

## PEOPLE



ASHOK VAHIE

IT was a one-day visit to rub shoulders with the Calcutta elite. **Rahul Gandhi's** approval of Bikash Bhattacharya's portrait of Rajiv Gandhi was awaited with the kind of suspense whipped up by a whodunit. The son nodded approval finally but now the behind-the-scenes story can be told. It seems there was a bit of do over the *angavastra* tossed over the late Prime Minister's shoulder. And the helpful soul who had acted as model for this tricky detail was none other than the PM's Doon School buddy, **Tommy Chopra**, who incidentally, had accompanied Rahul for the portrait ceremony. The son felt that his father's style was so instinctive that no one else could have possibly given the cue for it. The piquant situation was speedily resolved though. The approver was reminded that his mother had insisted on the *angavastra* in the portrait. Bhattacharya was, therefore, saved the chore of painting out the controversial

shoulder drape.

\*\*\*

IT became a claim to ill-fame. Director-general of the National Museum, **Dr R.S. Sharma**, landed himself right in the centre of a storm when he appropriated credit for editing a book on the legendary Kerala painter Raja Ravi Varma. Delhi's art circles were aghast. After all, it was common knowledge that the book, released to coincide with the opening of a comprehensive exhibition of Ravi Varma's work, was in fact the labour of art restorer **Rupika Chawla** and painter **Ramachandran**. The upshot? Pretty grim actually. The museum's DG filed in his papers for voluntary retirement after three decades of government service. And the buzz goes that Sharma was given no option: he was asked to quit by the Human Resources Development ministry since the authorship claim had turned the

bureaucracy's cheeks a flaming shade of red.

\*\*\*

THE Kumar Sanus and S.P. Balsubramaniam of music biz had better watch it. A new force in movie playback singing is threatening to emerge any day now. So, who should the new songster be? Ace actor **Kamal Haasan**, no less. Of course, he points out that he has crooned dozens of songs before but this time around he's cutting a disc of 10 freshly composed Tamil numbers. It will probably be called *Kamal — Live!* How come? Simply because the actor-singer is scheduled to perform at his first 'live' concert in Singapore, come September. "No, no, I won't be restricting myself to any one dance form," he says. "The programme will be a mix of my past numbers and a few of the new songs recorded for the album. I intend to have fun, the concert won't be classical or serious." Needless to harp, the Kamal concert is likely to set a trend of superstars from the South wooing their immigrant fans in other countries. Are you in singing-dancing form, Rajnikant, Chiranjeevi, Mammooty?

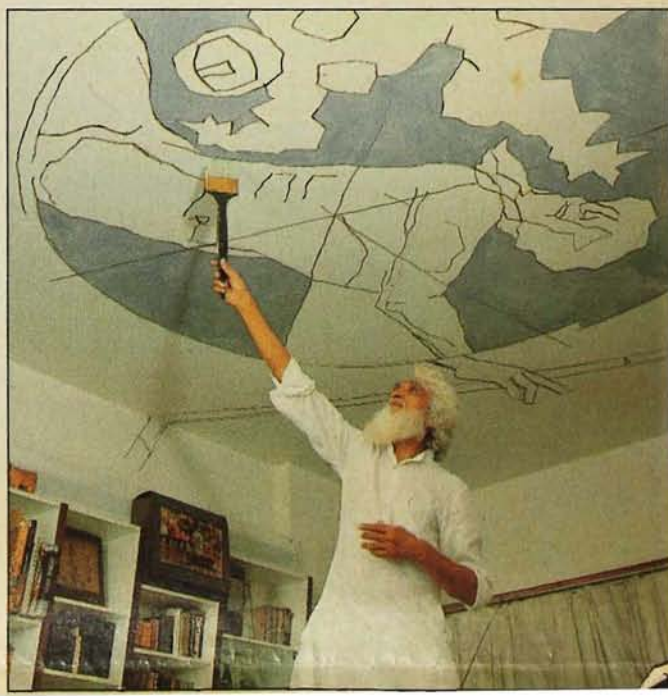
\*\*\*

NOW what could M.F. Husain and Dr Jabbar Patel



GAUTAM RAJAJOHYSKSHA

have in common? Certainly not a passion for oils, canvases and horses. But the duo have come together to collaborate on a film project devoted to the life and times of the barefoot painter. If their close buddies are to be believed, the script will be based on Husain's biography being penned by — you guessed absolutely right — **Khushwant Singh**. Patel was once deservedly famous for his politically-trenchant films and stage musicals. But today with his penchant for diplomacy and connections in the right places, perhaps the doc will make Husain a legend in his lifetime yet.







# REVIEW

25 JUL

## The Bol

In a society which is not exactly known for its broad-mindedness as far as sex is concerned, they do the unthinkable: take off their clothes for a camera and a thousand lewd male eyes. What is it that motivates these otherwise ordinary middle-class women to expose themselves thus? **CHARU LATA JOSHI** takes a peek into the tenebrous world of pin-up models.

*She was completely nude, lying on her stomach in the desert sand, her long hair flowing, head tilted back ... she seemed lost to the world. She wore no jewellery, no flowers in her hair ... nothing spoils the perfection of this photograph, except the moist fingers of the 17-year-old schoolboy who held it with adolescent longing and lust.*



### SOCIETY

IN his 1980s saga on new sexual mores, *Thy Neighbour's Wife*, Gay Talese peeped into a world peopled by centrefold nudes and sexual showmen. Though the land of the Kamasutra produced no Hugh Hefner to build a global empire out of male fantasies, it has churned out a handful of female pin-ups; Indian women, who like their western counterparts, dare to bare.

Career-conscious, but not camera-shy, they realise the economics of their sexuality. And strip down to their barest essentials: whether pouting provocatively from the *Debonair* centrespread or toying with lacy lingerie on the *Fantasy* Asian page. But while our Asian models may readily toe the

rity ratings in girlie magazines abroad, within the country they prefer to keep it all under wraps.

The few that are candid about their stripping soirees genuinely believe it will place them on an instant escalator to stardom in the glitzy world of Hindi films or glamour modelling. Ironically, nude models end up as just that — nude models. Remarks Delhi-based fashion co-ordinator, Tony Mullick, "The *Debonair/Fantasy* models are not models in the strict sense of the word. They are sadly mistaken if they think stripping will help their career. If they deserve a modelling contract, they will get it without posing in the nude."

Still, they are ambitious. "I knew I could achieve a lot in life. I was always called sexy and photogenic," says Rashmi, a dusky 27-year-old, who has modelled topless for *Fantasy*. Disrobing, has, however, given Rashmi the right breaks on screen: she not only comperes on television, but is presently acting in two Marathi films. Married into a conservative Maharashtrian family, the gutsy girl bared to prove a point to her in-laws. "I wanted to show them that I too could look beautiful, and since I have my husband's support, why shouldn't I do what I want?" she asks.

Rashmi, along with a burgeoning section of middle-class married women, defy the assumption that only single girls dare to bare. Take Preyasi and her husband, an executive in a private firm. The husband walked into the *Debonair* office with nude transparencies of his wife for publication. The fact that *Fantasy* was willing to pay Rs 27,000 for the negatives, while *Debonair* would pay a paltry Rs 7,000, didn't deter the couple. Their logic was: "*Debonair* is a classier magazine and will get her more mileage."

But whatever happened to middle-class morality and the fear of social ostracism? Apparently, these concepts are fading. Comments Preyasi's husband, "Even if my friends say anything, I have no problems. Basically we (my wife and I) have an understanding that she lives for me and I live for her."

Such idyllic relationships are, however, few and far between. For the majority, the guilt of posing nude can lead to a lifetime of psychological damage. Twenty-four-year-old Jullian's story could be slapped together by any melodramatic film scriptwriter. Jullian's husband Francis chose to marry her despite the fact that she had done a stint of nude modelling for *Debonair*. No sooner had they walked out of the church than Francis made his intentions clear. "He did not love or respect me; he married me with the sole motive of making me pose nude and earn money," says a visibly shattered Jullian.

Down to the brasstracks, the entire model-photographer-model co-ordinator nexus operates in a



photographers and co-ordinators are silent operators dealing with girls who approach them on their own or through contacts. Usually the newcomers are shot by amateur photographers of these agencies as samples. These picture transparencies are then routed through a contact in the magazine who selects or rejects a 'deal'. If the model is accepted, a professional lensman is assigned for the re-shoot, with the required theme of the magazine.

Within the magazines, however, there is no veil of secrecy. Says Kamal Jain, art director, *Debonair*, "The co-ordinator, photographer and the model are required to sign a legal document stating that the photos have not been used for any other purpose."