

## ART &amp; CULTURE

BIL CHITRA THILL, THT



# JOURNEY

## to a different me

Himalayan News Service  
Kathmandu

The photographs on exhibit at the Indigo Gallery are more than mere photographs: they are vivid visions and lifelike stories of girls who have faced abuse, betrayal, abduction and slavery in brothels.

All the photographs on display are part of a unique and creative project close to the heart of all those involved in it. The whole project supported by Terres de l'Homme (TDH) Foundation is a 'healing journey' of psychological transformation of the 126 girls and women who have participated in the project.

With the theme 'Another me', Achinto Bhadra, a documentary photographer has portrayed these survivors of trafficking, rape and abandonment in their own imaginative characters. All the girls featured in the photographs are being sheltered at the

Santaap, a non-governmental organisation based in Kolkata. The photography sessions took place at the Santaap's Sneha Girls Shelter with just two-three girls being photographed in a day.

Photography was just a part of the project. Harleen Walia, who is a counsellor, trainer and specialist in child protection, did a long process of counselling. According to Indrani Sinha, executive Director of Santaap, everybody involved in the project wanted to "tell the world about the pain that these girls were going through".

She said, "We wanted to involve a counsellor in the healing process as we were very concerned that they do not get hurt again."

There were many things to be taken into consideration. They wanted the girls to express themselves about what they wanted to be, but were wary that the girls might be reluctant to show their faces.

Bhadra said, "We had to

find ways to present an image of what they wanted to be by not revealing who they actually are."

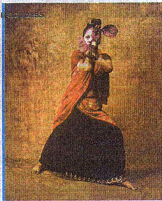
For TDH, which was looking for material for a campaign on contemporary slav-

ery on saying "I look so nice, they felt powerful while talking about themselves."

She added with a proud smile, "They were so perturbed that I would not recognise them. So they

### THE SNAKE GODDESS

"Because ... Ma. Mansha the snake goddess is full of anger and hate. I will use my weapons to hunt down and kill all those who have hurt me so much."



showed me their photographs during the exhibition to let me know."

Speaking at the inaugura-

tion, this was the perfect idea. As the girls started pouring their heart out to the counsellor, everybody got emotionally attached to the project.

Sinha said, "The girls were given the time and choice to speak about their experiences. Even the counsellor wanted to write stories and not case reports as such. Powerful words and emotions emerged from the girls."

According to Sinha, all the girls involved found out a creative way to vent out the anger, pain and frustrations through this project. They held an exhibition at the shelter and gave two copies of their photographs to the girls.

When asked about the girls' reactions Sinha said, "They were so happy and



RADHA, THE BELOVED OF KRISHNA

"Because ... like Radha, I will wait forever for my beloved to find me."

GIRL IN PAIN



"Because ... I want them to see how it feels, I want the world to understand how rape and violence destroy a woman's will to live."

A VENGEFUL SPIRIT

"Because ... I want to eat all those who hit me."



PROTECTED BY THE BURKHA

"Because ... I am afraid what will happen if people know what I've gone through, and because I am a Muslim girl"

tion that was held on March 16, John Frederick, consultant for TDH said, "The innate compassion present at the shelter made the project happen."

With tears in her eyes Sinha said, "I see these girls broken, hurt and in pain every day, but they are still able to speak their minds. I am so proud of them."

The exhibition-cum-sale will go on till March 26.

A SHELTERING TREE



"Because ... so many times I needed a refuge, but there wasn't one. I want to give the shelter of a flowering tree to any girl who needs it."

## French becoming more English?

LONDON: Despite the country's famous pride in its culture and language, more English words have entered the French language in the past decade than in the preceding century, a French government official conceded in an interview published on March 14.

"We have not stopped borrowing massively from English for the past 10 years," Xavier North, the

director of the French foreign ministry's department responsible for the promotion and protection of the French language, told *The Daily Telegraph*.

"We are even taking English words without giving them a French pronunciation, like 'standing ovation' or 'stock options'," North said.

North added that every month, 18 government "terminology commissions" produced a list of

new words that could be used by public sector workers to make French "a productive language apt at expressing modernity".

He cautioned against panic, however, telling the newspaper, "In the 16th century, the same thing happened when Italian took French by storm. Many of the words used then were later rejected. Some we keep, some we spit out." — AFP