

photography

COLLECTOR'S EDITION

Photo editor Deepak Puri

has worked behind the scenes with iconic lensmen over 30 years. As he shows his collection now, he just has one concern: to make it about the photos, not about him

Arundhati Chatterjee
48hours@hindustantimes.com

Last week, we interacted with Deepak Puri, the former picture editor of Time-Life News Service's South Asia bureau, over e-mail. Puri (63), who has worked with the publication between 1977 and 2008, answered all the questions about his collection of seminal photojournalistic works, currently on display. However, they were brief and crisp responses. Was he not interested or was he busy? We called him earlier this week to find out and were pleasantly surprised by the energy in his voice.

In 1977, a 24-year-old Puri left his job as a communication personnel at Indian Airlines, and joined Time-Life News Service as communication chief. Within the span of a year, he was promoted to bureau manager because of his ability to network and multi-task. During his three-decade stint with the magazine, Puri didn't click any photograph, but co-ordinated with scores of international lensmen and managed the logistical support they would need to cover stories in the subcontinent. This was also the period when Puri created a lifelong association with celebrated lensmen from across the world. He often received their photographs as memoirs and gifts. Over 150 such works comprise the Deepak Puri collection which will be showcased at Tarq's latest exhibition — In Legacy of Photojournalism: The Deepak Puri Collection.

Much like his responses over email, during our conversation, Puri keeps his answers short and repeatedly explains. "This should not sound like an exercise in self-promotion. The exhibition is more about the photographs, and less about me. Talking about my profile only takes away from these great works of photojournalism." Further, he explains why he had asked us to call him only after 2pm: "After managing the bureau's work for so many years, my body has become conditioned to the New York time zone. I wake up at 2pm and go to sleep only after 3am."

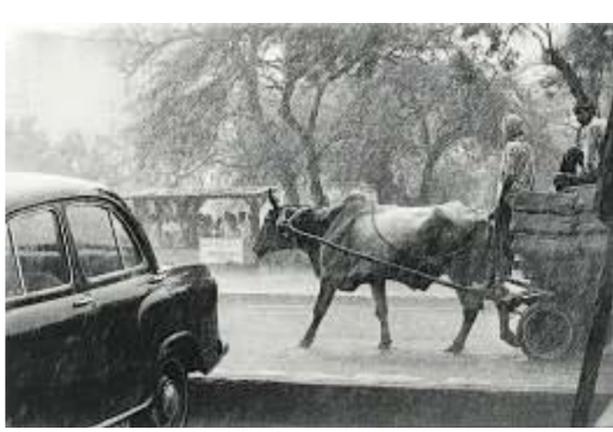
His tenure with the magazine saw him confront some challenging situations. He recalls how, in war-torn Afghanistan, he helped reporters and photographers walk through customs with satellite phones, a flak jacket and even sent cash to volatile areas to support them. "More recently, as a consultant, during the earthquake in Nepal, I organised logistics for American war photographer and photojournalist James Nachtwey, who was on an assignment for Time. He was desperate to shoot an aerial view of the destruction, and



■ Naga Sadhus at the Maha Kumbh Mela, Allahabad, 2001 © Prashant Panjiar/Outlook



■ Holi Bath, Bidar, Karnataka, 1972 © TS Satyan



■ Monsoon Downpour in Delhi, 1984 © Raghu Rai

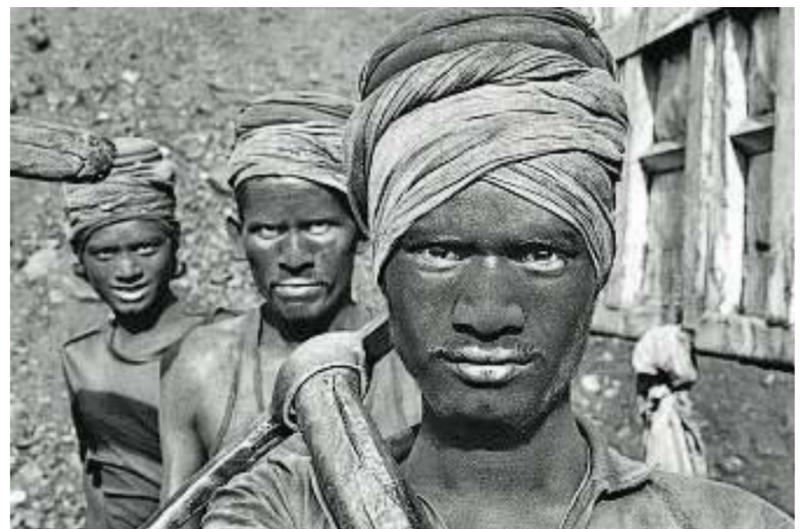
I managed to get him on one of the helicopters of the Indian Air Force (IAF)," he adds.

Working in the publishing industry for so long, Puri has adapted to

the changes in technology. While most applaud the "instant" factor, Puri lists more shortcomings for photojournalists than benefits. "Still images had a pulse of their own that I cannot explain in words. Digital photography lacks that depth. Today, some great images are captured or made, but they get lost in the clutter of the world wide web. It's a problem of plenty," he says.



■ Statue Seller, Delhi, 1997 © Pamela Singh
PHOTO COURTESY: THE DEEPAK PURI COLLECTION, MAP/TASVEER



■ Coal Workers, Dhanbad, Bihar, India, 1989 © Sebastião Salgado



ABOUT THE COLLECTION

Deepak Puri donated a part of his collection to the Museum of Art & Photography (MAP), in Bengaluru. With the efforts of Tasveer and Tarq art galleries, the photographs are on display for the first time in Mumbai. Some of the photographs in the collection include Brazilian documentary photographer Sebastião Salgado's stills of coal workers in Bihar, lensman Raghu Rai's frames shot in Delhi, British photographer Diane Barker's portrait of the Dalai Lama and Prashant Panjiar's photographs of the Maha Kumbh Mela in Allahabad.

ON SHOW

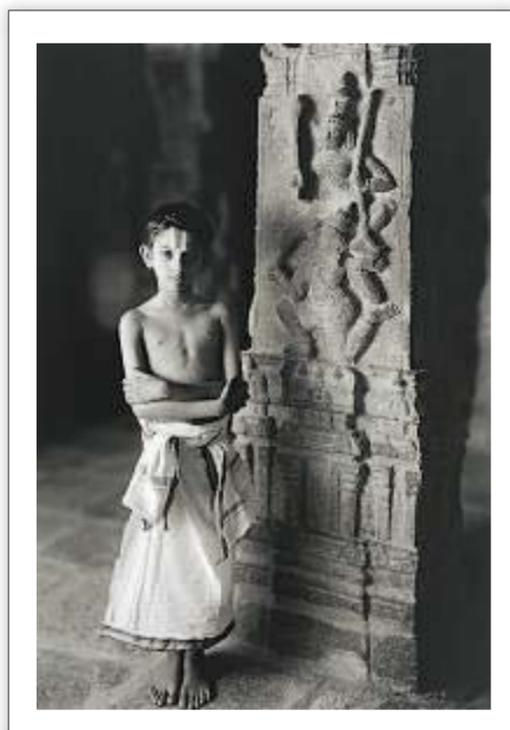
In Legacy of Photojournalism: The Deepak Puri Collection will be on display till May 26, 11am to 7pm

♥ Tarq, Apollo Bunder
☎ 6615 0424

Visit: deepakpuri.map-india.org to view the entire collection



■ Deepak Puri; © Sebastião Salgado



■ (Above) An Afghan Soldier hands a flag in solidarity to a departing Soviet soldier in Kabul, Afghanistan, 1988 © Robert Nickelsberg

ALL PHOTOS COURTESY: THE DEEPAK PURI COLLECTION/MAP

■ Kanchipuram #647, Tamilnadu, India, 2012 © Kenro Izu