

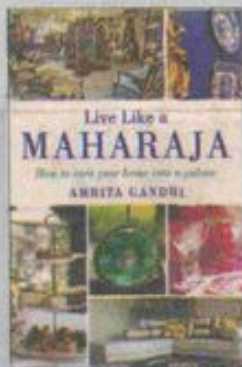
Like a Royal

IT WAS during a conversation with designer Ritu Kumar that travel show anchor Amrita Gandhi heard a story of a maharani, who after losing her husband took to white chiffon saris. It's believed that she is the one who made that fluid fabric a rage and hosted all her soirees in a white chiffon sari paired with gleaming emeralds around the neck.

This and more such tales around royalty appear in Gandhi's debut book titled *Live like a Maharaja: How to Turn your Home into a Palace*, which was launched last week. However, don't mistake it for just another coffee-table book, for this one gives tips on how to dress like the royals, decorate one's home like a palace and even some recipes from the royal kitchen. "After anchoring a few seasons of *Royal Reservation* on NDTV Good Times, we discussed the idea of publishing it. But we didn't want it to be just another coffee-table book. It had to be more, like a guide," says Gandhi.

For the show, she had interacted with royal families from across India and when the idea of compiling their thoughts came up, they were more than willing. "The families were glad that the book would treat them as more than just showpieces, and were happy to share their favourite dishes and recipes," she says. So, dig into the ways of making Bundelkhand Lemon Pickle or Kache Gosh ki Biryani; how printed chiffons are a strict no-no for the night; and how to layer a sofa the royal way. The 200-page book (Penguin, Rs 699) is full of anecdotes and photographs, and tips and suggestions that are fun and easy to follow.

SOMYA LAKHANI



Book cover



Simona Bocchi discovered the technique of coloured jute in Udaipur

Naturally Layered

"INDIAN women, especially in Udaipur, symbolise strength. They are different from the women in the West; they are stronger, mentally as well as physically, yet their position in society is marginal. There are restrictions on them unlike men," says artist Simona Bocchi, of her observations during her seven-year long stay in Udaipur. In an exhibition titled 'The Travelers Reflections', in association with the Embassy of Italy, Bocchi shows India from her point of view.

On the terrace of JJ Valaya's flagship store, The Home of the Traveler, in Sultanpur, Italy-based artist and sculptor Bocchi has exhibited a range of sculptures in carrara marble, bronze and jute. "Jute symbolises my respect for nature. I have used natural materials and avoided chemicals. I don't use any plastered objects inside to support the sculpture, its volume is created layer-by-layer with jute."

In Udaipur, she saw women dye their saris. "I have been working for 12 years on plain jute, but adding colour to jute was an interesting discovery," she says. Bocchi has used coloured jute in turbans and dupattas over female heads to reflect the vibrant Rajasthani culture.

The artist has been working with marble for a while but Udaipur gave her the opportunity to discover new techniques. "I come from a developed country. We have machines and robots to make our work easier. Here, they are still working with hands. It's slow yet the rhythm you develop

while working on materials makes it interesting," she says. In Udaipur, she also learnt miniature painting and marble inlaying. Currently, Bocchi is writing a book on her experiences as an artist in India.

The exhibition is on till March 26 at The Home of the Traveler, 368-369, Sultanpur, MG Road from 11 am to 7.30 pm. Contact: 65154000

NIKITA SHARMA

(The reporter is a student of EXIMS)

