

The Hindu

Their stories

Date: 08-04-2011 | Edition: Bangalore | Page: 16 | Source: Bureau | Clip size (cm): W: 8 H: 30

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EVENT *One can see layers of pain, resilience, hope and endurance in Srikanth Kolari's photographs*



SELF TAUGHT Travels gives Srikanth Kolari his stories PHOTO: MURALI KUMAR K.

The Tasveer Art Gallery is submerged in tones of grey and grief. Photographer Srikanth Kolari is the man who shows it to us, the way he sees it in his exhibition, "Thereafter". His pictures have an obstinate calm, almost like the metaphorical calm after the storm. Be it in the coalfields of Jharia, conflicted Kashmir or tsunami ravaged towns of coastal Tamil Nadu, Kolari's images are layered with pain in its purest form, resilience, hope and endurance.

Kolari says he became a photographer quite by accident. "I was living off my father's money and quite clueless about what I wanted to do, when a friend suggested photography as an option because it would allow me to travel. I had nothing to lose and so I got into it," says Kolari, who, after dabbling with his fair share of fashion, wildlife and commercial photography is now working on his own.

Kolari credits his work and his themes to his travel. "It depends entirely on where I go and what I see. One thing leads to another. I have no deadlines, no boss. The only person I need to be bothered about pleasing, is myself." Kolari's work is overridden by a dark sobriety, which could be overbearing at times, yet the man makes no excuses for his style and the stories he has chosen to tell. "This is their story; it has nothing to do with me. I went to each of those places and these pictures tell the stories I saw there. Besides, these are all real stories; it just goes to show a life beyond the ones you and I are living." "My travelling depends on my bank balance. Right now I am broke and cannot afford anything," says Srikanth. "I do commercial work for the money. But I am completely cut off from the rest of the world; I am not into social networking or any of that, so it gets slightly harder for me. I don't put myself out there." The self-taught photographer says that if he could go back and do it all over again he would do it the same way. "You can spend lakhs on a course, but I would rather have travelled with that money and do it on my own. It takes longer though. What students of photography may have learnt in six months I probably took six years to learn. Besides, there are no good photojournalism schools in India. The closest school which I would recommend to kids will be Pathshala in Bangladesh."