

## VIEW FROM THE GALLERY



**This month MOHAMMED ARFAN ASIF talks exclusively to the 'master of magical realism', CHAKRAVARTY RAJAGOPAL.**

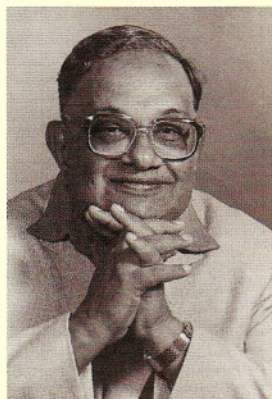
**S**RINIKETAN IN BANGALORE is the cradle that gave birth to the resurgence of pictorialism in India. Chakravarty Rajagopal, 76, as a leading figure of that movement, ensured that creative pictorial photography was not upstaged by commercialism.

#### What inspired you to take up photography?

It all started when my grandfather purchased a Perkenson Rayment camera in 1890. From then on, three generations in our family have been fascinated with photography. I personally took to photography at 20, when my uncle gifted me with my first camera — a war disposal 828 Kodak Bantam in 1947. It was in the same year I happened to see the national exhibition conducted by Mysore Photographic Society. I got the address of Dr G Thomas from the salon catalogue, wrote to him, and he invited me to attend the next meeting which was a programme by T E D'Aguiar.

#### Has your style evolved from a basic principle or approach?

Yes. I first ventured out cycling, and then on a war model motorbike, to the villages around Bangalore. The sharp rays of light in the early morning and late evening gave me the *rekha* ['line'] on which I evolved my photographic style.



Portrait of C Rajagopal by Mohammed Arfan Asif.

Light against darkness always has greater impact than vice versa. That's the principle behind the white chalk against a blackboard and that's the very same I use in my pictures. In the toughest of conditions, I try to capture a line of light to play up the shadows in my compositions; I call it the 'line of light' style.

**What is your experience with colour photography and why do you prefer black and white for artistic photography?**



'Monsoon clouds'.

In any form of visual art, colour is an added dimension and proves advantageous. I was exposed to colour photography much before anyone else in India. Ansocolor and Agfacolor came after the war and I processed photos in my home

referring to books, using M&B, Genochrome developer, Ferreniya-color, Gevacolor and Dufacolor.

Modern colour processes are no doubt simple and economic, but the limit of control over the final image is not encouraging. Around 50% of the final outcome is in our hands as compared to 100% in monochrome. Without the

total control over the final result, I am afraid that colour photography cannot be a true medium for creative photography.

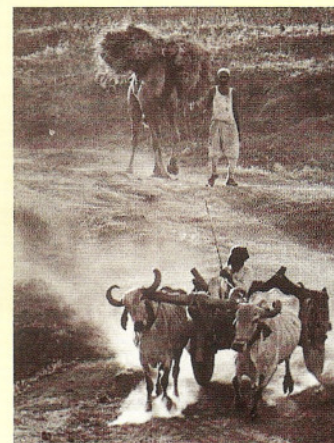
#### How far do you think we have realised photography as a universal language?

To a very large extent. The world has realised the importance of the medium of photography as a means of factual communication. [Photography] has familiarised us with the appearance of things. People used to speak of Mount Everest in prose. Today, we know what Everest looks like!

■ Send your comments to Mohammed: [maa@itp.net](mailto:maa@itp.net)



'And twilight will descend'.



'Homeward trip'.

**BLACK & WHITE  
SPECIAL ISSUE**