



Honouring the Hands that Build Our World

celebrated annually on the third Friday of September, National Tradesmen Day honours the skilled professionals whose hands build and maintain the world around us. From carpenters and electricians to plumbers, masons, and mechanics, tradesmen form the backbone of modern infrastructure and daily life. The day serves as a reminder to appreciate their expertise, dedication, and hard work, often carried out behind the scenes. In India and across the globe, the demand for skilled trades continues to grow, highlighting the importance of vocational training and respect for these professions that keep homes, cities, and industries running smoothly.

#LIFE

Soul Time Watch

“To the one who learned that fixing watches matters less than fixing lives.”



Every morning at 7:30, old Martin would open his tiny watch shop in the heart of the city. At 78, his hands were still the steadiest around. People said that he fixed watches the way a healer tends to wounds, with infinite patience.

One rainy afternoon, Daniel, a 32-year-old executive with a face etched in stress, walked in. He dropped his luxury watch on the counter.

“I need this fixed urgently. It’s lost two minutes in a week and I have important meetings. Can you have it ready by tomorrow?”

Martin looked at Daniel first, then at the watch.

“Watches are like people,” he said quietly. “When you rush them too much, something inside starts to go wrong.”

Daniel glanced impatiently at his phone.

“I just need it to work perfectly.”

“It’ll take three days,” Martin replied.

“Impossible! I’ll pay double if you have it ready by tomorrow.”

Martin shook his head and put the watch in a drawer.

“Come back in three days. In the meantime, take this.”

He handed Daniel an old bronze pocket watch. Daniel took it reluctantly, he didn’t have a choice.

Over the next few days, Daniel noticed something odd. That old watch kept time differently; some hours seemed to last forever, others passed in a flash. During boring meetings, the hands barely moved. But when he had lunch with his little daughter, time flew.

On the third day, Daniel returned, intrigued and a bit unsettled.

“This watch is broken. Time moves irregularly!”

Martin smiled.

“It’s not broken. It’s tuned to your soul, not to satellites. It measures time by how you live, not just by numbers.”

He handed back Daniel’s repaired watch.

“This one will lose time



again if you keep losing your life.”

Daniel stared at both watches, confused.

“People check the time a hundred times a day, yet never seem to have any,” Martin went on. “Perfect watches on empty wrists.”

“So, what do you suggest?” Daniel asked, genuinely interested now.

“Understand that there are two kinds of time: the time that passes, and the time you live. My father told me: a watch can count seconds, but only your heart can count moments.”

“How much do I owe you for the repair?”

“For the watch, fifty euros. For the lesson about time... you pay by living differently.”

Weeks later, Daniel came back and left the pocket watch on the counter.

“Is something wrong? Did it break?” Martin asked.

“No,” Daniel smiled. “I want to buy it. I quit my job in the city. I’m opening my own business here, with hours that let me pick up my daughter from school.”

Martin answered:

“The most valuable watches aren’t sold. They’re passed down. Keep it. One day you’ll realize the most important punctuality is being present when life needs you.”

That winter, Martin passed away. In his will, he left the shop to Daniel with a note:

“To the one who learned that fixing watches matters less than fixing lives.”

Now, if you visit that little shop, you’ll see a sign on the door:

“We don’t sell time. We remind you how to live it.”

Sometimes, we need our watches to stop, so that our hearts can start beating again.



Mirza Raja Jai Singh Had With Him Dakhil Bandoon And Sawar Bandoon Men

PART:2



'Siege of Dwarka', note the guns mounted on the fort ramparts.

#THE INDIAN MATCHLOCK

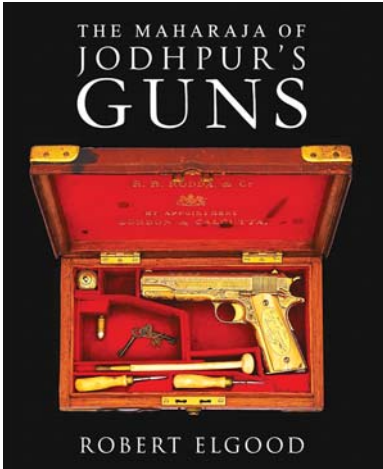


Matchlock made for probably Maharaja Takhat Singh in 1840 in Mehrangarh museum.

he kept a Game Book. In a single month over the thirty years that elapsed before the *A'in-i Akbari* was written, Akbar shot an annual average of almost thirty-four animals with this gun alone. His son wrote in the *Jahangirnama*: “With it, he hit three to four thousand birds and beasts.” Others would have been killed using sword, lance and bow. But the plumber of animals shot by the emperor was greater than this because Akbar did not limit himself to a single gun each month. Abu'l Fazl explains: “His Majesty has selected out of several thousand guns, one hundred and five as khasa (household) guns.” In addition to the twelve guns ‘chosen in honour of the twelve months’, there were guns for the week and for certain days in a most complicated cyclical routine. Nor was this empty ritual.

Abu'l Fazl states that, “His Majesty practises often.” Jahangir simply said of his father: “In marksmanship, he had no equal or peer.” Abu'l Fazl wrote of the large numbers of guns being made for Akbar, and clearly the Mughals were the major producer in Hindustan but Lord Egerston’s 1896 catalogue of Indian arms attributes no guns to them, merely recognising some pan-Indian regional differences in form and surface decoration. The Mughals led the development of firearms in Hindustan and it must be assumed that Mughal, or strictly speaking, Persian technology, provided the means by which barrels were made in the sixteenth century.

Babur’s armourer was Chhiyasu’d-din and Mughal armourers mentioned in successor reigns are all Muslim. Did the Rajputs obtain their barrels from Mughal workshops, import them or make them themselves? How should we distinguish Mughal guns from those of their allies the Rajputs? If the seventeenth- and eighteenth-century guns in the various Rajput armouries are all Rajput-made, one is left asking where to find the missing Mughal guns? It would be surprising if the guns that the Rajputs obtained were not Mughal in origin. Saxena says that ‘in the beginning, guns and cannon were mostly procured from Agra and Delhi’. Lahore, with its Persian,



and latterly, Sikh craftsmen, became increasingly important.

The Rathores have a fine collection of cannon at Mehrangarh Fort but they are all acquired rather than made locally and a high proportion are European in origin. The 1853 arms inventory shows that the design varies, and in time becomes stylised. The original form is found on European barrels, which are adopted but given an Indian interpretation, becoming a shared Muslim/Hindu design, but there are symbols that indicate a purely Hindu gun like the trisula that appears on barrels in the City Palace, Jaipur; a specific order by a Jaipur Maharaja.

The changing acceptability of firearms is indicated by Mughal rulers permitting their portraits to be painted holding guns. A sketch by Balchand shows Shah Jahan as a prince using a matchlock c.1620. More important is the painting of Shah Jahan by Pavag, Balchand’s older brother, c.1630-45. The Padshahnama shows retainers holding matchlocks at a 1628 darbar; though the painting recording the event is attributed to 1640, commissioned by Shah Jahan, an example of how from the Mongol period onwards, paintings were used to emphasise royal continuity and legitimacy. All the guns have match arms, sinew binds stock and barrel, and curved metal rests, necessary because of the length and weight of

gun barrels acquired at the height of Mughal power in the seventeenth and first half of the eighteenth centuries may well have met most of the Rajput aristocracy’s needs in later years.

Mughal adoption of Hindu aesthetics made the assimilation of Mughal decoration easy for Hindus. For example, the column bases in the Red Fort in Delhi comprise pots with columns rising out of them, which are decorated with a ring of lanceolate leaves. Those in the Bhadon Pavilion or in the Diwani-Khas are good examples, both dating from 1638-48. These are certainly not acanthus and Koch says that these are ‘reminiscent of lotus petals’ but the carved marble shows a leaf, one that resembles the Indian willow (*Salix tetrasperma*, in Sanskrit *vanjula*).

This pot and leaf design has no precedent in Islamic architecture and the kumbha or pot decorated with leaves is an auspicious Hindu symbol. The same leaf design decorates the muzzles of matchlocks found in Rajput armouries from approximately the date of these buildings onwards, though the design varies, and in time becomes stylised. The original form is found on European barrels, which are adopted but given an Indian interpretation, becoming a shared Muslim/Hindu design, but there are symbols that indicate a purely Hindu gun like the trisula that appears on barrels in the City Palace, Jaipur; a specific order by a Jaipur Maharaja.

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barrel, and are fixed to forestocks. The stock ends are slightly convex and lack heel plates. All these court guns are decorated with an emerald flanked by two rubies, set at intervals in line up the length of the stock, suggesting that they are royal guns.

Another Padshahnama painting shows the Mughals capturing the Bengal port of Hoogly from the Portuguese in 1632. The Indians hold the stocks of their matchlocks under the armpit rather than to the shoulder. Presumably, this was intended to keep the face as far away from the breech as possible because of the danger of barrels exploding, but it can hardly have helped accuracy. Perhaps, this was one reason why the infantry in Akbar’s time, though very numerous, were not regarded as important. Many were in state service in some humble capacity, came from a wide variety of castes and occupations, and were pressed into armed service without training, when the need arose.

Pay depended on their caste and the arms they owned. In the sixteenth century, the Mughals called them *pidagam*, *paik* and *absham*. They were equipped with a motley collection of spears, swords and bows and the number of guns among them increased slowly. Bernier says that an Indian bowman could fire six arrows in the space of time it took a matchlock man to fire twice. Acquiring a matchlock gave a man status, which enabled him to progress up the mili-

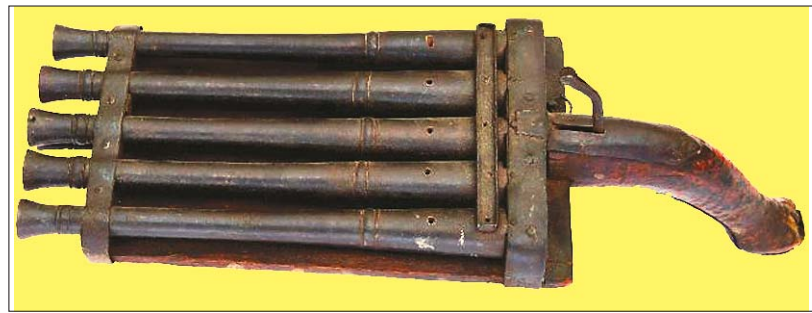


A Mughal Infantryman.

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tary hierarchy where he might become a *silahaposh*. Units of *silahaposh* were of mixed origin, and in Rajasthan, often included Nagas. Paid a modest wage, they provided escorts to rulers and were guards on city ramparts. Some were provided with arms by the state. Bhhils too were recruited in Rajasthan, men noted for their skill with a bow.

In the eighteenth century, the Rajputs increasingly recruited



A matchlock multi-barrel pistol, also called panjtop.

Purbias, people from eastern India, particularly Bihar, as matchlock men. They were referred to as *Biradaris*, the units, each known by the name of their leader. Brigades of mercenaries for hire were a prominent feature of the north Indian military labour market from at least the fifteenth century. Successive Mughal emperors kept *bandukchis* under their control, attached to and paid by the Royal household rather than giving power to their nobles; but, with time, favoured nobles like the *Kachwahas* of Amber were permitted to recruit as an emporium of wares from India. Sarajevo’s famous gun barrels were exported across the Ottoman Empire and as far as India. Two major gunmaking towns in Albania, Pritzen and Tseto, were less regulated as Mughal power declined.

The Turks replaced their matchlocks with the miquelet lock, developed in the Iberian peninsula on the back of Portuguese designs by about 1580 and this lock was adopted across the Mediterranean region. The Turks used this until the late nineteenth century but Indians never used it, other than guns produced under Portuguese instruction to recruit gun barrels to India, though probably few before the seventeenth century.

The success of this trade was no doubt helped by the Turks of high status who came to serve the Mughals such as the Ottoman governor of Kasra, Amir Hussain Pasha, who abandoned Sultan Mehmed and arrived in Delhi in 1669 where he was liberally welcomed by Aurangzeb, eventually becoming subedar of Malwa. In 1715, when Maharaja Ajit Singh of Marwar’s daughter Indra Kunwar married the Emperor Farrukh Siyar, the maharaja’s rise in status was indicated by his purchase of matchlocks, worth one lakh, a large order, and the supplier unknown.

The Ottoman army encountered European dragons in the Cretan War (1645-69) who fired from horseback using fusils, flintlock muskets that were lighter and more convenient than the contemporary matchlock, a new approach to warfare that Rumi mercenaries brought to India. The Mirat-i-Ahmedi describes Rathore horsemen, armed with matchlocks and incendiary bombs, advancing to take the town gates of Ahmedabad in 1729. Horsemen armed with matchlocks increasingly became a feature of Indian battlefields from the latter part of the seventeenth century. To facilitate this, matchlocks became shorter and lighter.

To be continued...

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#WOMEN

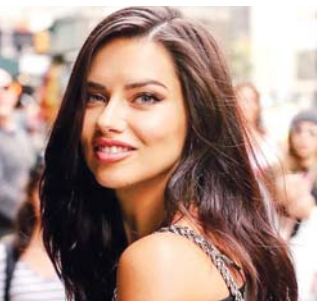
Beautiful Women

Top 10 Countries with the Most Beautiful Women: A Celebration of Global Beauty

Beauty is an extraordinary and diverse tapestry that spans cultures, ethnicities, and traditions across the world. When we talk about the countries with the most beautiful women, it's essential to appreciate that beauty is

subjective, shaped by personal, cultural, and societal values. That said, certain countries are often celebrated for their women's distinctive charm, grace, and cultural elegance. Here's a look at 10 countries globally renowned for their beautiful women, blending aesthetics with cultural richness.

1. Brazil



Known for its vibrant mix of indigenous, European, African, and Asian heritage, Brazil offers a dazzling variety of beauty. Brazilian women are famed for their radiant confidence, sun-kissed skin, and lively spirit, traits that reflect the country's energetic culture and love for dance, especially samba.

2. Russia



Russian women are often admired for their striking features, high cheekbones, light eyes, and tall, slender frames. Beyond physical beauty, Russian women are known for their resilience, sophistication, and strong family values.

3. India



India's beauty is as diverse as its culture. From the fair-skinned Kashmiris to the dusky South Indians, Indian women embody a rich spectrum of beauty with deep, expressive eyes, glossy hair, and traditional grace. The global popularity of Bollywood has also showcased Indian charm worldwide.

4. Venezuela



Venezuela consistently produces top contenders in international beauty pageants. Venezuelan women are known for their polished elegance, strong personalities, and dedication to maintaining fitness and style.



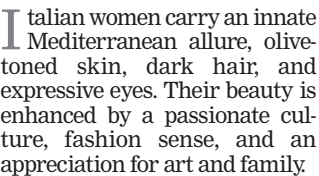
Swedish women embody the Nordic ideal of beauty: blond hair, blue eyes, and a natural, effortless style. Known for their health-conscious lifestyle, they often exude a fresh, minimalist elegance.

6. South Korea



South Korean beauty standards have gained global attention, especially with the rise of K-pop and Korean dramas. The country's women are celebrated for their flawless skin, delicate features, and innovative skincare routines.

7. Italy



Italian women carry an innate Mediterranean allure, olive-toned skin, dark hair, and expressive eyes. Their beauty is enhanced by a passionate culture, fashion sense, and an appreciation for art and family.

8. Ethiopia



Ethiopian women are noted for their unique beauty, characterized by radiant skin tones, elegant bone structure, and expressive eyes. Ethiopia's rich cultural heritage adds to their distinct charm.

9. Colombia



Colombian women are known for their vivacious spirit, warm smiles, and a wide range of looks, thanks to the country's ethnic diversity. Their passion for dance and music adds to their magnetic presence.

10. Lebanon



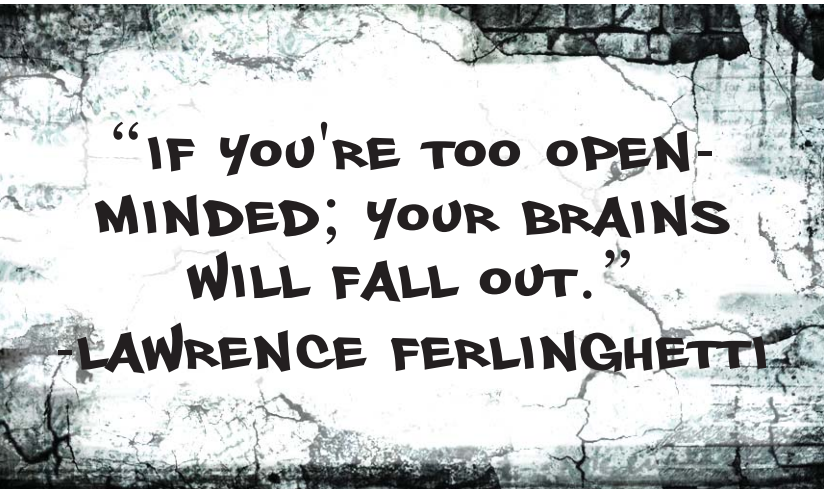
Lebanese women are admired for their striking features, deep, dark eyes, luscious hair, and a flair for style. The country's blend of Middle Eastern and Mediterranean cultures influences their unique beauty.

What Makes Beauty Truly Global?

It's important to remember that beauty isn't confined to physical traits alone. Confidence, kindness, intelligence, and cultural richness all contribute to what makes someone truly beautiful. Every country around the world has its own unique beauty to offer, and celebrating this diversity enriches our global understanding and appreciation. Beauty transcends borders. It's in the way a person carries themselves, their stories, and the cultural heritage they embody. Whether in bustling cities or serene villages, beauty blooms everywhere.

By Jerry Scott & Jim Borgman

THE WALL



BABY BLUES



By Rick Kirkman & Jerry Scott

ZITS

