

# AFTER

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## Going beyond sight



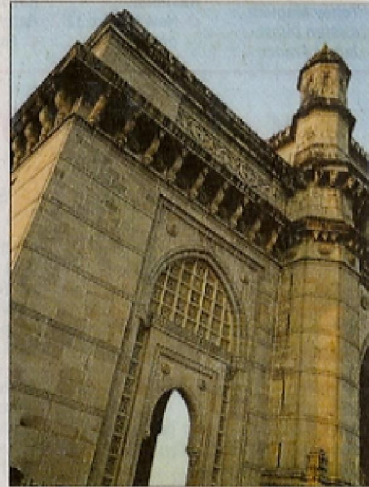
Curator Partho Bhowmick's new exhibition features blind photographers' works

Divya Unny

**PHOTOGRAPHY** might seem the toughest art form the visually impaired may be able to indulge in, but looks like they envision a world through their mind which gives the photographs a whole new meaning.

This is precisely how curator Partho Bhowmick (whose second photography exhibition by the blind will be unveiled today at Zenzi) defines blind photography. "I train them to conceptualise their vision for life through these images and it is sort of inspiring and challenging for them to translate their mental framework into live images," explains Bhowmick.

A photographer himself, his curiosity towards blind photography increased when he stumbled upon an old photo-magazine that told the tale of successful blind French photographer Evgan Bavcar. "Since



Some of the photographic artworks (above & top)

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then, I started studying the visually impaired and their approach towards the art form of photography. I watched films like 'Children of a Lesser God', 'The Scent of a Woman' and 'Sparsh' and read Helen Keller's 'The Story of My Life'. Through my research I got in touch with 35 very different blind photographers in countries like France, Israel and other countries," he says.

He then started work in January 2006 with students from the Victoria Memorial School for the Blind, taking them through a diaspora of challenges and experiences. "Initially, it was tough to convince them about their own abilities; many of them were discouraged by external ele-

ments like friends or family. But they overcame it as soon as they realised their niche for the art form. Their images are primarily inspired by touch or sound." But it was just one philosophy Bhowmick says that kept them going. "I told them that their work should never reflect their disability and their pictures need to prove a point."

A group of nine students, from 10-50 years, their first exhibition was held at NCPA this February. Now, their new exhibition 'Beyond Sight' will soon travel to Bangalore, Delhi and Calcutta. "I aim to do nothing but help them realise their potential and hope viewers will be able to analyse the same too," he sums up.