



# ARTS ILLUSTRATED





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## Publisher's note

The earliest symbol for division is the rigid line with two dots on either side, never moving, never meeting, never crossing over. It is seared in our brains that the idea of division is sacrosanct – you pick a side and you stay there.

Thankfully, the arts give us a fluid construct from which to view 'division', our theme for this issue. We look at artist(e)s who structurally or ideologically engage with this great divide – sometimes by intention, sometimes by circumstance, and sometimes by coincidence – giving us new ideas, perspectives and the possibility to change the stories we have heard and symbols we have grown up with. And, most importantly, to re-negotiate this intensely polarised world with its seeming allure of connectedness.

Vincent Adaikalraj



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### Editor's note

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The theme for this issue arrived with Norwegian-British documentary film-maker Deeyah Khan's 'White Right: Meeting the Enemy'. The film, which traces the rise of white fundamentalism, has some disturbing interviews with neo-Nazis as Khan asks quite simply 'I am a woman of colour, I am the daughter of immigrants, I am a Muslim, I am a feminist, I am a lefty liberal, and what I want to ask you is, am I your enemy?' By the end of the film, you are surprised and overwhelmed with how a simple act of crossing the divide with no judgement, no prejudice or bias or expectation, and by purely listening with the need to understand, change begins.

We knew instantly this was what our theme should be this issue: Of humanising divisions that by virtue of their separateness allow us to build bridges. It was a hard issue to work on because it meant meeting head-on the divisions in our minds, in our cultural contexts, our social-political realities and questioning the parts that make us individuals without leeching the individuality of the other. We had a heightened sense of awareness and consciousness while putting this issue together, but, as always, the magazine took a life of its own, choosing the stories it wanted to tell. (For instance, despite several e-mails to Deeyah Khan, the interview we wanted never happened. But the magazine, smug in its all-knowing avatar, continued nonetheless. Sore point, obviously, for me.)

But the stories that did make this issue are each mini revelations of what deep convictions can do and undo, of what art can create and destroy, and how ideas, simple in texture, can have profound implications. And, how, everything begins with a question.

*How will we cross the ocean? We will build a bridge of stones...oops, sorry, wrong example, clearly, for the statuesque times we live in.*



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### Cover Artist

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The original photograph used for the cover



Whenever my father travelled on work, *Amma ji*, our old landlady, would taunt my mother, '*Ghiya ji ki bahu, mero miyo ghar nahi, mujhe kisi ko dar nahi*'. It literally translates to – 'I fear nothing, because my man is not home'. When the men were at work, the women were free to do as they pleased. They could step out, meet up with friends, hang out. Much like in the photograph that I chose to create the cover image for this issue of Arts Illustrated. Three women posing with two children...I could not help but imagine them to be my mother, my *mausi* (my mother's sister) and my *maami ji* (my mother's sister in-law), and the children as though they were my brother and I. I recall going to places with them as a child, to the beauty parlour, the blouse tailor, the temple, walking narrow lanes, eating *paani poori*, and orange candies. And *Amma ji*'s prying eyes at the end of the day.

I grew up believing that women must remain scared of their husbands. That is why they step out only when the men-folk were not around. For most of my life I have witnessed issues about liberty for women around me. I have questioned their relationship with men – with their

fathers, husbands, co-workers, or mere co-passengers in public transport. I assumed that I would grow up to be more empathetic.

The cover of this issue is about this strange dichotomy that a woman's life is. Between time and space where she can be as she pleases to be, and where she must conform to forced rules. Between a virtual world and the real one. Between tradition and modernity. Between what is intimate and what is public. And often this divide does not exist in the physical space. It is intangible, one that is born in the mind, constantly fed to the heart through centuries of cultural conditioning.

And now, in my work, she ushers in a new era through some kind of a Blue Screen – embracing and rejecting, adapting and shifting through a multitude of dimensions. In a state of transit. Painting a reality that she likes, finding a safe space, escaping into nothingness. Celebrating the divide that has been a foundation of sorts. Resetting. Refreshing. Rebooting.



Nandan Ghiya

Studio assistants: Mukesh Vijay and Sitaram Jangid  
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Cover page curated by Rahul Kumar

# Babur ki Gai

OCTOBER 25 TO NOVEMBER 20, 2018, GALLERY LATITUDE-28, NEW DELHI

Reviewed by RAHUL KUMAR

Myth is defined as a widely held but false belief. Often passed through generations, it becomes the *subjective* truth for a community. For non-members or outliers to this set of people, it becomes a fantasy. And, in a world where information flows freely, reaching the palms (literally) of millions at light-speed, the boundaries blur on real versus fake. We may wonder: what is fact and what is a myth? And even before one begins to explore the answer to this question, myths are perceived to be reality.

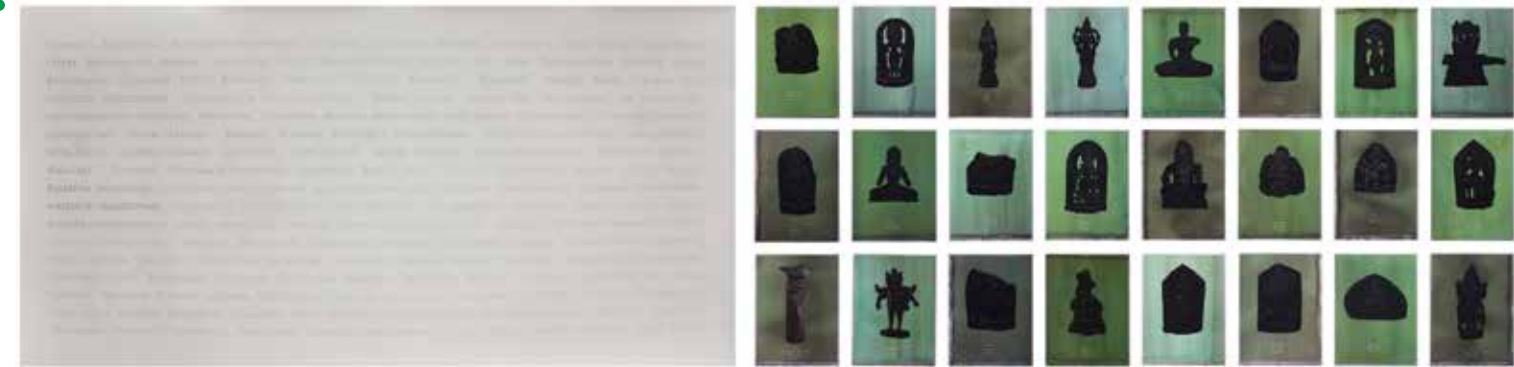
*Babur ki Gai*, a group show comprising 19 artists from the Indian subcontinent and beyond, presented by Gallery Latitude-28, in collaboration with Art District XIII, in New Delhi, focuses on contemporary mythopoesis. Established and upcoming artists have reacted to the theme of myth-making in a wide variety of expressions, making for a potent show. 'I got particularly interested in the works of some of the artists from MS University, Baroda, when I visited the campus earlier this year. The idea of this exhibit culminated with Adwait Singh, who was already working on the concept of contemporary history,' says Bhavna Kakar, who runs Gallery Latitude-28 and is the curator of this show.

One of the participants, Yogesh Ramakrishna, employs a wide range of mythological propaganda-strategies resulting in dream-like drawings where fantasy and reality coexist. It is his attempt to expand the subjective and aesthetic oeuvre, making the imagery his tools to observe situations, objects and people. Ramakrishna's aesthetics is to respond to the objects and memorabilia, like letters, from the borrowed archives of people. There is volatility in his approach, and it is this volatility that precisely articulates the 'absurd' of his work.

In contrast, Manjunath Kamath mocks and distorts forms leading to moments of unexpected recognition through his terracotta sculptures. He creates an imaginary space where objects morph into animals. His works have been inspired by *Vaishnavite* philosophies and imagery. The works remain open-ended and invite the viewers to construct their own narratives.

For Shilo Shiv Suleman, women are timekeepers. She believes in the studies that have tried to correlate the moon to the tides and to a watery womb. A street artist and founder of the Fearless Collective, she references translated Tamil poetry in her works.

The title of the show itself refers to a key work in the show by artist Priyanka D'Souza, who claims to have recovered the lost pages from the *Baburnama* folio. The authenticity of these pages as well as their recent citation by a politician in support of the agenda to ban cow slaughter is however contested, as the researchers suggest that the mention of cow slaughter happens not in the *Baburnama* but in his '*wasaya*' (will), which has also been proved to be a 17th century forgery. D'Souza made the work while at a residency in the Alps, looking at cows in Salsburg, adding yet another layer to her story!



Kedar Dhondu, *If Myths Are Real, Why Did You Not Stop the Destruction*, Watercolour and gouache on paper (right - 24 panels), Pencil on Paper (left), 10" x 7.5" (right), 35" x 75" (left), 2018.

Khadim Ali, *Forlorn Foe II*, Tapestry wool, cotton, natural and chrome dye and gold leaf, 55" x 43", 2016.

Fay Ku, *Offering*, Graphite, ink, acrylic and oils on layered sheets of drafting film, 42" x 30", 2017.

Anupama Alias, *A Lady with a Deer*, Cotton, rice paper, lamp carbon, tea wash and watercolour on paper, 60" x 48", 2018.

All Images Courtesy of the artists and Gallery Latitude 28, New Delhi.



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