



SELLING TRAVEL DREAMS

RASHMI BRAHMBHATT, THE HIGH PRIESTESS OF GLOBE TROTTERING, SHOWS THE WORLD DIFFERENTLY, SAYS RENU MEHTA

NO place is out of reach if you know Rashmi Brahmhatt. If you want to scale the Himalayas, soak in the Bahamas or trace the roots of your cultural heritage, all you have to do is go via her Crossways Travels and Tours in Toronto.

A NATURAL FLAIR

When Rashmi came to Canada in the 1970s, the business of travel was the last thing on her agenda. Trained as a television technician in Geneva, Switzerland, Rashmi was not upto going to school again in Canada and went on to do odd jobs. She worked as an interpreter for the immigration department and then spent six months

at a Montreal travel agent's office. To her surprise, she found that she had a natural flair for travel sales. In 1981, Rashmi floated Crossways Travels and Tours, her own travel agency.

Initially, she concentrated on the mainstream Canadian market and corporate travellers, but later decided to branch out into ethnic markets and came up with specialised tours such as the Art Explorer and In the Footsteps of Lord Buddha.

Today, Crossways is a travel agency with a difference. It does not sell tickets, it sells dreams. And Rashmi is all set and geared to making her clientele happy by tailoring her plan to their requirements.

SHOWING OFF THE REAL INDIA

Recently, Rashmi has geared her marketing perspective towards second generation Indian Canadians. Why, you ask?

Because, she found that many of them were reluctant to visit India. Because for them, India meant endless visits to relatives.

She took this up as a challenge. She has devised a travel plan to show a group of 18 to 25-year-olds—the real India—from its ancient monuments to glittering Bollywood. The group will also visit Indian homes and try out the different culinary specialties of the country.

According to Rashmi, the younger generation needs to embrace their Indian roots and culture. For her, although she has lived abroad for many years, India will always be her home, her 'janmabhoomi'.

She wants to see more Indians taking vacations to see India rather than visiting only for family gatherings and reunions. She says she'd like to take them to see the sunset and moon rise at the same time, possible only at Kanyakumari, the southern-most tip of India. She wants to show them the famous Ajanta and Ellora caves in Aurangabad, which are famous for the painted depictions of Lord Buddha's life; the vast tea estates in the East and the world famous Taj Mahal in Agra in the North. She wants them to experience, first hand, the beautiful Pink City, Jaipur.

Her own dream holiday would be in the Himalayas where she would like to meditate, interact with Nature and indulge in humanitarian work.