

GANGA BLUES MEET RICKSHAW HUES ON CANVAS

Dilip Chowdhary talks of the struggles of rickshaw-pullers of Bengal and his tryst with sadhus in Benaras as he discusses his latest works in his exhibition *The Tale of Two Cities*

Express Features

Ye Benaras hai, la unda yaha bhi har gaya to jeetega kaha, asks a hopelessly in love Kundan played by Dhanush in Anand L Rai's *Ranjha-naa*.

111 The movie epitomises the rustic and alluring appeal of young love turning insanely stalkish but also rejuvenates Benares beyond the Ganges.

And that's exactly what Dilip Choudhary captivates in his new painting exhibition in the city.

Despite being originally from Kolkata, it is Benaras that inspires him and hence with this exhibit, he spins 'The Tale of Two Cities', where the artist paints the two places as his muses.

Using fine light and shade besides a strong perspective, Dilip executes riveting canvases, each of which has a story to tell.

"The most common similarity between the two cities is the Ganga and its ghats. However, Benares ghats attract me even more than the ghats in Kolkata," says the 62-year-old artist.

His exhibition depicts real portraits of the cities, pulsating with action, mirroring its strengths and weakness in poetic language.

The city of Kolkata is depicted with a profusion of monsoons, abundant populace and heritage structures.

"My surroundings and my childhood struggle have led me to be what I am today. I am honest to my work... whether I paint a cityscape, a landscape or the rickshaw-pullers on the streets of Kolkata, all of them have, at some point of time, been my inspiration in life and have left their mark with me," he explains.

The hand-pulled rickshaw is one of the oldest modes of transport in Kolkata.

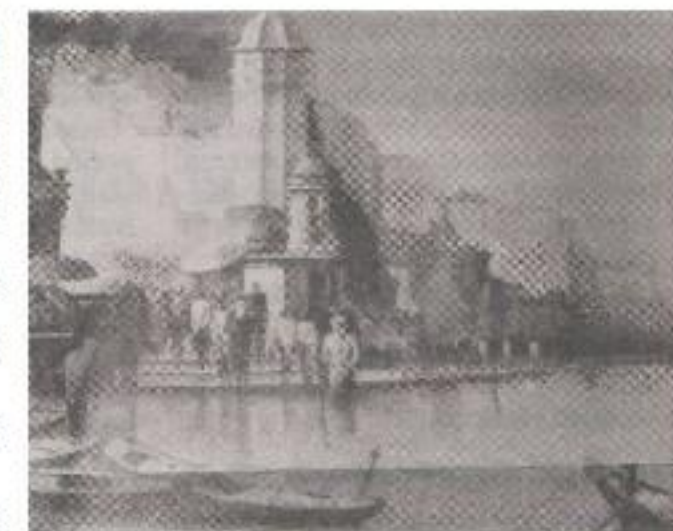
The artist portrays rickshaw-pullers to show their daily struggle.

Dilip studied the lives of the rickshaw-pullers by staying with them for a couple of nights.

"I experienced so many things including how they stay, arrange their rickshaws, live, have fun and sing in front of fires on winter nights in Kolkata," he says.

In Benares, he met a lot of sadhus and had conversations that went on for hours.

"There is a tradition among Bengalis, where widows spend the rest of their lives in Benares. I ended up meeting a lot of Bengali widows who stay there with their families. I found the connection there between the two cities. Maybe



the two cities are connected through Her (Ganga) or maybe the relation these cities share is from a much earlier time," Dilip says.

All the hand-driven rickshaw-pullers are people who have migrated from the neighbouring state of Bihar and the canvas depicts the story of their struggle.

Dilip has been painting since childhood.

"I used to glance upon this one artist who used to work in his studio, while I was on my way back from the football playground daily. I got interested in his work and one day, I approached him to teach me his art and that's how it all started," says the artist.

Dilip has done his Bachelor of Fine Arts in painting from the Indian College of Art and Draftsmanship.

He has been in the art industry for around 27-28 years now and is currently based in Kolkata.

The exhibition 'The Tale of Two Cities' is being showcased at Sublime Galleria, UB City until December 3.



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— Dilip Choudhury

