

# DIVINE AWAKENINGS

*A Pilgrimage of Light & Devotion*



S H U B H O D E E P R O Y

Faith is a profound and fundamental human experience—an invisible foundation upon which individuals and communities build their resilience and hope.

It is a deep-seated conviction, a trust, or an unwavering certainty in a positive outcome, a guiding principle, or the inherent goodness of the universe that often transcends logic or physical proof.

Whether it manifests as the simple belief that a difficult time will pass or as the dedication to a deeply held moral code, faith provides comfort, offers purpose, and instills the inner strength needed to navigate uncertainty.

It is the quiet, internal light that empowers people to take action, make sacrifices, and surrender their worries, allowing them to find profound meaning in the complex journey of life.



Today, I witnessed a kind of faith and devotion that felt almost unreal — the kind that doesn't need words, only light.

I saw it in Chakla, a small village in North 24 Parganas, West Bengal, known as the birthplace of hindu saint Baba Lokenath. It is here, in this quiet ancestral land, that thousands gather every year to observe the sacred Kartik Brata.

Chakla is not a place you stumble upon; it is a place you go to with intention. People travel from cities, towns, and distant districts, carrying only a small diya, a little ghee, and a heart full of hope. As the sun sets, the entire village slowly transforms. Lamps begin to glow on doorsteps, temple courtyards, and under old trees. The air thickens with incense, murmured prayers, and the soft sound of feet moving barefoot on the earth.

What happens here is simple yet extraordinary. Devotees who have fasted through the day light their diyas as an offering, believing that the glow of each flame carries their prayers to Baba Lokenath. The light is not just physical — it feels like a shared faith illuminating the darkness.

There is no rush, no noise, no spectacle. Just steady, unwavering devotion. And that is why I went.

Not for the ritual, but for the atmosphere.  
Not for the photographs, but for the feeling.

To stand among these lamps, to watch strangers come together in silence, to see belief shining in hundreds of tiny flames — it was humbling. In Chakla, I didn't just see a festival.

I saw what devotion looks like when it becomes light.



*The first flame. A moment of intense focus and prayer as a devotee prepares her offering. This is where the devotion begins.*

Amid the smoke and scattered flames of this ritual, devotion rises quietly from the ground. The women sit in prayer, their offerings glowing through the haze as incense mixes with the warm light of ghee lamps.....



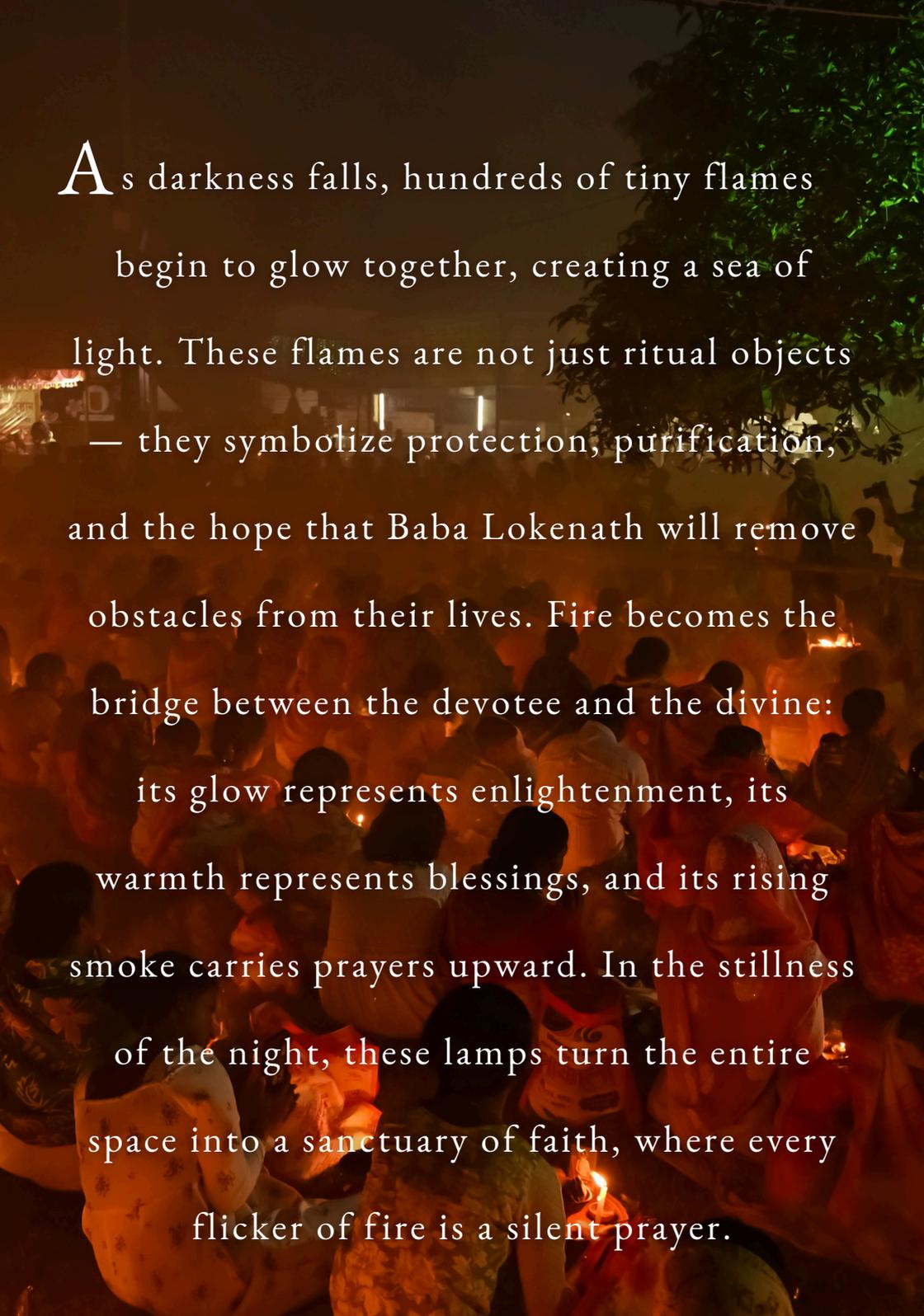
Shooting this moment was a challenge—the darkness, the drifting smoke, the unpredictable flicker of fire—but it was also the beauty of it. In the dim light, every flame felt like a heartbeat of faith, and every frame a fragile gift captured before the night swallowed it again.

*Surrounded by the smoky atmosphere,  
the face is lit by the small fire.  
Sacrifice made visible through light  
and haze.*





*Transferring Faith's Flame.*

A large crowd of people is gathered at night, holding lit lamps. The scene is illuminated by the warm, orange glow of the lamps, creating a sea of light. The background is dark, with some distant lights and trees visible. The overall atmosphere is one of devotion and hope.

As darkness falls, hundreds of tiny flames begin to glow together, creating a sea of light. These flames are not just ritual objects — they symbolize protection, purification, and the hope that Baba Lokenath will remove obstacles from their lives. Fire becomes the bridge between the devotee and the divine: its glow represents enlightenment, its warmth represents blessings, and its rising smoke carries prayers upward. In the stillness of the night, these lamps turn the entire space into a sanctuary of faith, where every flicker of fire is a silent prayer.

Holding the light aloft. This small, fragile flame represents a prayer for peace and protection for the entire family.



In the glow of countless ghee lamps, women sit together in devotion during Rakher Upobash in Chakla. Each diya they hold becomes a prayer—its flame rising through the night air as they fast, chant, and offer light to Baba Lokenath. Surrounded by a sea of flickering fire, their faces reflect the quiet intensity of faith that defines this sacred evening.



The power of devotion multiplies here. One flame begins the ritual, but as hundreds gather, their individual lights merge into a single rising glow — a fire born of shared faith, each flame strengthening the next.



What does faith look like when it glows in the dark?



In the stillness of night, she cradles her flames as though  
holding prayers made of pure light.  
Around her, hundreds mirror the same quiet surrender, each  
protecting a fragile fire from the drifting shadows.  
And as these small lamps breathe and rise together, a field of  
strangers becomes a single tide of devotion—  
turning the night into something softer, warmer, almost holy.



A sudden silence swept through the crowd, settling like a blanket over the night. The lamps flickered on, untouched, and for a moment it felt as if faith itself was breathing in the quiet.



The chanting fades. The crowds drift away, their footsteps soft against the dusty ground. But the light remains.

Standing before the thousands of glowing offerings stretching into the smoky night, the meaning of Kartik Brata settles gently into clarity. This was never only about a single night of fasting or ritual. It was a reminder of something far deeper—an ancient truth held quietly in the hearts of those who gathered.

The prayers have risen. The fasts have ended. The ritual has come to its close.

Yet the collective radiance born here—the shimmering union of so many hopes, surrenders, and whispered faiths—refuses to disappear.

Because this light does not stay in this holy place.  
We carry it home.

We carry it into the ordinary days, into the silences, into the darkness that life sometimes brings.

And perhaps that is the real pilgrimage:  
to leave with more light inside us than when we arrived.



# Shubhodeep Roy

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Shubhodeep Roy, 24, is an award-winning documentary photographer from Kolkata, India, whose practice combines visual storytelling with a deep sense of social responsibility.

Roy's work addresses pressing contemporary issues — human rights, migration, and climate change — creating narratives that both illuminate and challenge. His acclaimed series *The Migrant Workers of India* brought global attention to the struggles of migrant communities during the pandemic, establishing him as a strong, empathetic visual storyteller.

He had already received 22 international awards, participated in nearly 50 international exhibitions, and earned recognition from UNESCO, United Nations conferences, the EU Delegation to the Council of Europe, and other respected global platforms. His long-term project, *Varanasi, Celebration of life and death*, has been published in the Royal Photographic Society's *Contemporary Journal* (UK) and the *Royal Overseas League Journal* (UK), and UNESCO.

Roy continues to develop long-form documentary projects rooted in culture, spirituality, and human experience — committed to using photography as a way to engage, question, and give voice.

**Created in 2025.**

**All photographs were made by Shubhodeep Roy on 15 November 2025 at Chakla Dham, North 24 Parganas, West Bengal (22.97° N, 88.83° E).**

