

# Capturing the image of Lahore

WHEN one thinks of photography in the context of Lahore, the name of 'chaacha' F.E. Chaudary springs to mind. When Pakistan came into being, he was nearing his 40th birthday and was recognized as a top photographer. This year was his 95th, and he remains alert, full of beans and, probably, the oldest living Lahori, let alone an icon in Pakistani photojournalism.

As a child I recollect my elder brother and myself 'pinching', we called it borrowing, his Quickly moped every time he came to our house. We learned to ride motorcycles at his expense. When my father was sacked as Editor of the *Civil & Military Gazette*, Lahore, two days after suffering a major heart attack, he left money under the old man's pillow and then led a huge protest campaign against the owner for being callous. But then the owner was a businessman and a sick Editor had no use for him. In those days a heart attack meant the end of a career, and it took my father two years to return to work.

But the career of F.E. Chaudary as a photographer is another story. He definitely is the pioneer of Pakistani photojournalism. So good was he at his craft that at official functions he would sit and get up just once to take a picture, just one snap and his work was done. Others would click a whole reel to select their best. But not F.E. Just one picture was enough. He had learnt his craft from the 'Masters', for before him a long line of distinguished photographers had come and gone.

Photography arrived in Lahore in the 1840s. No record of those days is known today. But some of

the most spectacular early images captured by the camera were of the architecture, people and landscape of the Punjab. Felice Beato, an Italian-born photographer who travelled through India between 1857 and 1858, took beautifully detailed photographs of the Golden Temple and of Lahore after the fall of the Sikhs. These were the very first photographs of Lahore that exist today.

A few years later, in 1864, Samuel Bourne, the most famous commercial photographer in India at the time, took photographs of Amritsar and Lahore, which included Maharajah Ranjit Singh's *marrhi*, his marble pavilion, and Lahore Fort. While in Srinagar he captured a stunning image of Colonel Alexander Gardner, known to have been in Ranjit Singh's court in 1831, dressed in a tartan suit and matching turban. The people of the Punjab, including Sikh soldiers, maharajas and Akalis were also frequently photographed. Bourne's work is known for its sheer beauty and balance, for black and white photography has its own artistic value.

But the first photographer to set up business in Lahore was William Bartholomew, who was an 'apothecary'. He set up his business inside the Lahore Fort in 1849, and then later moved to where the Lower Mall is today. On the death of William Bartholomew, his assistant, James Craddock, became the main photographer of Lahore. He set up the first photographer's shop on The Mall, and was the official photographer to the British East India Company, and later to the British government.

But then came the famous

Irish photographer William Henry Burke. Born in Peshawar in 1861, he grew up to become his photographer father's main apprentice. Willie got married in 1887 and soon became the branch manager for photographer James Craddock in Lahore. William Burke set up business at the hill station of Ooty in 1911 and also in Madras in 1913. Pictures by him in the India Office collection date from 1910-35.

One of the more important state events Burke photographed was the Rawalpindi Durbar of March 1885, at which Amir Abdur Rahman of Afghanistan met with the viceroy of India, Lord Dufferin. While there he met the young journalist from the Lahore-based *Civil and Military Gazette*. Kipling was apparently impressed by Burke's photography, and was responsible for luring him to come and live in Lahore. Kipling went on to work for six months in Simla, where again he may have come across Burke; by this time Simla had replaced Murree as the fashionable hill station and summer seat of the viceroy. One reason for this may have been the frequent cholera outbreaks with which Murree was plagued.

In July 1885, Burke opened a branch studio in Lahore, and this gradually became the centre of his business. He moved to Lahore to live and to bring up his children, although he still kept the Murree and Rawalpindi studios open. He also continued to make photography expeditions to the frontier areas, and to photograph the Punjab Frontier Force of the Queens Own Corps of Guides, based at Mardan. During the Second Afghan War in 1879,

Kipling and Burke covered it and for the first time brought to the British and Indian reading public first-hand accounts of the happenings there. Burke died in Lahore in 1899.

But then there came to Lahore an array of brilliant photographers. The names of W.Baker, A. Sache, Fred Bremner and James Rickalton are well known to researchers. To follow them were a long line of Indians. With the advent of the 20th century, a number of photography shops opened in Lahore. They all used the glass plate cameras, which even today can be seen operating in the Mayo Hospital Crossing near Hospital Road. With rapid changes in technology came photo-journalism, and all over the world an entirely new breed of men emerged, all of them dedicated to capturing on celluloid moments that could be cherished later.

It was in that new rare breed of men that was born F.E. Chaudary. He started his career as a schoolmaster at the St. Anthony's High School, Lahore, and soon became the chief photographer of *The Pakistan Times* of Lahore. A pioneer in Pakistani photojournalism, he retired from active service when the newspaper closed in the 1980s. With him also came to an end an era, almost entirely dedicated to capturing the world we see in black and white. At the age of 95, he represents the very finest traditions of journalism that we have seen. It has been a long march from the Italian Felice Beato to the Pakistani F.E. Chaudary. Maybe some day their entire work will be put together to present the mosaic that Lahore even today is. —MAJID SHEIKH