

A slice of diasporic reality, through the lens

SUJEET RAJAN

New York

GAURI Gill's collection of photographs on the Indian diaspora are a kaleidoscope of the known entity, the well-recorded struggles and the achievements. Fighting for space inside the confines of the Bose Pacia gallery in Manhattan, the five dozen photographs showcase the struggles to succeed as well as fit socially in a country that is as different from India as chalk is from cheese.

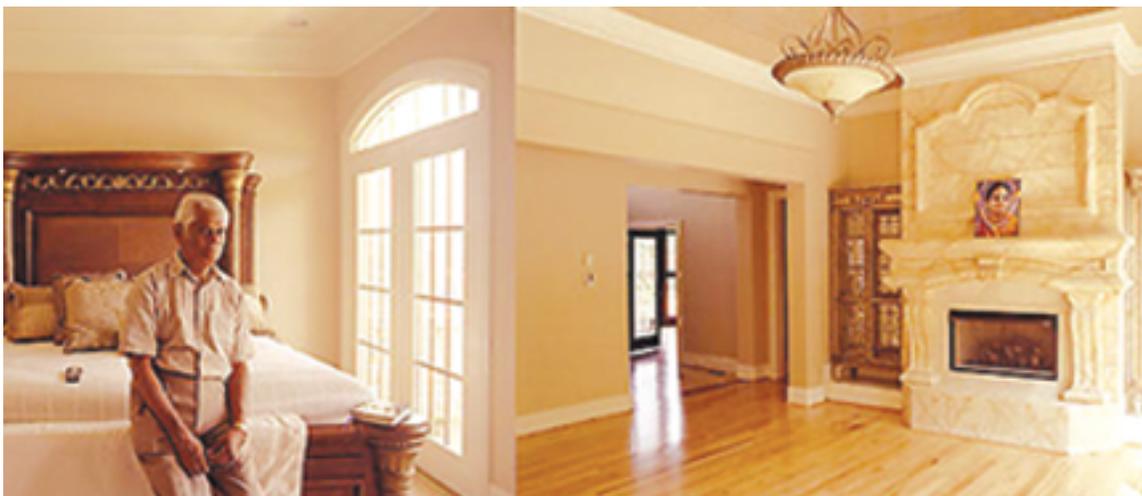
Some of the photographs capture mundane occasions and day-to-day life that many amateur photographers might have also caught on their cameras, not unlike those snapshots that lie snuggled in many an album from the east to the west Coast. Enlarged and framed beautifully, the beauty of Gill's works—titled 'The Americans'—lies in being seen in its entirety. The effect is like reading a giant volume of Jhumpa Lahiri's short stories.

The photographs, shot across the United States from 2000 to 2007, are an eloquent portrayal of the diasporic experience, poignant in the nostalgia they evoke.

New Delhi-based Gill, who has a BFA from Parsons in New York and a MFA from Stanford University, in California, uses the camera to record the vulnerability of the diaspora, and is not concerned much with the aesthetic values of the shot. For Gill, the intrinsic life of her subjects whom she pans are more important than the intrinsic value of the shot she captures on her camera.

One of the more memorable photographs shows an elderly man sitting on an immaculate, luxurious bed in a neat room, juxtaposed with a parallel image of a large living room with a fireplace and a chandelier, bereft of any furniture but with exquisite moldings on ceilings, facades on windows and polished wooden floors, with only a photograph of a woman with a garland around it, perched atop the fireplace. The short title is stunning: 'Motel Owner Dhansukh Dan Patel's Parents in his New Home. Nashville. Tennessee, 2004'.

The photograph encapsulates myriad stories, with even the non-present Dhansukh Dan Patel assuming a potent life force. More than anything else, it is the vast vac-



Clockwise from above:
Motel Owner Dhansukh Dan Patel's Parents in his New Home. Nashville. Tennessee, 2004;
Gauri Gill with some of her works at the Bose Pacia gallery in Manhattan;
Jagdeepak Steven Sandhu's Mother and Wife, Outside Their Home, Virginia, 2002;
Halloween Party. San Francisco 2000;
Woman Worker at Sunsweet Prune Packing Factory, Yuba City, 2002.



uum of loneliness that strikes with ferocity, exemplified as much by the bareness of the sanitized room as by juxtaposing the dead with the living.

The photograph subtly questions the life that much of the dias-

pورا leads in its rush to embrace the American life and to achieve the American Dream. Gill's photograph seems to ask: at what cost?

Gill does answer that question through some of her other works that focus more on the women and

the young she is fascinated with: a photograph of a confident-looking woman worker at a prune-packing factory in Yuba City, California, helmet on head, with huge crates and boxes ranged in the background. That shot defines the free-



dom that the United States gives to its immigrants, regardless of color or sex, and a living which would be as daunting as it would be incomprehensible for most women who toil in the fields of rural India for a pittance.

Photographs showing second generation Indian Americans, enamored by traditional *bhangra* or celebrating quintessential American festivals like Halloween, perhaps also give the answer to the diaspora's quest to enrich the American life and to participate fully in it.

'The Americans' is an exhibition par excellence, though one could only wish that Bose Pacia had more space to spare for Gill, who said to *The Indian Express* at the opening reception that only 61 of her 77 works could be fit in. A pity indeed, for one missed out on 16 short stories.

Fashion designer Anand Jon's case postponed till Jan 28

STAFF REPORTER

New York

THE hearing on Anand Jon's case that was supposed to be held on January 13 has now been postponed to January 28. There is also a possibility that Jon, the 33-year-old fashion designer found guilty of 16 sexual crimes, including forced rape, could now undergo a new trial altogether.

At last week's scheduled hearing at the Clara Shortridge Foltz Criminal Justice Center in Los Angeles, Judge David S. Wesley met with deputy district attorneys Mara



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McIlvain and Frances Young together with Jon's defense attorneys Donald Marks, Anthony Brooklier and Leonard Levin, to discuss a motion for the accused to receive a new trial. The judge ordered a further investigation into the case and asked for a progress report to be presented to the court by January 29.

Wesley also ruled that the defense motion for a new trial be sealed, as well as seven binders of MySpace documents that have been presented as evidence by the defense. He also placed in effect a gag order on both the prosecution and defense.

The *LA Weekly* reported that according to prosecutor Frances Young, Jon will not be eligible for parole until 67 years. The report said the new trial should be based on either compelling new evidence or a serious procedural error committed by the judge or the prosecution. It said that the fact that Wesley ordered the two sides to begin a process of sharing discovery evidence suggests that there are indeed new factual items to consider.

There have also been complaints among Jon's supporters of unfair play by the District Attor-

ney's office, so it will be interesting to see if these figure into the next court date, said the *Weekly*. Prosecutors Young and Mara McIlvain certainly looked grim as they assented to the sentencing postponement, it also added.

Dressed in a deep-charcoal suit, white shirt and a red tie, Jon returned to jail and his family members and supporters, along with newsmen and pool cameramen, decamped. When they next return, there should be more details on what could be a dramatic turn in the case full of surprises, added the report.

