

RECOMMENDATIONS

Photography

November 17 December 02
Dr. Pierre Claquin holds a solo photography show titled, 'Surviving Dreams: The struggling circuses of Bangladesh', at the gallery of Alliance Francaise de Dhaka in the city that remains open from 9:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. and from 5:00 to 8:00 p.m. everyday.

Art Show

November 20 January 10
A group art exhibition of four young artists is being held at the American International School at Baridhara in the city and remains open daily throughout the day.

Apparel display

November 22 December 6
An exhibition of dresses and apparels take place at ARIAL Centre (Rd. 7), Dhanmondi in the city. The show is open from 10:00 a.m. to 9:00 p.m. daily and is open to all.

Surya Utsav

December 29 January 02
Bangladesh Astronomical Association arranges one of its annual events, Surya Utsav (Sun Festival) as the organisation aims at showing the participants, several exciting matters including the first sunrise of the year 2003, cultural ceremony of the indigenous people of the area, Keokradang at Bandarban district, Pitha festival and observation of the night sky through telescope. Interested persons are requested to register names within November 30 at the office of Bangladesh Astronomical Association 1/3, Block-E, Lalmatia, Dhaka Ph: 0171-187555.

Photography

Focus on the forgotten in Southern India

Shyam Tekwani's solo photo exhibition at "Chitrak", part of "Chobi Mela"-11

FAYZA HAQ

"FACES of Exclusion, India" by Shyam Tekwani, an exhibition of coloured photographs at Gallery "Chitrak" explained how exclusion, ironically, is a theme that can include anyone and anything. Race, gender, religion, class, caste, economics and politics are common basis for exclusion. Yet there are other more insidious, inexorable, mechanisms of exclusion work within society.

The selection of photographs represent people and places that have been excluded, and entire ways of living that are threatened with exclusion all over the developing world. As a photo journalist, Tekwani travelled all over India, covering everything from election campaigns and refugee exodus, to political unrest and conflict. As he puts it himself, everywhere Tekwani found "development". Tekwani says, "Dams, bridges, satellite dishes, shampoo in sachets for women who bathed in the village pond, power looms in place of hand looms, new roads and new power lines and TV antennae whispering in the wind. I saw motor boats, catamarans, and trawlers dredging sea beds for shrimp by the ton, where once fishermen had dived with feet without any diving gear for a conch shell or two. What did these developments mean? Was it all good? All bad? For whom?"

"These were questions that were raised in my mind. How was I going to answer them? In a poor development country, such as India, nothing is black and white. I travelled the rural dirt tracks, the by-lanes in forgotten city neighbourhoods and looked for some answers. I didn't find any. I found another India--and India excluded. Left behind, shunted aside to make way for the new, modern India. In the camera's press for technology, progress, modernization, whole communities, vocations and ways of life being inexorably excluded.

"To me these were the faces of exclusion. These people, these ways of life...once they represented



the mainstream: theirs was the way, in religion, industry, in art and culture and social mores. Today they have been left behind, set aside, excluded. The times, as we say, have changed."

"Faces of exclusion" includes "The last man on earth" in which we see a diminutive half of a man seen from the back, in black. He is seen against white clouds which progress on to a mauve sky with a tree, abundant with leaves seen in the left foreground. Grass is included in the front too. This represents the loneliness of man that engulfs him sometimes in India as also everywhere else. We then see stately mansions and princely ways of life of the Chettians in Chettinad. These are "stories" of the past. The younger generation has moved westward to the "modern" world. The older generation is seen in the photo struggling to find means to cling on to the glories of the past. Here we see a middle-aged man in a white "singlette" and sarong sitting on a couch covered with silk-brocade covering with raised motifs, and hung from the top with heavy metal chains. The details of the tiles at the forefront and the line of overhead fans can also be spotted clearly. Behind him is a similarly clad man of the same age and he too appears to be brooding with the past. The ebony pillars are dark while the overhead lights are bright and flood the room somewhat with their sparkle. The light and shade play in the photo in white, beige, brown and

black plus the theme of loneliness is laudable as are all the photos seen in Shyam Tekwani's section at "Chitrak".

"In Handloom weaving being replaced by power loom" depicts a man working on manually worked loom at the back, although it is not very apparent as to work he is working on-- cloth or carpet. He appears in a red "singlette" and whitish-gray sarong. The power loom in front is obviously shooting off sparks of fire. The details of the room in which pieces of wood have been nailed together. The contrast of heritage s pitted against mechanized progress is only too clear.

"Dummy-horse performer is reduced to performing for a government function in a bid to show that folk arts still do exist. In truth, modern entertainment technology have shoved aside centuries old folk arts into the dustbin of history" is the label to another colour photograph with a poignant message. Here we see a girl wearing bright coloured garbs, in silver, gold, blood red; she sports "teep", nose-ring; there are decorations on her cheeks, forehead; and jewellery in silver, with paper vermilion flowers and feathers on her "bun" waving from the back of it. She rides a puppet horse which is decorated with blue, stripes of white and red, flowered frills, with the body worked upon with gold and gold along with hanging beads and sequins from the mouth of the papier-mache or wooden horse head with the finishing touches in



blue and gold; feathers flaunt from the top. The background is in shades of brown.

"Lower caste Hindus at prayer" brings in which we see a line of Hindus who are all dark brown in complexion; have shaven heads; they either wear saris or sarongs; some of them have the "tilaks" on their foreheads. Some women are seen with bangles while some of the men have "gamchas"; some are in bright colours while others are seen in stark white and others have patterns on their garbs. In the background are cattle in black and white and even a horse with a drooping tail along with some relaxing people.

"One may then move on to examine "Refugees fleeing another spurt of political violence caused by a river water dispute between two neighbouring states in Southern India". Here see a long line people with their clothes askew or hitched up, carrying all types of water vessels such as metal pans and jars. Their "dhotis", saris and "lungis" speak of despair and haste; there is a dog running along this desperate march in search of the vital water. A hillock is seen at the back. In front is the worn pathway and the rest of the photograph contains spiked grass. Most of the picture is brown, intermingled with green. There is the pale blue sky to offset the characters and the rest of the scene in this moving picture of despair and determination.

"We then see in the exhibit a deep-sea diver who is naturally

barely clad as he goes about his dangerous work under the blue-green sea; he wears the necessary goggles and he carries something in his hand while tied to one foot is the necessary pan for his treasure from under the deep sea. His goggles and scant clothes and the pan fixed to his foot is blue while the water is indigo blended with aquamarine. One wonders how the photo was taken at such a sea depth. Along with the picture reads the caption "This diver has about 90 seconds to plunge a depth of about a hundred feet, to search and pick conch shells and surface with his catch-- all without the aid of any diving gear, save a metal plate that functions as a flipper and a pair of diving goggles."

"We can move on to "Seaweed divers rowing their boat off an island in southern India. They dive up to fifteen feet in their sari and earn a pittance for a full day's labour." In this photo we see three women struggling to sit and move the boat with the oars of a boat. They have all sun-brunt and bronzed faces and are all clad in the traditional South Indian apparel for women: saris, in blue, vermilion, green and yellow, with a black and brown covering. We see one of them with her feet against the side of the dingy, with the pale blue sky at the back and the wave froths at the two sides in tiny dots. The backdrop of the land with its trees and houses are included in the lens frame. The struggle and strife of the women braving against



PHOTO CREDITS: SHYAM TEKWANI / DRINK

the water is surely a moving image which deserves great admiration.

Also to be seen in Shyam Tekwani's project is the picture with the caption: "Outcastes: mainstream women are prohibited from entering their homes, outcastes during the period of the "curse" in part of Southern India. Confined to an enclosure erected a good distance from their homes, they live out their "impure and unclean" days with stoicism that come naturally to them." Here we see the graven faces of the women, some without their blouses and just sporting their saris, one in emerald green, another in pale jade green. They naturally have on their necklaces, children astride their laps, vessels held in their hands with the barrier of bare tree branches in front. At the back are their houses.

The cruel fate of the widows in Southern India is also included in Shyam Tekwani's window on South India. The attached tag tells us, "Widows are prohibited from remarriage." Here we are confronted with a line of widows, all in white, while they are bending down to light "dias". This is a pathetic sight indeed which has been couched for us in purple, black, brown. The yellow flames of the "dias" and their reflected parts provide the contrast of yellow flames with their reddish haloes. The vast display of the white of the widows brings only sympathetic vibrations of pain and suffering.

Proceeding on to the "Dikshitsars" These are the hereditary trustees of

"Chidambaram", who we are told by the tag along with the photo, are for over five centuries. We are informed furthermore that their way of life faces challenges with the onslaught of modernization; inter-marriages and the steady trickle of young boys from the fold of "modern" way of life keeping the numbers of the community. Here we see a row of young boys with their chest exposed except for the trail of the sacred thread on their shoulders; all of them bearing stripes of sacred white "chandan" marks on their forehead; they appear to e all shyly smiling and slightly grinning, as the mood takes them before the camera. They are in white songs tied at their waist-- some wearing decorated cloth too at the waist which is decorated with gold, red. They sport necklaces and bead strings as well as talismans. The backdrop is black, widows and pillars at the sides.

The exhibition contained many more photographs, the ones mentioned being the most eye-catching ones. The depiction of the deprived in South India by Shyam Tekwani should be an eye-opener for those in Bangladesh who have not had the opportunity to even pass through the South of India. Their discontentment and disenchantment with life is apparent to the writer, who only whizzed by that area, from time to time, decades back, and judging the situation there-- going by the graffiti on the walls.

TV GUIDE

Table with columns for different channels: BT, BBC, CHANNEL-i, and HBO. Lists programs and their start times.

Table with columns for STAR NEWS and STAR MOVIES. Lists news programs and movie titles with their start times.

Table with columns for TODAY'S HIGHLIGHTS, PICK OF THE DAY, and STAR SPORTS. Features highlights like 'Eve Of Destruction' and 'Trust Me', and lists sports events.

Table with columns for STAR WORLD and STAR PLUS. Lists international and local entertainment programs.

Table with columns for STAR GOLD and NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC. Lists programs like 'Hit Geet' and 'Poles Apart'.