recalling all energies that are externalized, so that we develop a deep receptivity to more dimensions of being, beyond the purely physical. It will become increasingly difficult to maintain a presence in the old paradigm of 'it is only real if we can see or touch it', and because of this we are sensing our co-creative ability to have interface with the goings on of our planet - we are here as co-creators!

Calendario Mayan



So this year the more we come from deep within our own centre connected to the Earth, the more we will be able to flow with the changes.

Imagine if we are very connected to the external world, our job, which all of a sudden is no more, because the latest earthquake, tsunami or storm, just wiped away our livelihood? For sure this will be traumatic, especially if we are still buying into the paradigm that says that this is the all important thing.

By all means work, make the money to pay the endless list of bills, but begin to look to the alternatives - like where to grow the food? Perhaps it is time to gather some heirloom seeds (seeds that have not been genetically manipulated to stop them from reproducing other seed); the seed that our parents and grandparents used to grow ... it is time to gather these seeds.

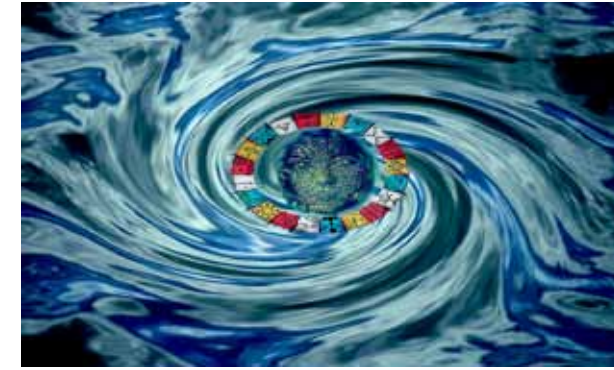
It is also time to get to know your neighbors, to connect in and re-create community (common-unity), as you will definitely get to know them in the midst of the next emergency (e-merge-ncy). This is one of the greatest gifts of the times we are in, as emergencies merge all over the planet, people begin to know each other, and join together for the greater good of all concerned. Hearts begin to crack open as we are less concerned with the personal private self and more concerned with our families, our neighbors, our regions, our nations and our planet and how we serve this ... then the planetary heart is born...as we reconnect to our compassion and learn to heal all that comes up as it comes up, and experience the intensity of each moment and the opportunities for accomplishing deep and long range healing, that come as the hidden gift to all that we experience.

If we are very intelligent it will be time to organize a central hub where all can feel safe to go, although usually this comes as an afterthought, but hey I will put it out there for us all to consider.

We are basically asked to organize for our survival this year, we are in 2011 and some call this the year of change, although most of us working with the Mayan Calendar see 2012 as the BIG year, but we can never know.

People are espousing that the Comet Elenin will come so close to the Earth in Sept/October that this will have a huge effect on us, it could be bringing more earth changes, and it could be bringing the greatest gifts of higher consciousness. All I know is that anything could happen and probably will, although I feel we are still in the lead up.

One of the main things is not to buy into the mainstream propaganda machine, programming fear for this time. Maintain your centre, tune into your inner knowing, let go of the program of giving your power away to the external expert, and know that you know. Even if in this moment you are unsure, believe me, so is everyone else - our true key to safety is our own inner knowing. To be caught out, is to be giving your power away to a so-called expert, who has many great hypotheses and has little grounding in knowing the reality of what will come, as you and I.



Organize for your survival, get in touch with your instinct, and eat good foods that give energy, that build your life force. Let go of processed foods that dumb us down. Try to eliminate sugars, processed meat, eggs, excessive salt, breads - in fact excess in any degree will not build a fully alive life force that depends on variety to become vital. All processed foods in the West and increasingly in the East, have that much chemical that truly we are only eating bulk poison. Become wise to the adage of 'let thy food be thy medicine'.

Wise up to what your body is telling you. Learn how to make water filtration systems out of a can or plastic bottle and stones, rock and dirt - there are many YouTube videos showing how this is done. Learn how to make good soil from burning a small amount of wood. YouTube is such an amazing resource in this time and it may not be here in the hardest times, so learn up now. Integrate the knowledge that is available so that you become less dependent on the town water and electricity systems. Become a sovereign agent with the knowhow of survival to share with all around you. NOW IS THE TIME FOR THIS!

Learn to trust your inner knowing and be prepared to experiment, as a child, with the ideas that come to you.

Gaze at the Sun in the morning and evening to receive solar illumination into the inner cortex of your brain to stimulate your own intelligence as the ancient sun worshippers, such as the Maya and Inca, knew how to do.

Most of all, trust that this is the most exciting and exhilarating time to be alive and therefore, be prepared. Release any old fear programs that stop you from moving forward, and embrace the change; this is the time we have all been waiting for!

Blessed be dear hearts, and know that all of the above is decoded and read from following the codes of the Mayan Dreamspell that was held in stone for 1260 years in the Temple of Inscriptions in Palenque, Mexico, to be released at this time for this TIME... Reclaim your time and reclaim your mind!

O YUM HUNAB KU EVA MAYA E MA HO!

Vasumi writes a daily blog on the energies that are presented by the Mayan Dreamspell, to subscribe www.1320sync.wordpress.com. She also creates a 13 Moon Journal each year to assist folk to be in touch with the daily flow of consciousness as shown by this ancient future system of the Maya. You may contact her at lovevasumi@yahoo.com or through her website www.vasumi.com. She also shares personal sessions to attune people to their spiritual purpose as shown by the Mayan Dreamspell for this time.



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