

Feature

Education

# Lift them up Gently, Take Them up with Care

NOT to have a child at all in a place like the Subcontinent is considered a curse. Parents themselves feel unsatisfied. In such a situation when a child is born physically or mentally

English or Bangla: it is tiring indeed to tackle the abnormal children, who deserve more care than the normal school children. We speak to them

by Fayza Haq

expert Kaniz Fatima Parul, who has been trained for over a year by Ms. Monica Thomlin, who comes regularly from UK. I learnt that the hearing experts were taught to operate the audiogramme, while they were also trained how to teach the deaf children to speak.

The training facilities for us is limited. We never get to

with her colleague, Md. Saif Kabir.

"Ms. Monica Thomlin, our instructor, was present only sometimes in the last two years. It is she alone who can update us with the latest knowledge," Saif, who has a master's degree in Physics added.

Most of our patients are sent to us by E.N.T. specialists

apart from her son with the hearing impairment. "I send the girls to government schools and can say nothing about my son's future. No one can predict destiny," she said wisely.

The principal of the centre, Mr. Abdul Salam said, "The main problem of the institute is that the children can hardly afford the tuition fees. The admission fee is Tk 1,765 while the hearing aid ranges from Tk 3,000 to 20,000, and how many parents can afford this? Our priority is to have the children take part in speech so that they can gradually adjust to the normal schools. The courses extend from two to four years, depending on the extent of the hearing deficiency," Mr. Salam informed me.

He was not happy about the financial running of the school. "This is a rented house and the owners are now demanding Tk 35,000 per month for it. Earlier it was Tk 27,000 per month. The salary of the teachers and other assistants come to Tk 41,000 a month. While the 'Hi-Care' Institute takes care of the audio experts, we must handle the teachers ourselves, and we are grappling with this situation. There are 97 students and the teachers are paid from the fees that we get. We would like to help the poor and give them free lessons but this is seldom possible," he informed me.



Young Deaf Children in class room

imparted, it gives tremendous pain to the parents and the extended family.

The deaf children that come to the 'Hi-Care' Centre, at Dhanmandi, to be fitted with hearing aids, and to be taught to a point that they can join normal schools, appear contented enough. Yet this is because of the carefully contrived congenial atmosphere created by the teachers and the other hearing-aid testers.

Nirafat Anam Shipra, the Vice-Principal of the Dhaka school, has been at the post for two years, but has worked at the centre for 11 years. "I want to keep myself busy when my husband is away at work. The job satisfaction here is tremendous," she says.

With a master's degree in Zoology, Nirafat says that since the school runs on a self-help basis, the teachers are paid extremely hard. They are paid from Tk 1,000 to Tk 1,600 at the most but they must cope with the handicapped children and treat with patience and tenderness.

The teachers now must necessarily have a bachelor's degree, but when the institute began, women with HSC certificates were taken in. There are not the usual holidays such as for Ramzaan, as is followed in so many other schools, Nirafat informs me. The committee that runs the centre has its hands tied too as it is lacking in funds itself.

"We have to keep on talking while teaching Mathematics,

and gradually train them to read and write until they are integrated into normal schools," the Vice-Principal added.

The children face the financial problems of paying the high fees that soar to Tk 550 per month. Then there is the cost of the hearing aid which is Tk 3,000 on the average. The batteries cost Tk 5 to Tk 20 a week, while the maintenance of the 'lead' is another added expenditure.

"Here they adjust well and are lively. They are, in fact, restless to come to the school," Nirafat informs me. "The uniform is a cost too, and it is difficult for the middle-class to afford it. Yet, we do have a quota and have given 'half-scholarships' to 10 children, and there are two students studying free of cost this year," she added.

"At times we send as many as 33 students to the normal school each year but sometimes this drops to 25 or 27," she continued.

The institute has 22 teachers, two 'ayas' and a 'chowkidar'. In the audio centre there are three full time workers and eight part-time ones.

The two functions of the school include the one at Pahela Baishak and one at the end of the English calendar year. "This time we performed at the Shishu Academy on January 12th," the Vice-Principal of the school informed me.

Talking to the hearing-aid

**The two functions of the school include the one at Pahela Baishak and one at the end of the English calendar year. "This time we performed at the Shishu Academy on January 12th," the Vice-Principal informed.**

go abroad as we cannot afford it. As a consequence, we have no academic training in speech therapy, and hearing improvement. We have three audiometres, and an impedance audiometre. One of the earlier machines, mentioned is automatic but the other two are manual. The pure tone audiogramme checks if the child is responding to instructions.

Many children have different psychological problems and we must be their friends and guides. The machines often break down and they have to be sent to U.K. for repairs," Kaniz told me, along

with their history sheets and proceed with our work, as with Mehdi Hassan, who had the complaints of unruliness at school, and it turned out that he had partial hearing loss," Kaniz added.

When I spoke to Mrs. Fani Akhtar, the mother of five-year old Sonia, she complained of the expense of bringing the child to and from Nawabpur. "My husband works with the Biman cargo section and so we can barely bear the cost," she said.

Mrs. Rabia Akhtar, the mother of six-year old Habib, said that she had four daughters to tend to at Malibagh.



Audiological Test with "Free field Audiometer"

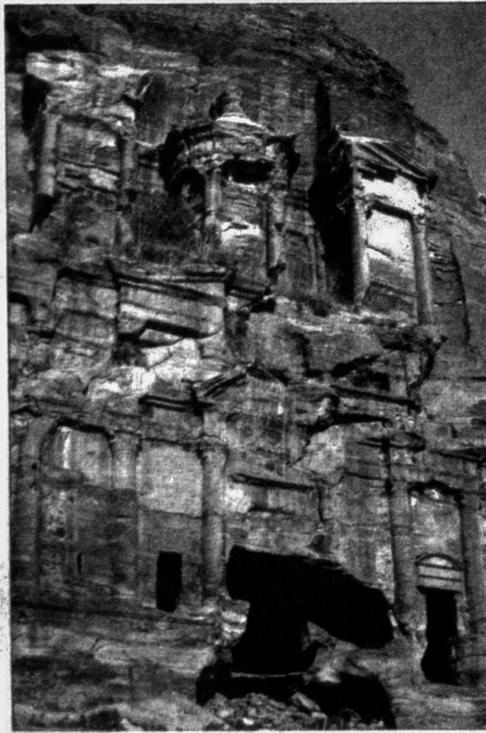
THE ancient city of Petra lies in a semi-arid region of south-west Jordan that dominates the desert of the Arabah depression, dropping down more than 1,000 metres to the west. The massif forms a natural fortress, where once was built a strange city, the capital of a kingdom that dared to resist the might of Rome.

Today, Petra is one of the most beautiful historic sites of the Middle East, a testimonial, unique in size, to cave architecture, or what one might almost call troglodytic urbanism. Its 45 square kilometres house a succession of over 500 great monuments, hewn from the rock by astonishingly gifted Bedouin architects-sculptors more than 2,000 years ago.

The road to Petra snakes through grey, stony desert on a high, arid plateau. It is difficult to believe that once, in ancient times, an oak forest grew here. Then the road descends into a small valley. Suddenly, at a bend in the road, the magnifi-

cent site of Petra comes into view below, a rocky chaos to which the city owes its name, for "petros" means rock in Greek.

Coming down from the plateau, the traveller is plunged into a lunar landscape of yellow-white sandstone carved into thousands of sugar-loaf or whaleback-shaped domes, an expanse of humps and protuberances whose contours are thrown into relief by the harsh light of dawn. Already the first cave monuments of the city can be made out, among them the Obelisk Tomb. Gradually the whiter rock gives way to steep slopes of rose-red sandstone, which give the Petra massif its dominant colouring.



Erosion has caused extensive damage to the Corinthian Tomb, right.

# Petra: the Rose-red Capital of a Forgotten People

by Jacek Rewerski

The road into the massif passes through the Sik, a narrow gorge about 3 kilometres long, 100 metres deep and narrowing in places to a width of a bare 3 metres. Straight stretches are punctuated by sudden bends until the gorge gradually opens out on a huge depression ringed by flat-topped mountains whose sheer slopes are dotted with magnificent monuments.

The spectacle is overwhelming. In places, patches of black, white and yellow alternate with the dominant red of the multi-coloured stone, which erosion has shaped into a natural work of art, a ruined landscape of cliffs and ravines pitted with grooves and cavities in which sumptuous forms have been carved by the hand of man.

## The Valley of Moses

Everything in Petra speaks of history. Before it even reaches the massif, the road runs through the Wadi Musa ("the valley of Moses"), at the entrance to which, under a white dome, rises a spring reputed to be the one the patriarch caused to flow from the rock during his crossing of the desert.

Local tradition also claims that Moses' brother Aaron is buried under the Djebel Horoun ("Mount of Aaron"), where a small white mosque supposedly shelters his tomb. Charming in its rustic simplicity, it is a place of annual pilgrimage.

Other legends have built up around the Khazna Firaoun ("Pharaoh's Treasury"), an astonishing cliff monument facing the mouth of the Sik. It is topped by an urn that Bedouins used to shoot at with their rifles in the hope that from it would spill out the gold of the Pharaohs. The entire facade bears the scars of their treasure-hunting.

Who were the sculptors and architects of Petra? The Nabataeans, who probably originated in southern Arabia, appeared in the Middle East around the fourth century BC. Strabo and Diodorus Siculus,

two historians of the Augustan era, tell us that the tribe consisted of some 10,000 nomadic Bedouins who used to trade between Arabia and the Mediterranean. These caravaneers, "determined to preserve their liberty... calling the desert their homeland", who "have no vineyard or field or see, and have not built houses to dwell in" (Jeremiah 35), nonetheless built an empire with Petra as its capital. Diodorus Siculus wrote of them: "They surpass other Arabs in wealth, even though there are only 10,000 of them."

Petra benefited from a site that guaranteed the security of its inhabitants and had its own water source, the Ain Musa — an element of prime importance in the desert. Its location at the crossroads of the trade routes linking Syria to the Red Sea and India to the Gulf and the Mediterranean gave them control of the principal caravan routes with their traffic in gold, precious stones, myrrh, incense, spices, Phoenician purple, wood and exotic animals.

King Obodas I, one of the great figures of the Nabataean dynasty, ruled Petra during the first century BC. Around the year 93, he defeated Alexander Jannaeus, the king of the Jews, in Golan, taking from him the lands of Gilead and Moab. In 85, he killed the Syrian king Antiochus XII in the Negev. These events earned him divine status and he took the title of Ilaba, meaning "God". The Nabataean kingdom was now a power in the Middle East and under Aretas III (84-62 BC) it stretched from northern Arabia to the Sinai peninsula and Damascus.

The Nabataean people underwent an astonishing metamorphosis, the former nomads becoming sedentary city-builders. Many archaeological remains bear witness to their urbanizing activities, of which Petra remains the most spectacular example. The city was to play a frequent part in the history of the region in the

days of Cleopatra, Herod and John the Baptist.

In 64, Pompey created the Roman province of Syria and in 106 Trajan ordered its governor to annex the Nabataean kingdom and to turn it into the Roman province of Arabia. The new territory was governed by an envoy sent from Rome, and Petra itself was given metropolitan status.

The region was gradually Romanized and, little by little its Nabataean character faded. The desert fortress was unable to compete with the economic might of the Roman giant and, in the third century, bypassed by the new trade routes, Petra went into a gradual decline. Under Byzantine rule, a cave temple was transformed into a cathedral, a bishopric was installed and Petra became a Byzantine administrative centre. In 636, after the battle of the River Yarmuk, the Muslims took control of the region, but since it was not on the pilgrimage route to Mecca, Petra sank still further into decline and neglect.

At the time of the Crusades, the city, by then in ruins, was occupied by the armies of Baldwin I. In 1127, the cru-

saders built three small forts there, the remains of which can still be seen. The crusaders, however, did not stay there long.

The last mention of Petra, in connection with the Crusades, dates from 1276, during the Syrian campaign of the Mamluk Sultan Baybars against the crusaders. Subsequently, Petra was lost in oblivion surviving, like Troy, only as a legend.

## A city reborn

In 1812, a Swiss traveller, Ludwig Burckhardt (1784-1817), caught a glimpse of the rock-hewn city while making a journey to Mecca disguised under the pseudonym of Sheikh Ibrahim. "I regret not being able to give a full report on the antiquities of Sik", he wrote later, "but... I was unprotected in the midst of the desert where no traveller had previously gone... The inhabitants will grow used to the enquiries of foreigners and then the antiquities of Wadi Musa will be recognized as worthy to figure among the most curious remains of ancient art."

Burckhardt was soon followed by other travellers — in 1818, the British naval officers Irby and Mangless; in 1828, the Frenchmen L de Laborde and MA de Linant de Bellefonds. In 1839, David Roberts made some fine engravings of the site. From that time onwards, a stream of scientific expeditions followed. Petra was slowly reborn to



Petra: as it was

become today one of the principal tourist attractions of the Middle East.

The erosion that originally sculpted the wonderful landscape of Petra has begun to cause serious damage to some of the cliff monuments. Because they are carved from the rock, they are relatively fragile.

In Jordan, the Department of Tourism and Antiquities, Yarmuk University, and the Higher Council for Science and Technology are co-operating to analyse the evolution of the site and to determine the measures that need to be taken to protect it and to prevent further damage. These interdisciplinary studies, involving specialists from such countries as France, Germany, the United States and Italy, are beginning to produce results. There are plans to establish a Petra National and Archaeological Park.

— UNESCO Courier

Besides Mauritius, UNESCO's Sector Analysts Division is also participating in similar inter-sectoral policy work in Myanmar, Vietnam, Papua New Guinea, Chad and Benin.

— UNESCO

# La Fontaine's House in Chateau-Thierry

by Pierre Albert Lambert

EVERY year, on 24th June, the inhabitants of Chateau-Thierry celebrate La Fontaine's feast-day. Every shop-window depicts one of his fables. His characters act out the fables on flower-decorated floats. All kinds of events and entertainment are devoted to him.

This is the time when thousands of admirers come to pay La Fontaine homage (Paris is only an hour away by train). People flock from all over Europe, South America, Africa, Japan and even China.

At the foot of the old castle walls, overlooking the town for ten centuries, visitors discover the house in which La Fontaine was born in 1621. The house, which was built in the Renaissance, is picturesque with its double flight of steps, its old balustrade and its well in the middle of the paved courtyard.

The facade still has the three intertwined crescents, an emblem of Diane de Poitiers, King Henri II's mistress. There seems to be no explanation for the emblem. The house belonged to the La Fontaine family until 1676, when the writer sold it to a nobleman of the royal hunt.

All the original fittings may have disappeared, but the museum in the old house contains a treasure in pictures, illustrated editions, paintings and various objects. They come from many different places and confirm the writer's popularity all over the world.

With its original beams, its works of art and the white marble busts of Racine and Moliere, the large drawing-room recreates the atmosphere in which the poet lived. A display-case shows his christening certificate, his marriage certificate to Jeanne Hericart and a legal document by which he gave his pew in Saint-Crepin church to a citizen in the town.

Other documents concern his activities as "Water and Forest Warden," a position La Fontaine bought in 1652. There is also a letter by Madame de Sevigne in which she praises the charm of the Fables, but has certain reservations. She considers certain parts are rather "flat". Portraits on the walls show his patronesses: the Duke of Bouillon's wife, Madame de la Sabliere and Marie-Anne Mancini.

Another room has a collection of everyday objects deco-

rated with themes from La Fontaine's Fables and Tales. There are all kinds of things from all kinds of places: Limoges and Meissen porce-

lains, terracotta figures, tobacco jars, buttons, fans, chairbacks and bronze decorations on clocks.



lains, terracotta figures, tobacco jars, buttons, fans, chairbacks and bronze decorations on clocks.

They all represent the fable-writer's work: "The Wolf and the Lamb," "The Fox and the Crow," "The Oyster and the Pleadings," "The Milkmaid and the Milk Jug," etc. One scene, illustrating "The Fox and the Stork," was carved last century on a coconut by a convict in Toulon. Unusual children's games reveal the importance of La Fontaine's work in the education of small children.

There are also countless collections of Fables published in all languages. The museum has a collection of 300 illustrations which were made at the request of a patron by French draughtsmen and artists of miniatures (including Dela-

croix) as well as foreign artists including Chinese, Persian and Egyptian ones. This collection is unique in the world. Sixty of these paintings form one of the most beautiful groups of Indian 19th century miniatures. They are of particular interest as they result from a little known episode in relations between France and India. They were painted, from 1837, by a Muslim artist in the Sikh kingdom of Punjab, where the artist had former officers from Napoleon's army who had been seconded to the Maharajas of Lahore, as patrons.

There is no other place than Chateau-Thierry in which the universality of La Fontaine's work can be so greatly appreciated or the extent to which he contributed to spreading French culture measured. Moliere had been right when he wrote to Racine's son: "Let us not make fun of the chap. He will live longer than all of us." (La Actualite En France)

# Developing human resource policy

IN a drive to develop its human resources, Mauritius has just adopted a Master Plan for Education which embodies a comprehensive policy of nine years basic education for all with major improvements in quality, relevance and equity at all levels of education.

The Plan aims at creating a highly skilled, adaptable workforce which will help the nation achieve newly industrialized country status by the year 2000. This is the first major

education sector-wide followup in the African region on the World Conference on Education for All (March 1990, Jomtien, Thailand).

Further, the Master Plan for Education is also one of the first exercises using an interdisciplinary, inter-sectoral and inter-agency approach to human resource sector development adopted by UNDP, UNESCO and other UN agencies.

In addition to nine years basic education, the Plan aims to give all children pre-primary schooling, and boost the quality of learning by improving training, career prospects and working conditions for the country's 9000 teachers and set quality standards for teaching aids and school equipment.

The Master Plan is the culmination of 18 months' activities in which the Ministry of Education provided the leadership, with the active participation of national working groups and consultations involving institutions and persons from public and private areas directly concerned with education and human resource development.

UNESCO, which had been chosen by the Government as its partner in this policy work, provided expertise in sector analysis, and UNDP financed the activities. ILO and the World Bank also participated.

In November last year, UNESCO will host Donors Consultative Meeting in Paris aimed at mobilizing external resources for the implementation of the Master Plan. The Meeting is being organized jointly by the Government of Mauritius, UNDP and UNESCO.

The Mauritian Education Master Plan project is one of a series of UNESCO projects aimed at contributing to restructuring education systems within the overall framework of human resource development. Salient features of the innovative approach used are: involvement of national staff at all levels of activity, from data gathering to policy design; policy dialogue between the main national actors concerned by the human resource development; comprehensive programmes and strategies based on inter-sectoral, interdisciplinary and inter-agency cooperation.

Besides Mauritius, UNESCO's Sector Analysts Division is also participating in similar inter-sectoral policy work in Myanmar, Vietnam, Papua New Guinea, Chad and Benin.

— UNESCO