

## "Usha - The Divine Dawn"

As a former pedigree writer for the Thoroughbred sales in Germany, as an amateur jockey, instructor for young riders, as a steward and since the great 'Shergar' interested in the racing and breeding history of the Aga Khan family, which began with Aga Khan I. around 1850 in India, I was able to gain access to the events in racing and breeding in India through the acquisition of extensive racing literature and with the help of knowledgeable people. I may mention in particular Mrs N. Rupa (for many years the only female jockey in India and highly successful), Major Nargolkar, Mr Satish Iyer, Mr Siraj Attari and the late Mr Anil Mukhi.

Now, after the books "Horse Racing in India" (Deas Lynn) and "Classic Winners" (RWITC), another book has been published which will delight connoisseurs: "Grit, Grace & Glory, the Usha Story". I gratefully received it from Mrs Ameeta Mehra through mediation of Mr Siraj Attari.

This wonderful volume, splendidly illustrated with hundreds of photos, is one of the rare international racing books that describes in detail the hard breeding path of a thoroughbred stud to great success on the racetrack. Private and family history are not left out, texts by Sri Aurobindo touch on spirituality and faith. For a statistician - which I sometimes am - the chapter "Usha's Classic Hall of Fame" reads almost overwhelmingly - with the 78 victories of horses bred in Usha in India's 6 Classic races to date as well as the 305 victories in regional Classics. (By comparison, horses bred by the Aga Khan family have won 101 Classics in Europe and the USA since 1929).

This begs the question: how has this been achieved in a relatively short time since the stud was founded 50 years ago? No secret is made of this. Mrs Mehra says: "Usha's philosophy - Tender Loving Care." It starts with

the rigorous selection of the future dams and sires of the foals, with optimal husbandry, feeding and care. Mrs Mehra's words as a traditional breeder and those of her staff speak of a long-term perspective, as opposed to one of short-term commercial gain. Usha's breeding policy reveals that it is anchored in the strictest parameters of probability. The early and upcoming foundation mares, family formation and stallions are presented accordingly - from the champions Grey Gaston to Razeen, Steinbeck, Multidimensional and Speaking of Which. Major Nargolkar also analyses the 15 Indian Derby winners bred in Usha to date. I would like to add my personal Usha Star, one of the world record holders by number of starts, "Autumn Pearl", who remains unnamed in the book and who was ridden by N. Rupa 6 times in his 47 victories - 229 starts at 2-10 years old, 47 victories, 67 places.

In conclusion, reading the Usha story nourishes the conviction that Indian-born thoroughbreds need not fear international competition in their own country and will also be successful outside their home country.

"Grit, Grace & Glory - The Usha Story" is not only an uplifting and exciting read for racing fans, it is also a Textbook for both novice and experienced Thoroughbred breeders all over the world.

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