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Will the cow stand on four legs again?

Using cow as a metaphor for the earth, artist Sidharth Rai questions the very existence of this animal that has been worshipped from ages and asks will it ever stand on four legs again like it did in Satya Yug? Ekamata Sharma reports

all decorated with a colourful stole, the *Holy Cow 1* shows *devta* (gods) sitting on her body being reinforced by means of images from the era of miniature paintings to today's popular bazaar prints. The *Laughing cow 2* is like a double edged sword. One side is the archetypal *hamadheru* and the other side the cow is covered with the brand logos of all the daily usage dairy products sourced from cow. The painting *Kalyug* attracts a lot of attention, wherein the cow is shown standing on one leg. "As the legends goes, in Kali Yuga, the cow is balanced on one leg where the body has become all important, and the search for luxuries is creating material waste. This is a critical time. It is time to stand on four legs of Satya Yuga as *satya*, *dharma*, *dhyana* and *argaman*. By ascending into *dharma avatha*, becoming aware and being sentient beings we can achieve *dharma* — the path of righteousness. Only then can we hope to glimpse the *satya* or truth. And as a metaphor, the cow will again stand on four legs," explains Rai.

He adds, "We can certainly slow the process of destruction of earth. Learn to co-exist with

metaphor, it's the projection of human thought, a symbol of the mother earth. Our behaviour with the cow mirrors what we are doing to the mother earth. We have created heaps of garbage. We have disturbed the waters around us. While on one hand man talks about ecology, in actuality, this self-centered greedy human seeks to take more and more from the cow and the earth to fulfill his selfish motives."

It took the artist two years to conclude his vast and intense variety of works which weave traditional and contemporary relationships of human beings with India's sacred animal. The colours in the paintings are fresh and luminous, as the artist makes his own colours using natural vegetable sources, minerals, plants, clay, organic, inorganic pigments et al. The sculptures provide a vital focal point, giving their three dimensionality and versatility in terms of the size and materials used, ranging from small cows made of marble, a huge cow made of thousands of covies, to a cow made of transparent fiber brands of dairy products.

The contemporary concerns on the cow have been amplified in a short film by the artist. The film shows the current state of cow sitting on a garbage heap, crossing the road amidst heavy traffic, eating garbage et al. "This film was the first thing that I did before making the paintings and sculptures. I moved out with my camera to shoot the present condition of the cow," tells Rai.

"While I was working on the *Barah-maha* series (the seasons) I encountered many happenings around me. I translated these images into the medium of painting and sculptures. I saw Nandi bull garlanded with corals and wearing beautiful jewels. I also witnessed activists waving flags in multitudes and shouting slogans of 'save the cow'. Then there was a cow standing silently in the dense fog of the chilling winter and another lame one with a broken leg sitting in the middle of swirling traffic. There was one with flies buzzing incessantly on a hot and filthy summer of June and another in a fit of hunger shoving around the heaps of garbage eating polyethylene along with sundry rubbish," the artist recalls heavily.

While the painting *Bull Nandi 1* in blue depicts the bull



Cowrie shell cow

vivacity



The Laughing Cow 2

allow trees and animals. Let us put in his best efforts and reduce his or her desires then we can help solve our ecological problems."

Curated by Seema Rawra, the exhibition is on till April 13 at the Religare arts gallery.

the earth can recycle. In the desire of creating comfort and luxury, we are taking more and more from the earth and the waste we are creating. Let us