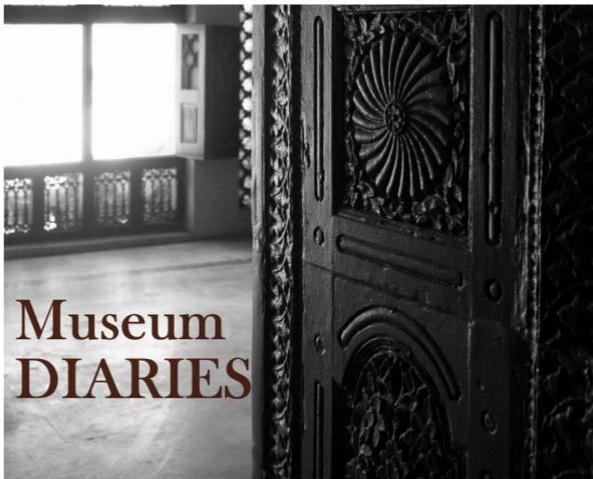




Detailed Concept Note

Ajaib Ghar ki Dasta'nein

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*Poetically disjointed thoughts and musings – part of
Photo Studies slice at theproject.raheellakhani.com*

Prologue

During a museum (*ajab ghar, in Urdu*) visit, I tried to capture things which did not breathe or say were still. Personal conversations reflecting on orthodoxy & renaissance provided these idols some oxygen (*read: metaphysical chemical*).

Thus a creation of dasta'n (*story, in many cultures*) emerged in the process.

Creations are called upon by names & remembered by their character.

I chose to follow the same.

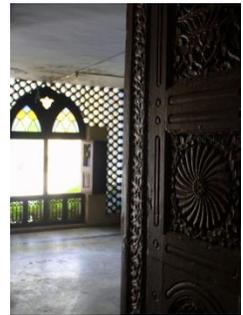
Photo Study

When I entered the Sindh Museum, it was covered with dust & there was no electricity. I felt as if I am back in the ancient times, the orthodox thought of a ‘modern’ man living in modern times. The paradox was, & I knew, that museums are spaces which document the history, culture, artifacts & achievements of civilizations. The photography is an attempt to capture those spaces & objects in a specific way so they become subject of your & others’ aesthetic experience. This concept note tells the narrative formed while making decisions about organization, representing & ‘naming’ of photographs. Thus, the narrative involves an interpretation &/or product of philosophizing by reflecting on both the image & present socio-political realities.

Chotha tul-o-arz

Fourth dimension – symbol of time & creation¹

The first image is titled ‘Aamad’ (*arrival, in Urdu*). The creation is characterized by arrival into a space. Whether it’s the creation of soul in the metaphysical realm out of God’s self-love as characterized by Ibn-e-Arabi or Adam’s descent on earth, the human arrived in a particular space from nothingness or through some transition.



¹ Hindu: Brahma & perfection; Islam: Creator, Universal Intellect, Universal Soul & the Primordial matter;
Pagans: Four elements of Earth, Water, Fire & Air



The second image is titled 'Aalam' (universe). Geometrical patterns, representing the cosmic *reality & interconnectedness*, in Islamic architectural design have instigated imagination & aesthetic appreciation in people belonging to diverse cultures. This picture helps to connects preceding & subsequent account.

The third image is titled 'Firaaq' (separation). The veil between God & Creation creates the sorrow of separation from the beloved. This reality can observed in the gross nature of matter & restless in the material world.



The ancient space & time of creation – the metaphysical world & absolute time was about 'Zikr' (remembrance) - the title to fourth image. It was chanting of God's self-love & the love of Creation for the God; the affirmation He is the Deity of souls.

Zindagi Chaar Din Ki

Life of four seasons

However, in the colorful & shiny outlook of the world, it adorned the form of 'Rasm' (ritual) – the title of fifth image. It both beautified & suffocated the act of remembrance.





The sixth image is titled 'Mard' (masculine gender). The cradle & the presence of only male inside the boundaries of the section speak of the normative preference for the male offspring in the family.

As a result, the woman is subjugated to the demands, orders & suppression of the male dominated society. The seventh image in the photo study is titled 'Putli' (puppet). Nevertheless, she is the strong hu-man; the bearer of child. Without women, there cannot be male offspring.



The eighth picture is titled 'Chader' (covering cloth). Everything is covered. Covered in words; covered by not saying anything.

Kun Faya Kun

'Be! & It is!' vs. Seven days of Creation

In most of sacred texts & religious mythologies, it is believed that it took six days for God to create or say sculpt the universe. The ninth image in the study is titled 'Chata Din' (sixth day). If he is the potter, he used clay to shape the human; if he is a painter, he splashed colors; if he is a knitter, he pulled all threads together. He is beyond any description. Confining him in a description is a heresy; however, remembering him is a virtue.



The next day, it is said that God relaxed; therefore, tenth picture is titled 'Satwein din araam' (rest on seventh day). Whether he relaxed in the company of souls or at the Garden of Eden, it is still a question for many - yet to be answered for many souls.

...& the story continues. Eleventh picture is titled 'Rabta mahal' (connection resumed). Eighth day & onwards, humans also started to pro/create. The quality of al-Khaliq was gifted to humans as creative-imaginative ability.





Twelfth & thirteen pictures are titled 'Aks' (shadow) & 'Rooh' (soul) respectively. Aks talks about the basic development in terms of physical & intellectual rigor for survival & invention.

Later one extends the intellectual to spiritual & aesthetic side of human search. No wonder, music is food for the soul.



However, the paradox of separation is longing and dilemma of growth is dependence. We feel alone but are we? We feel we have freedom but do we? The second last picture is titled 'Nigaah' (supervision).

Nevertheless, He has allowed you to take the journey. Are we chained or not? This notion is dependent on our own worldview. The study ends with a picture titled 'Ab tum ja sakte ho' (now you can leave). The departure!



'Be! & It is! So let it be!