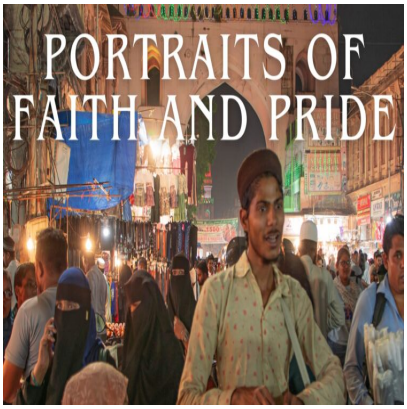


PORTRAITS OF FAITH AND PRIDE

Description

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Holding the camera perched on the tripod in one hand and the cell phone in the other, I thought, with one stumble or a careless misstep, â??Iâ??ll get trampled under the feet of thousands, no one ever noticing; I would be choked down, like a used water bottle.â?• Itâ??s like a cloudburst of people, rushing like a flash flood toward the historic holy monument â?? the Charminar. Itâ??s the last Sunday night during Ramadan.


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It sounds scary even to imagine such an awkward scene. â??How much time, perhaps hours, it would take should anyone notice that Iâ??m down there flat on the road filled with ear-shattering sounds of the festival market, the bargaining din of restive buyers. Further, as if the roar not high enough, the ears seem hijacked by the unending, annoying hooting of scooters and cars and warning sirens of police vehicles, the amplified loudspeakers howling at a disorienting volume to lure the customers. I wondered what if a newcomer rushes into this milieu â?? to this monumental mix of faith and festivity. It would for sure scare the daylights out of the newbie; it would panic him to run fast to the nearest escape as if he were facing head-on a hundred rail engines speeding toward him.

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I have never missed hanging around the Charminar during Ramadan for the last three years. Regarding the creepy suspicion I got today when I got stuck in the blasting mass, I blame myself and my not-so-steady retired feet.

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No, it didnâ??t go the way I had so shamefully imagined. For all the two hours I trudged along the becoming-larger-every minute crowds, I got the needful space and a bonus of smiles that allowed me to pitch the tripod and adjust the camera settings. I positioned myself, with the camera gear, in the sweltering summer, among the flocks drowned in buying, bargaining, and many jostling in a keen religious fervour, and most of them women in their religious attire. And the hour ticking close to midnight, I felt it was not possible to work with oneâ??s artistic balance in the given setting. It is more unlikely to expect some reasonable images.

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On this visit, like in the previous three years, I was grateful, and my camera felt honored for the random acts of acceptance and smiles of kindness that went beyond religion. Despite all the chaos, the ear-splitting sounds, and the mix of faith and mass-marketing, I could find the magical colors of hard work and a silent manifest of humaneness evoking a concept â??letâ??s be kind to others and letâ??s be kind to ourselves.â?• My portraits would vouch for that form of godliness â?? a sense of integrity for anyone to feel proud of.

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Category

1. Places

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