

Mukesh

I was shocked by the sight of an eleven year old boy lying sprawled out between a gang of rickshaw-walla's and junkies. Some guy inserted a needle in the small boys vein. I grabbed him from between these men and brought him to the Ashram. In just a few days the broad smile blossomed up and his high voice would resound through the Ashram premises. Though at a sudden his face would again cloud over, laughter silenced, dark rings appear around his eyes.

In his heart he felt rejected, just a small discord might upset him, so sensitive a boy. Next morning Mukesh would not be there at breakfast, his laughter would not be heard. Many times he ran away to his old "friends" who are no friends at all but predators. Then he would sleep with older junkies in exchange for drugs. In this state I would find him then, in some shadow under a bridge, sad and lonely, and I only had to hold out my hand to close him in my arms again. So wounded you don't want to think about it, but turn the page instead.

This turn came when Mukesh started painting. Under apprenticeship of Javed he has found his own particular style. Simple shapes brushed in a single stroke, abstract, sensitive color-use, Zen. At present he is venturing out in the direction of Javed, though I hope he will return to the simple primal style of the beginning. Mukesh is HIV infected and is on Anti-tuberculosis treatment, his condition however is very healthy. Mukesh's parents are poor landless farmers, living in a mud hut with no power or water. As soon as we are able to sell some of his paintings, he will go with Javed and some other Sewa Ashram boys, to his parents and build them a small house made of bricks, rent a small piece of land and restore dignity in his parents' life and his own. Mukesh is still a young boy, still as sensitive as he was when I barely knew him. We see his personality evolve through his paintings, we see a young man grow up.