



Vivid, visual tribute

The Indians: Interesting Aspects, Extraordinary Facets

by Sumant Batra

Treepie, New Delhi

Pages 240. Rs 8,500.

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A powerful visual of a young *bhagat* of Lord Shiva on the cover compels you to pick up this coffee-table book, and as you go through the pages, you see photographs that portray the nation in Technicolor. The text by the author tells us "You can feel the spirit of India in the ecstatic passion for the high profile game of cricket, and equally in their enjoyment of simple games like *kabaddi*, *gilli-danda*, *kanche* and *pithu* played across the *galees* and *mohallas* of India."

Sumant Batra, the author, introduces each chapter with a brief write-up, and the book has 21 chapters, including *Rituals & Ceremonies*, *Banjaras*, *Garam Chai*, *Head Gears*, and *Desi Khana*.

Photographs dominate this thick (12"x12") visually rich volume. In such books, pictures need captions that keep an international audience in mind and help the reader to place the visual in a proper context. While some pictures have captions, others, inexplicably, don't.

Straying off the oft-tread path, we have photographs of the people of India, and that too ordinary Indians attending to their day-to-day chores — an interesting concept, one that the photographer, Sonhal Nichani, has captured colourfully. A number of his pictures in this limited-edition book are, indeed, stunning.

The high price of the book is daunting, although it is heartening to know that the profits will go to a charity, the Loomba Trust, whose President, Ms Cherie Blair, has written the foreword. The trust has, to quote Ms Blair, "been working tirelessly for 11 years to sponsor the children of poor widows in every state across India." A noble cause, which must be supported widely.