

FROM A CITY OF JOY TO FORGOTTEN CITY

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The quest for beauty often culminates in an architectural design. A house built at the fag end of one's life or a memorial to love they are all part of this journey. And the designs find larger meaning if they combine beauty with function- which our traditional structures seemed to have achieved.

This was the theme of Manu Rewal's three documentaries screened at the India Intrenational Centre last week .

Rewal who has obtained an M. Phil in cinema and audio –visual studies from Paris has based his film **Resonance** on six projects of his architect father Raj Rewal...

The film makes interesting parallels between historical structures and Raj Rewal's work. The shots of the *mandala*, *jalis* and minarets are interspersed with shots of the historical structures which inspired them. The Asiad village and the National Institute of Immunology built on the pattern of Jaisalmer and havelis repectively show the original designs. Thankfully, the director has done away with any superfluous narration letting the shots, blend beautifully and unobtrusively with the narration....

The film on **Mandu** is riveting from the first shot. Skilful direction and the haunting music of Shubha Mudgal takes the audience on an enchanted voyage.

Mandu – City of Joy begins with the advantage Resonance never had – the subject itself. The latter lacked the charm contemporary structures cannot hope to possess, whereas Mandu is washed with the charm that only the past can lend. The film attempts to trace Mandu's Journey from a city of joy to a forgotten city.

Once an important crucible of art and culture, Mandu's architecture is a union of Hindu and Muslim cultures, best illustrated in Hoshang Shah's tomb. The film captures the Islamic dome with Hindu features, while a sufiana qalam is sung in the

background. The use of a sufi song at this juncture reinforces the theme of Hindu – Muslim unity. In fact, music is used aptly through the move. Recitation of a shloka while showing a Jain *Kalpasutra* and its harmonious blending with the ‘*aazaan*’ while showing the Jama Masjid are effective devices...

After showing Jahaz Mahal, the concluding bit of the film concentrates on Baz Bahadur’s palaces and the famed love story of the singer Roopmati and Baz Bahadur. The film ends with beautiful shots of Mandu at sunset while the narrator relates the legend of Mandu. It is said if a person who is pure of heart visits Roopmati’s palace at midnight, he can hear her sing still. And the haunting romance of the now ghost city lives on.

The third documentary on **Jaisalmer** to be telecast with Mandu on Doordarshan as part of the Heritage series, captures the desert’s beauty as it is hit by a sandstorm. Well executed the film explores the impact of tourism on Jaisalmer. Scenes of busy lanes, market places at night and radios blaring Hindi movie songs all show the city as it stands today. The film shows the link between architecture and lifestyle effectively.

The documentary also underlines the main features of *Patwon Ki Haveli* a masterpiece of Jaisalmer architecture.

The director makes good use of light. Light filtering through *jalis* or a view from a dark room lend a beautiful quality to the movie. The music, too, is apt and lifting. Traditional instruments and songs like *Ghoomar* and *Holi mein arhat gulal*, bring Rajasthan alive.

With its densely packed houses built back to back (there are no back streets in Jaisalmer) without going to high, Jaisalmer stands as a model in space and energy conversation. And Rewal and his team succeed in telling us one thing – even in architecture, we could take a lesson or two from history.

