

## India connection

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At one time Javier Moro's calling card was as Dominique Lapierre's nephew who had collaborated with him on some projects. It wasn't an easy tag to shrug off but with *Passion India* (about the Spanish Anita Delgado who married the maharaja of Kapurthala) selling hundreds of thousands of copies in Spanish and English, Moro is more relaxed about his own credentials as a writer. Earlier works include *The Foot of Jaipur*, *The Mountains of the Buddha* and, with Lapierre, *It Was Five Past Midnight in Bhopal* about the Union Carbide tragedy. En route to Kathmandu, Moro spoke with Kishore Singh .

### Another book on India?

Actually, I'm on my way to Kathmandu, to write the script for a film on a Spanish woman who married a Sherpa. It's a co-production between Spain, France, UK and India. There's a huge demand in Spain about Spanish women who married Asians. Vicki Sherpa has been living in Kathmandu for 17 years, and I'm going to spend time with her to research and write my script. Initially, she married a Sherpa merely to get a visa to stay on in Kathmandu, then fell in love with him, and has since founded various schools that she runs there, including a school for teachers.

### You keep coming back to the subcontinent.

I'm 52 now. I first came to India when I was 14 — at a time when almost no one flew. I returned as an adult. India bewildered me. There were elephants on the street—back then, you even had bears on the roads.

India inspires me. I have friends here. It's safe to travel and is a wonderful country. The only time I had a sense of violence was when I carried a camera into Sonagachi, the red light district in Kolkata, to help Thomas Kelly on his book on the sex workers of South Asia. You can spend an afternoon talking in Sonagachi but not carry a camera ever!

### How was it writing the Bhopal book?

I have a background in anthropology, and I wanted to write a book on the fight to save the Amazon region, then Chernobyl... But everyone had forgotten Bhopal because it deals with the poorest of the poor. And nothing had ever been written about Bhopal.

Besides, it was in India, and I loved the thought of coming back. I was thrown out of the company's headquarter in USA. I didn't know how a chemical factory worked. I had to make it palatable to readers. Besides, it had happened 20 years earlier, so it was a long process and a lot of work.

### **And Passion India?**

I'm glad to see the book doing well in India. There's now going to be a second edition here and a Hindi edition by the end of the month.

### **Where have you travelled in India?**

I do a lot of travel writing in India for major magazines —Arunachal, Rajasthan, Himachal, Kerala —it's very vast.

### **Have you considered living in India?**

I stayed in a room in Bhopal for seven months, then in Delhi for four months when researching Passion India. I have wondered about living in India — Mumbai, perhaps, or Delhi — but would need a large project to do it.

### **Is there a lot of interest for India in Spain?**

Oh yes, Spain has opened to Indian fashion. There's a feeling that jobs are being taken away to India. There are two institutes — Casa Asia and Casa de l'India promoting cultural exchanges, scholarships and publishing programmes.

And next month, the Cervantes Institute will open in Delhi to promote Spanish language classes and culture. It will be headed by Oscar Pujol who spent 16 years at the Benaras Hindu University and has done a Spanish-Hindi dictionary.

### **What Indian books are you working on?**

I have two books planned on contemporary issues but I can't share the details since I am quite superstitious about these things.