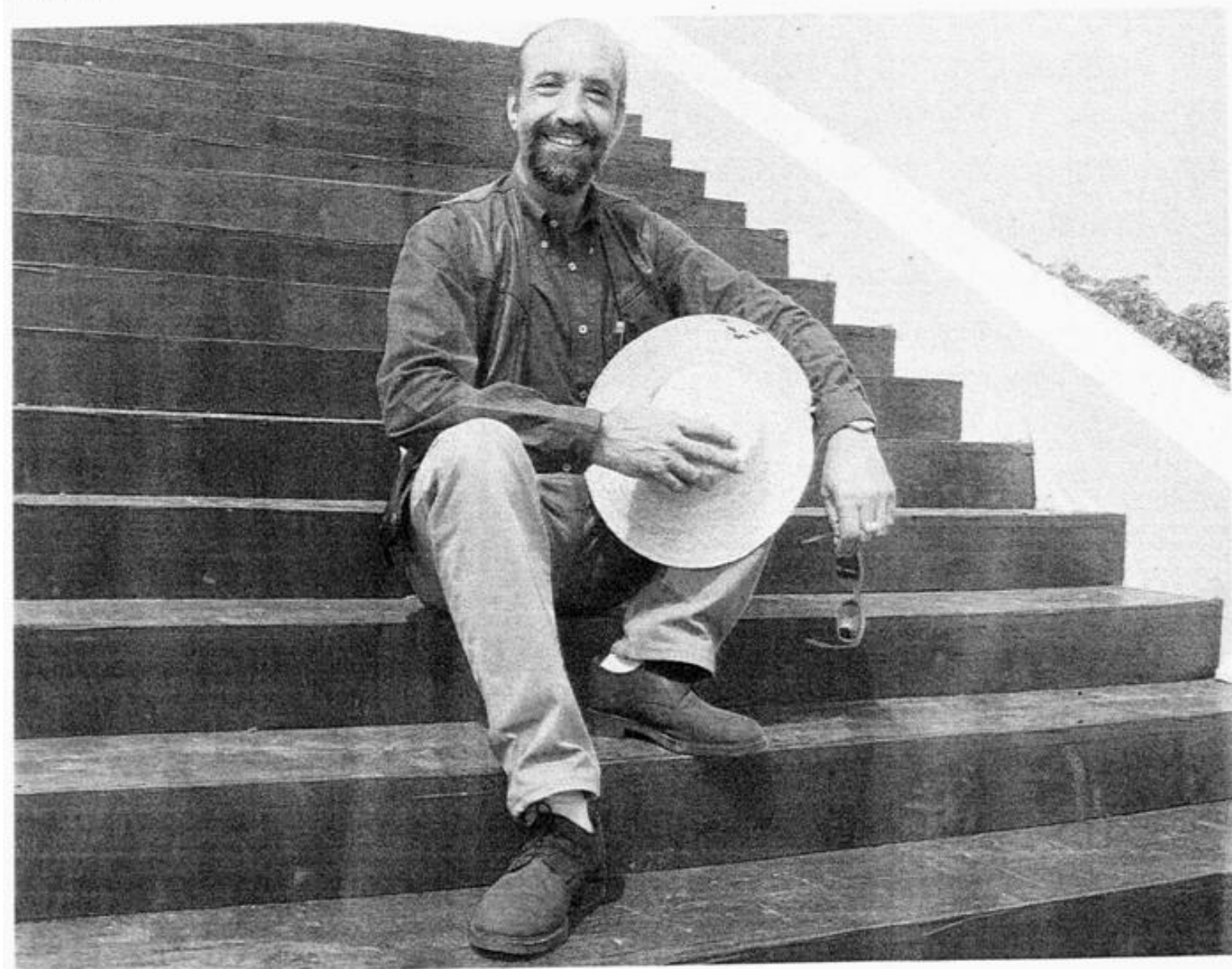


Indyeing love for indigo

PERSONALITY Nasser Sourmi is upbeat on his dance ballet on indigo, an integral ingredient of all his works



PLAY IT WITH INDIGO The colour is an integral part of Nasser Sourmi's works PHOTO: SANGEETHA DEVI. K

Nasser Sourmi prides himself in being one of the very few artists to use natural indigo pigments for his paintings. A number of his arresting works stand testimony to his love for Indigo. It was at one of the international conferences on indigo that he was requested by UNESCO to participate in the International Symposium on Natural Dyes. "You'll find indigo pigments in 90 per cent of my work. I wanted to present the history and importance of indigo through a dance ballet. I worked on this concept seven years

ago. I asked me if I wanted to do it in Hyderabad," says Nasser, sipping a cup of lemon tea.

A few hours ahead of the grand finale of the Memory of Indigo presentation, he looks at the impressive black and white wooden platform with a flight of stairs painted in Indigo and says, "This truly is a collaborative work - there are Canadians, Japanese and Indians. The choreographer Luigia Riva and I had the concept ready but the actual work began only after she arrived here on November 1. This huge stage, built using bamboo, came up in three

days. I began his work and got this ready. Ideally, I'd have loved to train the dancers and have the music ready well in advance. But even those things fell in place only a week ago. Musicians from Isha Foundation got a feel of what we wanted and came up with a wonderful score purely on an instinctive basis. The dancers (two groups of six) were also quick to grasp the idea."

Memory of Indigo is an abstract concept that he's working with, but Nasser explains, "This is different from regular dance ballets. You'll see dancers draping a

few artisans adjacent to the stage depict the stages of indigo dyeing process. But we haven't been able to do that. So the history of indigo will be brought out through the ballet. It's a symbolic presentation."

Nasser has been using indigo pigments in his paintings for almost two decades and traces back his interest in the dye to his childhood days. "I learnt from a book at the British Museum that indigo was one of the first colours used in Palestine. Being a Palestinian, I learnt that the country had a histo-

ry of shades of lime yellow and a thin indigo line ran across the walls. My uncle's portrait in the drawing room was made using the colour indigo. When I grew up, I began using indigo for my work." Like most natural dye lovers, he states, "There's not much use of natural indigo in Palestine now. I hope indigo doesn't fade out of India too. The English brought the synthetic indigo dye to Palestine. With the English around, you know there's bound to be trouble!" Nasser hopes to keep returning to India. Next on his roster