

## Atrocities against women

# Cong firm on House Committee probe demand



**MALINI SAHU ■ BHUBANESWAR**

The State's Congress Legislature Party (CLP) has firmly reiterated its demand for a House Committee probe into what it describes as the "alarming rise" in atrocities against women and the "sexual exploitation" of girls in residential schools across the State.

Addressing a press conference at the Congress Bhawan, CLP Leader Ramachandra Kadam, flanked by his party's legislators, declared that they

would not cooperate in Assembly proceedings unless their demand is met.

"We have been demanding a House Committee probe into the rising crimes against women and girl students in residential schools, especially in tribals-dominated districts. Our proposed House Committee would include representatives from all political parties, including the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP). Yet, the treasury bench members are unwilling to comply with our request," Kadam stated.

Senior Congress lawmaker Tara Prasad Bahinipati further elaborated on the necessity of a House Committee. "The increase in crimes against women and girls demands an in-depth investigation to identify the root causes. A House Committee is crucial to examine these issues thoroughly and propose effective legislative measures to curb such incidents," Bahinipati emphasised. He warned that unless the government accedes to their demand, Congress MLAs would continue to obstruct Assembly proceedings.

"We are willing to cooperate with the government, but it appears that the BJP government is reluctant to listen to our legitimate demand. Speaker Surama Padhy must consider our request sympathetically instead of acting under pressure from the treasury bench members," Bahinipati added firmly.

Despite the persistent pressure from the Opposition, the ruling BJP has remained silent on the matter, offering no response by the time this report was filed.

The Congress legislators who stood in solidarity with the CLP leader at the press conference included Sofia Firdous (Barabati-Cuttack), Ashok Kumar Das (Basudevpur), Dasarathi Gomango (Mohana), Kadraka Appalawamy (Rayagada), Mangu Khilla (Chitrakonda), Nilamadhab Hikaka (Bissam Cuttack), Pabitra Saunta (Laxmipur), Prafulla Chandra Pradhan (G. Udayagiri), Sagar Charan Das (Bhawanipatna), Satyajete Gomango (Gunupur) and Tara Prasad Bahinipati (Jeypore).

# Cong disrupts Assembly over crimes against women

Blow whistles in House to express their feeling

**PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR**

Opposition Congress members in the Odisha Assembly disrupted the Question Hour on Thursday, protesting against the increasing violence against women and demanding improved safety measures for women in the State.

They carried out a unique form of protest, blowing whistles inside the House to express their dissent.

The demonstration began shortly after an obituary reference was made for former MLA Debaraj Seth of the Sonepur constituency, who passed away on Wednesday at the age of 84.

The issue started when the House began the Question Hour following the adoption of an obituary motion.

As soon as Speaker Surama Padhy called on Health Minister Mukesh Mahaling to respond to a question raised by BJP member Dushmant Naik, the Congress members stormed into the Well of the House, shouting slogans and



blowing whistles near the Speaker's podium in an attempt to disrupt proceedings. They demanded that Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi make a statement regarding the rising crimes against women.

Despite repeated appeals from the Speaker for the Congress members to return to their seats and cooperate with the House proceedings, the protesters continued their disruption. Unable to restore order, Speaker Padhy adjourned the House at 10:46 am until 12 pm. Following the adjournment, the Congress members staged a sit-in near the Mahatma Gandhi statue in the Assembly premises.

When the House reconvened at 12 pm, the Congress members once again rushed to the Well, blowing whistles before staging a noisy walkout.

The proceedings continued in their absence, with the House debating the adjournment motion moved by Opposition BJD members.

Later in the afternoon, when the House reconvened at 4 pm, BJD members raised concerns regarding the restriction on journalists to take photos and videos during the Question Hour. They also expressed dissatisfaction over the lack of coverage of Opposition activities on the Assembly camera in the House.

On Wednesday, Congress members had also disrupted the House, calling for formation of a House Committee to investigate the increasing crimes against women. For the past week, the Congress has been stalling the proceedings to highlight concerns over the rising violence against women.

## In BBSR

# 460 school buses have no fitness certificates

**PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR**

In a shocking revelation in the Odisha Legislative Assembly on Thursday, Transport Minister Bibhuti Bhusan Jena informed that as many as 460 school buses are operating in Bhubaneswar without valid fitness certificates.

In a written response, Jena stated that a total of 1,484 school buses are registered in the capital city, but 460 of them lack the necessary fitness certification. Despite this, these buses continue to transport students daily on the busy streets of Bhubaneswar.

The Transport Department has formed enforcement teams and is carrying out regular inspection, the minister informed, adding that e-challans are being issued against the violators.

The minister also informed that 3,322 buses, which are over 10-year-old, are plying on different routes of the State.

The absence of fitness certificates has raised concerns over safety and security of students travelling to schools in those buses.

Parents and concerned citizens have urged authorities to take immediate action to ensure safety of school-children.



**Biswa Pakhal Divas:** Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi and other ministers along with State Assembly Speaker Surama Padhy take Pakhal in the Assembly premises on Thursday.

## Skill Centre of Excellence to open in State



**PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR**

Union Minister of State for Skill Development and Entrepreneurship Jayant Chaudhary on Thursday made a courtesy call on Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi and held discussions regarding implementation of various Central schemes.

Particularly, opening of more skill development centres were discussed. Chaudhary said that in the

current Budget, there are provisions for opening of five Centres of Excellence for skill development. One of them would be opened in Odisha.

It was also discussed to strengthen the ITIs, opening of more World Skill Centres, Multi Language Training Centres and inclusion of the ITIs in the tribal areas of Odisha under the PM Jan Man Yojana. The Union Minister said decisions on these matters would be taken soon.

## In Bhubaneswar

# Rs 75L brown sugar seized during raids

6 including juvenile held; car, scooter seized

**PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR**

In a crackdown on drug trafficking, the Commissionerate police on Wednesday seized brown sugar worth Rs 72 lakh in raids at two locations in Bhubaneswar and nabbed six persons, including a juvenile, in this connection.

The Special Crime Unit (SCU) intercepted and seized 448 grams of brown sugar, valued around Rs 45 lakh, during a raid near Loyola School Square at Nayapalli.

"Acting on credible intelligence, the SCU team, led by a senior officer, raided the location. During the search, police recovered the brown sugar from a backpack carried by the juvenile. But his accomplice SK Sohit managed to escape. The seized contraband was prop-



erly sealed and marked as evidence," a police officer said.

During investigation, police uncovered that the accused duo was part of a broader drug peddling network with connections to suppliers in West Bengal. The duo had conspired to distribute the contraband to local peddlers in

Bhubaneswar.

The juvenile was booked under Sections 21(c) and 29 of the NDPS Act for unlawful possession and trafficking of brown sugar in criminal conspiracy with SK Sohit. A manhunt has been launched to apprehend the absconding accused, Sohit.

In another operation, a pat-

trolling team of the Maitri Vihar police arrested five habitual drug peddlers near Hatiasuni under its jurisdiction on Wednesday.

Police recovered 270 grams of the drug worth Rs 27 lakh along with a car, a scooter, four mobile phones and Rs 14,500 in cash from the accused.

## IT Dept raids top liquor bizman Sahu

**PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR**

The Income Tax (IT) Department on Thursday carried out extensive raids on properties associated with prominent liquor businessman Bikram Sahu across multiple locations in the State on the allegations of tax evasion.

The searches were carried out at establishments linked to Sahu in areas such as Angul, Talcher, Kamakhyanagar, Dhenkanal, Paralakhemundi, Puri and Bhubaneswar.

The raids were part of an ongoing investigation into suspected tax evasion and financial irregularities.

Sources indicated that authorities are currently examining financial records, including bank statements, account books and other relevant documents, to uncover potential discrepancies.

In a parallel operation, IT officials conducted raids on the residences of brothers Tirupati and Someshwar Sahukar in Paralakhemundi on the day.

Notably, in December 2023, a massive raid on an Odisha-based distillery group resulted in the seizure of Rs 353 crore in cash over a five-day operation, marking one of the largest cash recoveries in the department's history.

## Gold reserves found in Odisha's multiple dists

Says minister in Assembly

**PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR**

Odisha is home to rich gold reserves with multiple districts showing promising gold deposits. This was informed by Mines Minister Bibhuti Bhusan Jena in the State Assembly on Thursday.

Significant gold deposits have been identified in Sundargarh, Nabarangpur, Angul, Deogarh and Koraput districts, the minister said. Additionally, initial surveys indicate the presence of gold mines also in Malkangiri, Sambalpur and Boudh districts, he said.

In Mayurbhanj, extensive exploration is underway in the Jashipur, Suriaguda, Ruanasi, Idelkucha, Mareidhi, Suleipat and Badampahad regions. Earlier, gold deposits were also discovered in Adasa-Rampalli of Deogarh district when the Geological Survey of India (GSI) was conducting a G-2 level exploration for copper.

activities are ongoing in the Gopur-Gajipur, Mankadchuan, Saleikana and Dimirimunda areas of Keonjhar district. The State Government is closely monitoring these findings, which could boost Odisha's mining potential and economy.

Odisha is preparing to auction its first gold mining block. The GSI and the Odisha Mining Corporation are concurrently investigating Mankadachua, Saleikana and Dimirimunda in Keonjhar for gold potential. Technical committees will evaluate final exploration reports before recommending the next steps for commercialisation.

Preliminary surveys are underway in Mayurbhanj's Jashipur, Suriaguda, and Badampahad regions. The GSI has initiated copper-gold exploration in Deogarh's Jaladhi area with results expected this year. While Keonjhar's Gopur-Gajipur deposits await quantity assessments, no immediate auctions are planned there.





















# Between Giggles and Goodbyes

A heartfelt collection of vignettes capturing the humour, warmth, and depth of a mother-daughter bond, writes **SWATI PAL**

Writing about the parent — child bond or about children growing up, is no easy task. One can descend to complete sentimentality or become a dead bore. Reading 'Din about Chins, Vignettes about Mother-Daughter,' penned by the prolific author, **Santosh Bakaya** was thus an extremely invigorating experience. Not only does she write with great ease but her writing has a remarkable blend of wit and philosophy, making the reader both smile as well as tear up. Santosh Bakaya has to be met with. I did. She is so full of life and empathy. Her laughter and the warmth in her eyes hold the promise of friendship and a deep-rooted generosity of spirit.

The book begins with a poem, 'Hush what is that?' extracted from Learning and Creativity (pub 2016) which will tug at your heartstrings. The too true and sweet narrative of a feisty mom chasing her daughter to put on socks, will fill any parent with nostalgia. The role reversal at the end will bring a sigh and a wistful smile to your face. The poem sets the tone for the vignettes. Words have a certain tempo as they are penned by Santosh Bakaya, they seem to gurgle and splash around and one of the devices that help in doing this is her use of alliteration such as 'Giggling at a gaggle of geese,' 'plucky pups, the mischievous monkeys, the grandiose green of the gulmohar.' The words have a rhyme and rhythm as one can see in the initial 'From the Writers Desk' and the overall effect is captivating. She manages to encapsulate the life of her daughter from birth to late teens and the reader will feel as if the child is someone s/he knows. One can picture the child prancing around to the melody of her favourite Bollywood number, one can hear her ribbing her mother (what an amazing variety of names she has for her mother) and admonishing her for being loud or not so aptly dressed. The daughter is special and yet could well be any daughter...so universal is the appeal in the way she has been described by Santosh Bakaya. The elation of being a loved and needed mother, the

desire to understand every mood at every moment of her daughter's life, the mixed feelings of reluctance to let go and yet, the pride at seeing the larger universe to which her daughter belongs - Bakaya may be writing about herself but in many ways, she has written for every mother.

The title vignette is droll, just like Santosh Bakaya's humour. You discover why there is a din about chins in the Bakaya household and you enter the family not as a voyeur but as an invisible member. Iha is mercurial and you will love her as much as Santosh does. And you will be curious to know more about the personal lives of all the members of the family, so subtly does Bakaya draw you within its folds.

Memories jostle with one another and Bakaya moves effortlessly as well as with speed between them. 'Of Teddy bears, calories and clouds' is one such example of Iha as a little girl imagining herself to be a teddy bear in a ditty used by her mother to make her walk and years later, the mother recalling those times. Iha now has complete control of her life and the mother grasps at the memories of her little girl, almost as if she is clutching on to a time when she called the shots for her daughter. There is profundity in the moving simplicity of narration - the philosophy that time and tide wait for nobody and that all we have are memories of time past; the umbilical cord between mother and child remains unseen but strong, understood by both and expressed at times. Another vignette that is touching even as it is written with



Bakaya's characteristic wry humour is 'Oh the horror of it!' One never forgets the lisp of children and parents always remain the safest refuge for children, no matter how grown up they are, that's what this beautiful vignette lovingly underlines.

As said earlier, Iha is mercurial and you will fall in love with her. Capricious of temperament, she is generous and will give the shirt off her back if needed as she does in the vignette, 'Red towel' and at the same time, she is grounded, not forgetting to scold her father for appearing in front of the domestic help, in, of all things, a red towel! The remarkable blend of wicked humour camouflaging a deep thoughtfulness is all too evident in the next vignette, 'I want you to have

## LANGUAGE, LOVE, HARMONY

The vignette, 'Why are you teaching her Urdu?' seems a little different at first reading as it foregrounds the perpetuation of hate politics between India and Pakistan and the politicising of language. It is a significant vignette putting into focus the author's views about cross border conflict and harmony. But it is young Iha's questions, 'How can one hate a language, mom?' or again, 'Why attack music, is it not the food of love?' that will haunt the reader. Many of the Vignettes will bring a tear to the eyes of the reader or a lump in the throat as does 'Yummy mummy anything for a hungry tummy' while there is poetic strain all along, most evident in such vignettes as 'The fantastic feat of feisty feet'.

a good time,' in which the reader is amused, both by Iha's antics as much as by the author mother who ends the vignette with the lines. 'As she left the room, I furtively bent down to salvage my fallen jaw from the ground. No, she did not turn back to see me stooping so.' Again, in 'The Inside Story' we are enchanted by Iha's glee at her first tattoo and her matter-of-fact attitude at having got a scholarship for her essay.

Iha, like children do, constantly surprises her mother and teaches her more than she knows. We see the author invariably wondering why she hadn't thought of something that Iha did, as we see in 'Is Christmas already around the corner?' Memories of these lessons learnt may make the author lachrymose as she admits readily but for the reader, it is again a sharp reminder that indeed, the child IS father of the man. In the vignette 'Injustice', the author observes about Iha, 'Injustice anywhere was, of course, a threat to justice everywhere, she has realised that, and could not tolerate belligerence in any form'. Over and over again we see Iha's generosity as she abundantly gives away her newly bought hoodies in the vignette, 'Which brand?'

Many of the Vignettes are quirky and end unexpectedly; the title arouses your curiosity and makes you think along a certain direction, but the ending is like a jack in the box, popping up to tickle your funny bone. You will need to read 'Love never dies' to understand this observation.

There is a lot of bantering between mother and daughter, sharper because of a shared bond over language and literature. While we see that in many Vignettes, it is pronounced in 'The flurry about egg curry'. We see this even in 'I am jiggered', a vignette that shows the camaraderie between the mother and the daughter and the Roald Dahl connect.

There are lessons to be learnt from these Vignettes, Institutions need to be careful about the mental health of their students, else they may scar children forever.

(The author is the Professor and Principal, Janki Devi Memorial College, University of Delhi)

## STORIES EVERYWHERE FOUND

Many of the vignettes have Iha saying that her mother should concentrate on food and not listen in on conversations of others, for food for thought. But it is clear that Santosh Bakaya finds a story everywhere and in everything, be it dins about chins or her daughter, Iha. And we all love a good storyteller.



### ABOUT THE BOOK

Book: Din about Chins  
Author: Santosh Bakaya  
Publisher: Penprints, Kolkata, 2025  
Price: ₹450/-

## MARCH READS



Book: Goa  
Author: Subodh Kerkar, Kunal Ray  
Publisher: Aleph Book  
Price: ₹595



Book: The Bitter-Fruit Tree  
Author: Prakash Parienkar  
Publisher: Niyogi Books  
Price: ₹370



Book: Each Little Bird That Sings  
Author: Jayantika Dast  
Publisher: Rupa  
Price: ₹495



Book: Futuresmith  
Author: James Allen  
Publisher: Rupa  
Price: ₹250

## NEW LAUNCH

# POETRY THAT SETS YOU FREE

'Mother, why can't I be like them? Because you are meant to be you.'

BY TEAM VIVA

These words, simple yet powerful, set the tone for 'Iron Draped in Silk: Poetry that Heals' by **Surbhi Gupta**. The collection is a heartfelt exploration of self-acceptance, resilience, and the quiet power of embracing one's own identity. With verses that peel away the layers of doubt and societal expectations, Gupta urges the reader to trust in their own magic, to stand firm in their truth.



One of the most moving sections, 'Trust the Magic' Within You, is beautifully complemented by perfect illustrations of a mother and daughter, capturing the essence of love, reassurance, and the strength passed down through generations. The poetry within this section speaks to every person who has ever questioned their worth, reminding them that their existence is not meant to be measured against others but celebrated for its own unique brilliance.

In pieces like "You are you, not them!", she challenges the reader to let go of external validation and embrace the freedom of self-acceptance. The emotions are raw, the words unfiltered, carrying the weight of lived experiences. In one particularly striking poem, a woman looks into the mirror, seeing herself as she once was, content, unbothered by others' opinions, only to realise how easily she let external voices shatter her confidence. But through self-love, she rebuilds, proving that healing is possible when one learns to nurture the soul within. For every woman who has ever felt unheard, unseen, or unworthy, This book is a reminder that strength and softness can coexist. With its deeply emotional verses and evocative illustrations, it speaks to the heart, offering comfort, courage, and a quiet revolution, one where women reclaim their voices, their confidence, and their right to be exactly who they are.

**IRON DRAPED IN SILK**  
Poetry that heals  
Surbhi Gupta

### ABOUT THE BOOK

Book: Iron Draped in Silk  
Author: Surbhi Gupta  
Publisher: White Falcon Publishing  
Price: ₹699/-

# Turning Pages into Painting

A definitive tribute, 'Bimal Das Gupta: An Ode to a Legend,' explores his artistic evolution, abstract mastery, and enduring legacy in modernism, says **SAKSHI PRIYA**

Bimal Das Gupta's legacy is one that deserves far more recognition than it has received over the years. A pioneer of abstraction in Indian modernism, he defied artistic conventions, mastering multiple mediums with an effortless fluidity that set him apart. On the occasion of his 30th death anniversary, *Bimal Das Gupta: An Ode to a Legend* pays tribute to his extraordinary contributions, offering a deep dive into his artistic journey and the sheer brilliance of his work.

Edited and curated by **Archana Khare Ghose** and curated by **Vikram Mayor**, Art Curator of Gallery Silver Scapes, and **Uday Jain**, Art Curator of Dhoomimal Gallery, the book is a comprehensive collection of essays, archival material, and personal anecdotes. It features contributions from notable art critics, historians, and artists, including **Ashok Vajpeyi**, **Ina Puri**, **Prayag Shukla**, and **Niren Sengupta**, each offering unique perspectives on Gupta's impact on Indian modernism. The National Gallery of Modern Art (NGMA) has also contributed images from its permanent collection, reinforcing his place in India's artistic history.

The book meticulously traces Gupta's artistic evolution, starting with his early watercolours from the 1930s, where his deep connection to nature is evident. His landscapes from this period, such as the Fantasy series, demonstrate his mastery of light and composition. His fascination with marine landscapes, developed from his frequent travels by ship, is reflected in his seascapes from 1970 to 1982, capturing the ever-changing moods of the ocean. The book also highlights his experimentation with Neo-Tantric abstraction in the late 1960s, where symbols, dots, and strokes of red evoke deeper philosophical meanings, as seen in *Prakriti*.

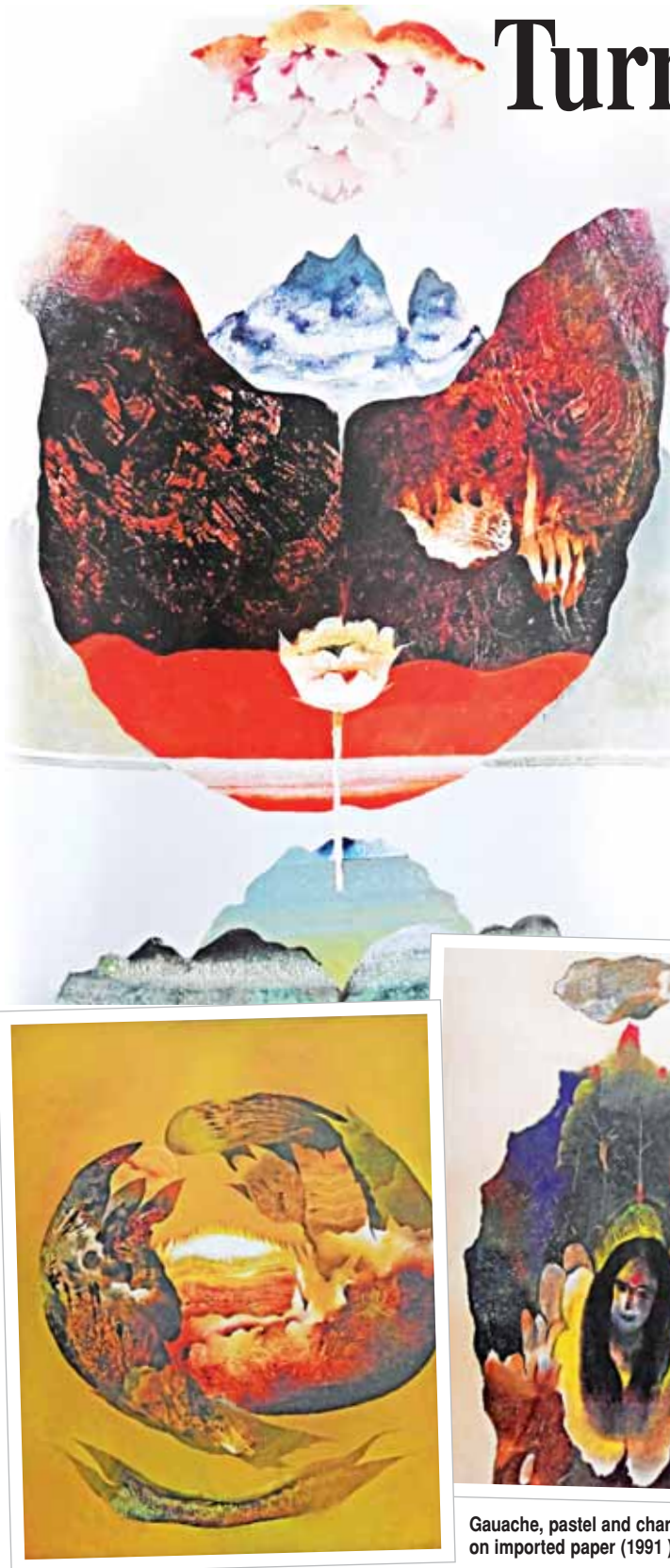


His shift from figuration to abstraction is explored through essays that detail his influences—from the landscapes of Bengal and Rajasthan to his exposure to European modernism during his travels to Poland, Germany, and France. This period marked a turning point in his career, inspiring semi-abstract and fully abstract compositions such as *Houses*, a constructivist cityscape that showcases his evolving artistic language.

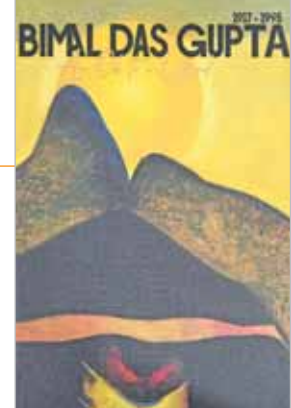
The book includes rare archival material, such as a 1949 oil painting that demonstrates his early forays into abstraction, blending cubist influences with Indian motifs.

'The Cosmic Dance,' an abstract interpretation of Shiva and Parvati, is another highlight, capturing movement and energy through vibrant colour choices. His later works from the 1980s, particularly his acrylic pieces, reveal a striking interplay of opacity and transparency, imitating the wash-like effect of watercolours.

Through *Bimal Das Gupta: An Ode to a Legend*, his story resurfaces with renewed vigour. The book offers an in-depth understanding of his artistic brilliance, celebrating an artist who saw beyond form and colour, capturing the essence of nature and abstraction in a way that remains unparalleled.



Gauache, pastel and charcoal on imported paper (1991)



### ABOUT THE BOOK

Book: An Ode to a Legend  
Publisher: Gallery Silver Scapes & Dhoomimal Gallery  
Price: ₹5000/-

