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Meet Vicky Roy; the real slumdog

Ankit Ajmera / DNA

'If wishes were horses, beggars would ride!' Well, that's certainly come true for 22-year-old Vicky Roy, who used to pick up rags as a kid and spend nights on a dingy railway platform in Delhi.

The fortune wheel turned in his favour and now he is among the four in the world (and the only one from South Asia) chosen for a mentorship programme by the US-based Maybach Foundation to photo-document the reconstruction of the World Trade Center in New York.

"I ran away from home at the age of 11 because I felt stifled and wanted to achieve something on my own," says Vicky. After landing up in Delhi and working as a ragpicker for some time, he was picked up by Salam Balak Trust (SBT), an organisation working for street children, and got enrolled in a school.

How did photography happen? "One day, a photography workshop was organised by the trust for the children which actually got me interested in the subject. Fortunately, after that I happened to meet Brit photographer Dixie Benjamin, who came to Old Delhi to take some pictures, and managed to assist him."

Cameras are generally quite expensive. How did he manage to get one for himself? "I took a loan to buy a film camera which was paid by SBT. Later on, I paid them a sum of Rs 500 every month from my salary which I used to get from assisting (photographer) Anay Mann," he says. His first solo exhibition titled Street Dream took place in Delhi in 2007 through which he was able to earn enough to buy a professional digital camera.

Has he watched *Slumdog Millionaire*? "*Slumdog...is based on the Mumbai slums. The condition of the slums in New Delhi is drastically different. Most people think that those born in slums are destined to be like that forever. But I really relate with the movie when they show how little children living in slums can also have big dreams and achieve them too!*"

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