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Paresh Maity, *PAINTER*

The Portrait of the Artist in Contemplation

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In 1982, much before he became famous, Paresh Maity—whose paintings, photographs and sculptures grace many tony homes and galleries—accompanied a friend from Kolkata to Delhi to buy a motorcycle. It didn't form a 'motorcycle diary', but unknown to him, Paresh's journey to Delhi had already begun. In the 1990s, he returned to live in India's "art capital". A few years after his first solo exhibition, he bought an apartment in Chittaranjan Park—the capital's 'mini Kolkata.' "Thus I became a 'Delhiite'," confesses the artist, whose trademark black rimmed glasses, flamboyant tunics and signature silver necklace makes him an exotic figure in Delhi's creative arts and events circuit.

So, how does one become a Delhiite? Having his own circle of friends, being a regular visitor to the city's many galleries and being resilient in spirit "to paint various ups and downs." Paresh feels the image of the artist has changed dramatically. "In Delhi, the artist is no more a *jhola waala*. He is stylish. He knows the market. He goes to parties." At his studio in CR Park, Paresh is surrounded by his own gigantic paintings. "The radio keeps playing as I work," says Paresh, as old Hindi film songs and election advertisements on FM play an eccentric sound track.

In 1989 when he called up the famous master of watercolours Bimal Das Gupta from a phone booth in Hauz Khas village, the maestro showed interest in Paresh's art. He suggested a visit to Gallery Ganesha. "It had opened only a week ago. Sobha Bhatia, the owner, promised to hold my solo exhibition. Mine were huge paintings. Knowing how lazy Bengalis can be, and fearing I would never come back, she asked me to leave my work with her."

Paresh feels that Delhi doesn't give him the comfort "to escape". "I escape to Bangalore when I need peace and space from Delhi's fast pace." Delhi's cognoscenti and uber-art crowd were present at a recent party held by Paresh and his artist wife Jaisree Burman to celebrate his Padma Shri. Seeing him at his social best, it is clear that he knows how to celebrate Delhi both as an extrovert and in contemplation.

WHICH COLOUR ON YOUR CANVAS IS MOST FOUND IN YOUR WARDROBE?

I like the *mela* of colours that India, Delhi and life offer

WHAT'S ESSENTIAL FOR YOU TO PAINT PEACEFULLY?

Indian and Western instrumental classical music. Where ever I go, I have to have my CDs

YOU SETTLED IN CR PARK FOR THE FISH. DO YOU COOK?

I am a small eater. But I have help to cook for me