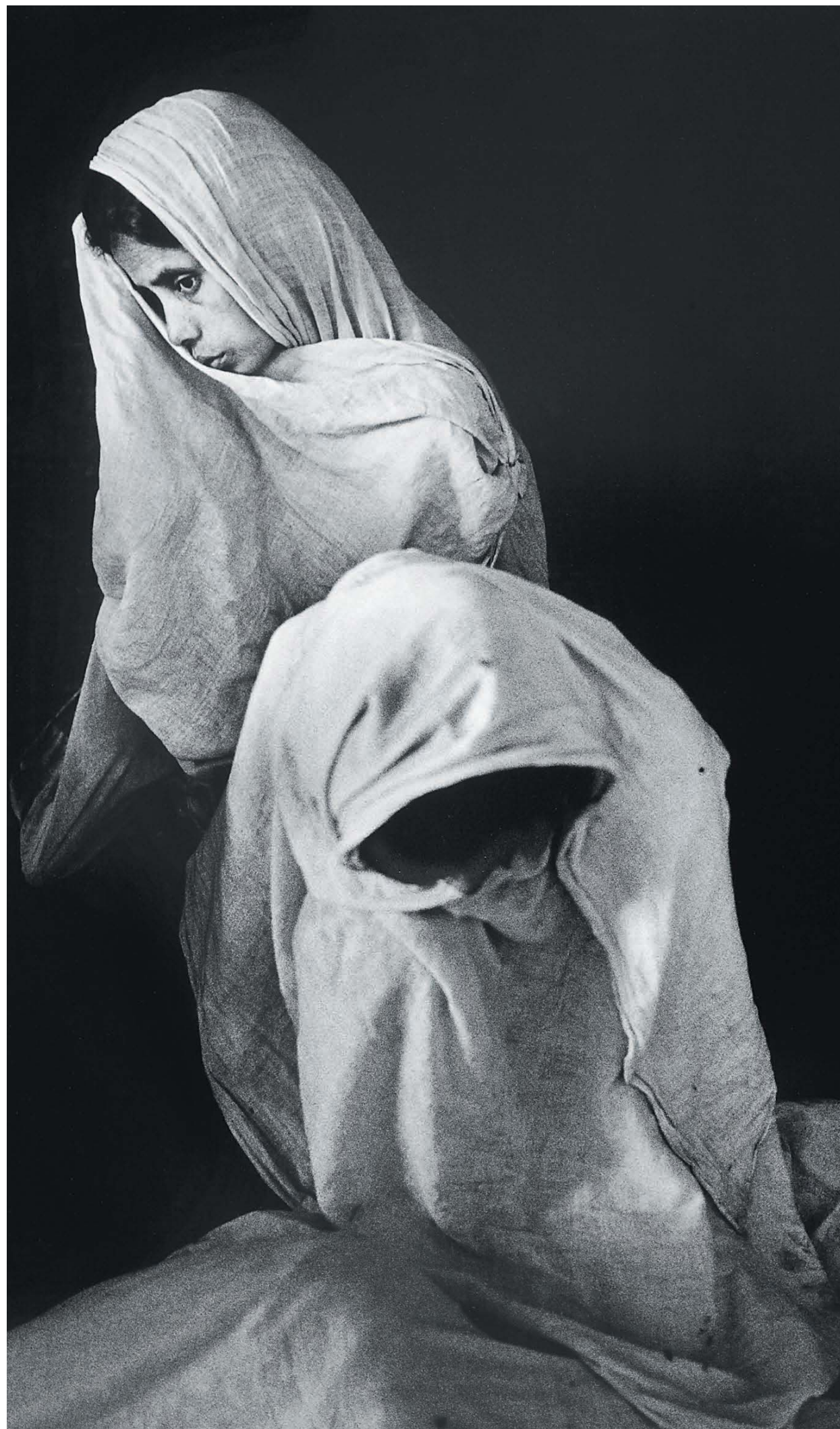


A CARING, DARING EYE

MORE, NOT LESS. *HT* photographer Kishor Parekh changed the face of Indian photojournalism. A recall by his photographer son, **Swapan**, and friend **Mahendra Sinh**



■ Pakistan's General Niazi surrenders in December 1971, after India is compelled to enter the war for Bangladesh



■ Kishor Parekh (1930-1982), the feisty journalist who wouldn't hear a 'No'.

When Kishor Parekh first picked up a camera at 19, newspaper photographs were used merely to fill in column space, often reduced to the size of postage stamps.

Issues such as human suffering and unsung stories of human courage were hardly ever covered. Newspaper photographers didn't try and capture anything beyond the two-dimensional portrayal of an event.

Then along came this stocky man, armed with a degree in Cinema & Documentary Still Photography from the University of Southern California. Bubbling with new ideas, he set out to capture what was essentially missing in Indian news photography.

He gave all of himself to the moment he shot, fought with fuddy-duddy editors, demanded — and got — eight columns for his pictures, right across the page.

His idols and inspirations were famous photojournalists of the time: Eugene Smith, Henri-Cartier Bresson, Margaret Bourke-White. During his career as chief photographer with *Hindustan Times* from 1961 to 1967, he also introduced the concept of 'picture stories', hitherto unknown to Indian newspapers.

Whether it was covering a war in India or an Indian expedition to Mount Everest, the Bihar famine, Nehru's world or Prime Minister Lal Bahadur Shastri's last moments, he was there.

His stubbornness earned him a slap from Nehru — the then prime minister thought Kishor was being intrusive in a private and solemn moment of prayer at the Gandhi memorial at 5.30 one morning. An angry Nehru ordered him out. Kishor stood his ground.

Hindustan Times carried the picture the next day and Nehru's office to request ten copies.

Arrogant? Yes. Sentimental? Very. Kishor had a soft heart. He was a romantic, fought for what he believed in and believed in taking pictures because that is what he loved most.

'He disguised himself as a Pakistani soldier'

Saroj Parekh, wife
■ letters@hindustantimes.com

We lived in Hong Kong then. Kishor liked painting on the beach. But when the news came, he said, "My country is burning and here I am painting." He worked with a magazine, then. They refused to assign him the job, though he pleaded with them.

His friends at work said it was too dangerous and he should think about his wife and kids. He returned home anyway and, with great difficulty, got to the Bangladesh border.

He had hardly any film on him. He stormed an army helicopter carrying news people, on the condition that once he was in Dhaka, he was on his own.

Once there, he found it quite difficult to penetrate into the action as a civil-

ian. He even at one point wore clothes taken from a Pakistani soldier's corpse. The Indian army arrested him as a Pakistani.

With great difficulty, he managed to convince them he was an Indian, and the reason why he did what he did.

When his book, *Bangladesh - A Brutal Birth*, was born, the Indian government despite having hordes of cameramen shoot for them at length, requested 20,000 copies of what he had documented in just a few days.



■ (Above) War widows in East Pakistan; (left) Indian soldiers feed a child during the 14-day war.

A HOPE THAT WOULDN'T DIE

Kishor Parekh went to Bangladesh with no presumption that he would annotate the genocide, or explain the exodus, or show the spirit of a people, or record the hallelujah of the homecoming, he went to find out why it happened, how it happened and, above all, to see for himself what strange hope drove a hopeless people on...

THEN *HT* EDITOR **S. MULGAOKAR** IN THE PREFACE TO KISHOR PAREKH'S BOOK ON THE WAR FOR BANGLADESH