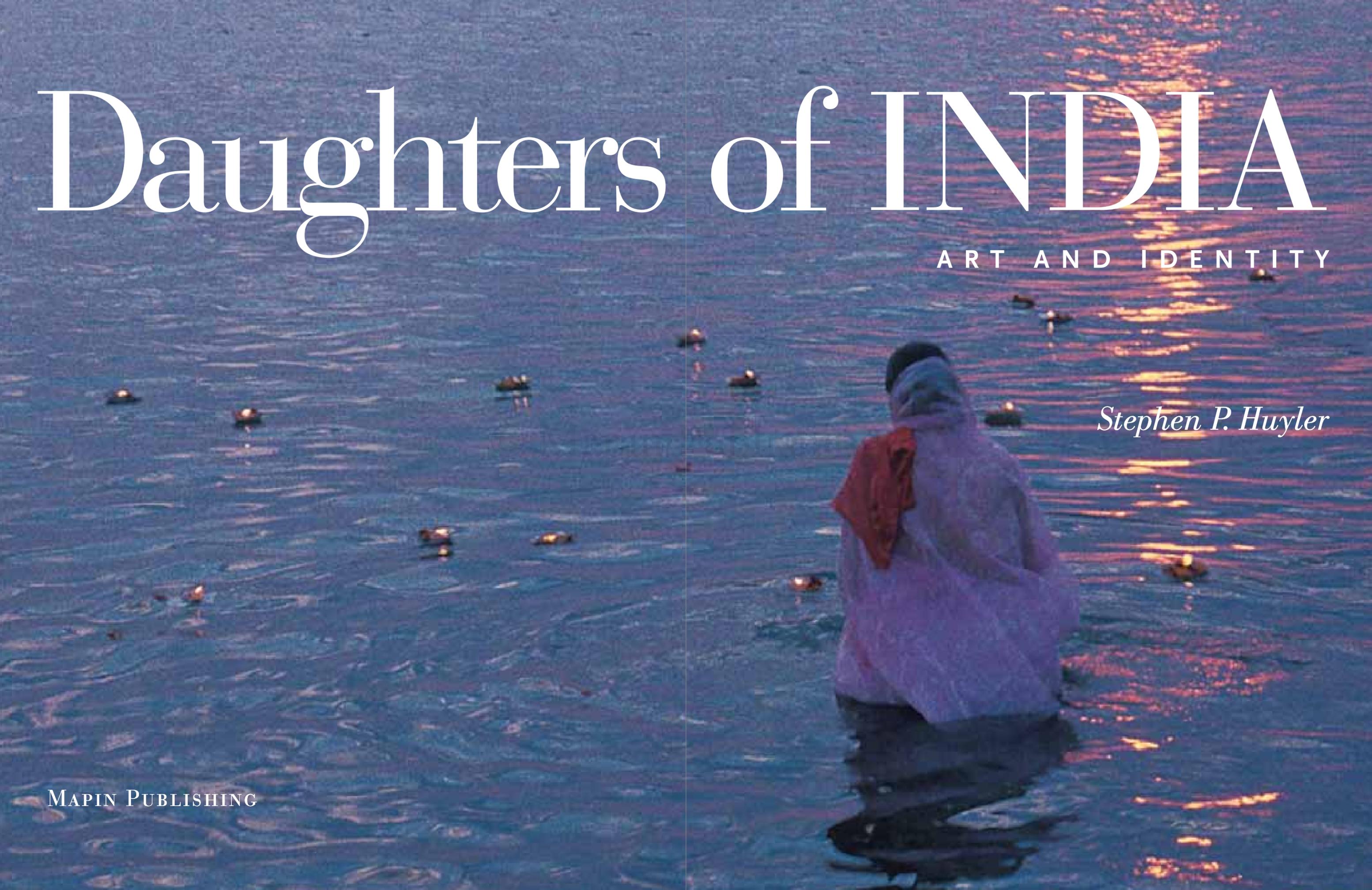


Daughters of INDIA

ART AND IDENTITY

Stephen P. Huyler

MAPIN PUBLISHING





PUSHPA Unsettling the Slums



Mumbai, Maharashtra





PUSHPA

“If my community is bulldozed, it will be very difficult. I will feel sad because I gave my blood and my money and my time to build this house and to help make this community. These are all my friends here. We are all like a large family. But it will happen some day, perhaps soon. I hope they will give me another home, but I am not sure. I have no money to buy land in Mumbai.”

WHETHER TRAVELLERS ENTER MUMBAI BY AIR, rail or road, their first view is usually of endless slums and inconceivable poverty. This impression is enough to make some tourists turn around immediately and head elsewhere. It requires a dogged determination to look further and discover a metropolis that is culturally fascinating and, ironically, very beautiful. Mumbai, previously known as Bombay, is India's financial capital, the centre of many of its industries, one of the world's largest deep-water ports, and the home of Bollywood, where thousands of Hindi films are produced every year. It is also India's most expensive city. Property values have escalated 40 per cent in the past year and compete with those of London, Paris, New York and Tokyo. An average of 400 families move into Mumbai every day of the year and most of them simply cannot afford accommodation.

CONTEMPORARY ESTIMATES OF MUMBAI'S POPULATION vary between 12 and 22 million. The lowest end of this scale qualifies Mumbai as the world's third largest city after Seoul and San Paolo, but unofficial calculations make it the most populous. Over 50 per cent of Mumbai's inhabitants are either homeless or poorly housed. They live in slums that occupy one-tenth of a crowded urban space of 107,000 acres. If the entire population is indeed 22 million, more than 11 million people live on less than 11,000 acres: 24 times the population density of New York City. Sanitation is minimal in the slums: there is an average of one toilet for every 1,400 people. And city water is available for only two hours each day in those areas where it is provided. Even then, 15 families have to share one spigot! The result is barely controlled chaos.

ALTHOUGH POVERTY IS STILL PERVASIVE IN MUCH OF INDIA, the rapid growth of India's middle class, the burgeoning of its cyber-industry and the increase of multinational investments have combined to make India one of the most powerful nations in the world. Estimates for the fiscal year 2007 indicate a phenomenal economic growth rate of 9.2 per cent! The consequent change is epidemic,

PRECEDING PAGES, LEFT:
Pushpa works as a sweeper
at Mumbai's Chhatrapati
Shivaji International
Airport.

RIGHT: To honour special
guests visiting her tiny
home, Pushpa draws a rice
flour *kolam*, or sacred
design, outside her front
door in the narrow alleyway
that serves as her street.

OPPOSITE: Pushpa is
forthright in her
determination to provide a
good future for her
daughter and son.