

JYOTI BHATT | SATYAJIT RAY **INDIAN** S. PAUL | SHYAMAL DATTA

# PHOTO ARTS

February 2019

Special Issue **KIPF 2019**



A SPECIAL EDITION DEDICATED TO THE KOLKATA INTERNATIONAL PHOTOGRAPHY FESTIVAL 2019



A CELEBRATION OF WORKS OF 250 PHOTOGRAPHERS FROM 40 COUNTRIES WITH PORTFOLIOS SPANNING ACROSS EVERY CONTINENT



Photography's MAHA KUMBH- KIPF 2019 from Feb 28- March 6

## **Dear Readers**

It is a matter of great pride and honor for us to be associated with the Kolkata International Photography Festival of 2019 - the Maha Kumbh of Photography. Asia's largest photography festival the KIPF will feature works of over 250 photographers from 40 different countries. In addition to that the festival will include portfolios panning across every single continent of the world. We are extremely grateful to Mr Kounteya Sinha, the renowned journalist with over 16,000 articles to his name and an acclaimed photographer who also happens to be the Festival Director for the KIPF, for taking time out of his busy schedule to don the hat of the "Guest Editor" for this issue. It was his valuable insight and his willingness to provide us a platform at this grand event which made this issue possible.

This issue features the photographs and a detailed analysis of the works of some of the finest photographers of the bygone era, the likes of S.Paul, Jyoti Bhatt, Shyamal Datta and Satyajit Ray and a look into Mr Kounteya Sinha's project "Unremembered" in which he puts humans in frames in his quest to challenge the lack of identity which haunts a vast section of our society. We have also handpicked 25 exhibits which will be a part of this festival, this collection of 25 photographs highlights the finest works of some of the stalwarts and upcoming talents of this era and provides a deep insight into a number of pertinent issues. We hope you will appreciate our effort which is aimed at celebrating one of the biggest photography festivals all set to unfold in Kolkata.

Regards

Rahul Bera (Editor of Photography & Design)

## **Indian Photo Arts**

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 Indian Photo ARTS





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Special Issue

# Kolkata International Photography Festival 2019

## Photography's Maha Kumbh

Works of over 250 photographers from 40 countries reaches the Kolkata International Photography Festival (KIPF) 2019 - Asia's largest such extravaganza to kick off on Feb 28 in Kolkata.

Portfolios pan across every single continent of the world.

From how the minority communities of Pakistan celebrate to an American photographer's quest to explore life in a big city captured after walking 20 kms a day for five long years, from the trials and tribulations faced by Bangladeshi migrants to Italy to the global menace of human trafficking, from the modern sea bathing culture in Netherlands to the hidden world of one of the world's

most endearing creatures – pandas, powerful narratives from 40 countries will form part of India's Maha Kumbh of photography.

The Kolkata International Photography Festival (KIPF) 2019 that is shaping to become Asia's largest such festival will kick off at the Indian Museum on February 27.

Between Feb 28-March 6, photography lovers from across the world will savor an endless plethora of raw powerful story telling with photographers from Ethiopia to Nigeria, US to Iran, Japan to South Africa, Italy to Tunisia and Germany to Pakistan forming one of the largest foreign crop of powerful story tellers to ever come into India for a single festival.

The gigantic festival that boasts of photographs dating back to the 1940s to present day and is all set to serve a resounding reminder of Bengal's domination in the field of arts boasts of some staggering numbers – over 250 photographers from as many as 40 countries showcasing nearly 1500 photographs in over 10 iconic venues.

The eight-day festival has been christened the Maha Kumbh of photography and will turn Kolkata – India's intellectual capital into a gigantic venerable gallery.

Shows will take place in almost all of the city's top institutions like the Victoria Memorial and the Indian Museum to galleries like Harrington and Kolkata Centre of Creativity (KCC).

Some of the city's most stunning private homes turned art spaces like Daga Nikunj to one of the city's most gigantic movie theatres that now stands defunct – The Gem Cinema will also convert into a gallery during the days of the festival. The

other venues also include the whole of Indian Council for Cultural Relations, Maya Art Space, Nandan and Kolkata Information Centre.

Interestingly, KIPF also boasts of being the first ever photography festival that will showcase work from every single continent of the world including the final frontier - Antarctica.

A singularly rare cache of photographs, taken by two of Bengal's greatest achievers – Sudipta Sengupta who was the first Indian woman to set foot on Antarctica and live there for over six months and Satyarup Siddhanta who just recently became the only Indian to ever climb Antarctica's tallest volcanic summit - Mount Sidley - will showcase life in the heart of the frozen kingdom and also that from top of the continent's highest point.

Festival's founding director Madhuchhanda Sen who also owns and runs the iconic Maya Art Space said "We are immensely proud to be able to showcase such a large variety of work from the far corners of the globe. The number of top photographers joining in to show their works has reached nearly 40. Kolkata is considered to be India's Mecca art and culture. The repertoire we are putting up will make KIPF 2019 a must attend festival for the world's who's who. This will be the first time that a photography festival of such a massive



scale - both in terms of the content and the scale of participants will take place in India”.

Festival director Kounteya Sinha - world renowned photographer who critics are calling the modern master of visual storytelling said “Imagine getting to see Raghu Rai’s (India’s most revered living photographer) unseen Kolkata photographed over 40 years to rare photographs clicked by Satyajit Ray himself that have languished in their family vaults. Imagine standing and watching one of India’s most expensive artist Paresh Maity’s gigantic photographs of Venice to iconic painters Jogen Chowdhury, Bikash Bhattacharjee, Ganesh Haloi and Chittrovanu Majumdar’s intimate works through camera under the same roof”.

Sinha added “Imagine Ahmed Ali’s prints sourced from 1940s showcasing the birth of Bengal’s industries to iconic doyen Jyoti Bhatt’s never seen before repertoire on rural India. Imagine being able to see some of Bengal’s greatest names from across fields – cinema to art, literature to music showing their photography for the first time ever – award winning filmmaker Goutam Ghose, globally acclaimed writer Kunal Basu to music director Shantanu Moitra all showing their works in a single festival”. He said “India has a very rich tradition of photography dating back to centuries. Erstwhile royal families hold a treasure trove of unknown and unseen

works that have long languished in their vaults. However, families such as these are now keen for the world to see those treasures. What you will see at the festival is both traditional rare photo works, many of the repertoires have never been shown in public space and the best of contemporary photography from the modern masters”.

The festival will not just see repertoires of the world’s greatest artists but will also have some of the biggest names from the world of photography come into the city to interact and mentor a giant pool of the city’s best talent, through workshops and debates on new trends and practices.

The festival that is taking place under the aegis of the Maya Art Space has the best photographers from across the world showcasing their repertoires. They include Ami Vitale and Ed Kashi from USA, Greg Marinovich (South Africa), Liam Larson (Mozambique), Carlos Saavendra (Colombia), Abir Abdullah (Bangladesh), Wolfgang Zurborn Germany), Isabel Corthier (Belgium), Paolo Patrizi (ITA), Hao Wu Young (China), Kiyoshi Niiyama (Japan), Filippo Pomano (Italy) and Julio de Matos (Portugal) among others.

KIPF has also been very clear about its intention to show some of India’s greatest work to the world during the festival – renowned artists include Prashant Panjiar, Ram Rahman, Dinesh Khanna, Irfan Nabi,

Idris Ahmed, Vineet and Rohit Vohra, Soumitra Dutta, Dhritiman Mukherjee, Jayanta Saha, Mala Mukherjee, Bivas Bhattacharjee, Kushal Gangopadhyay, Swapan Nayak, Soham Gupta and Swastik Pal just to name a few.

Another major highlight of the festival will be the first ever look into Raghu Rai’s 40 years of photographing Kolkata and specially the Durga Puja. India’s most famous living photographer will for the first time ever, showcase 25 of his works on Kolkata taken over the last four decades.

One of the major highlights of the festival will also be a string of incredible public installations being created by Bengal’s greatest installation artists like Partha Dasgupta, Sushanta Paul, Bhabotosh Sutar and Pradip Das.

India’s renowned art critic and historian Uma Nair who is part of KIPF’s illustrious advisory board said “KIPF is going to be a watershed moment for the contemporary practice of photography in India. In an age where communication is instant, and we see a melding of East and West like never before, KIPF will transcend boundaries and celebrate the beauty of the common man.

We will see images that create an incredible mosaic of inter cultural dialogues that reflect a diversity of thought and artistic style. The photographers will unveil

cultural islands that foster philosophies of human fabric. When the past and the present culminate it create the essence and fervor of a global community. Thus, KIPF will engage in spiritual, social, rural and aesthetic dialogues with traditions other than our own”. Nair will herself curate some of the collections. She is also on the advisory board of the festival along with stalwarts like Jogen Chowdhury (world renowned artist), Sandip Ray (multiple award-winning filmmaker), Gautam De (director, Indian Council of Cultural Relations), Nemai Ghosh (iconic photographer), filmmaker Goutam Ghosh and Ganesh Holoi (eminent Indian painter). Countries from where works have already come in for KIPF 2019 include Italy Columbia Mozambique Nepal Singapore Iran Pakistan Canada Belgium South Africa Sweden France China USA Australia Thailand Nigeria Germany Japan Ethiopia Tunisia Bangladesh Mexico Poland Vietnam Netherland and Israel. Rarely seen portfolio of India’s most awarded photographer S Paul will also form part of the festival. The festival will pay tribute to the man who was referred to as “the humanist photographer” and as “the Henry Cartier- Bresson of India”. Never before has any festival had access to Paul’s intricate and private works. KIPF will host the first such show of Paul’s unseen repertoire. Paul was the first Indian to be profiled by The British Journal of Photography in 1967.

Arguably, Kolkata's most revered old man of photography - Nema Ghosh who is most known for working with Satyajit Ray as his photo biographer for over two decades, starting with Goopy Gyne Bagha Byne till Ray's last film Agantuk will showcase a body of work across his life – not just on Bengal but also his tryst with Bollywood.

RAGHU RAI said “The Kolkata International Photography Festival is the largest of its kind, happening in India. I feel the state government must sponsor and support such kind of creative exercises meant to uplift many young minds. I wish it all the very best and I look forward to being part of it”.

India's ace actor and statesman Soumitra Chatterjee said “Of all the addictions, photography is one of the most dangerous. I have taken only one single photograph in my life. It was a shot I took of the second Hooghly Bridge on one side and a boat on the other signifying the new and the old co-existing in perfect harmony with the river. Photographs however mean a lot to me – what fascinates me is the power it has to capture historic moments, thereby playing a massive role in our daily lives today. My life and my career have been intertwined with photography – my director Satyajit Ray was a master in it. I am therefore very proud that my city is hosting such a large festival – the Kolkata International Photography Festival (KIPF).

This is sheer history in the making. It has my full support”.

The latest rage in the music world ANUPAM said “When I was younger, one of Sukumar Ray's famous lines ‘is photography an art?’ haunted me. Earlier we thought photography was just a replica of reality – but as I grew older and matured, I realized that this medium has its very own taste, aesthetics and has the ability to bring out what is hidden. I couldn't pursue serious photography but I use my phone regularly to take shots and post on my social media handles. I can't wait for the Kolkata International Photography Festival – the maha kumbh of photography to begin. I will hop every single gallery to view the incredible repertoires. Such a gigantic festival was a long time coming and I'm glad it is finally happening. I wish it all the best and I am part of it in every way”.

World renowned dancer TANUSHREE SHANKAR said “Photography has been an intrinsic part of my family. To me it brings out moments that most of us overlook with the naked eye. For me, these private lost moments are very important and photographs capture them for us to cherish them in posterity. I sincerely feel photographers are specially created by God with an ability to see through life's fleeting moments of magic that most people miss. I wish the KIPF all the very best and I feel honored to be part of it. I

will be visiting all the galleries, seeing all the powerful portfolios by both international and national artists. Kolkata, this is one event you cannot afford to miss”.

Another major highlight of the festival will be the portrayal of Jyoti Bhatt's work in a curated show called Living Walls - a testimony of India's indigenous arts and vanishing traditions. Jyoti Bhatt – world renowned Indian painter, printmaker and photographer known for colorful works that combine a graphic sensibility with traditional Indian folk design will show 20 photographs of the Indian countryside. Bhatt's early studies of painting and fresco led to a focus on intaglio printing processes in the 1960s and '70s, when he picked up a camera and began to take photos of rural life in Gujarat and Maharashtra. Bhatt shares with KIPF a suite of his works that define him as a documentarian, an ethnographer, as an archivist of collective history and one who focused on artistic terrain in the lives of people who belonged to social margins.

One major draw of the festival will be the photographs taken by Bengal's most revered actor Prosenjit Chatterjee. Stalwarts from Kolkata too – Sunil K Dutt to Arun Ganguly to Benu Sen will showcase their works.

Richa Agarwal, the chief of the Kolkata Centre for Creativity (KCC) said “We are

very proud to be associated with Asia's largest International Photography Festival - Kolkata International Photography Festival, 2019. Photography is an art that brings to life an artist's vision through lens and we at KCC are committed to showcase world's greatest artists. The inaugural event at KCC will witness a plethora of renowned photographers and some of their remarkable works, interesting sessions and screenings. We are elated to be a part of this vast canvas of visual storytelling that is expected to mesmerize the people of Kolkata.”

Noni Khullar, the head of Harrington Street Arts Centre said “Harrington is happy to be one of the co-hosts of the KIPF 2019 and more so because it is once again showcasing Raghu Rai's works. Raghu ji's interpretation through the lens of his camera has been a window to a fascinating India which most definitely captivates one's attention. Personally, I feel his works are magical”.

Dozens of schools too have taken part at KIPF – 50 of which have been selected. Among which, 20 photographs will be shown in print form and the rest on digital platforms. The open call competition section called Finite/Infinite too saw a massive response and KIPF has selected top 50 of the photographs that have won among which 20 photographs to be exhibited in print.





**KOUNTEYA SINHA**  
Festival Director  
Renowned Journalist  
Acclaimed Photographer  
Explorer



**RAGHU RAI**  
Padmashree  
Legendary Photographer  
Honorary member of the KIPF  
2019 advisory panel



**MADHUCHHANDA SEN**  
Founder Director  
Explorer  
Photographer



**SOUMITRA CHATTOPADHYAY**  
Actor Extraordinaire  
Statesman  
Icon  
KIPF 2019 Ambassador



**TANUSHREE SHANKAR**  
Dancer  
Artist  
Icon  
KIPF 2019 Ambassador







Special Issue

# Unremembered

**INTERNATIONALLY RENOWNED PHOTOGRAPHER KOUNTEYA SINHA TO PUT HUMANS IN FRAMES AT ASIA'S LARGEST PHOTOGRAPHY FESTIVAL - KIPF. CALLS THE SHOW "UNREMEMBERED" - HIS PROTEST AGAINST INVISIBILITY, ASKS THE WORLD TO NOTICE, TO CARE.**



**H**is penchant for the extra ordinary, for the gigantic, for art that must have soul is legendary.

But of all the things that India's best story teller Kounteya Sinha has mesmerised us with over the past couple of years, this one has to be the most spectacular magnum opus.

Sinha, the world renowned journalist turned artist is opening his spectacular new idea –“Unremebered” to the world on March 2 in Kolkata as part of Asia's largest extravaganza – the Kolkata International Photography Festival (KIPF).

Imagine a burnt down cinema hall. You walk in through walls peeling off like a snake shedding her skin.

You enter this gigantic space that is now dead but was once Kolkata's favourite address for cinema lovers.

Sinha is a photographer and you've come to see photographs. You look around for photographs. But what you find are real people, in flesh and blood looking at you through large wooden frames.

“Unremebered” is India's first ever show of human photographs – where pictures talk to people.

Sinha, who is actually the festival director of the KIPF says “Identity or the lack of it has always bothered me. We photographers document the world with pure honesty, telling stories that are trying so hard to hide. But how many people actually care about the subjects they photograph? How many even want to find

out their names, who they are, where do they come from, what is their favourite memory, why are their lives invisible, what is his or her worst nightmare, do they have people to love or are they just things no one notices?”.

“My latest show is therefore a serious protest against invisibility. Unremembered as a show will have photographs but the focus will be on human subjects. Real people I wanted to photograph will be sitting there as human subjects. Instead of showing their photographs that you would have otherwise admired for the character of their faces or the play of light, I have decided to show the real humans instead. Unremembered will tell people how to remember. The next time they photograph someone, the next time they see someone as a subject, they must remember that this is a person, not a thing,” Sinha said.

“Unremembered” will open to Kolkata's venerable art lovers on March 2 and will go on till March 4, every day from 3pm-6 pm.

Sinha has chosen one of Kolkata's most astounding location for his latest show – the abandoned single screen movie theatre - Gem Cinema.

What's better, the scenography, the visual interpretation and installations of the show is being done by one of Bengal's greatest artists – Susanta Paul.

The national award winning designer who has become an institution in Kolkata for











his work on the city's largest event – Durga Pujas – having conceptualised and created 42 gigantic such pujas in two decades said “Kounteya’s incredibly powerful idea coupled with his insanely haunting photographs impressed me beyond measure. The way he sees the world, the way he captures a story that others can’t

see, the way he moves people with his art – the emotional reaction he brings out in them, lay to rest the ever churning debate on whether photography is art. It is pure art for me. It has a way to move and captivate that only art can do. Kounteya shows us that photography isn’t about capturing beautiful things or isn’t a fixed

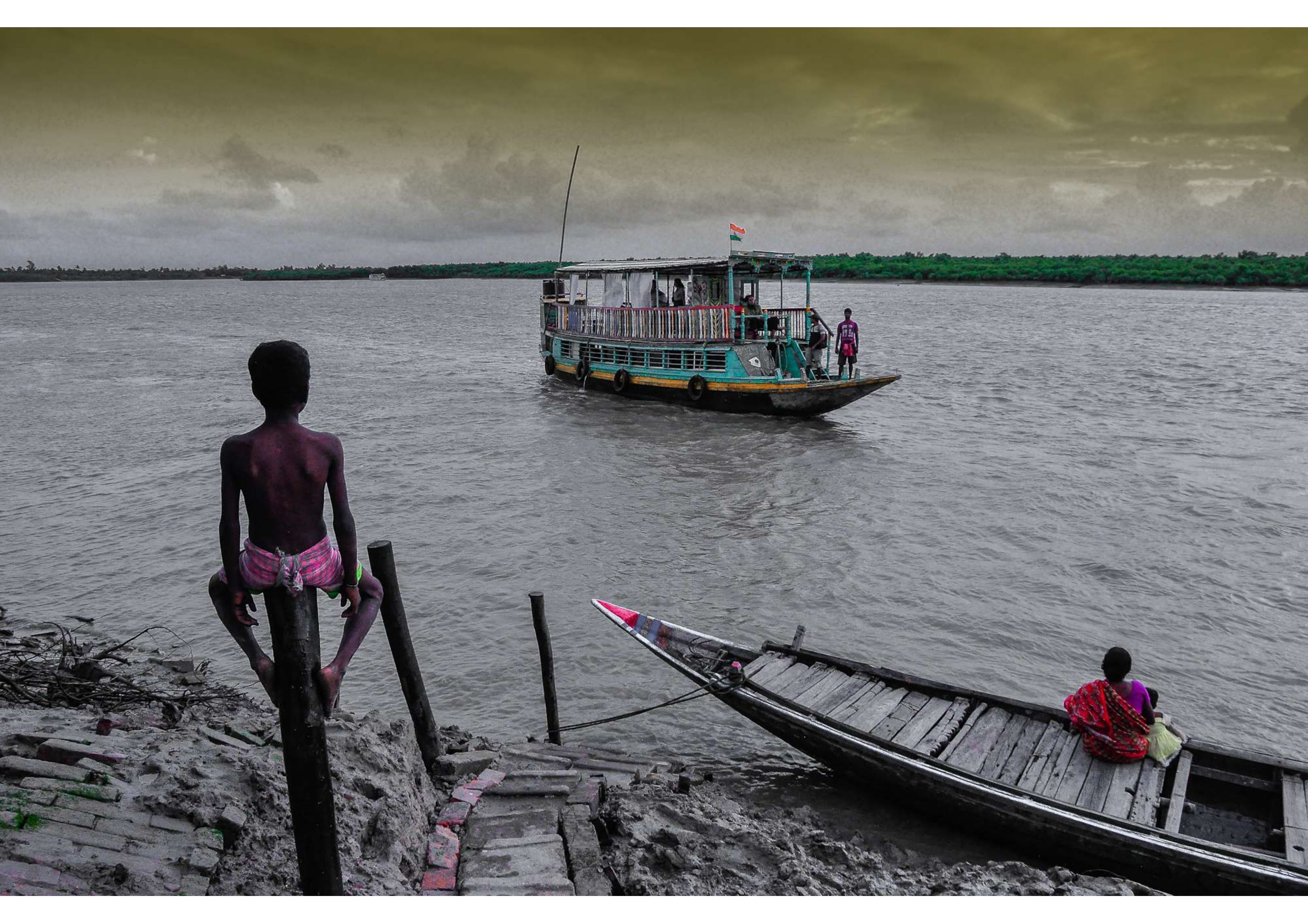
frame. Those beautiful things, those photographs must say something powerful. They must capture specific moments that provokes the audience to look within themselves, introspect”.

Paul added “In the duration of our lifespan, all of us ignore or are unable to see things

around us – we fail to notice. Then one day our life comes to an end and we leave without having noticed so many things. Kounteya’s Unremembered tells people to notice. My installations will draw people to come out and notice – as an audience they have to cross the boundary to reach the subject and see things rather than live through life scratching only its surface. As a student at Kolkata’s Government Art College, my initiation to the world public installation started with Durga Pujas. My art practise is therefore born out of large spaces. White cube or gallery shows is too congested for my thinking. My art is also a collaborative exercise. In the Durga Pujas, I as a director conceptualise an idea but hundreds of people together make it a reality. Both Unremembered and the Gem Cinema is beyond the traditional white cube and is a deeply though provoking space. Kolkata wouldn’t have seen a show like this ever before”.

Sinha’s subjects are raw and real. From a lone Hindu boy living in perfect harmony in a fully Muslim locality to an 80-year-old woman who settled in Bengal but carries her Andhra roots through the jewellery she wears every day, from women who are progressive and bold to those still reeling under the injustice of conservative thinking, from a female Baul singer to an abandoned child, Sinha’s human photographs will teach the world once again to see.









Kounteya has a real taste for flamboyance. He is like “an untiring tidal wave” that loves what is daunting and keeps returning to the shore to tame the impossible. A disappearing act that is probably his only

predictable virtue. But then, he appears out of nowhere with this eclectic and path breaking work and takes cities and people by storm, only to once more return to his solitary lair.

His projects are elaborate, spectacular and a sure recipe for a win. His sense of dimension and size of an idea even before it is born is an uncanny gift. And this time too, the artist in him hasn't disappointed.

His intense, borderline obsession with “art that matters” – where he believes that creativity must have purpose and meaning and must be strong and wild enough to take on a mission, however difficult, has









once again made this young creative power house come up with an idea that will take the world by storm.

Sinha who once made 60 of Kolkata's rickshaw wallas the chief guests of his

show and brought Om Puri to interact with them – the original rickshaw wala in the movie of City of Joy said “For me, everything has to matter, no fluff. Shows must be bigger than the artists. They must

be able to look down upon us. And by size I don't mean how large the show is but how big actually are the dimensions of an idea”.

Unremembered is a show that will shake

up the art world and take the first edition of the KIPF to heady heights. You will never forget what you will see.

Miss it at your own peril.





ॐ  
असतो मा सद्गमय।  
तमसो मा ज्योतिर्गमय।  
मृत्योर्मा अमृतं गमय।

सत्यं वद।

धर्मं चर।

सरस्वत्यै नमः

पाक शाला

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ture is the basic truth of life





















**Kounteya Sinha**-the renowned journalist turned artist and one of the finest storytellers is the man behind the magnum opus **“Unremembered”**, the first ever show of human photographs in India which opens to the world on March 2 in Kolkata.

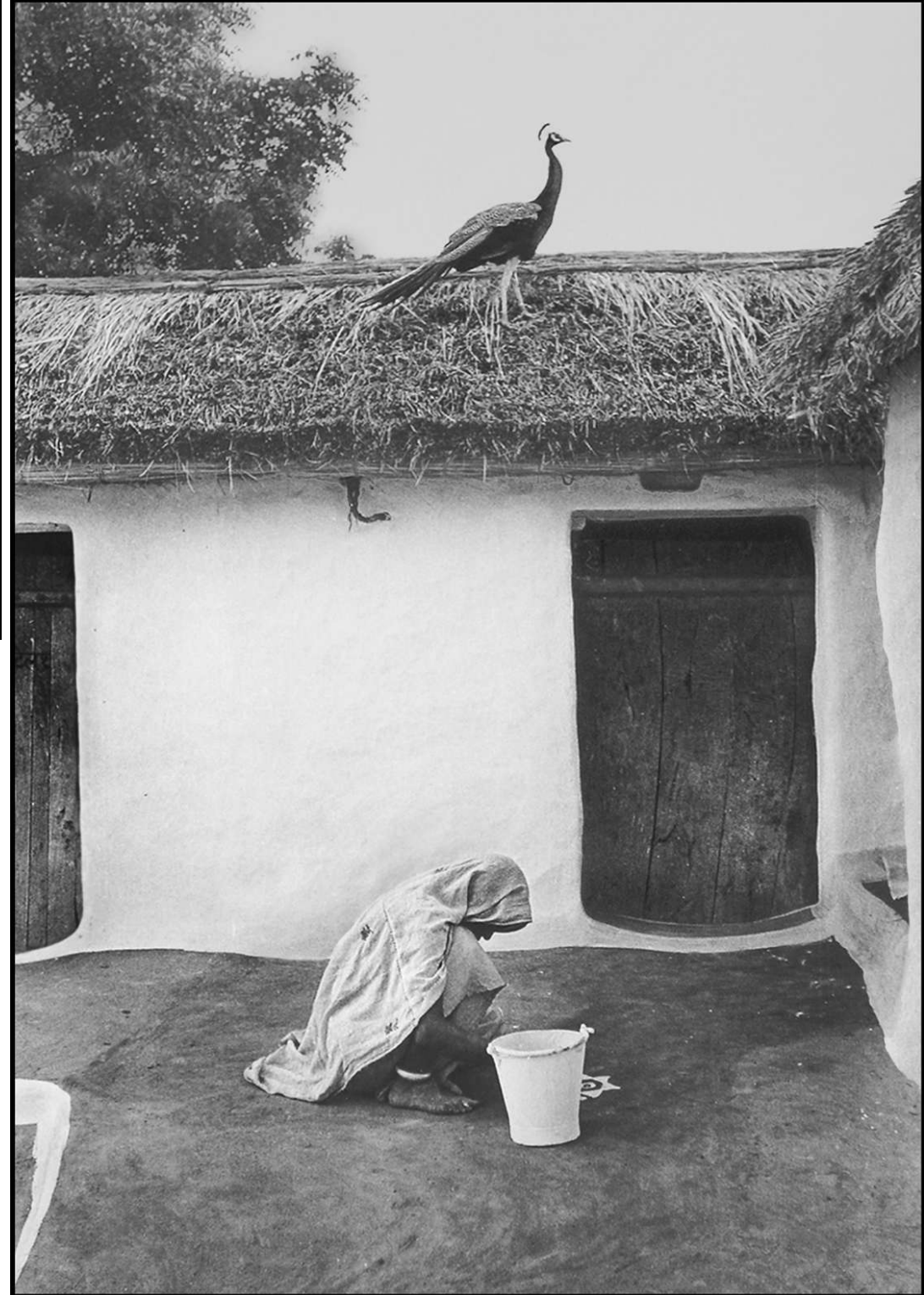
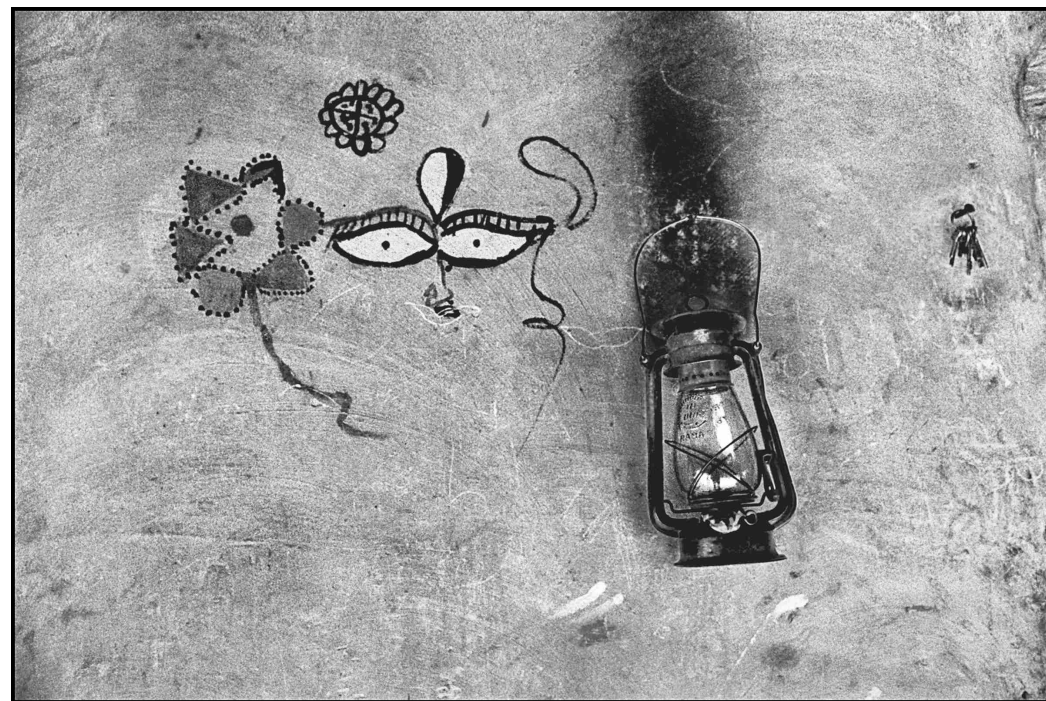


**Susanta Paul**-the national award winning designer and the man who conceptualised more than 42 gigantic Durga Pujas over the past two decades is at the helm of the scenography, the visual interpretation and the installations of Unremembered.



**Uma Nair**-a renowned critic and curator has been writing for the past 30 years on art and culture. She believes art is a constant journey which encompasses learning and growing and she herself had learnt by observing masterpieces of art at the best shows in New York and Washington D.C.





Special Issue

# Jyoti Bhatt

## Living Traditions: 1967-1995

by Uma Nair (Curator & Critic)

Indian artist, and renowned printmaker, Jyoti Bhatt's photographs speak of an India that belonged to the past. The 25 images in this exhibition chronicle the artists's travels through rural environments in Gujarat, Rajasthan, Haryana, Madhya Pradesh, Orissa, West Bengal and Bihar, from 1967 to 1995. Bhatt has been actively engaged with photography since the mid

60s, and all of these images constitute an important chapter in the history of photography in India, demonstrating great artistic sensibility, creativity and a unique understanding of traditional cultures. Each print can be seen as an artwork in its own right, as well as a historical document and visual aide to Bhatt's paintings and prints.



The concentration in my work is not just on the art forms, but also on capturing the integrated relationship between art and people — how the two are interwoven in the act of daily living," he explains. Bhatt began documenting the folk and tribal culture of rural India in the summer of 1967. He travelled widely, visiting villages and tribal regions, and his journey has turned into an archival encyclopaedia that posits the past as a relic in the leaves of history.

### Visual expressions

Jyoti Bhatt the printmaker with his love for intaglio discovered the tribal arts of Indian villages with his camera. "I was asked to do a documentation of some of these villages," says he, "The idea was to capture the visual expressions in their original setting along with people who inhabited these spaces. While I was focussing on daily traditions, like wall paintings and rangolis, I realised after I looked the works that there was a strong thread of transience. Suddenly it seemed as if I had captured vanishing walls in the lives of so many village dwellers."

Jyoti Bhatt captures his journeys across Gujarat, Rajasthan, Haryana, Madhya Pradesh, Orissa, West Bengal and Bihar from the 1960's to the 1990's. Walking into India's villages and capturing women and children and huts and walls, this series of photographs is more than a documentation. It is an archive of the living

" traditions of India's rustic villages – the arts and crafts of the folk idiom that were not just forms, but living relics of the rituals that were integrated into the lives of humble dwellers embodying narratives that hark back to centuries ago.

### Calf in reverie

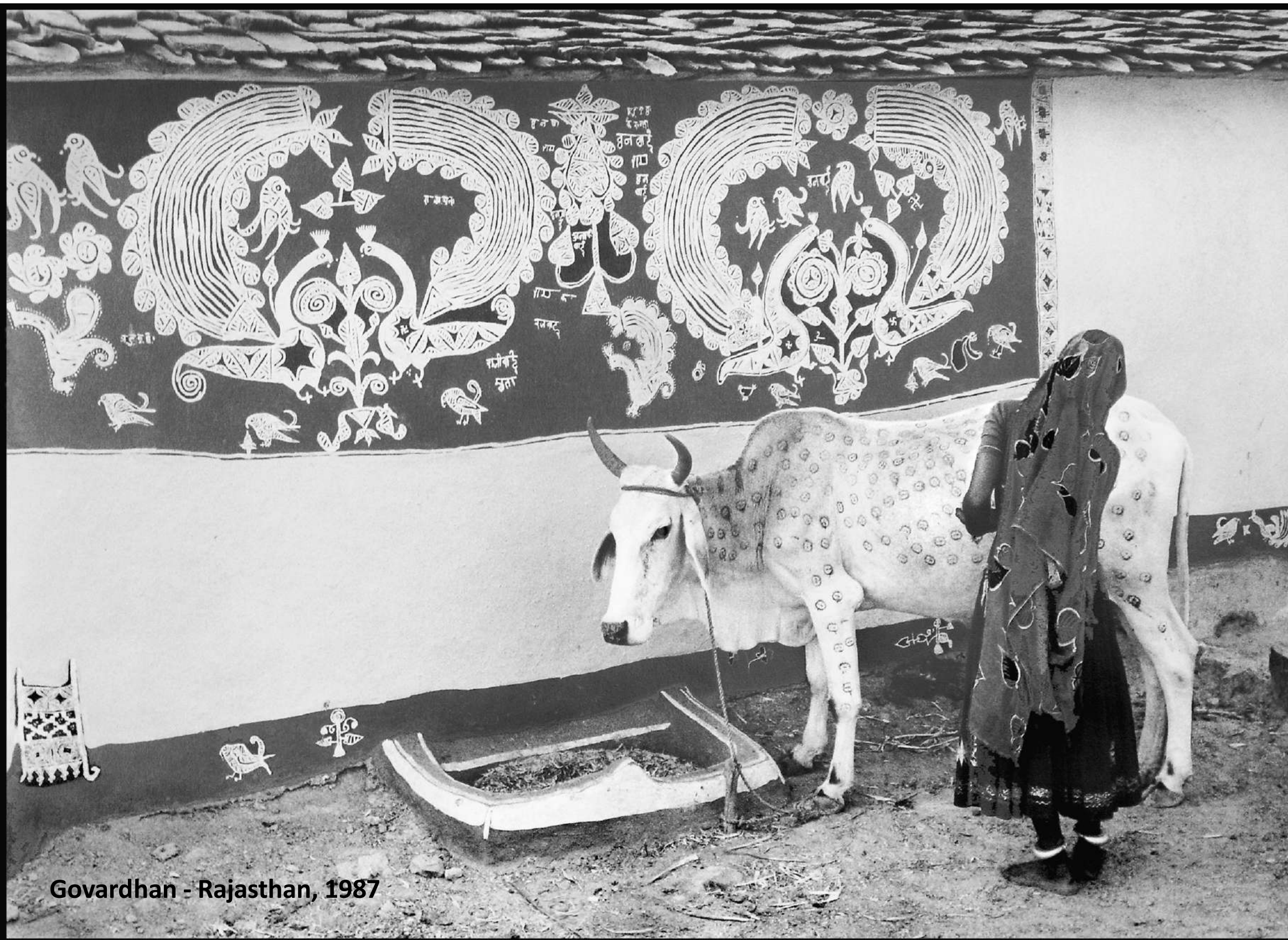
Bhatt signifies the truth that art for them is more than a centuries-old tradition, it is a part of the society they belong to. "I noticed most often that what was on their walls was what they missed, sometimes it was the dying peacocks or the tigers, but it was fascinating to see that they were painting their inherited memories. I felt that as contemporary artists how far behind we are, we are not even truthful to our own journeys." Bhatt says he has focused on two basic art forms in series, art forms on walls and floors. "It's because I studied painting that I could appreciate certain forms easily without bias. Most of this art is alive because the women were doing it all and they didn't change as much the men."

Look at images such as Calf-Madhya Pradesh 1983 and Govardhan Rajasthan 1987 – in both works, there is a connectivity between the art, the wall, the people, and the bull and the calf. There is an inter-relationship between their art and their lifestyle. The bull stands in tranquil comfort as the lady paints on his body, for the Govardhan festival -- what entices is the drawing on the wall. In the second

Calf - Madhya Pradesh, 1983







**Govardhan - Rajasthan, 1987**

case, the expression in the calf's open eye paints a reflection of absolute reverie while you see the art on the two makeshift walls on two sides. There are two apertures here, one in the makeshift wall and the other in

the calf's eye – a tender reflection of the beauty of animals and life enlivened. The two makeshift walls covered with a coat of clay and cow dung over which the women apply chhuimitti (white clay)

soaked in water are artistic in themselves. The parallel, lateral strokes are created while the clay is still wet and it is this that adds the evocative elegance – a counterpoint between animate and

inanimate.

### **Moments into memories**

The only objective behind the series for Bhatt was to record the medium since it was the only way he could save it. Ladies drawing mandana become tools of historical testimonies. While one work looks at a seated lady drawing an intricate mandana the second work has an old woman in a rural courtyard in Banasthali 1979 who draws while we espie a peacock on the roof of the thatched hut. Form and space become vital parameters in the study of these images. Bhatt's formal education is reflected as much as the commentary on indigenous art forms even as he offers interpretations of space that flits back and forth through time.

Look at the images of the three Harijan girls Kutch Gujarat 1979 standing in coy consciousness, the two boys in naïve innocence, the ethnic looking girl and child with the stunning kitchen tools in a surreal backdrop – Bhatt covers fascinatingly diverse subjects to offer us an authentic and indelible vision of an India that is at once teeming with rural rhythms of lifestyles and art practices that are both tactile and triumphant. Bhatt's Bengal image of a lantern with an abstract Durga drawing transports us to the timelessness of the surreal and the stark that he stumbles upon. Interior of a Rathwa tribal house in Madhya Pradesh 1979 is a magnificent



mapping of the richness of the lived idiom in the midst of their own abject poverty. If that has a sense of soul so does Daedapdia Gujarat 1967 of the young mother with her child.

### **Time and its tapestry**

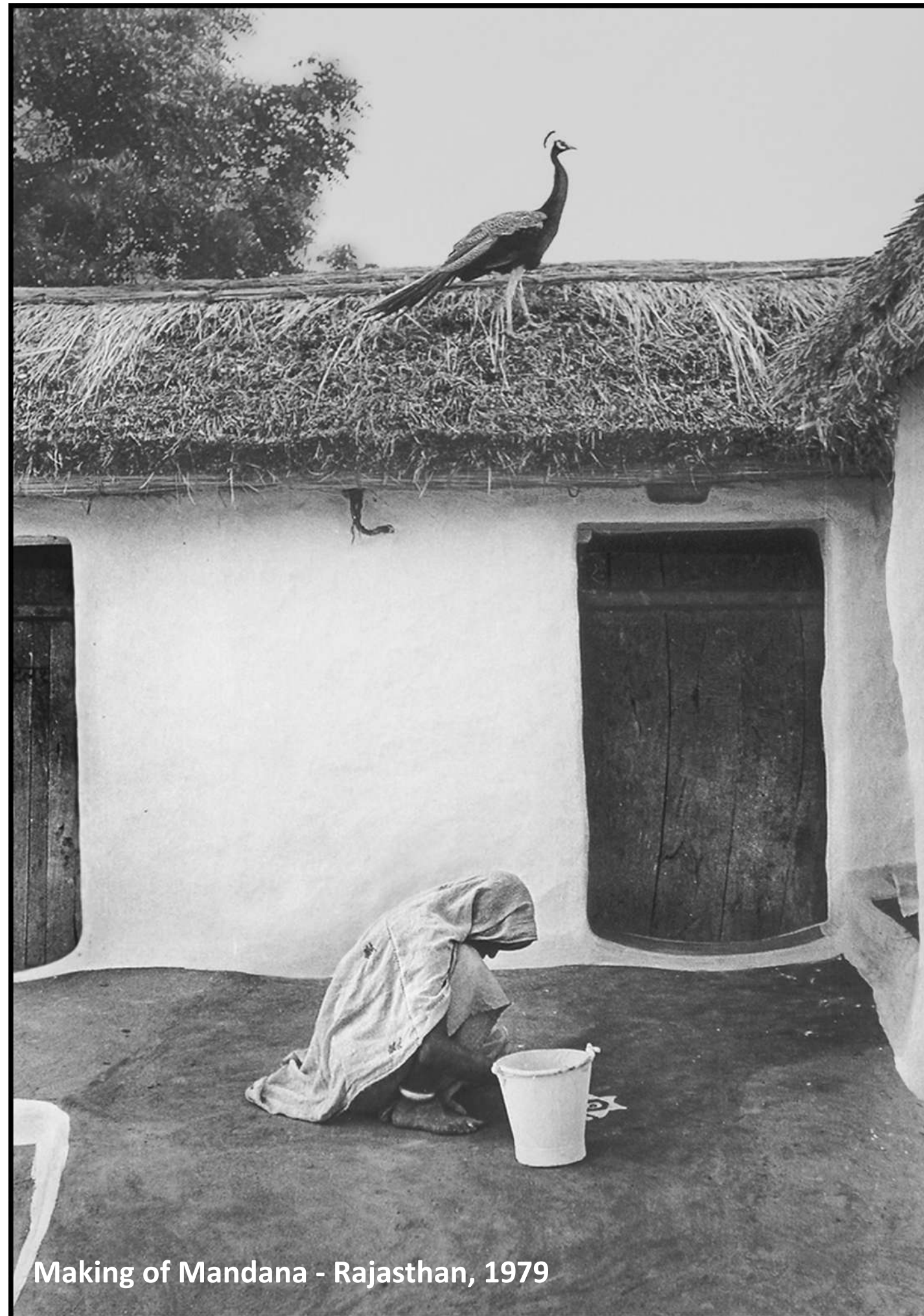
The show traverses tradition through the tapestry of time and buttonholes mortality. Bhatt captures inherited artistic conventions-unique and powerful-presents a lens that celebrates artistic expression which is shaped by the hands of the Rajwar women who kept their rituals and customs alive.

"I thought ritualistic and secular art forms, usually created by women, using transient materials such a clay, dung, flowers and rice flour needed to be given priority. It was most crucial because such forms were not considered important as 'National Cultural Treasures' or 'Archaeological Heritage' and their deteriorating condition did not seem to be bothering the government," said Bhatt in an interview.

His most profound images are of women and children, they lead the human eye into a black and white labyrinth, where reality must be relearned from the inside out. That radical search for the hidden structure of the indigenous arts in India is at the heart of Bhatt's quest for documentation.

### **Monochromatic Matrix**

Bhatt lays bare the perennial debate of the

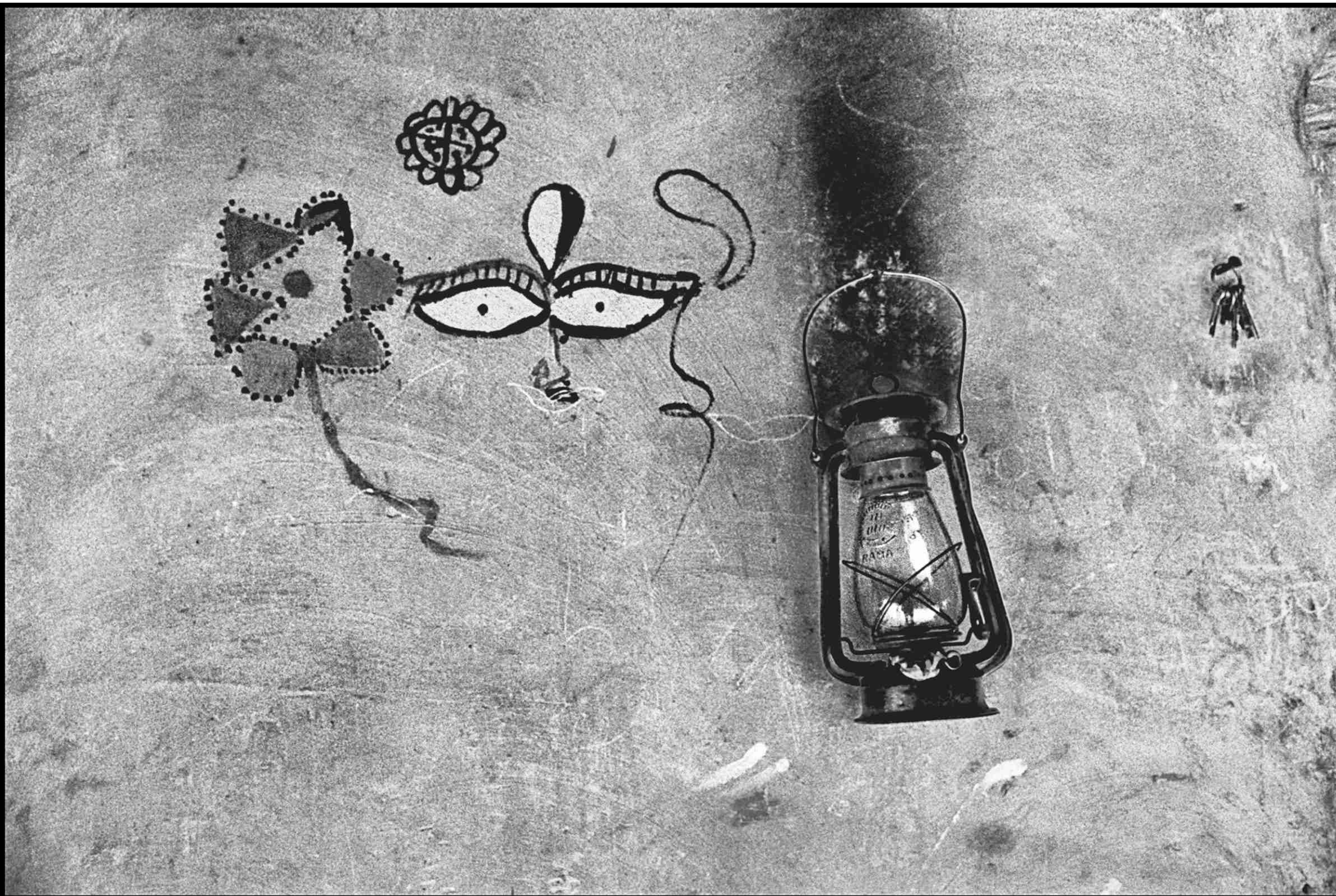


**Making of Mandana - Rajasthan, 1979**

power of monochromes. "I found that these folk artists in India's heartlands, were more contemporary than us, because they understand the presence and the rootedness of their work, they live with their art and they are always recreating." It tells us about how these drawings were part of rituals, how they marked the beginning of seasons such as winter, planting and harvesting seasons and before summer, apart from special and auspicious occasions like weddings, festivals and communal religious workshops.

In the monochrome matrix of documentation, Bhatt was searching not for the bare bones of cognition but the hidden truth of the rural psyche. These images invent a new visual language of lines and shade to evoke the deepest urges and traditions. This same monochrome mythology spills into multiple commentaries to dig into the truth behind pictures. Pictures, in colours, are to be looked at, Bhatt does not want us to passively look, but to imagine moments from within. While colours let us off lightly; black and white forces us to think. Between the black and whites are the grains of grey that echo the vitality and variety of India's rural rhythms.



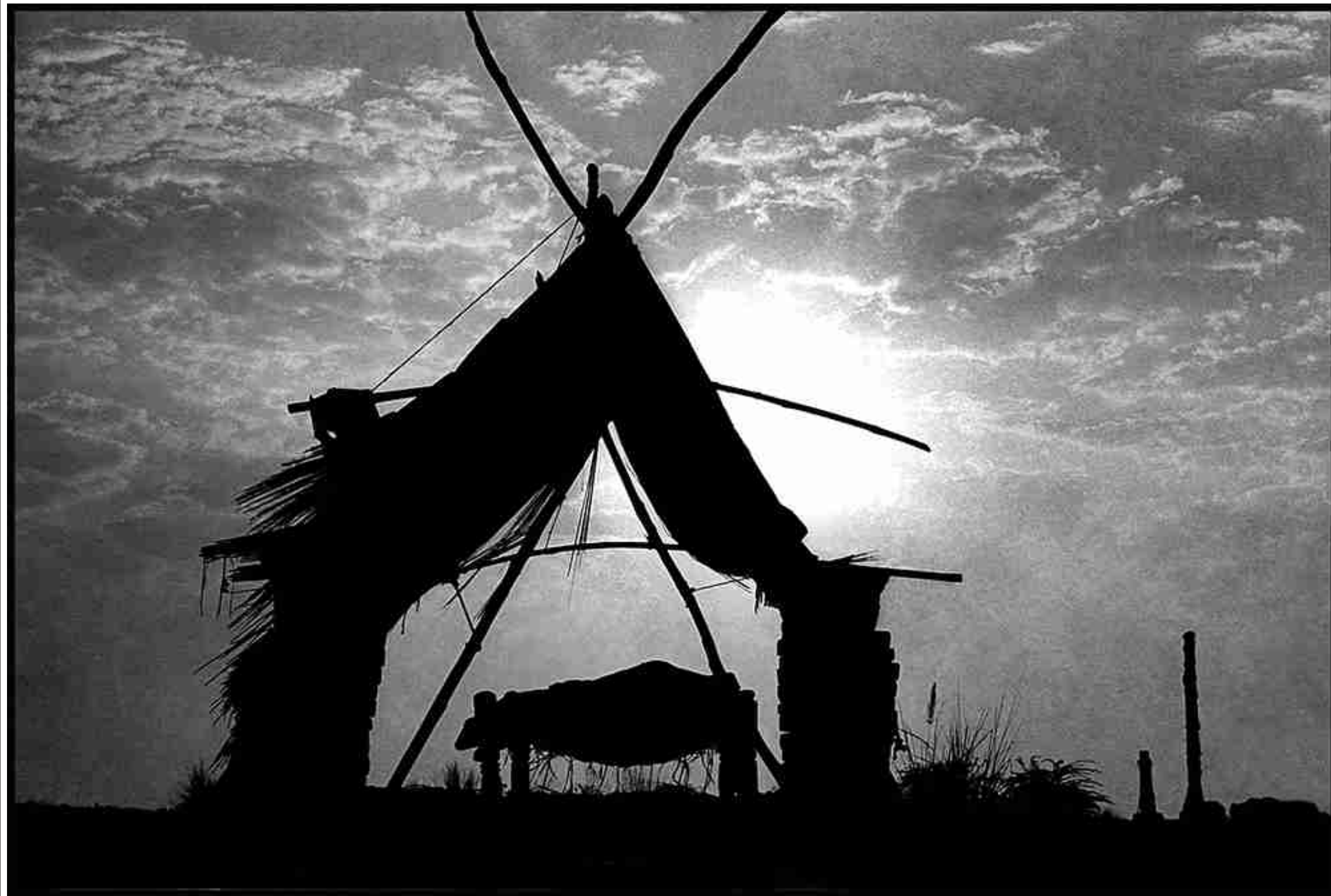


**Blacklight - Bengal, 1978**

“I found that these folk artists in India’s heartlands, were more contemporary than us, because they understand the presence and the rootedness of their work, they live with their art and they are always recreating.”- Jyoti Bhatt



# Scent of Human Dreams



S. Paul by Uma Nair (Curator & Critic)



Special Issue

Indian Photo Arts KIPF Special Issue | 51



In November 1990 at a solo show at Max Mueller Bhavan, New Delhi, I glimpsed the stark surreal world of the colossus S.Paul. In less than fifteen photographs you could see a black and white representation of images that held within the power of suggestion in the reflection of moments. Here were images that were alive in a quiet way, and held the truth that a photograph must have an existence of its own.

### **Subtle sensibility**

In this historic culling of thirty images we sense a canvas of moments, a tapestry of subjects that tell us that Paul's works were about the past and the present. He shot at a time when the currents and artistic sensibilities of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries were slowly being revamped, notably from pictorialism. Paul had a subtle sensibility, an eye, an openness to ideas and experiences, perhaps a need, and certainly a longing to go beyond the superficial. He worked on the idea that evolution happens not by random chance. And opportunities had to be made use of by being open, by searching and questioning and wandering.

In Paul's works, there is brevity of thought, and a subtle yet perceptible modernist current. To look at images by Paul is to be introduced to the first expression of true photographic art. While his images unravel like short stories, they are also full of poetry, and they seem to announce

the principles of objective photography, frank and forthright photography.

### **Transmitter of truth**

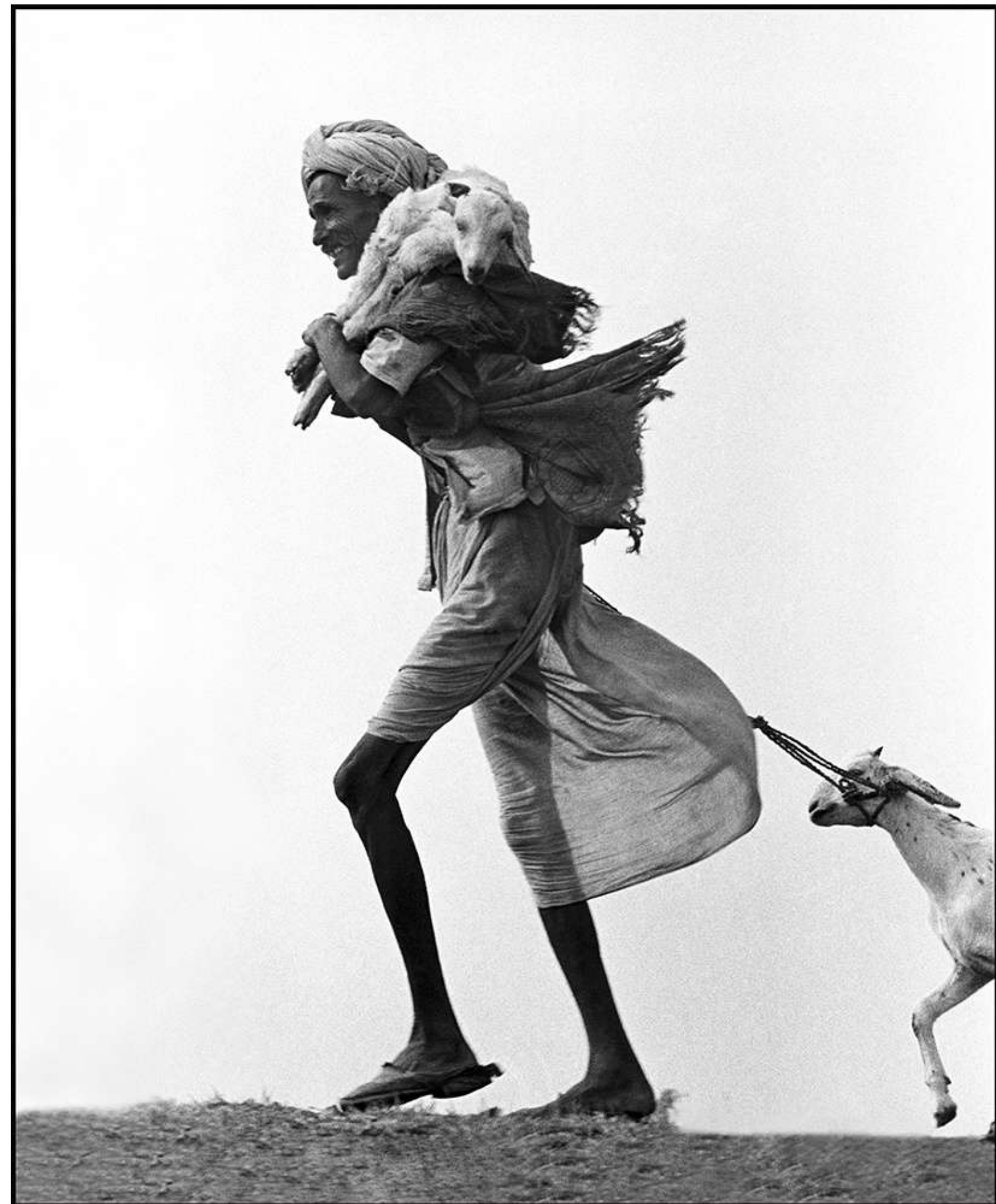
People punctuate his moments. They belong to all walks of life. They live in the fragment of a second in which contemplation and reflection, present us with an emotive essence captured patiently within the picture plane.

Paul belonged to the golden age of photojournalism where there was no Photoshop and no political dilemmas about the standardisation of information through images. Paul respected the camera for its role as a transmitter of truth. That is what Paul stood for, his lens was an instrument that captured the truth.

His work embodied an honesty in which there was no retouching, no synthetic images, no tweaking. Everything he shot and gave the world was authentic, raw, and pure and the worth of his frame was 'the weight of the photos', or the justification of what surrounds him as it was. The baby in the basket, carried by the migrant worker is a telling testimony of time in a fragment of evocative eloquence.

### **Austere silhouettes**

The study of silhouettes themselves tell us about his passion and penchant for the singular moment that stills the sublime fraction of time in an hour glass. The







thatched makeshift hut with the humble charpoy, the two travellers with a pair of puppies walking between them, a number of individuals caught in a dust storm, each image becomes a litany of narratives.

Paul's works are delicate, inspired by Cartier-Bresson's 'decisive moment', and his pictures titled 'Jain Nuns' stand in their own island of incandescence. Three nuns are descending from a spiral staircase, unsure of where to go next. The rhythmic movement of the turning nuns in their white khadi sarees against the spiral

staircase, suggesting something of an existential dilemma, create a picture of the barest elements that was the essence.

### **Lucid serenity**

Paul caught children at play, people in solemn prayer in a sea of collective worship, the migrant labourer's infant, like a cruel metaphor for the growing city. Images that constituted not the momentous, but time itself, a slow page-turner that constitutes a period of change.

His numerous images of people



anywhere—the little rear view of a monk's head is compositionally rigorous and almost sculptural in texture: it's hard not to reach out and stroke that evocative portrait taken from a rear view but with so much grace. His repeated studies of street scenes are, at one level, intellectual exercises, with their multiplying recesses and stories within stories, but they are shot with such attentiveness and care that they invite the viewer in. Paul must be one of the only photographers in history who can make the lone- wooden image of a charpoy look like an object of mystical beauty.

Paul was a silent story teller, he had a powerful sense of an artist striving to bring reality into harmony with the purity of his vision of reality on the street.

He was, alternately, a crafter of burnished, timeless imagery and a modernist obsessed with realism. Time and again, one finds oneself marvelling at his ability to suffuse common sights with the sensation of real life—people at Red Fort washed in a warm breeze, or just cyclists or a family on the move. Paul was a photographer of many gifts. Making the street look like a silent









a lamp post remind us of the golden dreams of poets? Paul was walking the sublime corollaries of such moments.

*Extract from S.Paul Obituary in The Hindu By Uma Nair*

People punctuate his moments. They belong to all walks of life. They live in the fragment of a second in which contemplation and reflection, present us with an emotive essence captured patiently within the picture plane.

soliloquy was perhaps his most enduring testament of life.

### **True modernist**

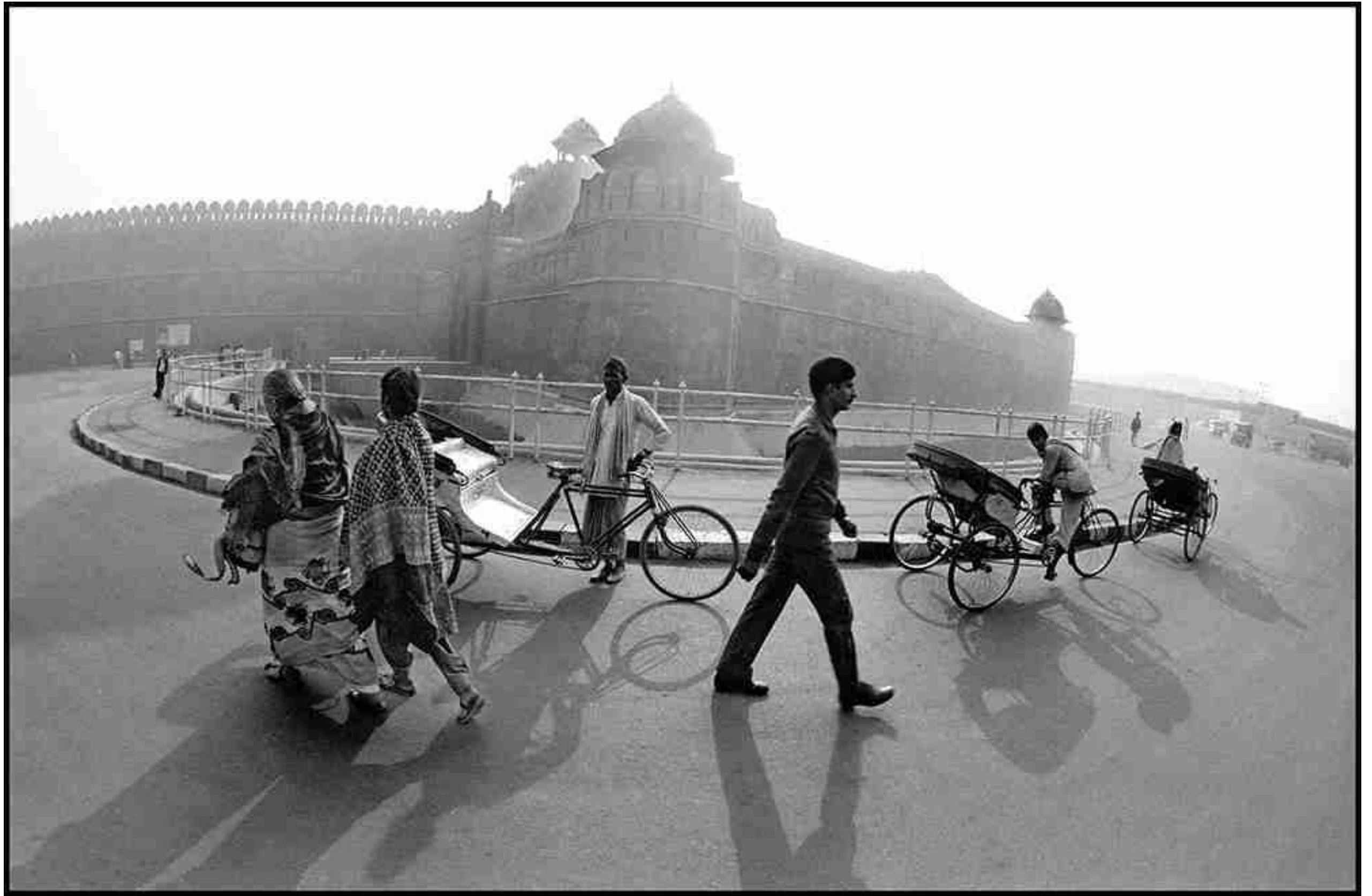
But Paul was a passionate lensman. He breathed photography in the dusty bylanes of Delhi. He shot for himself, for savouring the moments and enjoying his own joie de vivre. To the world of photography in India he was a true modernist. Whatever

he shot, for him it was the dignity of humanity, the charisma of nature and the split second reality of Leonardo da Vinci's words when he said: Simplicity is the ultimate sophistication.

One of his most perennial images is that of a dove in flight. The timing of the image is emblematic of the absolute purity of nature. Paul's works are a sublime

procession of natural and animal forms, sometimes naïve, sometimes vulnerable, with shy, furtive movements, flying with their wings mysteriously into the air or assuming attitudes commonplace enough, but imbued with some mystic meaning, with the light concentrated upon their wings. Can you explain the melancholic beauty of the falling rain, or tell why the slushy pavements, reflecting the lights of





In Paul's works, there is brevity of thought, and a subtle yet perceptible modernist current. To look at images by Paul is to be introduced to the first expression of true photographic art.





# Camellia Tagore and Tribes of North East India

by Uma Nair (Curator & Critic)

**B**orn in Assam and raised in Shillong, Shyamal Datta’s tryst with the North-East region of India is akin to a prodigal, who returns home after traversing the globe for a half century, to look for the ancient rhythms of tribal reality nestled in the mountains and valleys of his backyard. These fifteen images are just a whisper of an oeuvre that plumbs the depths of anthropological angst as well as articulations in the fabric of the everyday idiom of tribal traditions in his beloved quintessential Shangri-La - the remote inaccessible nooks of North East India.

In his own words – “In the course of thousands of kilometres of travel through murderous roads, life threatening land slips, flash floods, snow melts, thunderous monsoon rains, devastating floods, insurgent instabilities, earthquakes and back-breaking treks up vertical climbs often at midnight - I ask myself why am I attracted like a mysterious magnet to this undefinable region. Is it the tribal communities? Is it the landscape? Or is this just another adrenal rush? Maybe it’s the flora and fauna here? Or maybe it’s an indescribable maelstrom of all of the above and much more. Perhaps it is meta-description.

Maybe all of my journeys here have secret destinations of which I, as a photographer, am unaware of. As Edward Curtis, a

nineteenth century American pioneer of tribal photography, who documented the native American tribes from the Inuit in Alaska to the Hopi in Arizona had said – “I want them to live forever”, so maybe I am caught in a hopeless and ignorant conundrum to romanticize these communities too.

Maybe it’s this fear that this unique minefield of social, cultural and anthropological gemstones of our planet is vanishing.”

*Photographers deal in things which are continually vanishing and when they have vanished there is no contrivance on earth which can make them come back again.*

Henri Cartier Bresson

Shyamal turns Tagorean in intent as he adopts the metaphor of the poet laureate’s gem – *Camellia*. In his insatiable search for beauty undefinable, the photographers’ epiphany lay, not in his search, but within the internal space of his own roots – ignored indifferently all along. Tagore also was a fond visitor to the North East and wrote one of his famous novels *Shesher Kabita* in his Kench’s Terrace home in Shillong. To the photographer, the North East turns out to be his *Camellia*.

## Interior idylls

At the outset, when one looks into these images from afar, one is drawn into the





## Monpa lad with his sheep

idiom of an encounter with the paintings of the 17th century Dutch Masters with their detailed realism. As one peers into the corners and crevices of incandescent radiance, hints of the treatment of light in the hands of a veteran who adds respect

and admiration for his subjects, emerge gradually. If the young Chang Naga couple sitting at the hearth admit the graceful glimmer of glowing embers, the Angami Naga elder in his regalia plays solitaire as he represents

the kindling of an inner light – one that unites the techniques of light and shade, as emanated from the Western traditions, and the light of cosmic harmony linked with nature and the unceasing flux of the world.

## Cyclical continuum

Human observation has the ability to create channels of energy that allow you to focus your view on different things. Capturing the past, present, and future are one cyclical continuum that Shyamal mines for inspiration, and diverse tribal cultures and communities in the North East converge to a singular, universal experience — “the oneness of things.”

The result of this expansive perspective is a range of references and styles: the figurative with the abstract; mathematics with mysticism; rich, multivalent dark tones with luminescent bright shades. These allusions come together in images that are alluringly difficult to put a finger on, as in the portraits and habitats. Look closely at their faces, it is as if they speak to space, deep time, and a fraught history—like different angles of one enigmatic point of view.

## Limpid landscapes

The two landscapes become pivotal images filled with the poetics of pastures. We see the pure and condensed incarnation of the tremendous mystery of the universe in the mountains of Sikkim layered in its tenuous yet fragile, lavender ribboned roads that run along the purple moors of the mountains. If that is a classic landscape, the blushing sunset with the legendary Mizo maiden named Lianchhiari in the foreground recreate the landscape as a backdrop to narrate her tragic tale of having loved and lost. The enactment of the tale





## Golden langur - Assam

from popular Mizo folktale folklore is a novel odyssey; its sublime resplendence stoking antiquity. It is uncanny how deeply colours seem to penetrate like fragments in heaven. It would suffice to say true landscapes are spiritual emblems.

### Reflections and reverie

The Idu Mishmi lady sitting in reverie is replete with grace and allure as we glimpse her natural beauty: the bliss of solitude woven into her jewel toned backdrop that glistens in the warmly lit fireside hearth of her home. In the images of the young Adi girl or the grace and elegance of the

elderly Angami woman, both cleaning the husk of rice from the harvested paddy fields, we discern feelings sublimating into silent yet stance filled outpourings. Photography cannot opionate, substitute or even reproduce the massive compendium of ballads, folktales, songs, poems, dances et al of the North East – says Shyamal. Nor can it fully visualize the motifs, the complex nuances and continuity of the running thread of life flow of tribal societies - let alone encompass it through a few images. Photography can only touch the surface of the complex web and interconnections

of tribal folkloristics in the vastness of its labyrinth, he adds.

### Tapestry of tenors

The Monpa lad with his sheep is an iconic image for its self-expression. The direct gaze, serious expression, tousled hair, the tapestry of tenors in earth tones with a flash of colour in his jersey knitted from the wool belonging to his pet sheep and his mother bemused at this cycle of comic events - all become a part of the narrative rich in its humble annotations.

To quote him again in his ode to the North East - I like you as the smell of burning pine cones of the Jaintia Hills of Meghalaya; In the high Himalayas of Sikkim, I like you as the crunching sound of fresh snow in the deafening silence of the impending avalanche of Lachen; I cling to you - chequered mountains, white spring flowers of Kidima; As I drive through moon rock craters of spine breaking rocks and pools of mud and clay and stones for thirteen hours – I cling to you as you flow down the high mountains dancing and singing – the Siang of Riga, I sleep beside you.

Shyamal's vignettes of North east are suffused with colour, each frame is a testimony to truth in elements, and persuasively emotional human stories. In the female egret with her intricate plumage you see a fusion of animation and lush tropicana, with truly astonishing colours

that retains its brilliance and freshness, with a broad sense of history and deep feeling for human epochs, and passions.

Through his camera Shyamal Datta has created a uniquely and refreshingly new genre of the North East – a story hitherto untold.

“In the course of thousands of kilometres of travel through murderous roads, life threatening land slips, flash floods, snow melts, thunderous monsoon rains, devastating floods, insurgent instabilities, earthquakes and back-breaking treks up vertical climbs often at midnight - I ask myself why am I attracted like a mysterious magnet to this undefinable region...” - Shyamal Datta





# To Evoke an Entire World from Limited Details

*Make my life glad with nothing.*

*The rains sweep the sky from end to end. Jasmines  
in the wet untameable wind revel in their own  
perfume. The cloud-hidden stars thrill in secret.  
Let me fill to the full my heart with nothing but  
my own depth of joy.*

*Rabindranath Tagore*

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by Uma Nair (Curator & Critic)

To discover Satyajit Ray the colossus as a photographer is to unravel a secret hidden for so many years. It is like opening an album of memories and being allowed to turn the sepia tinted pages that have borne the dusk and dust of time. What would Ray the doyen have seen in the world he inhabited? What would this silent genius capture in the magic of those majestic hands? The Kolkata International Photo Festival will hold a small cameo in these iconic images taken by Ray himself.

From the vaults of the Satyajit Ray family are a highly coveted collection of Satyajit Ray's photographs taken over the years on his travels to different parts of the world. The Oscar winning filmmaker's son Sandip Ray who is himself one of India's most celebrated and revered story tellers is part of KIPF's highly illustrious advisory body and has handed over photographs from the Ray collection to be showcased at the Kolkata International Photo festival. In more ways than one, the suite of photographs are the Ray family's gift to the city of Kolkata.

This indeed is a good time to recall Satyajit Ray's words about Calcutta to the New York Times. "Calcutta is love and hate with me. I can't work anywhere else. I have my roots here. It can be a depressing place, but it's vital. I have no desire to work outside of India. I have had offers to go to California, but I'm not used to

working in a studio setup. I fear I'll lose my freedom, my confidence, I don't know. I couldn't tolerate memos, front offices and temperamental stars."

For Kounteya Sinha, KIPF festival Director Sandip Sen's rare gift is an artistic coup and Kounteya says: "The world knows him as a master of celluloid. But to glimpse the inner eye of Satyajit Ray as the photographer - will give you a rare peek into the master's mind - the way he saw and understood the world. No other festival in India has got their hands on this repertoire before. The gallery that ultimately shows this work will be filled to the brim every day for sure. The black and white images have a signature of soul in them and they will both inspire and teach the viewers of Kolkata."

### **Austere delicacy**

The little girl peering out of the window at Stockholm presents a window into the inner eye of Ray, an eye that was not just epicurean but one that noticed the austere delicacy of small things and places and people. A glimpse, a glance an aperture that echoes the passage of innocence and curiosity as much as it speaks to us about the fraction of a second that defines the momentousness of the moment. The act of peering is in itself the minute minuscule of stillness that is so tensile and yet not always tangible. It is this austere delicacy that Ray himself was able to capture when he narrated those epic stories. Again in his





own words when he spoke about stillness how incandescent were his own reflections.

"You had to find out yourself how to catch the hushed stillness of dusk in a Bengali village," he said, "when the wind drops and turns the ponds into sheets of glass dappled by the leaves of the trees, and the smoke from ovens settles in wispy trails over the landscape, and the plaintive blows on conch shells from homes far and wide are joined by the chorus of crickets, which rises as the light falls, until all one sees are the stars in the sky, and the stars blink and swirl in the thickets."

If these words of Ray are still so extraordinarily vivid and fresh then so is the image shot in Rome of a lady and man in conversation with a dog at their feet while a third person stands and looks elsewhere in the frame. It is the dynamics of the conversation, the individual roles in place and the expression of the little white dog in the forefront that gives us an evocative rendition of the spoken and the silent moment. There is such sombre yet distinctive clarity here, such great feeling of the mood and the moment.

### **Rare empathy**

Then there is also an effortless empathy in the image of the old man and the little boy in Gangtok. It has the effortless fluency and elegant air of a story that is waiting to be told. The delicate pathos and subtle suggestion of an isolation is writ

large on their faces in the way Ray captures their togetherness while each one is lost in their own thoughts the little boy looking directly at the shutter.

We are compelled to remember that even in his films Ray's own artistry and poise emerged very strongly but gradually in layers upon sequences that nestled into the crevices of story telling. This image is at once a narrative of land and solitude—perhaps a patriarchal palette of emotions that take us into unknown lands and travels of solitary leanings and learnings waiting to be told. Broken nests, broken families, the poignant poetic notes of desolation in the many pathways of waiting.

Then there are two images that speak of life in the West. The deserted place with a solitary figure walking and the sign: No Parking 8am-6pm. The barren and the broken and the high rise buildings in the background all speak of a time that can be framed in the hourglass of minutes that go by in the wink of an eye. In another scene in London you can get your passport photo in 10 minutes on the streets of Selfridges.

Let us recall that in his life as a film maker who wrote his own history Satyajit Ray made injustices his workhorse: unemployment, corruption and loss of values, denouncing the tyranny of dictatorships. In these images we glimpse the hand of a master who knew what he



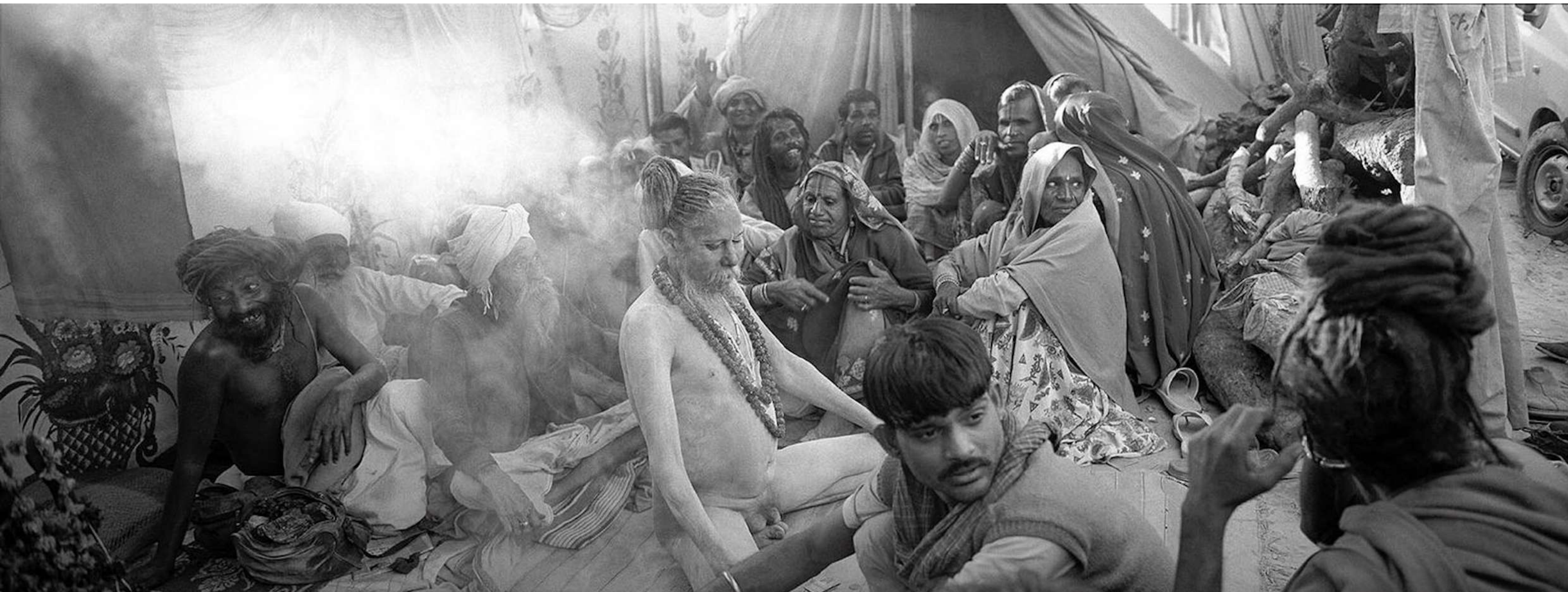


was seeing. Here is the same distilled simplicity, the same purity of style, the same impeccable craftsmanship.

To look at these images by Ray is to know that for Satyajit Ray time was like a capsule that had its inner and outer dimensions. I began with the lines of Rabindranath Tagore: He wrote the ‘Jasmines in the wet untameable wind revel in their own perfume.’ That is the same feeling we must have when he glimpses these works of Ray. They still have the fragrance of the master who created his own world. When Tagore says: ‘Let me fill to the full my heart with nothing but my own depth of joy,’ I would say let us just do the same and reflect upon this reverie, of a subtle chromaticism of all that has gone before.

Let us recall that in his life as a film maker who wrote his own history Satyajit Ray made injustices his workhorse: unemployment, corruption and loss of values, denouncing the tyranny of dictatorships. In these images we glimpse the hand of a master who knew what he was seeing.





*Photograph by Prashant Panjiar*



Special Issue

# 25 Photographs to look out for...

The massive scale of the KIPF 2019 can be overwhelming, with the works of more than 250 photographers across 40 different countries being exhibited and the sheer magnitude of the event the audience certainly runs the risk of missing out on some of the stellar works. While each and every photograph, which is a part of this festival is worth viewing and entails years of hardwork, blood and sweat of photographers with superlative skills, here is a collection of 25 of the finest exhibits which are a part of this magnum opus you wouldn't prefer to miss out on. This collection includes the works of some of the stalwarts and upcoming talents of this era and encompasses a wide array of subjects and issues and promises nothing less than a visual delight while providing the much needed insight into myriad aspects of the world around us.





*Photograph by Ami Vitale*





*Photograph by Ami Vitale*





*Photograph by Ami Vitale*

© Ami Vitale





*Photograph by GMB Akash*





*Photograph by GMB Akash*





*Photograph by Isabel Corthier*



*Photograph by Benu Sen*





*Photograph by Rohit Vohra*





Photograph by Kushal Gangopadhyay



*Photograph by Neo Ntsoma*





*Photograph by Kishor Sharma*







*Photograph by Dhritiman Mukherjee*





*Photograph by Dhritiman Mukherjee*





*Photograph by Soumitra Dutta*





*Photograph by Pattabi Raman*





*Photograph by K M Asad*





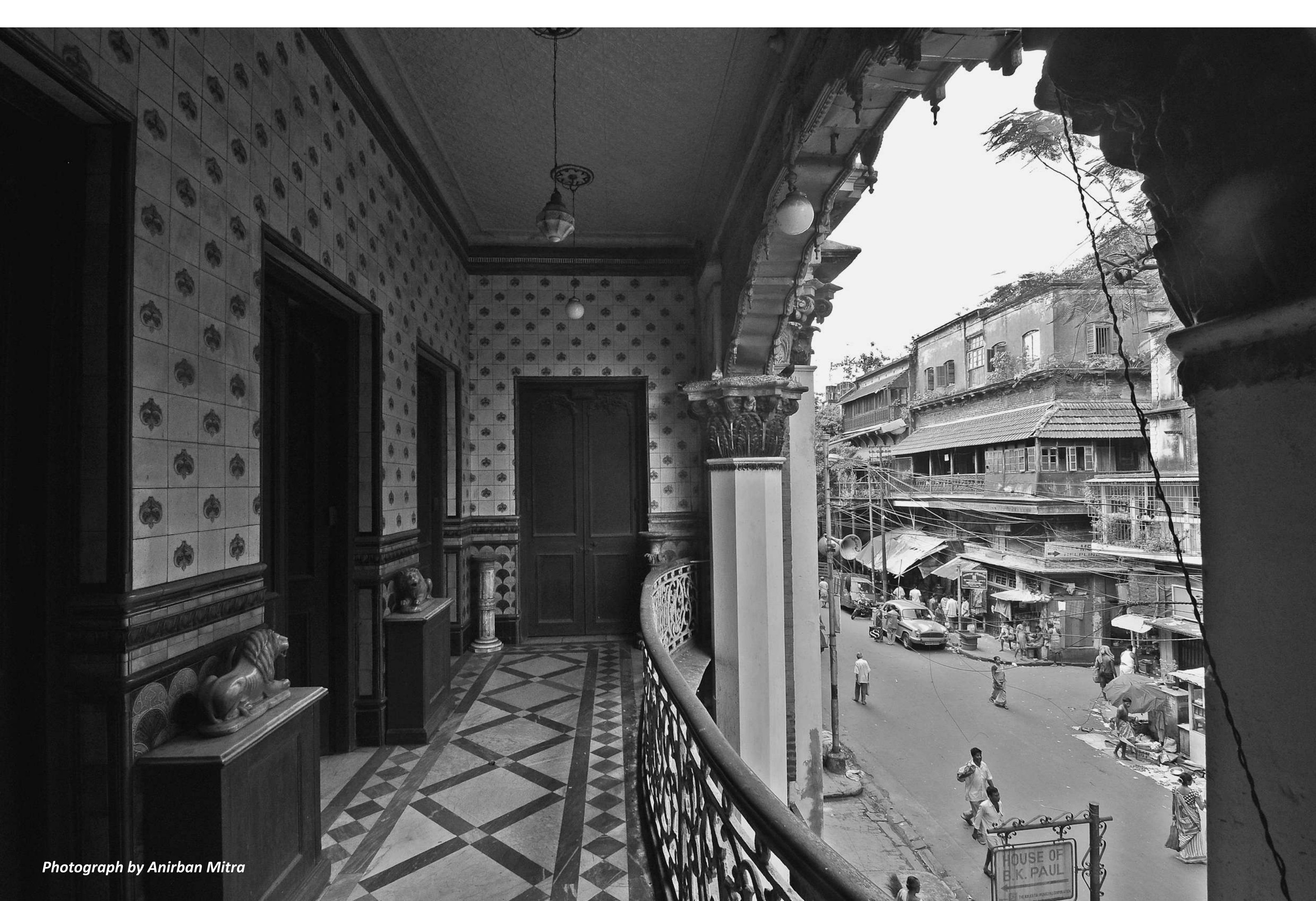
*Photograph by K M Asad*





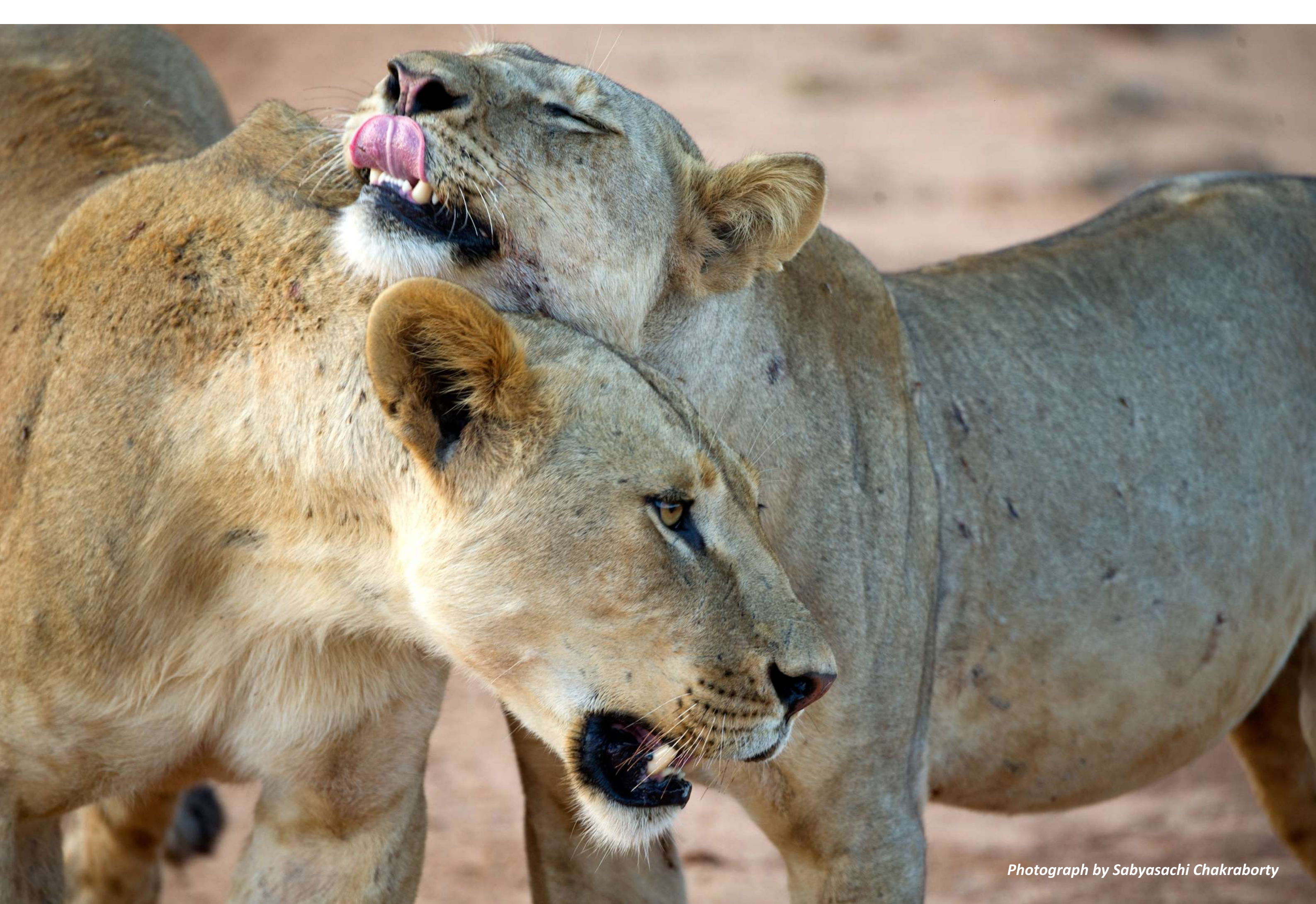
*Photograph by Abir Abdullah*





*Photograph by Anirban Mitra*





*Photograph by Sabyasachi Chakraborty*





Photograph by Bikas Das





Photograph by Wolfgang Zurborn





*Photograph by Arun Ganguly*





Photograph by Rajiv De

KOLKATA INTERNATIONAL PHOTOGRAPHY FESTIVAL

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FESTIVAL DATES  
EXTENDED BY 2 DAYS  
28<sup>TH</sup> FEB - 6<sup>TH</sup> MAR

KIPF  
20  
19