

dinkar kelkar MUSEUM

A monument to one man's passion for collecting unusual everyday objects

text by MEHER MARFATIA photography by ROHITZ TICKOO

The Raja Dinkar Kelkar Museum of Everyday Art has a stunning display of utilitarian objects, collected by Pune resident and poet, Padma-shri Dr D G Kelkar. The exhibits, collected over a period of 40 years, are housed in the museum at Shukrawar Peth.

Antique doors and windows in wood, brass, ivory and other materials, culled from houses and

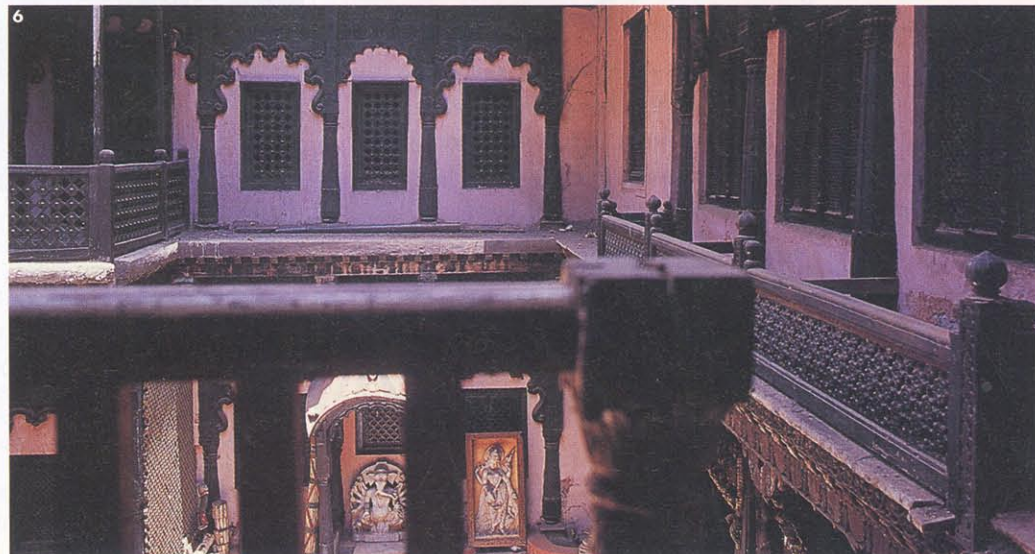
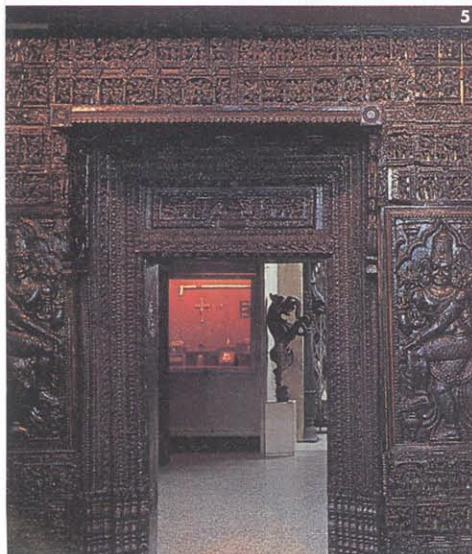
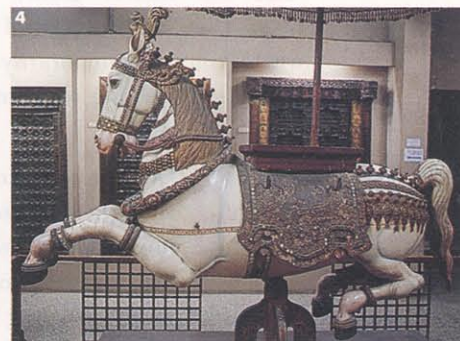
temples across India, are on the ground floor. On show are an 18th century *jharokha* window from Jaisalmer, an early 19th century shrine from Talegaon, Maharashtra and the door of a village home in Madhya Pradesh, featuring motifs of gods and chieftains. In a nearby room is a potpourri of Indian art, belonging to periods between the 17th and 19th centuries – from artistry on parchment,

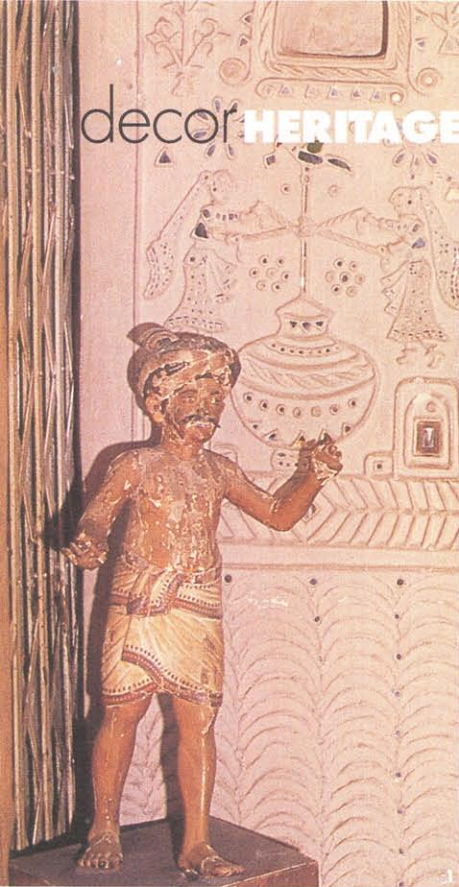
cloth and glass, to paintings on paper and leather.

The Vanita Kaksha, contributed by Kamalabai Kelkar, the benefactor's wife, showcases over a hundred *vajris* – skin and foot scrubbers – their handles embellished with conch-blowing musicians, elephants in combat, mounted riders, and various animals.

Other accessories on display include mirrors, *sindoor-kumkum* caskets

1. Detail of 18th century ceiling from Sawantwadi, Maharashtra
2. The decorative door of Dr Kelkar's Pune residence dates back to the 19th century
3. Late 20th century idol of Lord Ganesha, made of kitchenware
4. 19th century galloping horse from Karai Kudi, South India
5. 19th century carved door from Ramnad in South India
6. Mastani Mahal, with a 17th century ten-handed Lord Ganesha visible on the lower level





1. Entrance of the Special Exhibition Gallery in the museum 2. Various 19th and 20th century brass utensils from Maharashtra, Gujarat and South India 3. Veena, a stringed music instrument from South India 4. A 19th century image of Mahishasur Mardini from Jalgaon, Maharashtra 5. 19th century vessels and urns for storing grain, from Gujarat and South India



from 19th century Maharashtra and South India, sandalwood containers and perforators.

On the first floor is the Gallery of Kitchen Utensils, with old kilns, copper ovens, a prototype of a hotplate and noodle stand, terracotta vessels, spice boxes, vegetable cutters and grain storage urns in metal, stone, wood, hide, papier mache and ceramic, on show.

Another section of the floor has a wide selection of Indian musical instruments, including pieces used by many maestros, such as the *khol* of Keshavrao Bhole, the flute of Pannalal Ghosh, the *tanpura* of Sawai Gandharva, the mini *tanpura* of Bal Gandharva and the *taar shehnai* of Madhukar Golwalkar. Also on view are rare

tribal *objets d'art*, quaint *hookahs* and pipes.

A huge 17th century lamp arch from Tamil Nadu and an early 19th century bullock cart from Ahmedabad grace the landings of the museum. On the second level, betel nut boxes, inkpots, indoor games and playing cards jostle for attention alongside a sun lamp from Nepal and a kadamba tree lamp, with the *rasa-lila* inscribed on it.

Textile weaves, such as Benaras *shaloos*, Maharashtrian *paithanis*, Kashmiri saris, Parsi *gaaras* and Bengal quilted cottons, Rabari folk garments from Kutch and Kathiawad in Gujarat, *jari* gold thread work and embroidered fabrics, beaded *rumaal* cloths and brocade table covers, hang on the same level.

One of the most awe-inspiring areas of the museum is the Mastani Mahal. Dallying with both his wife and beautiful mistress Mastani, the 18th century Peshwa, Bajirao, lived opulently in his Kothrud palace. The woodwork, framed windows and doorways of that regal home have been recreated here. Kelkar's daughter, Prabha Ranade, describes what it was like, in 1961-62, to actually transport the palace to its new museum locale. "Every afternoon my mother and I would travel to Kothrud, mason and carpenter in tow, numbering each brick, pillar and base stone to re-assemble them accurately."

An exploratory stroll through the museum, indeed, proves to be an enchanting experience. ♦