



**President Dwight D. Eisenhower** began his second term in January 1957. Calling for unity and freedom in his inaugural address, the President declared America's "firm and fixed purpose—the building of a peace with justice in a world where moral law prevails." Two years later Eisenhower became the first U.S. President to visit India. The Civil Rights Act of 1957 was introduced during his presidency and it kick-started the legislative program that was to include the 1964 Civil Rights Act and the 1965 Voting Rights Act that outlawed all official race-based discrimination in the United States.

# 50 Years Ago

## What Americans and Indians were doing in 1957

By DEEPANJALI KAKATI





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Indian cinema's seminal epic, *Mother India*, was released in October 1957. Produced and directed by Mehboob Khan, the bitter-sweet story of a rural family earned India its first Academy Award nomination, in the Best Foreign Language Film category in 1958. The movie featured a stand-out performance by Nargis, embodying the moral values and customs that form the basis of traditional Indian society. The character's rebellious son was played by Sunil Dutt, the actress' future husband.

**Althea Gibson**, 30, became the first African American to win the women's singles title at Wimbledon, in July 1957. She was honored with a ticker tape parade in New York City and an official welcome at New York City Hall. Gibson went on to win the women's singles title at the next Grand Slam event, the U.S. Championships at Forest Hills, and became the No. 1 woman player in the world. Gibson had visited India in 1955 on a State Department sponsored tour to promote tennis in Asia.



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Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru inaugurated one of the longest dams in the world, *Hirakud*, in Orissa on January 13, 1957. The dam and dikes together are 25.8 kilometers long. This was the first in a series of dams to harness the Mahanadi River. The 745-square-kilometer Hirakud Reservoir was one of the biggest built in India, with a gross capacity of more than six million acre-feet of water. Canals from the reservoir irrigated 271,950 hectares of land and the generators at the dam and a subsidiary powerhouse had an installed capacity of 232,500 KW. The Technical Cooperation Mission of the United States contributed equipment worth about \$3 million to the project.

A LOOK BACK



Courtesy Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences

Based on Jules Verne's novel, the big-budget Hollywood extravaganza *Around the World in 80 Days* won five Oscars, including Best Picture. It had been nominated for eight. David Niven played Phileas Fogg, an eccentric English gentleman spurred by a wager to prove he could travel around the world in 80 days. He set off from London and traveled by train, ship, elephant and balloon, accompanied by his resourceful valet, Passepartout, portrayed with great élan by Mexican comedian Cantinflas. Along the way they rescued an Indian princess, Aouda, played by a young Shirley Maclaine, from burning on the funeral pyre of her husband. Directed by Michael Anderson, the visually spectacular movie more or less invented the idea of the cameo. Stars Frank Sinatra, Marlene Dietrich and Red Skelton popped up in bit parts, sometimes in disguise.

The first exhibition of American crystals engraved with designs by Asian artists, including five prominent Indians, came to India in May 1957. The "*Asian Artists in Crystal*" exhibit comprised 36 drawings by artists including Jamini Roy, Phani Bhusan, Gopal Ghose, Rama Maharana and K.S. Kulkarni from India. Their works were engraved on fine Steuben crystal by American craftsmen. The designs were collected by Karl Kup, curator of prints at the New York Public Library. Fashioned by hand at the Steuben Glass Company of New York, the designs were reflections of Buddhist, Hindu and Islamic thought and tradition. The exhibition visited Calcutta, New Delhi, Mumbai and Chennai.

The top-rated American TV show of the year, *Gunsmoke*, is often referred to as the first adult Western. Adapted from a radio series, *Gunsmoke* conveyed the pioneering spirit of America, with some historical background in each episode. Set in Dodge City, Kansas, in the 1870s, the series was an exploration of life in the community, even though it had its share of bank robberies, cattle rustlings and shoot-outs. *Gunsmoke* holds the record for the longest run of any scripted series with continuing characters on American prime time television. There were 635 episodes between 1955 and 1975, most of them starring Dennis Weaver (left) as the deputy and all of them featuring James Arness (right) as Sheriff Matt Dillon. Creator John Meston once joked, "If I had known it would last this long, I would never have created the darn thing."



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For a world long used to manually wound watches, it was time for a change. Hamilton Watch Company, founded in Lancaster, Pennsylvania, announced the launch of the world's first battery-powered watch with great fanfare on January 3, 1957. The asymmetrical shape of the "*Ventura*" underscored its new and innovative technology. The Ventura was first released in a 14-karat yellow gold case with the option of a black or silver dial. Initially, it had a matching strap of 24-karat gold appliqué but it was replaced with a conventional strap a few months later.



Courtesy Hamilton Watch Company