

Javed

“But some seeds fell on good ground and yielded crop a hundredfold”

The life-story of Javed is as amazing as his paintings. Innocent nature child, his parental home a mud hut near Calcutta. Father on a string-bed coughing blood, mother in the field harvesting crop, bending her back for someone else. Poor landless farmers with five children, weathering floods and droughts. Javed, black naked child playing in the mud, climbing trees, roaming around, no school on the horizon, free as a bird.

Inspired by Bollywood movies, teenagers jump the trains heading capital cities. Uprooted and then fragmented they run against a wall. This is not a village, it is a city hard as concrete. A skyline of fly-overs beneath which is another city, subterranean. Javed drags himself out of the shadow into blinding daylight, unable to stand up he watches the cars pass by. His loins carry the scars from injection-needles, there is a big abscess oozing pus. Suddenly everything turns before his eyes, then darkness. He wakes up with a contraption over his mouth and nose, fresh air comes out of it. In his arms are some tubes, a machine peeps, the room is clean, white, then darkness again, timelessness. Javed was in coma for seven days before he finally woke up to a changed reality, to begin with; the surrounding was white instead of black, the people dressed in white had no intention to rob him. A kind man, a stethoscope around his neck, told him something about HIV/AIDS and being positive. Then some longhaired boy brought him to the Ashram. After eighteen years of drug-abuse Javed became “clean”, healthy. In the morning he would wake up with a song, milk the cows and weed the land. But as a dog returns to his vomit in order to lick it up, so did Javed return to the needle, not believing, not knowing, having no faith that transformation can take place. In six years time Javed fell five times and has been helped on his feet six times. In the year 2005 I gave him some paint-brushes and paint. It started off with a small landscape, black mountains, a milky moon reflecting in a stream of water coming down the mountains as milk between two big breasts. Series of mountains and moons soon flowed out of his hands. His mind transformed, he became an observer with a perception not of this world. His brush tells us about desires, intimate, a woman, mother, womb and space, fertility and light. He never returned to the vomit, seeing for what it is. He thinks paint and canvas, he looks in colors, life became a song. The proceeds of his paintings are used by Javed to support his family and the Sewa Ashram. The mud hut of his parents is replaced by a structure of brick, a little more land is leased, fertilized and furrowed and seeds have been sown and have yielded crop a hundredfold.