

# ART TO ZOO

News for Schools from the Smithsonian Institution, Office of Elementary and Secondary Education, Washington, D.C. 20560

Spring/Summer 1986

## INDIA—

# Where Remarkable Differences Are Ordinary

*Question:* What important south Asian nation may be celebrating a festival right in your own community this year?

*Answer:* Think of an astonishingly diverse country having five major religions and fifteen official languages. Think of a climate both temperate and subtropical, with snow-topped mountains, steaming rainforests, searing deserts, and fertile plains. Think of an ancient civilization that began about twenty-five hundred years before Christ and subsequently knew many influences, including almost a century of British rule. Think of the world's largest democracy. Think of India.

India is a country you and your students may have been hearing a lot about lately. In 1985–86 the Festival of India, a celebration of Indian culture in the United States, is presenting art, music, dance, drama, film, and crafts in over ninety cities across the country.

This issue of ART TO ZOO invites your class to join in that celebration. Come with us to India and find out what its village life is like for children today. In the course of this adventure, your students will get the chance to sharpen their powers of observation and improve their research skills while discovering the answers to such questions as:

- What kinds of food are eaten regularly in India and how are they prepared?
- What chores do children do?
- What games do they play?
- What is the importance of school in their lives and what do they study there?
- What are the various occupations that people do to support their families and maintain the village economy?
- What is the size and layout of a typical village house?

But before we focus on these questions in particular, let's take a bird's-eye look at India so as to get a sense of its complexity and cultural richness.

## India—A Bird's-Eye Look

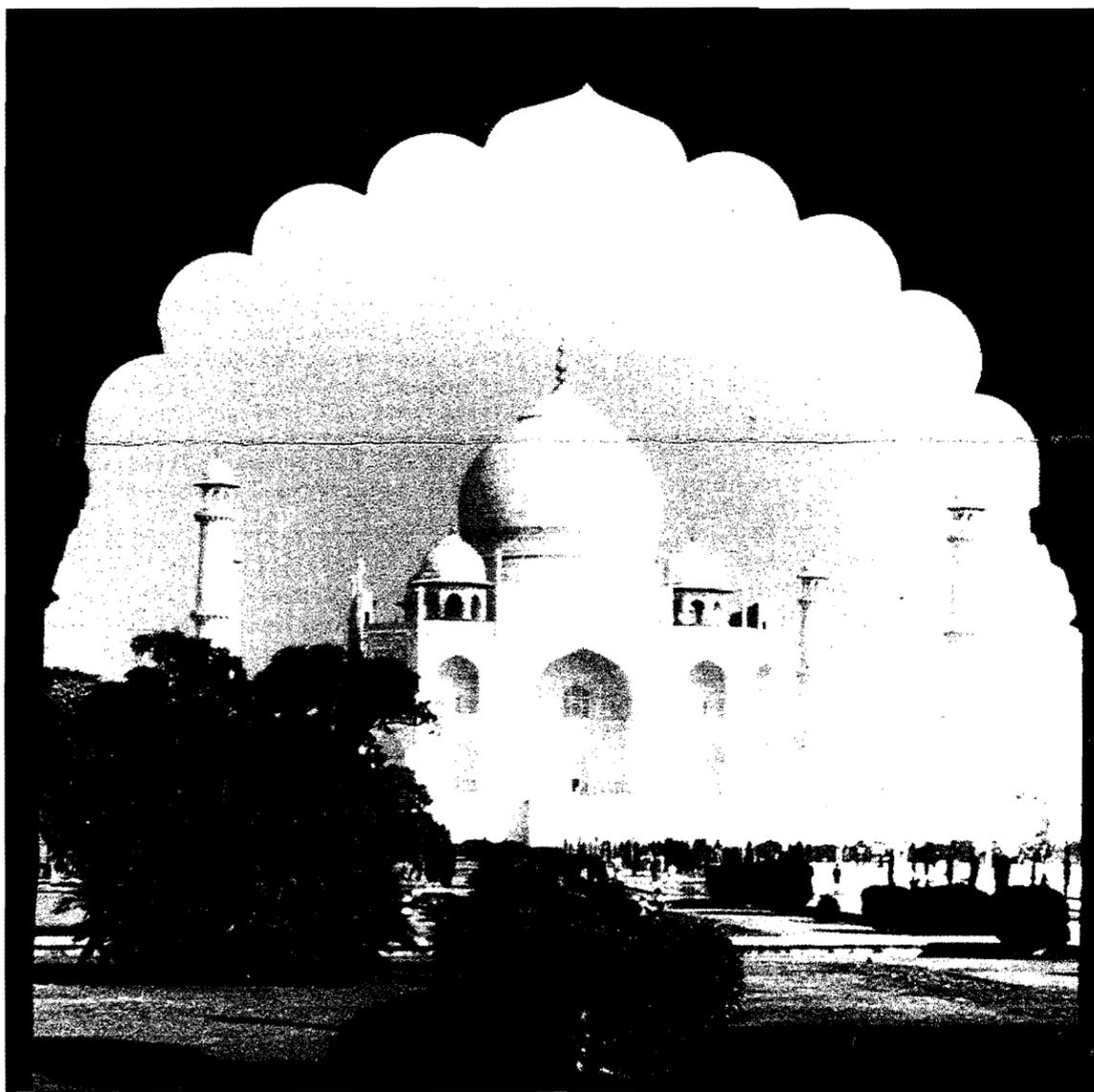
In India, remarkable differences are ordinary. Here diversity, both geographic and ethnic, is as impressive as it is commonplace.

Geographically, India is a land of dramatic contrasts. It is home to the high Himalayan mountains and to the flat Deccan plateau. The wettest spot on earth is in India, in the eastern town of Cherrapunji, and one of the world's driest, most barren deserts occupies the western province of Rajasthan. But some of the most fertile land in the world lies adjacent to that desert, in the Indo-Gangetic plain.

India's ethnic diversity is also remarkable. Today's Indians are descendants of hundreds of different peoples from the Middle East and Central Asia who arrived during three thousand years of countless regional wars and peaceful immigrations. Unlike the United States where there is one common language, India currently has fifteen official languages, three hundred minor languages, and three thousand dialects.

India also has many religious sects. Although 83 percent of the people are Hindus, the country is also home to more than eighty million Muslims, giving it one of the world's largest Muslim populations. Other Indian religions include, but are not limited to, Sikhism, Buddhism, Christianity, and Jainism.

No matter what its form, religion is an extremely important element of Indian life. Indeed, the culture

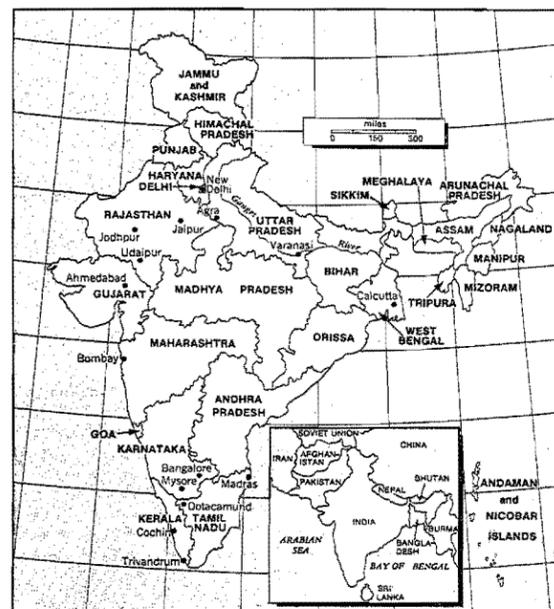


For most Americans the symbol of all of India, the Taj Mahal is the product of only one of many Indian cultures. (Photo: Madeleine Jacobs)

is rooted in religious teachings: oral tales, songs, and epic poems describe the deeds of holy men and women, gods and goddesses. Most national holidays and festivals celebrate important anniversaries or events in the lives of these figures. And shrines honoring religious figures can be seen throughout India. These range from rustic structures, crafted by hand in the villages, to majestic city temples.

Another important element of Indian life, a caste system, consisting of the Hindu groups within Indian society, has historically been based on the kinds of work people do. Traditionally four castes—priests and teachers, statesmen and soldiers, merchants, and farmers and laborers—were identified, as well as a class of untouchables. Each of these four groups—of which the priests and teachers (called Brahmins) were the highest—had a clearly defined set of obligations and rights. Over the centuries, the four major castes were divided into subcastes, each of which also had its own exact rules, influencing all aspects of Indian life. Today, despite economic change and laws prohibiting discrimination against the lower classes, the caste system remains important in Indian society.

*continued on page 4*



Smithsonian News Service map by Allen W. Feldman



Puppets—used throughout India for teaching and entertainment—played an important role in the Smithsonian's exhibition *Aditi: A Celebration of Life*. (Photo: Tejbir Singh)

## Panchatantra Tales

Stories from the *Panchatantra*—written in Sanskrit years ago—have been passed down through generations of Indian families. These animal fables show cleverness, kindness, and adaptability rewarded and unfairness and foolishness punished.

Most children in India grow up hearing these stories repeated to them by parents and grandparents. The tales may also be acted out in puppet shows that travel from one village to another for festivals, fairs, and celebrations. In India, puppetry is an important form of entertainment and education, and the puppets are often elaborate and very beautiful.

As part of your study of India, have your students stage the following *Panchatantra* tale, first making puppets for the characters. The most common types of puppets used in India are shadow puppets and marionettes; however, your students could also make glove or rod puppets for this activity. First, though, help your class read the script closely, analyzing the characters' traits and determining ways to indicate these traits in the puppets' features (e.g., a sneering lion's face to indicate his nastiness and greed).

Later as a collaborative activity, the students could write their own animal fables, deciding what virtues they would praise and what vices they would punish.

### Words to Know Before Reading This Play

*Dharma*: A person's duty in life  
*Insolence*: Showing a lack of respect  
*Impudent*: Rude or impolite  
*Tribute*: Forced payment  
*Upstart*: Pushy person  
*Voracious*: Hungry and greedy

## The Tale of the Lion and the Rabbit

### A Panchatantra Tale

Interpreted from Indian Tradition by  
 Kate Rinzler

**NARRATOR**: This is the story of how a little rabbit saved the animals from a voracious lion.

Once upon a time a voracious lion was killing all the animals. He didn't care. He ate everything: the weak, the strong, the old, the young, male and female. He even killed for fun. The animals thought, "Soon there will be none of us left," so they held a council.

## Lesson Plan

To begin, discuss with your students the information presented earlier in this issue of *ART TO ZOO*, emphasizing that India is large (almost half the size of the United States), is geographically diverse, and has 750 million inhabitants with varied backgrounds.

Then using an opaque projector, show your students the three photographs on p. 3 of this issue of *ART TO ZOO*. Spend time with each photo, drawing out the students' questions and observations about what the subjects are doing, how they are dressed, and how their lives may be different from and similar to the students' own. In the course of this discussion, present the background information provided for each photograph.

After the discussion, tell the students that they are going to become journalists for the India bureau of their class newspaper. They are touring India with the photographer who is taking these pictures and have been assigned to interview a subject in one of the photographs. Before the interview, each student must develop a list of at least ten questions to ask one of these children about Indian village life. These questions should be phrased so as to elicit information about food, clothing, shelter, education, occupations, and leisure activities, as suggested in the list of questions we presented earlier, on p. 1 of this issue of *ART TO ZOO*. Have students choose partners. Each pair of students will take turns playing the roles of journalist and Indian child—each student will become the other's photographed subject. The two will exchange their lists of questions and then individually research the necessary material in preparation for the interviews. In conducting this research, the students should use the material discussed in class, their observations of the photographs, as well as information found in the books listed in the bibliography on p. 4 of this issue of *ART TO ZOO*.

When they have completed their research, the teams should begin interviewing. Journalists should practice taking accurate, complete notes on these conversations.

Based on his or her interview, each journalist then should write a foreign news service feature article for the paper. The article must be based on facts about Indian village life but may create the situation that resulted in the photograph. For example, the student may speculate about why the grandson is taught by his grandfather, the storekeeper, and how the boy might feel about learning about the family business.

Articles may then be typed and combined into a newspaper format or posted on the bulletin board.



Teacher's Background for Photo 1

In India, older boys, such as this one plowing, are expected to help with everyday farm chores. Typically, most Indians live an agricultural existence and every member of the family helps out in some capacity. A boy may go to school in the morning or during the seasons when agricultural activity is slow. Then, as he is needed more and more to work at home, he will leave schooling behind. Although the government promotes education, many children, both male and female, do not get the chance to attend school at all.

**COW**: Meeting come to order. We must decide what to do about the lion. He is eating us all.

**MONKEY**: Soon there won't be any animals left and even the lion will die. He is a fool!

**DEER**: I have a plan. Since he must die, too, if he eats us all, let's offer to send one animal for him to eat each day. Then he will never be hungry, and the rest of us can live in peace.

**RABBIT**: That's half an idea—who will go?

We can't ask anyone to volunteer to be eaten.

**DEER**: We must be fair. Each day we will send an animal from a different group. And each day the animals in the chosen group will draw lots to see who will go. Of course, we won't send any of our children.

**RABBIT**: That would work, but how on earth shall we get the lion to agree?

**JACKAL**: We'll send somebody. We'll elect a leader.

**DEER**: If we send a leader the lion will just eat him. No, we must all go to talk to him. Then there will be too many for him to eat, and we can surround him.

**MONKEY**: I have an idea. We'll ask him to be our chief. We'll offer him tribute.

**JACKAL**: He won't accept. We'll have to ask him to be king.

**DEER**: He can be the emperor, for all I care! That will make him very proud and he would be embarrassed to refuse us.

**MONKEY**: It's settled then. We will say it is his *dharma* to be emperor. An emperor must have subjects to rule. So he must only eat what he needs and not kill us all.

**JACKAL**: O.K. Let's go before we get scared.

**NARRATOR**: So the animals went to the lion to beg for their lives.

**LION**: ROAR. Who dares this insolence?

Come no closer or I'll eat you all!

**MONKEY**: Forgive us, Royal Highness. We meant no disrespect.

**JACKAL**: We have come to ask you to be our emperor.

**LION**: Emperor? Of *all* the animals?

**DEER**: Yes, O Mighty One. It is your *dharma* to be emperor. Each day we will send you one of your subjects to eat as tribute.

**LION**: Eat?

**MONKEY**: Yes, Your Highness. You can live a life of ease.

**LION**: A life of ease?

**COW**: You will never have to hunt again.

**LION**: Never have to hunt again? Hm-m-m-m.

**ALL ANIMALS**: All hail the Emperor Lion, King of Kings who has no equal!

**LION**: Well, that's more like it.

**MONKEY**: Thank you, O Gracious Highness, most Elegant Lord. We must go now to decide who to send for your first meal.

**LION**: First meal?

**MONKEY**: First meal as emperor, Highness.

**LION**: Well, O.K. But make it fast.

**NARRATOR**: Each day from that time on, the animals met to draw lots. Each day they sent someone for the lion to eat, but they never sent their children. One day it came to be the little rabbit's turn. His name was drawn from the lottery of rabbits. But he was not quite ready to die and he dawdled along the way to the lion's den. He was sad and angry. As he hopped along he came to an old abandoned well. He hopped up and looked into the well. At the bottom, he saw his own reflection.

**RABBIT**: There's another rabbit down there. I think I'll make faces at him. Look at that! That insulting fellow is making faces at me. Who are you, you insolent midget?

**THE ECHO**: Who are you, you insolent midget?

**RABBIT**: Did you hear that? Mock me, will you?

**THE ECHO**: Mock me, will you?

**RABBIT**: I'll show you!

**THE ECHO**: I'll show you!

**RABBIT**: Well, come on then! Why are you hanging back?



(Al Mellet courtesy UNICEF)

Wearing a *dhoti* (long cloth wound around the lower torso) and a turban, this boy is farming in the traditional manner, using oxen for the heaviest work. Although the methods of farming are old, India has a very high crop yield per acre, helped along by modern methods of seed production, fertilization, irrigation, and crop rotation. Despite having an enormous population, India is able to feed all her people from crops grown within her boundaries, and does not need to import grain from other countries.



(Bernard Pierre Wolff)

#### Teacher's Background for Photo 2

This picture shows a grandfather, a storekeeper in Aurangabad, Maharashtra, teaching his grandson reading and mathematics. The store, a small one in a small city, probably sells spices and teas. While a store of this type would be unusual in a small village, older village children would be likely to see one when they visited a town.

The grandfather is carrying on an ancient and important tradition—the instruction of the young in the family skills and occupation. A child's first and often

only teachers are members of his or her family. In this case, the grandfather is bestowing his years of experience on the family's male child.

All over India, learning like this occurs. Even if a child also goes to school, the skills of parental occupations and the family's religious customs are taught at home. For example, mothers teach their daughters how to spin and cook and paint intricate designs on the floor. Also, daughters traditionally watch the younger children. Fathers who are balladeers may teach their sons how to play various musical instruments and how to sing. It is a loving way of passing down years of experience.



(Madeleine Jacobs)

#### Teacher's Background for Photo 3

These children, living in Rama, a small village near Udaipur, are happily greeting a tourist. They are dressed in a variety of styles typical of India. The girl on the left is wearing a patterned, loose-fitting skirt and top of a style that is usually worn by young women. The tallest girl is wearing a traditional sari. Several of the girls are wearing bracelets. Girls and women tend to wear a lot of jewelry, mostly bracelets, which is for many Indians not only decorative, but also a kind of bank account. Families invest in jewelry and sell a piece or two if they need cash for an emergency. Men as well as women wear necklaces, rings, anklets, and earrings. The "bundle" in the far-right girl's arms is a younger sibling, probably a bit shy. Perched high on the hip is the usual way for a child to be carried by an older sister.

THE ECHO: Well, come on then! Why are you hanging back?

RABBIT: Coward!

THE ECHO: Coward!

RAVEN: You foolish rabbit! Can't you see that's just a well?

RABBIT: A well?

RAVEN: Yes. Where women and men get water. You are yelling at your own reflection.

RABBIT: Oh. I thought this was a castle. It's built of stone. You mean that's me down there?

RAVEN: Wait a minute. Aren't you the tribute? You're late, you coward. The emperor will be angry and come again to kill us all.

RABBIT: Oh, dear. You're right. I must go.

NARRATOR: The rabbit hopped on down the road reluctantly, but as he hopped, he thought, and as he thought, he devised a plan to deceive the terrible lion. Meanwhile, the emperor was getting hungry.

LION: R-O-A-R! Where's my dinner? Those animals have cheated me, and it is not my *dharma* to hunt for my own food. That is beneath my position. I am the emperor. ROAR! Bring me my dinner before I forget myself.

RABBIT: Forgive me, O King of Kings, O Mighty One. I was detained on the road by another lion who says he is much greater than you. He wanted to eat me, but I escaped, for I am a faithful subject and I did not want you to miss your dinner.

LION: Another lion?

RABBIT: Yes, O Mighty Lord, and he says he is much greater than you. He said you have grown fat and lazy and that you do not know how to fight. I showed him, though. I gave him the slip.

LION: Where is this impudent upstart?

RABBIT: He lives not far from here—in a castle with stone walls. He was so afraid that he wouldn't come out of his castle when he threatened me. You are mightier than he, O my Lord.

LION: Take me to him at once! I will not have rebellion in my kingdom. He is a traitor. I could send out an army against him, but I will kill him myself. My subjects will see that I am not afraid.

RABBIT: Oh, yes, great King of the Universe. Your subjects will cheer you and throw a big banquet. We will send you as many animals as you can eat at one time as a tribute to your glorious triumph. An emperor must press forward against traitorous rebels and vile instigators. Rebellion breeds rebellion and spoils the faithful subjects of a kingdom. They might decide to pay tribute to him instead of you, Great King.

LION: ROAR! This cannot be! Take me to this scoundrel at once!

NARRATOR: The faithful rabbit did as requested and soon they came to the well in the forest. The emperor looked in.

RABBIT: There he is!

LION: I see him! ROAR! You, down there! Come out, you cowardly rebel, and meet your death!

THE ECHO: ROAR! You, down there! Come out, you cowardly rebel, and meet your death!

LION: Did you hear that, my faithful servant? He called me a rebel.

RABBIT: Oh dear, oh dear. Perhaps he has already declared himself the king of this section. You must challenge him. Do not let him insult you thus, my Noble Lord.

LION: ROAR! Come out and fight like a LION! I'll beat you tooth to tooth and claw to claw, you villain.

THE ECHO: Come out and fight like a LION! I'll beat you tooth to tooth and claw to claw, you villain.

LION: Did you hear that? More insults. This is an outrage.

RABBIT: It is, my Noble Lord. How will you deal with him? He is too cowardly to come out. I'll bet he has no troops to back him up.

LION: Of course! No troops. Well, I'll show him. I'm coming to get you now villain.

THE ECHO: I'm coming to get you now villain.

RABBIT: Hear him insult you? Go, my Lord, go. I will get reinforcements for you. All your faithful subjects will come to fight him. You just grab and hold that traitor and we will tear him limb from limb.

LION: That's my faithful rabbit. Watch me get him.

ROAR! R-O-A-R-R-R-r-r-r. . .

RABBIT: I forgot to ask him if he knew how to swim.

RAVEN: I saw that. Bravo, rabbit, bravo! Forgive me for ever saying that you were a coward. You were magnificent. Let's go tell the animals. Animals! Animals! Great news! Come to the Council House. Great news! Here is our hero. I give to you the rabbit. He convinced that stupid lion that his enemy was in a well and when he leaped, he fell into the well and drowned.

ANIMALS: Hooray for the rabbit! Hooray, Hooray! We are free. Praise him, praise him.

NARRATOR: And so it was that the little rabbit won out with his wits over the terrible lion. Never again did a lion threaten to eat all the animals—and never again did the animals accept a lion as their emperor.

## Free Spanish Translation Available

"The Tale of the Lion and the Rabbit" is available in a Spanish translation. To receive a free copy that may be reproduced for students, write to Spanish Translation

Office of Elementary and Secondary Education  
Arts and Industries Building, Room 1163  
Smithsonian Institution  
Washington, D.C. 20560

Just as there are marked differences among the different religions and castes of India, so are there distinctions between city and village life.

City dwellers go about their business as do people in modern cities anywhere in the world. They live in apartments or houses, work from ten to four at regular jobs, and return home in the evenings to watch television or take in a movie. Children go to school all day, and after school they do their homework, help around the house, and play games.

But in the villages, where 80 percent of the people live, life goes on much as it has for centuries. The houses are small, usually a single room, and often lack running water and electricity. Villagers work at farming or in service occupations. Agriculture is gradually becoming modernized. Farmers till the soil using tools their grandfathers would have used, while incorporating modern methods of soil fertilization and irrigation. Incomes are low: the average is \$260 per person per year.



Dressed in their colorful everyday saris, women in a field near Udaipur in the desert state of Rajasthan harvest sugar cane. India is now the world's largest producer of sugar cane.

Because money is scarce, most village children take on grown-up tasks while their parents work. It is not uncommon to find a six-year-old girl caring for a younger sibling, or an eight-year-old boy tending the animals.

Eight out of ten village children can't go to school because they need to help with chores. Instead of learning to read and write, most of them learn occupational skills from their parents, such as farming, pottery-making, or sewing.

But despite this lack of formal schooling, the majority of Indians know a lot about their country's culture, history, and folklore, primarily because these traditions form the themes of shows given by puppeteers, poets, and balladeers who perform in the villages or at festivals. Through such performances, India's ancient traditions are kept a living part of modern life.

Now come with us to India and find out more about what it is like to be a child growing up in an Indian village today. See *Lesson Plan*, p. 2.

## The Living Arts of India

### Multimedia Instructional Kit Available

In conjunction with the national Festival of India, a multimedia instructional kit has been produced by the Smithsonian's National Museum of Natural History and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), and will be available to teachers in mid-1986 through museums hosting Festival of India celebrations, as well as through regional university-based South Asian Centers (see the list in this issue of ART TO ZOO).

Some of the materials in this unit include:

- a teacher's manual with activities and lesson plans
- a videotape on the Smithsonian's *Aditi—A Celebration of Life* exhibition
- two audio tapes of music and folktales of India
- a collection of Indian craft objects
- a library of books, maps, and pamphlets about India
- plays and instructions for Indian games, including complete instructions for making shadow puppets

## Note to Teachers

The *Pull Out Page* of ART TO ZOO is intended to be reproduced for your students. You are encouraged to photocopy it or to make a master for use with other duplication methods. Cut the English and Spanish versions apart along the dotted line and fold each to make an 8½ × 11 inch booklet.

Other portions of ART TO ZOO may be reproduced as needed for classroom use.

## Resource Materials to Help You Teach About India

For further information about India, a number of excellent resource materials are available, including curriculum kits, slide and filmstrip programs, audio tapes, films, lesson plans, and maps.

*India: A Teacher's Guide* is a special issue of *Focus on Asian Studies*, a journal of The Asia Society, 725 Park Avenue, New York, NY 10021. Telephone (212) 288-6400. The cost is five dollars.

The Information Center on Children's Cultures of the U.S. Committee for UNICEF provides resources for teachers on many countries, including India. Write to them at 331 East 38th Street, New York, NY 10016 or telephone them at (212) 686-5522.

An experiential curriculum resources book, *Shilpa: Art Creations*, is available through Urban Educational Resources Project, 420 W. Wrightwood Street, Chicago, IL 60614.

The six South Asia Centers listed below provide a variety of materials (mostly free) about India and other South Asian countries. And if you want to have someone speak to your class about India, the center nearest you may be able to help arrange it. When writing or calling, contact the Outreach Coordinator.

South and Southeast Asian Studies Center  
260 Stephens Hall  
University of California  
Berkeley, CA 94720  
(415) 642-4564

Outreach Educational Project  
South Asia Language and Arts Center  
University of Chicago  
Foster Hall  
1130 East 59th Street  
Chicago, IL 60637  
(312) 962-8635

South Asian Study Center  
Cornell University  
170 Uris Hall  
Tower Road  
Ithaca, NY 14853  
(607) 256-6370

South Asian Regional Studies  
University of Pennsylvania  
820 Williams Hall  
Philadelphia, PA 19104  
(215) 898-7475

Center for Asian Studies  
University of Virginia  
Randall Hall  
Charlottesville, VA 22903  
(804) 924-8815

South Asia Area Outreach Office  
University of Wisconsin  
1249 Van Hise Hall  
Madison, WI 53706  
(608) 263-5839

For a free calendar of festival events taking place throughout the United States, write the Festival of India, 280 Madison Avenue, Room 1202, New York, NY 10016, or telephone them at (212) 725-2666.

### ART TO ZOO

is a publication of the  
Office of Elementary and Secondary Education  
Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C. 20560

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Smithsonian Institution Press

Associate Editor: Michelle K. Smith

ART TO ZOO brings news from the Smithsonian Institution to teachers of grades three through eight. The purpose is to help you use museums, parks, libraries, zoos, and many other resources within your community to open up learning opportunities for your students.

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## Discovery Room Slide Set Available

*Discovery Room: An Introduction* is a slide set available for teachers planning a visit to the National Museum of Natural History's Discovery Room, or for museum educators who want to develop similar interactive exhibitions in their own museums. At a cost of \$7.95, the set may be ordered from the National Museum of American History, Office of Printing and Photographic Services, Room CB-054, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C. 20560.

## Stamp Collecting Essay Contest Winners

Winners in the "What Stamp Collecting Means to Me" nationwide essay contest held last spring have been announced. The contest was sponsored by the National Philatelic Collection of the Smithsonian Institution's National Museum of American History.

Prizes have been awarded to these winners in the eight- to eleven-year-old division: Beth Pillsbury, 9, West Point, New York, first place; Jesse M. Redman, 8, Evansville, Indiana, second place; Frank L. Hicks, III, 8, North Salt Lake, Utah, third place; and Kelley Hagan, 11, Louisville, Kentucky, fourth place.

Prizes have also been given to the following winners in the twelve- to fifteen-year-old division: Robert Yoerg, 15, Buffalo, New York, first place; Robert Boggs, 13, Belle, West Virginia, second place; and Chad M. Sellmer, 14, Fairland, Indiana, third place.

Our reason for producing a publication dedicated to promoting the use of community resources among students and teachers nationally stems from a fundamental belief, shared by all of us here at the Smithsonian, in the power of objects. Working as we do with a vast collection of national treasures that literally contain the spectrum from "art" to "zoo," we believe that objects (be they works of art, natural history specimens, historical artifacts, or live animals) have a tremendous power to educate. We maintain that it is equally important for students to learn to use objects as research tools as it is for them to learn to use words and numbers—and you can find objects close at hand, by drawing on the resources of your own community.

Our idea, then, in producing ART TO ZOO is to share with you—and you with us—methods of working with students and objects that Smithsonian staff members have found successful.

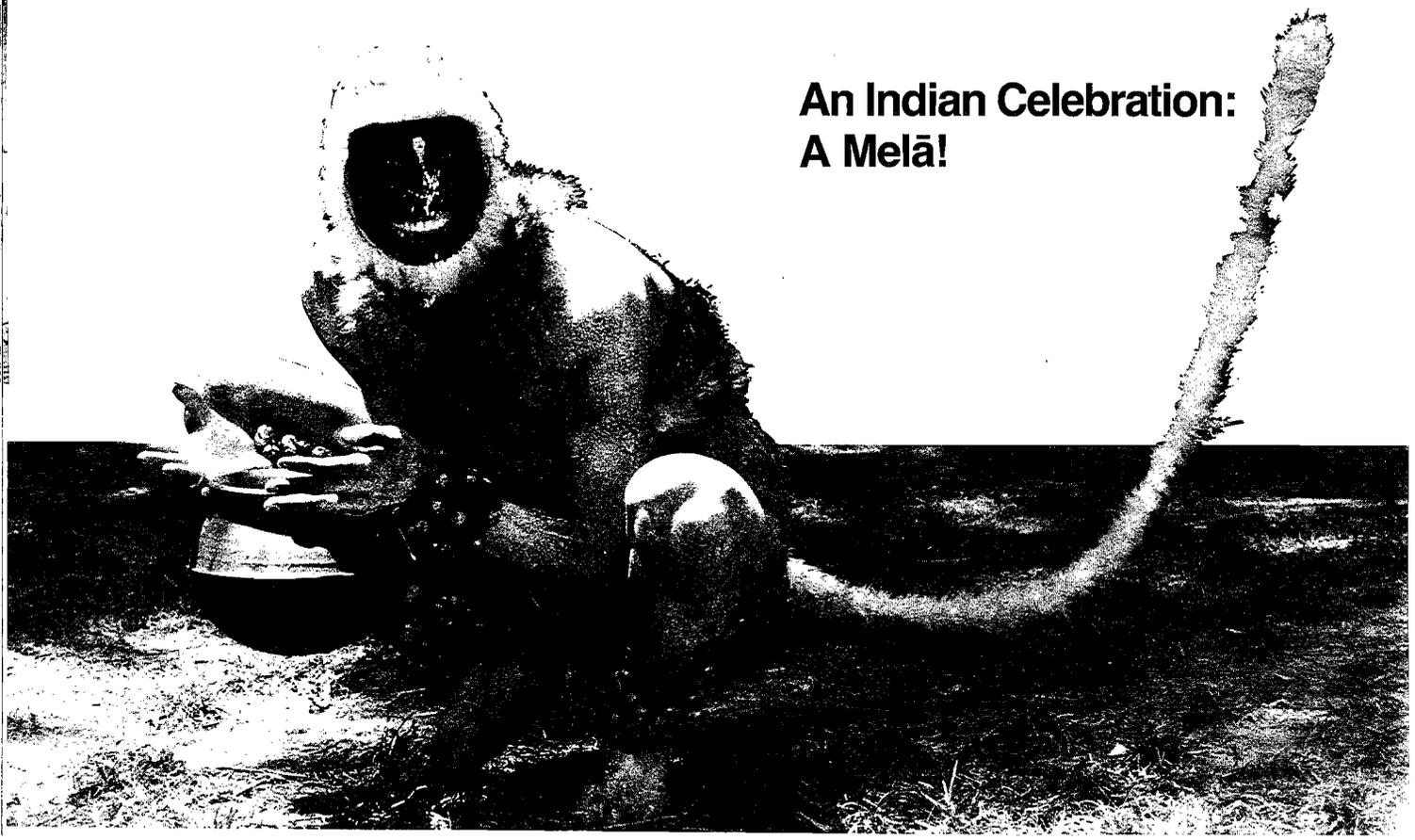
Special thanks to the following individuals for giving their time and expertise in preparing this issue of ART TO ZOO: Richard Kurin, Deputy Director, Office of Folklife Programs; Laura Adams McKie, Education Specialist, National Museum of Natural History; Barbara Robinson, Program Coordinator, Office of Elementary and Secondary Education. For sharing both materials and photographs, we especially thank the Information Center on Children's Cultures of the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF). And, for testing some of the materials, thanks also to Paula Lutz and Bert Lundgren and their students at Laurel Ridge Elementary School in Fairfax, Virginia.

# PULL-OUT PAGE



ART TO ZOO Spring/Summer 1986  
News for Schools from the Smithsonian Institution

## An Indian Celebration: A Melā!



A mischievous monkey impersonator grins about his latest trick; he performed at a melā held as part of the 1985 Smithsonian Festival of American Folklife. (Photo: Eric Long)

Melā! If you lived in India, a special treat would be to travel with your parents to the melā.

The melā, or Indian fair, offers a wide array of sounds, smells, and sights. There are camel races to watch, tempting foods to eat, and entertainment.



Vendors display their goods at the Smithsonian melā. (Photo: Daphne Shuttleworth)

It's hard to be bored at a melā. If, for example, you get tired of watching the jugglers and dancing puppets, there are many other amusements. One is the animal impersonator. Imagine a person dressed up as a long-tailed monkey, scrambling around the carts and eating lots of bananas.

At the temple on the melā grounds, you can watch a woman paint fancy designs on the floor with a mixture of rice flour and water. She uses no brush—but lets the liquid trickle down her fingers. This is a very old Indian art form called *rangoli*.

For the length of the melā, children have fewer chores and no school. People from different castes and villages come and mingle. Truly a fair to celebrate!

## A Treat for the Senses

There are hundreds of sights and sounds, smells and tastes to experience at an Indian melā. For example, something that you will probably hear is the sound of Hindi, the national language of India. Hindi comes from Sanskrit, an ancient language, and has an alphabet that is very different from ours.

Here are some Hindi words that you might hear at a melā. Try saying them (the pronunciations are in parentheses). Then practice writing them in the Hindi alphabet.

नमस्ते (na-ma-stay) means *hello* and *goodbye*.  
When Indians greet someone, they place their palms together in front of their chests.

अच्छा (ach-cha) means *good*, *okay*.

धन्यवाद (dehan-y-vaad) means *thank you*.

चाय (chy to rhyme with *fly*) means *tea*.

मीठा (mit-a-yi) means *sweets* or *candy*.



At the Smithsonian melā, an Indian-American group performs *dandia ras*, a Gujarati song and dance.  
(Photo: Jeff Tinsley)

At a melā you might also hear English. Because the British were such a strong influence in India, many Indians learned English—and many still study it today. In exchange, English speakers have borrowed many words from Indian languages. Did you know that these words originally came from India?

pajamas    khaki    bungalow    jodphurs  
cashmere    seersucker    calico    madras

Another sound you will hear will be music, but it will probably sound different from any music you have heard in the United States. There

might be people playing *sitars*, *harmoniums*, and *tablas*.

If you would like to hear some Indian music, you can visit your school or public library. In the record collection there you might find music by a popular Indian musician who plays the *sitar*, Ravi Shankar.

Thoughts of an Indian melā also conjure up spicy aromas of cinnamon, cloves, cumin, and cardamom. If you went to a melā, you might buy a snack of a cup of spicy tea and a cookie. If you want to make your own Indian snack, here are two recipes:

### Spice Tea

#### Ingredients:

2 cups of water  
1 inch of a stick of cinnamon  
8 whole cloves  
1 tea bag  
milk and sugar to taste

Pour the water into a saucepan. Put the cinnamon and cloves into the water. Bring the water to a boil. Remove the pan from the heat.

Place the tea bag into the water. Let it stay in the water for 2 or 3 minutes. Remove the tea bag and pour the tea into two cups. Add sugar and milk, if you'd like. Take in a deep breath and enjoy the spicy smell; then enjoy the spicy taste.

### Cookies

#### Ingredients:

1 cup of flour  
½ cup of sugar  
½ cup of semolina (Cream of Wheat is one well-known brand)  
½ cup of softened butter

Preheat the oven to 300 degrees.

In a large bowl mix together all the ingredients until you have a smooth dough. Divide the dough mixture into sixteen equal pieces, and roll each one into a ball. Place them onto an ungreased cookie sheet and flatten them with your hand.

Bake them for 25 minutes, or until they are golden brown.

Remove the tray from the oven, and let it stand for 10 minutes or until it is cool enough to handle. Then place each cookie on a cooling rack for about half an hour until the cookie is crisp.

If you want to make spicy cookies, add 1 teaspoon of either cinnamon or ginger to the flour. You can also press half an almond into the center of each cookie before placing them into the oven.



This lady is tasting a *jalebi*, a coil of fried batter dipped in syrup. (Photo: Smithsonian News Service courtesy Air India)

Arte a Zoologico Primavera/Verano 1986  
Noticias para las escuelas, de parte del  
Instituto Smithsonian.

## ¡Mela!: Una Celebracion Hindú

Traducido por Ricardo Inestroza



Una persona disfrazada de mono travieso se ríe de su última payasada. Esta persona actuó en una mela que tuvo lugar durante el Festival del Folclor Americano del Smithsonian. (Fotografía de Eric Long)

¡Mela! Si vivieras en la India algo especial que hacer sería ir con tus padres a una mela.

La mela o feria hindú ofrece una gran variedad de sonidos, olores, y escenas. Se pueden ver carreras de camellos, hay mucha comida deliciosa, y diversiones.

Es difícil aburrirse en una mela. Si por ejemplo te cansas de ver a los malabaristas y los títeres que bailan,



Vendedores mostrando sus productos en la mela del Smithsonian. (Fotografía de Daphne Shuttleworth)

hay muchas otras cosas para entretenerse. Una es el imitador de animales. Imagínate a una persona disfrazada como mono de cola larga, haciendo payasadas entre carretas y comiendo muchos bananos.

En el templo, en el sitio de la mela, uno puede ver a una mujer pintando complicados diseños en el piso con una mezcla de harina de arroz y agua. Ella no usa brocha, sino deja que el líquido se escurra entre sus dedos. Este es un viejo arte hindú llamado *rangoli*.

Mientras dura la mela los niños no tienen mucho que hacer y no van a la escuela. Gentes de diferentes castas y aldeas vienen y se mezclan. ¡Una verdadera feria que celebrar!

### Algo Especial para los Sentidos

Hay cientos de sonidos y escenas, olores y sabores que experimentar en una mela hindú. Por ejemplo, algo que probablemente oirás es el sonido del indostaní, el idioma nacional de la India. El indostaní viene del sánscrito, una antigua lengua que tiene un alfabeto muy diferente al nuestro.

Aquí hay algunas palabras que talvez oigas en una mela. Trata de decirlas (la pronunciación está entre paréntesis). Después practica escribiéndolas en el alfabeto indostaní.

नमस्ते (na-ma-stai) quiere decir *hola* y *adiós*.  
Cuando los hindúes saludan a alguien, juntan las palmas de sus manos en frente de sus pechos.

अच्छा (ac-cha) significa *bueno*, *está bien*.

धन्यवाद (dejan-y-vaad) quiere decir *gracias*.

चाय (chai) es *té*.

मीठाइ (mit-a-vi) quiere decir *dulces* o *confites*.



En la mela del Smithsonian un grupo hindú-americano interpreta el *dandia ras*, una canción y baile Gujarati. (Fotografía de Jeff Tinsley)

En una mela también puedes oír inglés. Debido a que los ingleses tuvieron una gran influencia en la India muchos hindúes aprendieron inglés—y muchos lo estudian todavía. En cambio, las personas de habla inglesa y española han adoptado muchas palabras de las lenguas de la India. ¿Sabías que estas palabras vienen de la India?

En inglés: Pajamas, khaki, bungalow, jodphurs, cashmere, seersucker, calico, madras.

En español: Piyamas, caqui, casimir, sirsaca, cálico, madras.

Otro sonido que escucharás será música, pero música que suena probablemente diferente a la que has

escuchado en los Estados Unidos. Quizás hayan personas que tocan cítaras, armonios, y tablas.

Si quieres oír un poco de música hindú puedes visitar tu escuela o una biblioteca pública. En las colecciones de discos allí puedes tal vez encontrar música de un músico popular hindú que toca la *cítara*, Ravi Shankar.

En una mela hindú también encontramos aromas de canela, clavos de olor, cominos, y cardamomo. Si fueras a una mela podrías comprar una merienda de té de especias y galletas. Si quieres hacer tu propia merienda hindú aquí hay dos recetas:

## Té de Especies

### Ingredientes:

dos tazas de agua  
1 pulgada de una raja de canela  
8 clavos de olor enteros  
1 bolsita de té  
leche y azúcar al gusto

Vierte el agua en una fridera. Pon la canela y los clavos de olor en el agua. Hierva el agua. Quita la fridera del calor.

Pon la bolsita de té en el agua. Déjala estar por 2 o 3 minutos. Quita la bolsita de té y vierte el líquido en dos tazas. Si quieres, agrega azúcar y leche. Aspira profundamente para oler el olor de especias; después disfruta el sabor de especias.

## Galletas

### Ingredientes:

1 taza de harina  
½ taza de azúcar  
½ taza de semolina (Cream of Wheat es una marca bien conocida)  
½ taza de mantequilla derretida

Calienta el horno a 300 grados.

En un recipiente grande mezcla todos los ingredientes hasta tener una masa suave. Divide la masa en dieciséis pedazos iguales y forma bolitas. Ponlas en una galletera sin grasa y aplástalas con los dedos.

Hornéales por 25 minutos o hasta que estén doraditas.

Saca la galletera del horno y déjala estar por 10 minutos o hasta que se pueda agarrar con la mano. Entonces pon las galletas en otro recipiente por media hora o hasta que se enfríen.

Si quieres hacer galletas de especias agrega 1 cucharadita de canela o jengibre a la harina, también puedes poner la mitad de una almendra en el centro de cada masita antes de poner la galletera en el horno.



Esta señora está probando un *jalabi*, una masa frita y cubierta de almíbar. (Fotografía del Servicio de Noticias del Smithsonian por cortesía de Air India)