

In the initial days, I had a fascination about Model Photography. I would take photos of pretty girls and stout, well-built boys after 'polishing' them a lot. Now-a-days we call it the 'make-up'. In current times, the digital make up has unparalleled importance.

The importance is so much that it has become difficult to differentiate between the original and the made up one.

Amidst all this, if and when I spot the wrinkled skin of a grand old man, I often tremble with excitement. Back then, I would feel great to take such photos. In the initial days, it was such raw photos that got me everything, the compliments, adulation etc. I could see every line on the face and capture the emotions.

This went on for a few years. I found new technology and newer paths. And then the technology gained total control. The basic was uprooted. And now, we are as well addicted to it.

All of this pokes me somewhere within. I was told to be aware of the boundaries and stay into the main stream... to carry forward what we learn... to not discard the old while embracing the new, to tightly hold it, to drop the flaws of the old and incorporate it in the design of the new...

I often realize and feel all of this while planning something new.

How have the works of the past- by our ancestors- painters, sculptors have managed to transcend the boundaries of time?

When we see the finishing of the sculpture from then, we forget the makeup that we do now. Why does this happen? We should be aware of what they have done and made. Why do we get disturbed when we see the made up, polished faces today?

At any moment, this sculpture would break into a dance step...

At any moment, one of them might apply the kumkum on the forehead...

How beautiful is the goddess Parvati, seating in the lap of Lord Mahesha... not one but many sculptures surround us. I am often captivated by them while taking photos of the sculptures. It's difficult to break free from them and adjust the frame. Not only the sculpture, but what surrounds them has a similar effect. The composition, the layout is never easy. The light that is shed on the sculpture suggests the angle. It is necessary that getting the right angle is part of your thought process.

We often lose our mask when we visit a sculpture-rich place like Ellora. We desire that our work should be as enriching as this that the viewer should feel that it is his / her own.

A French tourist chanced upon an unbelievable treasure in Cambodia. Truth be told, it was far more than a 'treasure'.

He not only found one but many temples.

The world took notice and tourists started streaming in. America tore this country apart in the US-Vietnam War. The ruins sufferings and wounds of the war are still found here.

The Buddha temples have become world famous because they attracted tourists. It is the tourists that have made them famous. For us, the Indians, these are mesmerizing and unforgettable. The motive behind these temples is the spread of religion by Gautama Buddha. The inspiration is of a peace-loving religion born in India. The sculptures conveying the greatness of the Ramayana are found everywhere over this temple.

We are awestruck and full of admiration as we see the works here. There are multi-storied faces of the Buddha here. This cannot be found anywhere in the world.

How did they make this?

How did the religious core of the artists reflect in the grand stone sculpture?

How much time they must have taken? How many pairs of hands were needed?

We fall short while thinking of something this fantastic...

In some countries we can see how hate destroys the art and tarnishes the human culture and these temples bring us a big relief.

As usual, we had kept two extra days. We almost bathed in sweat due to humid conditions when we reached and we could predict the days to come. The Angkor Wat temple complex... the sudden rains... the foggy mornings... nothing was exciting for Photography. We had taken out a pass for a week. We had decided and we would go every day. From 7 in the morning to 3 in the noon, we would see the temple and take photos. But sweat had made life hell. We would get tired after ever 3-4 hours of work. We would come out of the premises and have coconut water... only to resume work.

We had kept aside two days for the main temple of Angkor Wat...

I was taking photos while looking minutely at the nuanced emotions on the face of Buddha...

But I was not getting light or the composition the way I wanted...

It was necessary for me to roam around a couple of hours to study how and from where I will get the photo. Taking photos was not easy because of the tourists. Finally I zeroed on a place and waited...

There was no enough light on the face of the Buddha that I wanted to click...

The place where I was waiting was a bit tricky. I was experiencing cramps due to the posture I had chosen for planting my feet. . I had no option to bear it. I was captivated by the Buddha's face. Here was the Great Soul who had attained victory over sufferance. Now, he was testing mine. And then I forgot the sensation of pain.

After 40 odd minutes, the light began to improve slowly....

Everything began to come to life.

Buddha's face was transforming... magic began....

I took a few close-ups and kept making different adjustments. Across from where I was standing, I could see something hanging. A pillar had something tiny step like structure.

My gaze shifted there. I felt that I could stand there and so I did. I could see another Buddha that was before the one that I was aiming for. It was a profile in the shadows. I took it out of the frame and took in the smiling Buddha in lights.

I was literally standing without any support. But the Buddha in front of me had his pure smile that supported the whole world. The light unveiling the smile was magical. Everything was so clean, pure and omnipotent.

The new composition was beautiful. Was I happy? Yes. I was. But it was not the usual joy. This time around it was something ethereal it. As I regained my senses, the danger of falling with the camera flashed before my eyes and I took a step back. I descended directly from 15 feet and it was then I realized that the muscles were taut in many places.

What I had found was celestial for me.

My endurance had paid off and that too in gold.

The dream of a dawn...

The stay in the Moroccan desert can be very pleasing. I was in school when I saw a desert for the first time. A place without water... a place with the tress of dates and silver date palm... camels... mirage and cowboys. It was fun to walk with burying feet in the soft, beautiful sand...

Miles and miles of sand... till afar... we reached late at night. I couldn't see much clearly in the tent. But I could guess a bit. I slept thinking of the dawn. Till late in the night, various things from the desert kept flashing before my eyes... things from movies, stories... the ones I had heard and the once I had read.. It was waves of images. Scorpions and snakes appeared too.

I woke up at 4am.

I had readied my bag the night before. I got ready in 15-20 minutes and stepped out. I had thought that I would be alone to catch the sunrise, but a couple of people were there. I had already attached two different lenses for both the cameras. The tent owner had warned about the snakes the night earlier. It was yet to dawn. There was no direct light. The reflection of the moon was not full. Soft light had scattered.

People would come in the picture and I didn't want them to, so I walked half a kilometer away... I wanted the lines of the desert... exactly as they were when night wind had sung. I was adamant for it and I could see something like that. I could see landscapes afar.

The camera began its work. The pictures in the sublime light were magical. I was storing in the camera their enticing shapes and beautiful designs.

All of a sudden, on a small sandy hill, I spotted a flock of pigeons.

I could see something a bit faint on the big descent ahead.

The distance was about 300 meters... I focused in with a tele-camera and I was enthralled.... The lines made by winds had footprints of the lapwings

Such beautiful designs I had captured. The mind went crazy.

I did a few photo sketches of various forms and designs from afar.

I also got pictures of faint shadows created by the light through a single colour.

The sun was slowly peeping out from the clouds.

It was due to His tender steps that I got framing the exact way I needed.

I was content that the night ponderings had come true.

An exhibition was almost ready in my mind.