

Looking back

The passage of time is indeed magical and while it flies, our lives too move along without us realizing so- unless we pause to ruminate our past. At myriad images of my colourful childhood full of fantasies, the carefree naughty teens, the experimental and romantic days of early youth, the subsequent period of struggle to find a foothold in the world of art followed by the time I started getting recognition as a painter with an individualistic visual language having a style and character of its own. It has indeed been a long and fulfilling journey and in spite of the hurdles, I have truly enjoyed every moment. Even at this age I am relishing life, what with every dawn bringing with it new discoveries and fresh challenges.

I grew up amidst the lush green environs of Upper Assam and the eastern part of Bengal-deep forests, emerald fields, the sparkling river, the endless sky changing its hue from dawn to dusk. I was about ten when India became a free country but with the ecstasy of independence came the agony of partition. I was brought to Calcutta to pursue my education. Having fallen from nature's lap to this brick and mortar jungle was quite a culture shock - the imposing Howrah Bridge, the crowds, the din, big buildings, the trams and vehicles, busy streets, restaurants et al. Gradually I got used to this urban lifestyle. I was in my early twenties when, brimming with enthusiasm and eager about seeking fresh pastures, I decided to shift to Delhi. The capital and its people embraced this stranger wholeheartedly. It was here that I encountered supportive teachers who would inspire me to excel and loving students whose company helped me stay young and vivacious. It was here that I got acquainted with friends who became more like my extended family. Delhi with its rich historical legacy and architecture attracted me immensely - the forts and monuments built by various dynasties blending with the buildings designed by Lutyens in the new city. These architectural icons kept resurfacing in my drawings and paintings.

After about five and a half decades of living in Delhi, I returned to my roots - Kolkata, where I have been concentrating a lot on sculpting and experimenting with wood and bronze. I have attempted to involve and inspire the young generation and instill in them ethical values as also a sense of duty and dedication. In doing so I founded ARTS 91, an organization which epitomized “creativity and concern for humanity.”

I have in my lifetime travelled extensively within the country and all over the globe savouring a variety of cultures, languages and lifestyles, meeting artists, viewing museums and art galleries as also making loads of friends, all of which influenced my life, thoughts and works to a great extent. Whatever I have lost or gained, my personal triumphs or failures, my emotions - love, pain, anger, joy- my fears and insecurities, my hopes have all found expression in my creative endeavours. As a responsible member of this society, I have not been able to isolate myself from the circus of life, Therefore the socio political environment has had a huge impact on my visual language. Besides, my compositions have often been enhanced by stylized calligraphy of poems and quotations by great minds who have inspired me - Swami Vivekananda, Rabindranath Tagore and Jibanananda Das, Sukanta Bhattacharjee and Nazrul Islam

-Dhiraj Choudhury, Kolkata, 6th September 2011