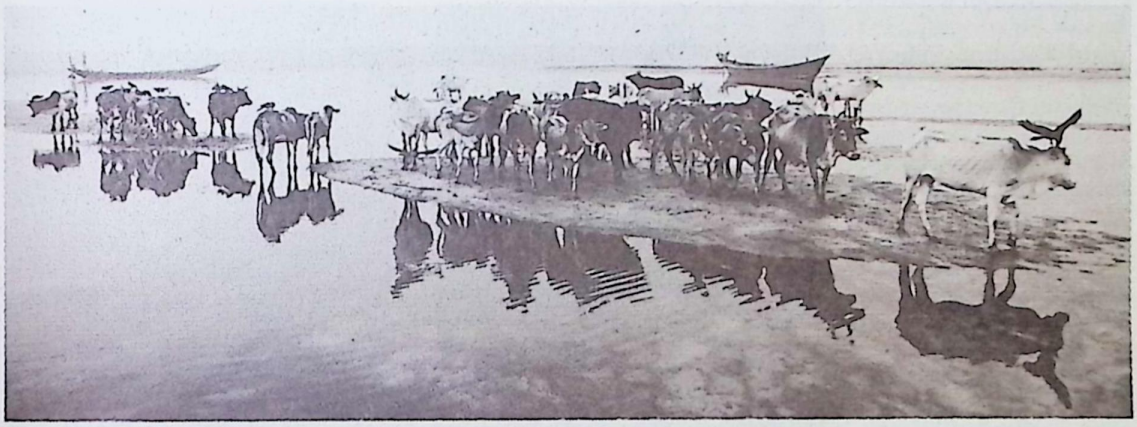
culture and transportation are largely dependent on rivers that sometimes cause flooding. Yet rivers can teach us openness, solidarity, romanticism and give us the spirit to live, he says. The ancient civilisation of Bangladesh was surrounded by many rivers. Originated in the Gangotri glacier in the Himalayas, the Padma is the second largest river in Bangladesh and a major source of water. In Hindu mythology, the river is one of the embodiments of the Goddess Laxmi. Due to climate change, and diversion of its natural path it is becoming increasingly narrow and dry. Flooding and erosion of the Padma cause environmental and economic problems. These are the underlying themes of Sumon's work.

Through photography, there is great opportunity to portray the lives and struggles of the people of Bangladesh, says Sumon. In the Netherlands World Press grant for Joop's art Masterclass his "char' are a man and nine crows. This shows the coexistence of man and birds in Nature. No one disturbs the other, says Sumon.

As we move on to a "char" which submerges in the rainy season, there is a bridge where large boats carry goods for human consumption. There is then an inviting image of men and women taking a morning walk. In the thatched huts, where cows used to be sheltered, we find "jalani" to be burned for cooking. There are haystacks, which the people collect from the other side of the river from another "char". The cows are usually kept inside during winter. They get no water. These cows, about a group of a thousand, sit in the middle of the river on the "chars". Crows then sit on these cows and fly over them. One sees two empty boats in the distance and the reflection of the cows in the forefront. This is one of Shumon's favourite pictures.



**Photographs from the series *Life and Struggle of Padma*.**

nomination was given by the National Geographic's Reza Dhigati, an Iranian who lives in Paris. Sumon was thus nominated with 180 other photographers. J'P's contemporary photography and Alliance Francaise gave him the first prize in the artistic category. From California's "After Image" this work got its publication. This was on the Padma River.

In the first image, very early in a misty morning, we see flowers in a woman's sari and her warm cover. In the next picture we get a woman in the early morning—taking dishes to be washed. There are fishermen who have managed to collect some catch despite the fog. The sea merges with the sky. The land, which is "char" area is very dry and dusty. It is winter. There are boats in the distance. In the next frame we get a romantic scene, before the sun has set and couples have come to be alone and speak out their thoughts, which they cannot in the city with so many onlookers and eavesdroppers. The young women's "shalwar-kameez," "orna" and long plaits are quite visible. The men are wearing "chadar" or coat. In the distance are boats. In a

A man and a woman are having their morning bath and one does not come in the way of the other. They are neither irritated nor embarrassed by the other person's existence while bathing. The dogs are around them and don't seem to care either. In the distance is a village. The land on which we see the individuals is a "char" which submerges in the rainy season, Sumon says.

In another scene we see fishermen returning home after a days' toil. They sell their daily catch the same day and the leftovers, if any, are taken home. This too is a "char" and in the background is a village, as in so many other images. Another photo depicts children playing on the layers of a "char". The mother is there and one of the kids is without clothes—dancing and skipping with fun and joie de vivre. Another Picture shows how a woman must walk two kilometres to get two loads of water as the rain has destroyed her home. This is Sumon's depiction of climate change. The middle-aged woman is on flooded land.

The collection of forty black and white pictures is indeed remarkable and sympathetic. The exhibition, which opened yesterday, is on till February 6. ■