

documentary

Projecting the Torch Bearers

A video presentation of still photographs on South Asia's Muslim women at Goethe Institut

By Tawfique Ali

MUSLIM women, all over the sub-continent, have contributed immensely to the cultural fabric of this region since the first ray of civilisation in this part of the world. They have played significant roles in political, social and cultural spheres. Their achievements and excellence in all these fields are equal to that of other women of any other country. It is either a flaw of history or social and

women's share in cultural synthesis of India, Pakistan and Bangladesh and their role and position in sub-continental history.

It documents the sycretic culture which evolved over the last few centuries in India, Pakistan and Bangladesh, influencing the way Muslim women of South Asia lead their lives. The cultural interaction of Hindus and Muslims over the years has created a unique society. This is a record of a continuing culture which began to take shape in the Mughal period and continues to this day.

the culture of past and the present-day cultures of Indian, Pakistani and Bangladeshi Muslim women. It shows Muslim women of varying backgrounds who took up the challenge of living in an Islamic way of life in the midst of a diverse and rich heritage.

Naz has researched into the challenges we face living in a western society maintaining our Muslim heritage. We appreciate and enjoy and to compare our culture and the ways in which it has been accommodated in the indigenous cultures of South Asia.

The invasions of Arabs, Turks and Afghans brought a totally new religion in the subcontinent Islam. Not only did Muslim theologians put an impact on the region but also the religious sphere was enlarged by the arrival of Muslim mystics from Persia. The first official Sultanate was established in 1206 and later by several different dynasties. Emperor Babur, who came from Samarkand in Central Asia, established Mughal rule in 1526. Muslims and Hindus remained separate as religious communities and yet a fusion of cultures and beliefs took place. Domestic ceremonies and rituals - such as birth, marriage and death - mingled. Converted Muslims, were heirs to rituals practised by Hindus, and newer sides came from the Islamic people.

More than 20 historic and contemporary women were featured in the documentary.

Razia Sultan (1236 AD-1239) was chosen to be Queen by her father Iltimush of the Slave Dynasty. Razia superseded her two brothers. Her appointment scandalised the nobles of the court. She was not allowed to succeed initially but after she routed the Queen Mother who wished to see her son Ruknuddin on the throne, Razia became Queen. After a battle against a fellow Turkish nobleman Altunia who was the governor of a province, she joined forces with him, and they subsequently married. Together they attempted to consolidate their rule but died shortly afterwards in a battle. It is said that she gave a new dynamism to the society establishing schools.

Nur Jahan, the Empress of Mughal India (1577-1645), was the favourite and last wife of the Emperor Jahangir. She came to India from Persia. She was a widow with a daughter when she married him. An active sportswoman and designer, she introduced the use of silver thread in textiles, new forms of jewellery. She was also a poet. She introduced non-abstract relief



Jahanara Akhlaq--- a Kathak Dancer.

forms in Islamic architecture. An active participant in the mystic life, preached by the Sufis, Nur Jahan and Jahangir set the stage for greater participation and sharing of the new and old cultures of India.

Chand Bibi, a Princess of Ahmadnagar was the Regent for her nephew after her husband Adil Shah died. The Mughals wanted her nephew's throne. The siege of Ahmadnagar was a legendary battle, in which Chand Bibi kept herself veiled but fought bravely with the army and became victorious. She was in her 50s at that time. This area is known as Andhra Pradesh today.

The Begums of Bhopal (1819-1930) were rulers of the princely independent state of Bhopal (Madhya Pradesh) for four generations. Educated like men of their time, they learnt the Quran, Persian, English, Pushto (the dynasty was of Pathan descent), arithmetic, handwriting, riding and fencing. They were Qudsia Begum (1819-1837), Sikander Begum (1844-1868), Shah Jehan Begum (1868-

1901) and finally Sultan Jahan Begum (1858-1930). As ruling 'princes' they dealt with all the matters of their state. Sultan Jahan Begum patronised educational institutions for women, spoke in public, and attended conferences in India and abroad. She practised purdah, but maintained that purdah to be moderated. In her last years she herself gave up purdah. She wrote her autobiography which was translated in 1911. Sultan Jahan



Embroidered Kantha.

Begum was the first Chancellor of Aligarh Muslim University. This University was amongst the first institutions where Muslim women were able to be formally educated.

Rokeya Sakhawat Hossain (1880-1932) was born in Bangladesh. She was married in 1896. Her husband taught her English language and encouraged in everything. She had written "Sultana's Dream". She also opened a girls' school in Bihar where they lived. Her husband left his money to her to spend on furthering women's education. Women were always the focus of Rokeya's activities.

Begum Jahanara Shah Nawaz (1896-1979) attended the roundtable conference of 1930 in London and spoke of equal rights for women in the constitution. In 1937 she was elected a member of the Punjab Legislative Assembly and served as Parliamentary Secretary in the Unionist provincial government. A founding member of the women's branch of the Muslim League, she left purdah in 1920. She remained an active fighter for freedom from British rule, and was one of the two women appointed to Pakistan's Constituent Assembly in 1947. Born in Calcutta (1915) to a family that had opposing views on women's education (her father wanted her to get an education outside the home and her mother wanted her to be traditional), Shaista Ikramullah was the first woman in her family to be educated outside the home.

Dr Sadik continues to stress the importance of addressing women's needs and involving them directly in creating and implementing development policy. She studied medicine in Pakistan and did additional research and study in United States and Canada. She held many high profile positions in Pakistan.

Parveen Talha worked in drug control, and designed the system for the Red and Green channels in customs control amongst her many challenging jobs in the government and other agencies-jobs which require her to make crucial decisions.

Asma Jehangir has used her impressive legal background to take a stand on human rights issues. As one of Pakistan's most respected journalists, Razia Bhatti was known for her courage, determination and integrity.

Ayesha Naved started with Pakistan International Airlines. The first woman pilot in Pakistan to fly a 747 as a First officer, she continues to be one of PIA's top pilots.

In 1963, Yasmeen Lari became

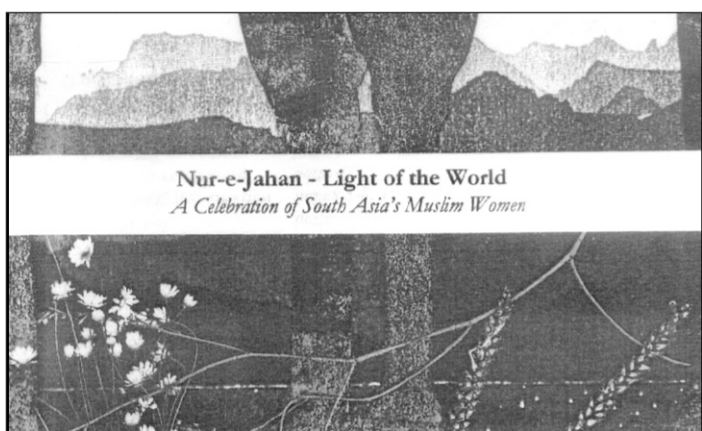
Pakistan's first and only female architect. Her work is valued all over the world. She has been the architect of many landmark buildings in Pakistan.

Naima Banu comes from a family of block makers who came to Jaipur from Multan over 300 years ago.

Jahanara Akhlaq began dancing at an early age, and was able to learn from a well-known Pakistani classical dancer Nahid Siddiqui - her mentor.

Runa Laila is a pop singer from Bangladesh whose singing style is recognised throughout India, Pakistan, and Bangladesh. She received her training at a very young age, and her first public performance was when she had to stand in for her older sister.

A special thread that connects all these women is that they are all family persons. They have chosen careers but not at the expense of



religious limitation that have hindered an honest exposure of these noble people who have created history and are entitled to exalted position in it. It is a matter of regret that they have hardly been recognised and coronated at the global level. That the Muslim women have equally contributed to give birth to a syncretic character of subcontinent culture is often overlooked. It is, as the researchers observe, due to sheer lack of proper exposure of these great ladies of history.

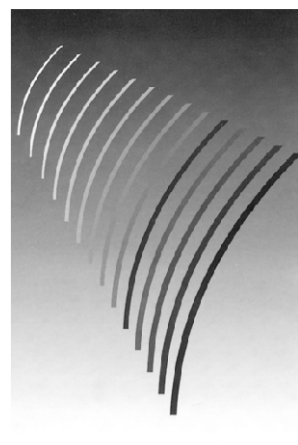
The film is a celebration of the lives of South Asia's Muslim women whose lives reflect long tradition of assimilation and interaction with the indigenous cultures of ancient India. It also reinforces the strong cultural traditions that South Asian Muslim women have inherited and focuses on the similarities between



Young bride-to-be at her "mayun."

Naz Ikramullah has undertaken a unique endeavour to celebrate these women. She has created a video documentary on the stills of Muslim women preserved in different museums across the world and has titled it Nur-e-Jahan, meaning light of the world. Nur-e-Jahan has been produced with the financial assistance of UNESCO and jointly organised by Centre for Policy Dialogue and Drik Picture Library. The show was held at German Culture Centre auditorium. It is relevant to mention that screening of this video documentary is part of Chabi Mela or photographic exhibition. This production is an outcome of Naz's research work on the issue while Thara Pillai had acted as her associate consultant. Naz has dwelt mainly upon two concerns: Muslim

Recommendations



Art Exhibition

An art exhibition, titled 1st Young Artists Exhibition of Japan-Bangladesh, has started at the Zainul Gallery, Institute of Fine Arts, University of Dhaka. The exhibition will showcase the art works of 14 young artists, seven from Bangladesh and seven from Japan, till January 9, from 2 p.m. to 8 p.m. everyday.

Mine, Yours, His/Her's

An exhibition titled Mine, Yours, His/Her's of creative interactive paintings by Omar Zafar was inaugurated at the Bengal Gallery of Fine Arts on December 20. The exhibition was jointly inaugurated by Abdus Samad Azad, Minister for Foreign Affairs and George Papandreou, Foreign Minister of Greece.

The exhibition has reopened after the Eid holidays on December 31 and will continue from 12 to 8 p.m. till January 9.

Exhibition

Selected Indonesian exhibition titled Images from Antara News Agency, The Children of Timore Lorosae and The Transfixed Spectator are being held at the Gallery Chittrak, House # 21, Road # 4, Dhanmondi.

The people of East Timore and the children of Timore Lorosae are subjected to severe poverty through ugly conflicts. East Timore became an image of total devastation after the militia, along with rogue elements in the Indonesian military, went on a rampage burning and destroying infrastructure in East Timore, when the announcement of the referendum results reflected that the people's will was for independence.

The exhibition will run till January 14 from 10:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. evryday.

TV GUIDE

PICK OF THE DAY



Strange Days

On the eve of third millenium, an ex-cop (Ralph Finnes) sells illegal 'clips'-- other people's memories of danger on CD on the streets of L.A. But someone gives him a clip that could blow the city wide open, and two roue cops will stop at nothing to get it back!



Martial Law on Star World at 2:00 p.m.

1:30 USA Direct 2:00 BBC News 2:30 Tate Mod/Rhock Royal Global Sunrise 3:00 BBC News 3:30 Top Gear 4:00 BBC News 4:30 Asia Business Report/Reporters 5:00 BBC News 5:30 Asia Business Report/Asia Today

STARPLUS

6:00 Kuccha Papad Pucca Papad 6:30 Star Geetmala 7:30 Good Morning India 8:30 The Sword of Tipu Sultan 9:30 Fox Kids

Sunday 10:30 Janata Ki Adalat 11:00 Chupa Rustom 11:30 Chalti Ka Naam Antakshri 12:30 Family Fortunes 1:00 Musafir Hoon Yaroon 1:30 Mirch Masala 2:30 Mail Milap 2:40 Star Sunday Matinee: 6:00 Shrimati Sharma Na Kehti Hai 6:30 Jubilee Plus 7:00 Star Bestsellers- 8:00 Star Film Utsav: Mr and Mrs 55 11:30 Jubilee Plus 12:00 Janata Ki Adalat 12:30 Kalash 1:00 Hasna Mat 1:30 Star Movie Show 4:30 I Love My India 5:00 Saans 5:30 Meri Saheli



The X Files on Star World at 9:30p.m.

DISCOVERY CHANNEL

6:30 Animal Survivors 7:00 In Care of Nature 7:30 Outer Bounds 1&II 8:00

4:30 Discovery Profile Series 5:30 21st Century Medicine CNN 4:00 World News 4:30 World Sport 5:00 CNN

World View 5:30 Inside Asia 6:00 World News 6:30 The Artclub 7:00 CNN World View 7:30 World Beat 8:00 Larry King Weekend 9:00 CNN World View 9:30 Style with Elsa Klensch 10:00 World Report 11:00 World News 11:30 Inside Asia 12:00 World News 12:30 Your Health 1:00 World News 1:30 World Sport 2:30 Diplomatic License 3:00 Larry King Weekend 4:00 World News 4:30 Ebizasia 5:00 World News 5:30 World Sport 6:00 World News 6:30 CNN Hotspots 7:00 World News 7:30 Business Unusual 8:00 World News 8:30 CNNdotCOM 9:00 World News 9:30 World News 10:00 World News 10:30 CNN IndiadotCOM 11:00 Style South Asia 11:30 Ebizasia 12:00 World News 12:30 Style with Elsa Klensch 1:00 CNN IndiadotCOM 1:30 CNNdotCOM 2:00 World News 2:30 The Artclub 3:00 World News 3:30 Diplomatic License



Jag on Star World at The X-files on Star World at 8:30 a.m.

AXN

6:00 I Dear You 7:00 Action Heroes 8:00 Steam Detective 9:00 Highlander the Raven/inferno 10:00 Farscape II/Mind the Baby 11:00 I Dear You 12:00 VIP II/Return of the Owl 1:00 Movie: The Fourth Flood 3:00 Highlander the Raven/The Flame 4:00 Steam Detective 5:00 Action Heroes 6:00 I Dare You 7:00 Farscape



Jag on Star World at The X-files on Star World at 8:30 a.m.

II/ Mind the Baby 8:00 Movie : Anacondas 12:00 Walkers of Justice 3:00 Silk 10:00 Walker's World 11:00 Highlander the Raven/The Flame Fire



The Pretender on Star World at 10:30 today.

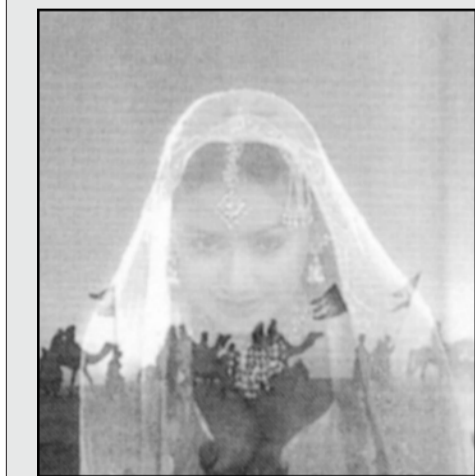
EKUSHEY TV
12:00 Ekushey News
Headlines 12:05 Ajker Potrikay 12:15 Bangla

ture Bangladesh 7:30
Eksuhay News 8:00
Protibedon 8:30
Noorjahan 9:30 Drama
Serial: Eka Ekjon 10:00

7:30 Soccer God the
Movie 9:30 Strange
Days 12:15 Top Secret!
2:00 Tootsie 4:15
Purple Rain

6:30 Baywatcl 7:30
The Simpsons 8:00 3rd
Rock From the Sun
8:30 Star News Focus
Asia 9:30 The X Files
10:30 Star Trek The
Next Generation 11:30
TV Com 12:00 Star
News 12:30 Star News
Sunday Cont'd 1:00
The X Files 2:00 Star
Trek The Next Generation
2:30 Cops 3:30
Star News Focus Asia
4:30 The X Files 5:30
Creflo Dollar Daily

6:00 BBC News 6:30
This Week 7:00 BBC
News 7:30 Holiday
8:00 BBC News 8:30
USA Direct 9:00 BBC
News 9:30 Correspondent
ex World Review
10:00 BBC News 10:30
India Tomorrow 11:00
BBC News 11:30 India
Business Report 12:00
BBC News 12:30
Mastermind India 1:00
BBC News 1:30 Face To
Face India 2:00 BBC
News 2:30 This Week
3:00 BBC News 3:30
Global Sunrise 4:00
BBC News 4:30 Click
on Line 5:00 BBC News
5:30 USA Dir 6:00 BBC
News 6:10 Bubble
Trouble/Shock Royal
Global Sunrise 7:00
BBC News 7:30 Date-
line London 8:00 BBC
News 8:30 Top Gear
9:00 BBC News 9:10
Inside/Moral Combat
Global Sunrise 10:00
BBC News 10:30 India
Business Report 11:00
BBC News 11:30
Holiday 12:00 BBC
News 12:10 TBA/Royal
Collart 1:00 BBC News



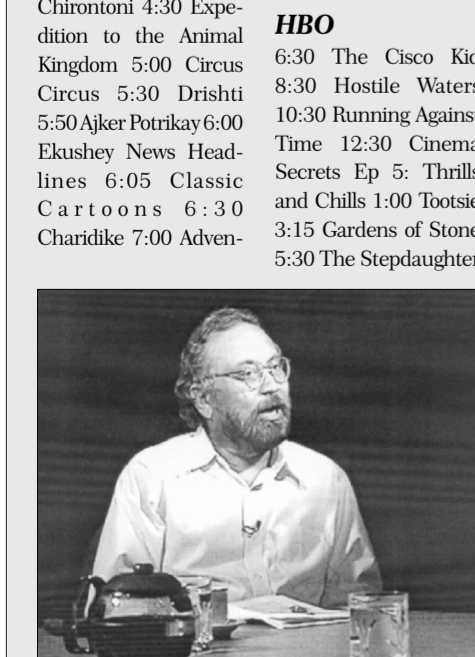
Mega serial Nurjahan (40th episode) on Ekushey TV at 8:30 tonight.

Movie: Harano Sur 2:30 Drishti 3:00 Ekushey News Headlines 3:05 Drama Serial: Na 3:30 Shofol Jara Kemon Tara 4:00 Chironтони 4:30 Expedition to the Animal Kingdom 5:00 Circus 5:30 Drishti 5:50 Ajker Potrikay 6:00 Ekushey News Headlines 6:05 Classic Cartoons 6:30 Charidike 7:00 Adven-

STAR GOLD
8:30 Rahein Na Rahein Hum 9:00 Teesri Kasam 12:00 Geet Bahar 12:30 Sunday Noon Show : Jaane Bhi Do Yaaron 3:30 Geet Bahar 4:00 Devi 7:00 Geet Bahar 7:30 Sunday Blockbusters: Preet Na Janne Reet 10:30 Beete Hue Din 11:00 Dil Ki Rani 12:30 Dil Ki Rani (Cont) 2:00 Geet Bahar 2:30 Devi 5:30 Dil Ki ani

STAR MOVIES
7:00 Thriller: Criminal Hearts 15 9:00 Drama: High Tide 15 11:00 Sunday Best : Shipwrrcked 1991

PG 1:30 Thriller: Dead Silent 15 3:30 Star Kids Club: Muppet Treasure Island 1996 G 5:30 Drama: High Tide 15 7:30 Action: Rapid Fire 9:30 Starbiz 10:00 Sunday Night Premiere: The Rock 1996 15 12:30 Action Force: Stranger on My Land 15 2:30 Thriller: Criminal Hearts 15 4:30 E! ThisL Brandon Lee 5:30 Action: Rapid Fire



Sarasari on Ekushey TV will feature poet Syed Shamsul Haque at 10:25



Protibedon on Ekushey TV at 6:30p.m. and 11:30 p.m.

STAR WORLD

6:00 Morris Cerullo 6:30 Space Island One 7:30 Lassie 8:00 Google Howser 8:30 JAG 9:30 Nash Bridges 10:30 The Pretender 11:30 Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's The Lost World 12:30 Ally McBeal 1:30 The Practice 2:00 Martial Law 3:30 World Championship Wrestling Thunder 5:30 Crown and Country 6:00 Travel Asia

PG 1:30 Thriller: Dead Silent 15 3:30 Star Kids Club: Muppet Treasure Island 1996 G 5:30 Drama: High Tide 15 7:30 Action: Rapid Fire 9:30 Starbiz 10:00 Sunday Night Premiere: The Rock 1996 15 12:30 Action Force: Stranger on My Land 15 2:30 Thriller: Criminal Hearts 15 4:30 E! ThisL Brandon Lee 5:30 Action: Rapid Fire

BBC WORLD