

'Veils & Turbans' Traditions of Rajasthan
 Exhibition of Photographs at Parliament of NSW
 By Jean Leviol Senior French Trade Commissioner in Australia



Jean Leviol, Senior French Economic & Trade Commissioner

Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan Australia presented Indian Cultural and Dance performance at Jubilee Hall, Parliament of NSW on the occasion of the Opening Day of Exhibition of Photographs *'Veils & Turbans' Traditions of Rajasthan* by Jean Leviol. Jean Leviol has been Senior French Economic and Trade Commissioner in Australia & for South Pacific and is soon leaving for Delhi (India) as Senior French Economic and Trade Commissioner in India.

Jean Leviol had visited Rajasthan (India) for a wedding and the experience of Rajasthan with its rich culture prompted him to capture the

people and their traditions in his camera. Photography is one of Jean Leviol's hobbies and deep interest. Special guests who were present for the inaugural ceremony of the Exhibition were The Honourable Dr Meredith Burgmann, President of the Legislative Council, Australian Labor Party representing the Premier Bob Carr, Consul General of India Hon. Ganapathi, Consul General of France Hon Laurent Gallery, Hon John Aquilina MP, Speaker of the NSW Parliament, Gambhir Watts, President Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan Australia, Shankar Dhar, Regional Director Australasia India Tourism and other diplomats and dignitaries. Jean Leviol said in his speech that this exhibition has brought France, India and Australia together and thanked Bhavan Australia for giving dance presentation and creating an atmosphere of Rajasthan befitting the Exhibition theme..

The Rajasthani and Garba dance by *Nritya* was much appreciated by the audience and brought the culture of Rajasthan alive in the Parliament of NSW. The colorful traditional and folk dresses of the performers illuminated the Jubilee Hall. The exhibition was declared open from 5 July which will continue until 29 July 2005. The guests after viewing the exhibition appreciated the *Veils & Turbans and Traditions of Rajasthan* captured by Jean Leviol.



Dr Meredith Burgmann,



Laurent Delahousse, Consul General of France



Hon John Aquilina MP and the speaker of NSW Parliament



M Ganapathi, Consul General of India



Shankar Dhar, Regional Director India Tourism



Performance by NRITYA dance group, sponsored by Bhavan Australia



Exhibition Gallery

Jean Leviol, A Profile

Jean Leviol, Senior French and Economic Trade Commissioner's (in Australia & for South Pacific) next posting will be in New Delhi as Chief French Trade Commissioner in India. His point of view about cultural exchange apart from trade relations between India and France is that, India is very influential in France thanks to: philosophies and religions; its masterpieces of art in temples, sculptures, clothing; its myths and icons. So India attracts French philosophers, intellectuals and travelers. India's greatest achievement after independence so far according to Jean has become a pattern for developing and emerging countries in aspects like peace, security, food self-sufficiency and of course democracy and stability of the institutions. Nowadays, he says, the new feature is also economic, India becoming a challenge for world economies.

Jean has visited India twice: first in December 1994; the second time was to represent his Ministry in the implementation of specific reforms. His first visit to India was as a guest at a wedding ceremony under Hindu rite.

The ceremony took place in Udaipur (city of lakes) and he stayed on the lake; The visit as defined in Jean's own beautiful words has been a, *"Three dream days on Lake Pichola, a tranquil stay under the shadow of the 430 metre façade of the palace of the Maharaja, who paid them the honour of several visits. It was during this visit that I took advantage of this opportunity to lose myself in these semi-desert countryside and thus to collect living testimony of what the agricultural and social life means to this rural State which is proud of its history"*.

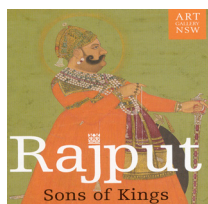
India as seen from his eyes says Jean Leviol, "is a very complex and culturally rich nation. We know that part of the civilization with several religions originating there. Of course there are big questions raising in my mind: agriculture, democracy, opening of the economy. But the striking feature compared with other emerging countries is the traditional democracy". His duty as a Chief French Trade Commissioner in India will leave him very short spare time for his passion for travels, socio-geography and photography but he candidly says, "my natural behaviour will lead me to seize every opportunity to travel throughout the country as well as the neighboring countries since I will be in charge of India and all South Asia".

It was this passion that prompted him to collect some wonderful & unique images of magical Rajasthan during his first visit to India (Udaipur). Jean Leviol's wonderful collection of *Photographic Art Pieces* of rural Rajasthan- *"Veils & Turbans, Traditions of Rajasthan"* were exhibited at Parliament of NSW, Sydney on 5 July 2005 – 29 July 2005. Prior to this exhibit, the photographs were displayed in a private gallery in France and in the main entrance of the Ministry of Finance. Jean Says, "As former speaker of the Parliament of NSW, John Murray has opened up the Parliament to the public and provided greater accessibility to the parliamentary facilities including the cultural and artistic events. I wanted to share my emotions and ideas through my photographs and realize an original event by gathering 3 cultures: French, Indian and Australian".

Jean Leviol, was born in the very West part of France, in Brittany, (celtic culture) in a rural area close to a middle age town named Quimper. It was not only his home town, it has been their family town for centuries, probably since the 10th century when migrations from the British Isles flocked to Brittany. He met his wife when he was living in Nicaragua (Central America); she is passionate with singing jazz and blues and with Indian and Chinese traditional philosophy, religion and medicine. Their children are 23, 20 and 12; elder (girl) graduated in a Business school and is currently working for Accenture; son is a student in engineering and 'junior' (a girl) is very much attracted by surfing and athletics. After traveling throughout Western and Eastern Europe, still as a student, Jean Leviol headed first for the Philippines Island on a private basis to help French manufacturers of hardware to set up a distribution network. Then he spent 5 years in Nicaragua as a junior commercial prospector to support French companies efforts to export in the country. Then he spent several years in Paris at the ENA (Ecole Nationale d'Administration) and as Director for South America at the Minister of Foreign Trade. Following that initial period, he spent 5 years in Asia, first in Indonesia and mostly in China as Deputy Trade Commissioner. After a 3 years term in Paris, he had the pleasure to spend five years in Mexico and then two years in Sydney as Senior Trade Commissioner. The goal throughout the endeavors has been to help small and medium size French companies.

Coming directly from Mexico to Australia as Senior French and Economic Trade Commissioner in Australia and for South Pacific, he says, "I experienced a lot of change obviously with my posting in an English speaking country marked with solid British traditions mixed with Mediterranean influence. The increasing presence of Asian people in the society didn't impress me much because I have lived for 6 years in Asia". It was in 1998 after posting in Indonesia, China and Paris, where during 3 years, he spent most of his time designing and implementing landmark reforms in order to enhance French exports. Therefore, the Ministre decided to honour him with a prestigious award in recognition of his efforts in implementing these reforms - *Knight of the National Order of Merit*.

These different vast experiences and expeditions explain his love for travels and reflect a 'keen and sensitive observer' both in his photography as well as his personality. His message to the youth as it reflects the wisdom is also very clear and a straight forward one, *Be humble, Be tolerant, Do it yourself first* (do not rely on others to do things for you).



Exhibition of paintings from the princely courts of India from 8 June - 4 Sept at the Art Gallery of NSW, Art Gallery Rd, The Domain 2000.

Visit www.artgallery.nsw.gov.au