

# PHOTO ARTS

April 2019

The One-Legged Fishermen of Inle Lake:  
the story of **Intha** fishermen



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Special Feature on the Kolkata  
Cloud Chasers p228

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Special Coverage of World  
Photographic Forum Awards p76

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wildlife conflict p32

## **Dear Readers**

In this issue we bring to you stories from the lives of the Intha fishermen, who are known for their unique way of fishing in the iconic Inle Lake in Myanmar. In this issue we have tried to explore the various facets in the lives of the Intha people and the fishermen and their indigenous methods of fishing. This issue also highlights the perils of human-wildlife conflict and how it threatens to topple the balance of nature. In this conflict there can be no winners and the losses suffered on both the sides are grave and heart wrenching. In our special coverages we have highlighted the amazing achievements, passion and fearless determination of the Kolkata Cloud Chasers – a group of eight individuals in Kolkata belonging to different walks of life bound together by their mutual passion of chasing storms and cyclonic formations. We have also spoken to ace fashion photographer Arghya Chatterjee and landscape photographer Soumya N Ghosh regarding their journeys with their cameras and their valuable insights into their respective genres. In addition to all of this, this issue marks the beginning of our collaboration with the World Photographic Forum. In this issue we have published a detailed coverage of the WPF Awards which was held over three days in the month of March. Along with that this issue contains the results from our previous online contest on the theme – “Places that Inspire Me” which was conducted for the members of the World Photographic Forum. Find out all of these and much more in the April 2019 issue of Indian Photo Arts magazine. We hope, that we have been able to live up to your expectations, we would be looking forward to your valuable feedback, suggestions and criticisms which will only help us deliver better in our future endeavours.

Regards

Rahul Bera (Editor of Photography & Design)

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*cover page photograph by  
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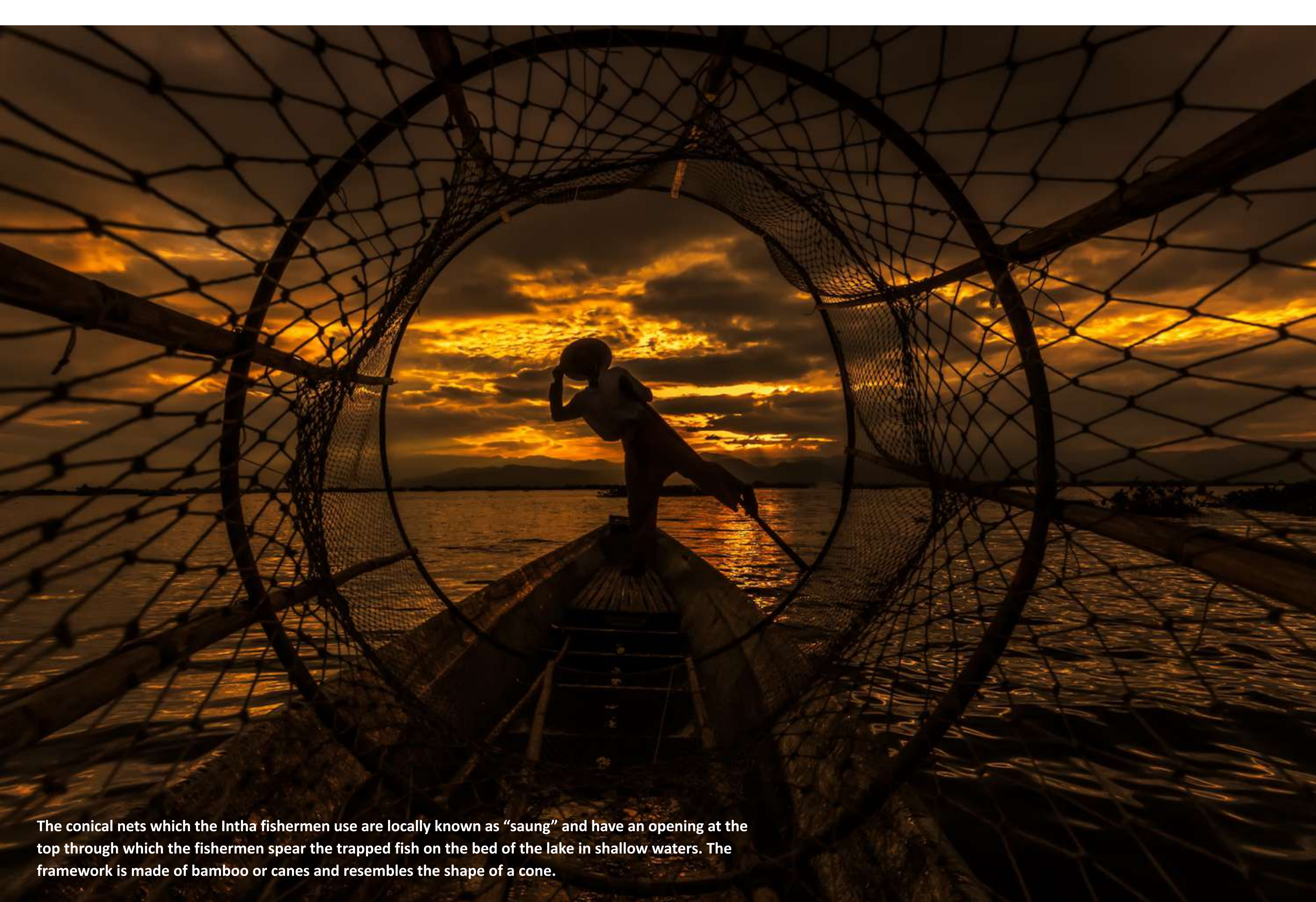


# The One-legged Fishermen *of* Inle Lake by Rajani Ramanathan

A unique tradition of fishing gives Inle Lake of Myanmar and the Intha community an unmistakable identity and has put this region firmly on the global tourism map.

A fisherman belonging to the Intha community in the waters of Inle Lake in Myanmar. These fishermen are widely known for their unique technique of fishing which involves rowing their boats with one leg while standing upright as they handle their traditional nets with their hands.





The conical nets which the Intha fishermen use are locally known as “saung” and have an opening at the top through which the fishermen spear the trapped fish on the bed of the lake in shallow waters. The framework is made of bamboo or canes and resembles the shape of a cone.



Much of Myanmar's landscape is dominated by its intricate network of rivers and other waterbodies. The Irrawaddy, Chindwin, Sittaung and Salween rivers along with their tributaries, estuarine systems and deltas shaped the majority of Myanmar's landscape and are responsible for the vast stretches of inland waters which occupy a significant proportion of Myanmar's landmass. In such a setting it is easy to fathom how rivers and waterbodies have shaped much of the Burmese culture and the way of life. The ethos of the Burmese society since ancient times has been closely intertwined with the country's waterbodies and even today much of Myanmar's culture shares a proximal link with its waters in terms of transport, food and other resources and even livelihoods. The fertile lands in the delta systems formed by the major rivers return rich hauls of agricultural produce with rice cultivation being the solid backbone of Myanmar's economy. Along with this the huge network of waterbodies dotting and crisscrossing the landscape offers rich and wide offerings from their watery depths which has resulted in fishing being one of the primary modes of livelihoods in the country. In addition to all of this, the rivers of Myanmar are still home to some ethnic tribes and communities who spend almost the entirety of their lives on these waters. In the midst of such settings the Inle Lake rises to prominence partly by dint of being the second largest lake in the country set

against the backdrop of breath-taking natural beauty, but largely due to the unique talents and way of life of an ethnic community which has made this lake their home for centuries now.

The Inle Lake is the second largest freshwater lake in Myanmar situated at an elevation of approximately 3000 feet. Located in the heart of the Shan Plateau, the Inle Lake is widely known as home to the Intha people. The Intha people are an ethnic community of Myanmar with their lineage tracing all the way back to Tibet. A relatively small community with a population of a little over 100,000 the Intha people live in towns and villages scattered along the banks of the Inle Lake. Being a riverine community, the Inthas are primarily dependent on fishing and agriculture for their livelihoods and the rich haul of fish in the depths of the Inle Lake and the fertile plains bordering it provide the near perfect setting for both occupations. While the Inle Lake is known for its picturesque setting, the Intha people however give this lake a unique character courtesy their strange and remarkably unique fishing methods. Living by the edge of waters the Intha people have traditionally been a fishing community. However it is their very own unique fishing methods which set them apart from other fishing communities. The Intha fishermen use their legs to grip the oar and with the other leg and arms operate their signature conical fishing nets, and all of this gets done while the fishermen are standing

upright. This particular method of fishing is unique to the Intha fishermen and cannot be seen anywhere else in the world. As the lake is filled with floating reeds and plants, the fishermen have to stand up on their boats to see what lies ahead, and thus they have developed this marvellously agile method of rowing their boats, using one leg to wrap around and hold the oar and paddle, which allows them to stand up, not to mention keeping their hands free for working with their fishing traps and baskets. The Inle Lake is a relatively shallow stretch of waterbody and in patches is densely populated with floating plants, weeds and other aquatic vegetation. The dense vegetation of the Inle Lake could be one possible explanation why the fishermen have to stand upright and perform such complex acrobatic and agile manoeuvres involving their limbs, nets and oars as standing upright provides them with a clearer line of sight in terms of navigating their boats as well as locating a shoal of fish. It goes without saying such a skill requires a lot of practice and extorts a great deal of strength. Balancing on these rickety boats is an incredibly difficult task. The fishermen with one leg wrapped around the oar effortlessly glide along the calm waters of the Inle, quietly going about their daily business and the stoic expression on their gritty faces effectively conceals the hardships involved in this unique craft. The conical nets which they use are locally known as "saung" and serve a special purpose. The framework is made

of bamboo or canes and resembles the shape of a cone. In the shallow waters of the Inle Lake where during the dry season the average depth seldom exceeds 2 meters these specially built nets come in handy. The fishermen throw these nets into the water and press them hard against the bed of the lake with their legs thereby trapping the fish. Once they successfully trap the fish using their conical nets the fishermen use their spears to pluck the trapped fish out through an opening at the top of the conical net. Most of these fishermen set out in their small boats carved out of teak at the break of dawn and spend more than 8-9 hours on a daily basis on the waters of the Inle Lake.

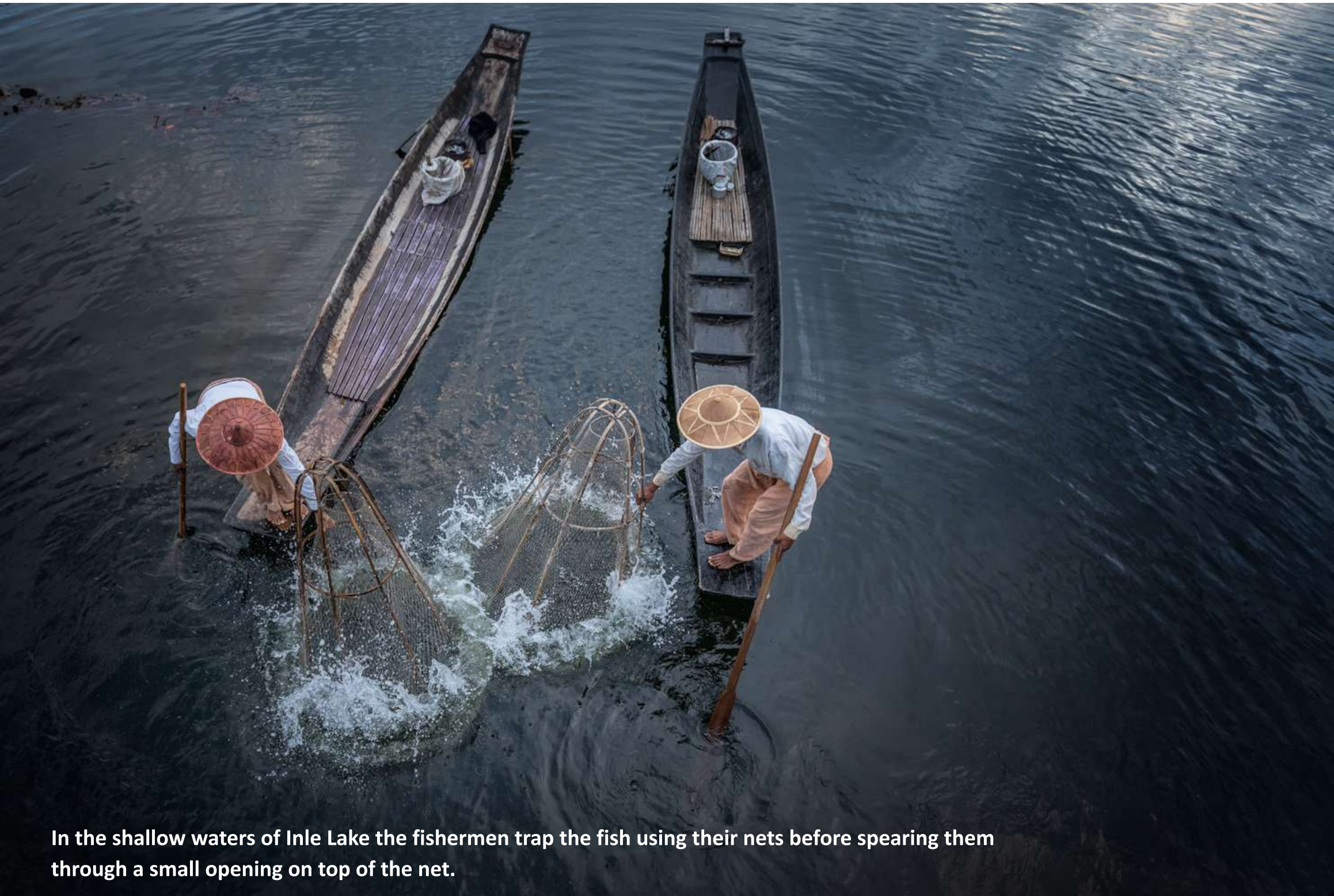
*The Intha people are an ethnic community of Myanmar with their lineage tracing all the way back to Tibet. A relatively small community with a population of a little over 100,000 the Intha people live in towns and villages scattered along the banks of the Inle Lake. Being a riverine community, the Inthas are primarily dependent on fishing and agriculture for their livelihoods and the rich haul of fish in the depths of the Inle Lake and the fertile plains bordering it provide the near perfect setting for both occupations.*





The fishermen spend around 8-9 hours daily on these waters. This is a physically demanding technique and saps the last ounce of energy from their bodies, particularly during the hot and humid summer months.





**In the shallow waters of Inle Lake the fishermen trap the fish using their nets before spearing them through a small opening on top of the net.**

The unique method of balancing, rowing with their legs, handling the conical nets and spearing the trapped fish exerts a severe toll on their bodies. It is quiet common to find them taking frequent breaks in between fishing sessions. The shallows of the Inle Lake have plenty to offer with the prized catches being the

Inle carps, tilapias, featherbacks and snakehead among others. These unique techniques have been passed on from one generation to the next and it takes years of practice and observing others at work to master this craft. Children start out early as they accompany their elders on these fishing trips and observe them closely.

The rich hauls are enough to feed the families of the fishermen and in times of plenty the surplus catches are sold in the nearby floating markets.

Beginning with the name the entire lives of Intha people are dominated by the waters of the Inle Lake. As the name suggests, In – stands for lake and tha –

stands for people in Burmese, which quite literally makes them people of the lake. The entire population of Intha people live along the shores of the Inle Lake or in their floating homes. The stilt homes are simple and modest and are mostly made of wood and bamboo. Along the water of the Inle Lake homes and in fact entire villages are built on stilts above water. While land is sparse these people have devised ingenious methods to support their largely fishing based economy with farm produces. The little land that is available to them is incredibly fertile and the ideal setting for the cultivation of rice. In addition to this the Intha people have built floating fruit and vegetable markets which make them self-sufficient and further galvanises their agricultural set up. The Inle Lake as much as it is known for the unique ways of fishing performed by the Intha fishermen, these floating gardens too play a major role in ascertaining the Inle Lake its distinct character and identity. This method locally known as ye-chan involves cultivation of tomatoes and other seasonal fruits and vegetables on plots of floating islands which together accounts for hundreds of acres of floating vegetable and fruit gardens and stand out as a crucial cog in the region's economic wheel. At the heart of this method lies the water hyacinth, a rapidly growing round the clock aquatic plant which is known for its dense growth in shallow and humid waters. The dense roots are sturdy enough to support tonnes of weight and entrap debris





Two Intha fishermen go about their daily business against the backdrop of their village. The shores of Inle Lake are home to many such villages which are entirely dependent on the lake for their livelihoods.



Two Intha fishermen engaged in fishing in the waters of Inle Lake in the ensuing darkness after sundown. The fishermen use these oil lamps to navigate the waters and search for shoals of fish.



*The Inle Lake as much as it is known for the unique ways of fishing performed by the Intha fishermen, these floating gardens too play a major role in ascertaining the Inle Lake its distinct character and identity. This method locally known as ye-chan involves cultivation of tomatoes and other seasonal fruits and vegetable on plots of floating islands...*

During the middle of the 20th century this age old traditional method fell from grace when a surging wave of infrastructural reforms swept across the country and gave access to some of the remotest locations such as the ones around the Inle Lake to crops and other produces from other parts of the country in an easier and more effective manner. This coincided with the period ranging from 1962 to 1988 when Myanmar followed its own brand of socialism. The economic turmoil in the 1980s paved the path for a more market based economy and in the face of a number of agitations and uprisings the then government was forced to abolish the prevalent method of state procurement and distribution of resources. In September 1988 the military staged a coup seizing power from the then ruling party at the government and thus began Myanmar's transition to a more market based economy.

and sediments thereby forming a solid platform. The Intha people were quick to recognise this and once these patches of water hyacinth were densely packed with debris, sediments, dried up leaves and other floating matters forming a solid platform would saw them into separate plots and use them as bedrocks for their

vegetable and fruit gardens. This traditional method of cultivation in a region where water rules the roost is a remarkable testimony to the innovative and effective approach of the Intha people and even today remains the most favoured mode of cultivation among this community. Tomato comprises of the majority of the production

while other major yields include beans, cucumbers and a wide variety of seasonal flowers. It is difficult to ascertain with absolute certainty the time of inception of this old traditional method of farming. However most records suggest ye-chan agriculture possibly dates back to the second half or the end of the 19th century.



These floating gardens too play a major role in ascertaining the Inle Lake its distinct identity. This method locally known as ye-chan involves cultivation of seasonal fruits and vegetables on plots of floating islands. At the heart of this method lies the water hyacinth, a rapidly growing round the clock aquatic plant which is known for its dense growth in shallow humid waters. The dense roots are sturdy enough to support tonnes of weight and entrap debris and sediments thereby forming a solid platform for the floating fruit and vegetable gardens.



It was during this turnaround in 1990 the ye-chan which had fallen out of favour received a new lease of life and revived itself. Between 1990-2010, as some figures suggest in consonant with this transition

to a more market based economy the area covered by the floating gardens saw a remarkable increase. The rapid expansion of the floating gardens is a testimony to the transition in economic policies that

Myanmar is still going through. The produces from these floating gardens find their takers in the rotating 5 day market which is one of the major activities in this region and goes a long way in establishing

an economic order in the region. The villages along the shores of the Inle Lake hold a 5 day market in a rotational manner. There are a number of market places along the Inle Lake each designated for separate





The entire population of Intha people live along the shores of the Inle Lake or in their floating homes. The stilt homes are simple and modest and are mostly made of wood and bamboo. Along the water of the Inle Lake homes and in fact entire villages are built on stilts above water.



An Intha woman rows her boat carrying the produces from her floating garden on the waters of Inle Lake.



villages or towns along the lake. These market places are hubs of activities for the locals where they converge with their agricultural produces and other goods catering to the needs of the buyers who

crowd the markets in huge numbers. The tourists in turn take a keen interest in the local handicraft, food items and other wares which provides further impetus to the economy of the region. The assortment

of local handicrafts, spices, pickles, fresh vegetables and other garden produces, eager buyers and sellers in their colourful traditional attires, the gentle haggling over the counters, the fervent promotional calls

to sell their products all add to the distinct and vibrant nature of these 5 day markets.

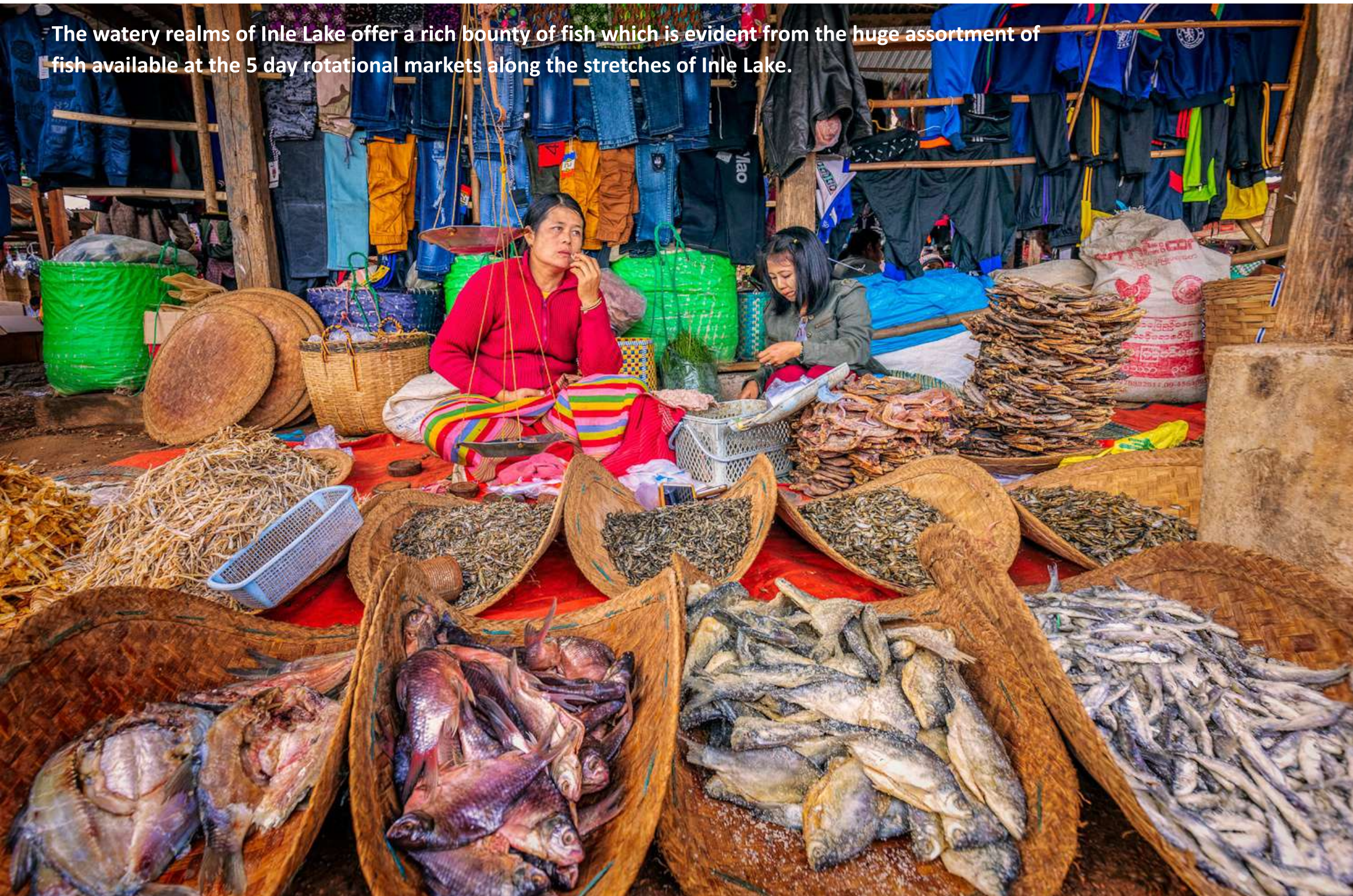


The rotational 5 day market is a hub of myriad activities. Buyers and sellers from the adjoining towns and villages converge to these marketplaces which sell a variety of items from spices, food items to local handicrafts.





The watery realms of Inle Lake offer a rich bounty of fish which is evident from the huge assortment of fish available at the 5 day rotational markets along the stretches of Inle Lake.



*The Inle Lake which is at the epicentre of all the above mentioned activities for the 200,00 odd population in its watershed, most of whom are the Intha people, is facing some serious threats, courtesy the one event which poses the biggest threat to this planet today – climate change. The agricultural practices on the floating gardens seem to be the most affected. Unpredictability in climate patterns have significantly reduced the yields...*

The Inle Lake which is at the epicentre of all the above mentioned activities for the 200,00 odd population in its watershed, most of whom are the Intha people, is facing some serious threats, courtesy the one event which poses the biggest threat to this planet today – climate change. The agricultural practices on the floating

gardens seem to be the most affected. Unpredictability and the untimely arrival of warmer summer months resulting in shorter spans of cooler winter months have significantly reduced the yields from the floating markets. The yields in various seasonal produces too have taken a hit. The prolonged periods of warm and dry

seasons, which again could be attributed to the rising global temperature, pose serious problems when it comes to irrigating the cultivable floating gardens. The water of the Inle Lake which is a shallow stretch of waterbody records extreme temperatures during the scorching summer months and the intense and

prolonged periods of high temperature result in vast stretches of the lake drying up under the baking heat. The lack of water not only results in reduced water supply for irrigation but also a sharp decline in the existing population of fish. Unpredictable patterns and increase in various climate related events such as cyclones and floods too have significantly affected the delicate balance of the ecosystem of the Inle Lake. In addition to this the ever so steadily increasing human population too is piling up the pressure on the waters of the Inle Lake. The pressure to feed a growing population has led to the excessive use of chemical fertilizers and pesticides for larger yields. These chemicals eventually contaminate the





Scenes from a 5 day rotational market along the shore of Inle Lake. As tourism flourished in this region the 5 day markets gained immense popularity among tourists from all over the world. These markets offer more than glimpses into the lives and cultures of the local people who throng these markets in huge numbers to buy and sell their produces decked up in their traditional attires.

water of the Inle Lake thereby significantly affecting the ecosystem of the lake. The use of chemical fertilizers and the rapid expansion of the floating gardens in order to support the growing population along the lake have contributed heavily towards the deteriorating water quality of the Inle Lake which has in turn affected the supply of fish from these waters. The failing water quality doesn't augur well for the Intha people and other human settlements since they too are solely dependent on the water of the Inle Lake for a number of purposes including drinking.

The Intha fishermen are synonymous with

the Inle Lake, and the fate of these two entities remains intertwined. This ancient method of fishing which has been passed on from one generation to the next is ideally suited against the backdrop of this beautiful water body and has firmly held its ground even in the face of rapidly changing times. The Intha fishermen, their traditional houses, the iconic floating gardens are all etched firmly in the history of this region. The lake and its people need looking after, this unique chapter in the rich history of Myanmar is a perfect example of the synergy that can be successfully achieved between human

settlements and the natural world. The changing times, the modern day and age have rapidly engulfed much of this planet's ancient ways and traditions, some made way for more effective and productive means while some were gradually pushed back into obscurity before fading away into oblivion. One can only hope the traditional methods of the Intha people do not suffer the same fate. Modern methods and techniques certainly promise richer rewards, however it is in these traditional methods often lies hidden the perfect balance between nature and humans which is a much sought after commodity in

today's world when the planet is reeling under the pressure of meeting our ever increasing demands for its natural resources.





The Intha fishermen are synonymous with the Inle Lake, and the fate of these two entities remains intertwined. This ancient method of fishing which has been passed on from one generation to the next is ideally suited against the backdrop of this beautiful water body and has firmly held its ground even in the face of rapidly changing times. The Intha fishermen, their traditional houses, the iconic floating gardens are all etched firmly in the history of this region. The lake and its people need looking after, this unique chapter in the history of Myanmar is a perfect example of the synergy that can be successfully achieved between human settlements and the natural world.



## About the Photographer

Rajani Ramanathan lives by the credo “Life is a journey, a journey that shapes your life”. Photography for her is a medium to capture precious moments in time and record it for posterity since the world is changing so fast around us and not always for the better. The more she travels, the more she realizes how little she knows. Every trip and every interaction provides her new perspectives about how different and yet same people are and the uniqueness of the myriad cultures she experiences. From the simplicity of extremely skilled fishermen in Myanmar Inle lake, to the gypsies of Camargue, to the berbers in Morocco or the sheer beauty and grandeur of Iceland or Antarctica and so on across all seven continents, her experiences have been mind boggling which she wishes to share through the medium of photography.

**Facebook:**<https://www.facebook.com/RajaniRPhotography/>

**Instagram:**<https://www.instagram.com/lovestotravelworld/>





In the city of Porbandar the waste from a cement factory flows into this lake and the chemical reaction is responsible for an algal bloom in the waters of the lake. The algae attracts thousands of lesser flamingos each year which throng the waters of this lake to feed on this algae. This is yet another instance of how human induced activities can affect the behavioural patterns of wild animals which may not be for the better at all times.

## A Battle with no Winners:

The scourge of Human-Wildlife conflict threatens either side with dire consequences and extracts a heavy toll from those involved.



The mighty Himalayas languidly glides into the valleys of Jalpaiguri and Alipurduar districts in the northern reaches of West Bengal and is the chief architect behind the lush green valley which dominates much of this region's landscape. The thick vegetation along the slopes of the Himalayas flowing into this valley is home to a plethora of species while the plains are carpeted by vast swathes of tea gardens and maize fields. Life in this valley flows at its own pace reflective of the perfect synergy between the frantic pace of the cities and the languid atmosphere of the mountainous towns and villages. Yet in the midst of such apparent harmony for decades now a deep rooted tension has been brewing and over the last decade or so has reached the tipping point. A visit to the villages in this region adjoining the stretches of agricultural lands paints a clearer picture of the prevalent conflict the region is grappling with since many decades now. As dawn breaks over the maize fields the remnants of the previous night's rampage reveal the graveness and the magnitude of the problem. Mangled wire fences, acres of harvested lands and crops ransacked, healthy plants uprooted and tossed around, the fields bear the look of a fierce warzone. The giant footprints and the sheer force and bulk of destruction unmistakably reveal the identities of the perpetrators – a herd of elephants. As is the case with almost every other part of the country the Terai-Dooars region too has experienced

a population explosion over the past few decades. The ever growing human population extracted a heavy price from the natural world, by clearing up forest lands for agriculture and settlements which resulted in severe habitat loss for the denizens of the forests and the Asiatic elephants with sizeable populations in these parts were hit the hardest. These giants of the animal world require huge patches of land to move around and colossal amounts of food to stay alive. Human settlements along the fringes of the wildlife sanctuaries and national parks in this region have largely restricted their movements in search of food. Quiet understandably the herds are left with very little choice but make the most of whatever comes or rather stands in their way. In this particular case feeding upon the rich harvests of maize naturally becomes an acceptable option for them. The villagers on the other hand, like the elephants have a lot at stake as well. The destruction of their crops, results of months of hard work and investment could be the death knell for them. They too are left with little or no alternative other than to retaliate, which they do by attempting to scare away the elephants by bursting crackers or hurling stones. It goes without saying in such a setting there are no winners, there are no sides to be rooted for, the damages suffered by either parties could be fatal and sadly such incidents are not uncommon. Destruction of crops by other wild species such as boars, nilgai continues to remain

a major problem for farmers across the country despite the various compensation schemes and ingenious methods adopted by the farmers. The unfortunate farmers often complain the compensation they receive from the authorities are either inadequate or late in reaching them while methods adopted by them such as digging up ditches surrounding their fields, staying up at nights in order to keep a look out for a marauding herd or setting up of solar powered fences didn't prove to be severe deterrent for the animals raiding their fields. The animals either get used to the

The ever growing human population extracted a heavy price from the natural world, by clearing up forest lands for agriculture and settlements which resulted in severe habitat loss...

noises or the presence of humans trying to drive them away or find various ways to bypass these human made obstacles surrounding the fields. The infrastructural developments in this region like elsewhere too have taken their tolls on the wildlife and the elephants. Incidents of elephants and other wild animals being run over by trains and freight carriers while crossing the railway tracks cutting across these wildlife safe havens have sadly become increasingly common.

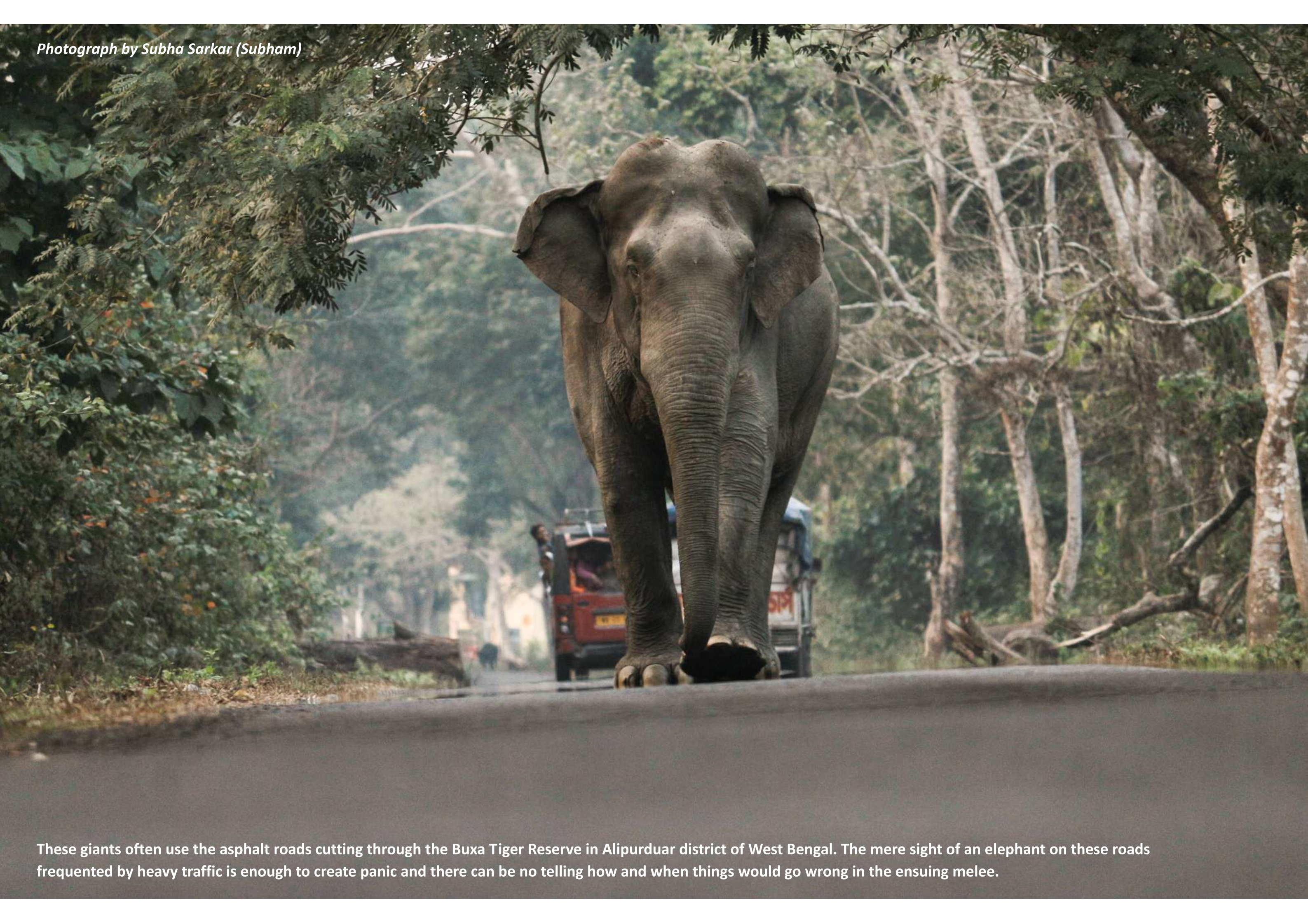
In other parts of India the situation is no different. Our cities and towns it seems are engaged in a never ending quest for infinite expansion on this planet, tearing through every aspect of the natural world that stands in their way. In many parts of India our cities and towns stand perilously

close to national parks and wildlife sanctuaries. And their insatiable lust for expanding their frontiers leads to the invasion of wild realms of this country. For instance in spite of being a protected area the Sanjay Gandhi National Park within the boundaries of the metropolis of Mumbai is one classic example of impending human-wildlife conflicts. Several instances of leopards straying into residential complexes adjoining the park or preying upon unsuspecting stray dogs or even pet dogs have been reported from this region. In the same context one gets

reminded of a fair number of sensational news where leopards entered residential premises and attacked human beings in some of the major cities of India including Guwahati and Nashik among others. Retaliations by angry mobs and eventual lynching of the animal which has strayed into human properties too have hogged much of the headlines during recent times. While such direct confrontations lead to pandemonium and retribution, human settlements particularly in the outskirts and semi-urban areas in their own rather subtle ways almost unwittingly create an environment which often tilts the delicate scales of ecological balance and almost never in the favour of the animals. For instance stray dogs, which can be found in close proximity of almost every human



*Photograph by Subha Sarkar (Subham)*



These giants often use the asphalt roads cutting through the Buxa Tiger Reserve in Alipurduar district of West Bengal. The mere sight of an elephant on these roads frequented by heavy traffic is enough to create panic and there can be no telling how and when things would go wrong in the ensuing melee.



In parts of India, a disturbing trend of packs of stray dogs attacking and even killing antelopes such as the Indian gazelle and blackbuck has raised its ugly head.

settlement, pose a huge threat to the natural wild order of the region. The stray dogs and their exploding populations upend the natural order and in an ecological set up devoid of large carnivores the canines establish themselves firmly at the top of the pecking order. It goes without saying an eco-system not designed to incorporate a top predator within its hierarchy will never be capable of bearing the brunt of such an invasion and is bound to crumble. In parts of India, a disturbing trend of packs of stray dogs attacking and even killing antelopes such as the Indian gazelle and blackbuck has raised its ugly head. In addition to this stray dogs are extremely adaptable to human presence and virtually are a part of the human society. Even the already critically endangered Great Indian Bustard is facing added threat from this new enemy. We can ill afford to lose even one more of these birds to any unnatural cause, least of all to an attack by a pack of stray dogs. They scurry the wastelands or the dumping grounds in the outskirts of the towns or cities in search of food which brings them in direct conflict with the scavengers of the natural world most notably the jackals and the vultures. For wildlife scientists and naturalists the depleting number of vultures has been a cause of serious concern for a long time now and such ensuing conflicts with stray

dogs further complicates that problem and fades the hopes for the revival of vulture species across the country. Our cities and towns produce a huge amount of waste, a significant portion of which is made up of plastic. Wild animals particularly the young ones choking on plastic is a pretty common occurrence across the whole country and the entire world.

The national animal of the country, the redoubtable Bengal Tiger like many other species has often been at the heart of this human-wildlife conflict. The tiger is arguably the most protected animal in India and after the rude awakening a decade ago when their numbers had plummeted to an all-time low of 1411 several strong measures have been put into place in order to quickly revive the fast depleting tiger population. These measures bore the desired results and as per the last census the tiger population in India stood at 2226. While these increasing numbers are heartening one cannot help but feel the catastrophic events which wait to be unleashed as part of the impending conflicts with human beings which loom large in the horizon. Tigers are solitary animals and each individual maintains huge stretches of territories. With every passing decade the natural habitat available to tigers and other animals across the country has shrunk and replaced by human

settlements. As a result of which in various parts of India, especially states with a higher density of human population incidents of tigers, particularly young adults who are yet to establish territories of their own or old individuals pushed out of their domain by younger rivals straying into the villages or towns adjoining the wildlife havens have sadly become far too common. Like the wild animals, the human beings living in these parts of the country, in close proximity with the wilderness are dependent on the forests for natural resources and often venture deep into the forests in search of firewood, or to take their herds of cattle grazing. Lack of infrastructure or poverty often compel them to flout the rules laid down by the forest department as they venture deeper than allowed in search of greener pastures for their cattle, firewood and other forest products such as honey. This often leads to close encounters between the humans and wild animals and when the animal in question is a tiger the consequences more often than not are fatal. The villagers in states like Uttarakhand, Madhya Pradesh, Karnataka, parts of Maharashtra which boast of significant tiger populations have had the experiences of losing their cattle to many such tiger attacks. In spite of the compensation schemes laid out by the government and the concerned authorities the loss of a cow, sheep or a goat to a tiger attack is truly a massive blow for these hardworking people who toil risking their lives in order to make ends meet. In the

face of such grave loss the lust for revenge impairs better judgement and in an act of retribution the villagers often gang up and lynch the tiger or resort to poisoning the remains of the carcass. Apart from merely seeking revenge this is also done in order to prevent further such incidents. The forest department which is entrusted with the task of identifying such rogue animals and relocate them farther away from human settlements, in spite of their best efforts fail to prevent such incidents purely because the number of such conflicts are far too many and increasing with every passing year for an already stretched forest department to tackle with its existing manpower. Apart from collecting resources from the forests the villagers in remote corners of India often take routes which cut across the perimeters of national parks and wildlife sanctuaries. In doing so they frequently come in close contact with the wildlife and like the tiger, other formidable creatures such as the stubborn sloth bear and when cornered or threatened these beasts are extremely capable of inflicting life threatening injuries.

While the presence of permanent human settlements along the fringes of national parks and sanctuaries have given rise to this conflict which has been raging for centuries having possibly reached its pinnacle in the present day, there is a threat of a very different kind, entirely man made which takes the lives of hundreds of wild animals in this country. Roadkill of wild animals is the fastest and most widely



The daily labourers in the foreground were in for a shock when this tiger appeared out of nowhere as they were busy cutting these tall grass for their cattle in Tadoba National Park. As they fled and took refuge in a tourist vehicle the tiger took a keen interest in their belongings. Such incidents are common in many parts of India where villagers depending on the resources from the forest often cross paths with the tiger and other wild animals and such encounters do have the potential to turn fatal for either side.

*Photograph by Rohit Vasave*





emerging threat to wildlife in India. Across the country several prominent roads and highways frequented by vehicles ranging from private to heavy commercials cut across the area of a number of prominent national parks, sanctuaries and biodiversity hotspots. For the animals living in these parts the asphalt roads are a mere extension of their wild domains and they often use them for moving from one part of the forest to the other. This results in dire consequences when the animals get run over by speeding vehicles. The species falling prey to speeding vehicles range from the smallest to the giants, langurs, jackals, different species of reptiles to the more formidable leopards, elephants all have fallen prey to this menace. Such tragic incidents are not only restricted around the wildlife reserves, in the outskirts of our cities, in the suburbs which teem with its very own wildlife such incidents are far too common.

The numerous forms in which human-wildlife conflict manifests itself cannot be comprehensibly noted down in a single article. The problems are unique to different parts of the country and the world for that matter, so are their manifestations. Yet there is a common thread which binds all of these occurrences together. The root cause for all such problems seems to be the encroachment of human settlements in the wild realms of the natural world. In spite of this there seems to be no clear solution to these problems, precisely because it is almost impossible to advocate

the cause of any one party involved in this conflict. There can be no denying that we need to preserve and protect our wildlife and our forests. Various protection and conservation measures over the past few decades have ensured a safer future for many threatened species in the country yet at the same time it has come at the expense of increased human-wildlife conflicts particularly in areas with a higher density of human population. Quite surprisingly the human settlements in parts of India rich in forest resources and the wildlife of these regions are fairly tolerant towards each other's presence. Given the huge population of human beings dependent on the forests and natural resources and the number of conflicts that actually take place, the disparity in these records further reinstates this point. Yet when they do take place the outcome often is gruesome. It is easy for those in the secured environment of their cities or high-rises far removed from the ground reality to gun for the heads of an angry mob that lynched a tiger preying on their livestock, or for those who burst crackers to drive away a rampaging herd of elephants. In reality though the people living in such close proximity with wildlife are often more tolerant and respectful of the forests and their denizens than our pre conceived notions designate them to be. In this classic catch-22 situation where the forest department and other concerned authorities and NGOs are restricted to the role of a reactionary mechanism, had it not been

for the respect and affection for wildlife the retaliations could have been severe and even threatened the survival of multitudes of species. This tolerance could be attributed to the deep cultural and religious roots the people of this country share with its wildlife. In most of these conflict zones villagers still perceive the forest to be as much home to the animals as it is to them. However the question still remains for how long can we bank on this unwavering faith these incredibly resilient people have displayed. With the ever increasing conflict and the changing nature

**T**he species falling prey to speeding vehicles range from the smallest to the giants, langurs, jackals, different species of reptiles to the more formidable leopards, elephants all have fallen prey to this...

of it the wildlife in this country is resting on a ticking time bomb. Instead of prosecuting a retaliatory angry mob, or gunning down a straying tiger or a leopard responsible for the death of livestock or human lives the better approach would be to find ways which can mitigate this age old crisis. Often the onus lies with the villagers to provide credible evidences as they claim for compensation. This is a tall order for these villagers who are already reeling under the pressure of poverty and a catastrophic event such as loss of acres of crops or a livestock. The compensation schemes often take long to reach the aggrieved party. The mechanisms involved in these processes should be looked upon and measures should be taken to expedite these procedures. Based on the available

records it should not be a tough task to identify those villages which are the most vulnerable. Live monitoring mechanism around the perimeters of these villages would relieve the villagers of the burden of providing documented evidences and speed up the process of compensating them at the same time ensuring no aggrieved party is left out. Promoting tourism in these belts too could be healthy alternative which would on one hand generate viable avenues for employment for the villagers while safeguarding the future of hundreds of species thereby

providing a massive boost to the cause of conservation. In the end it must be said, in this conflict there are no sides, there is no one winner, both the parties involved in this conflict have a lot at stake and the loss of any single life on part of the humans or the animals is heart-breaking. In such a scenario all we can do, as the most influential species on this planet, is be mindful of the fact that nature and natural resources are the basic rights of every living creature on this planet and in our overzealousness to expand all our cities, towns, infrastructures we should not trample upon nature by not allowing it enough time to recuperate from the losses we have inflicted upon it. At the same time before we gun for the heads of the farmers or the hard working people living





off the forests, we should temper our criticisms with kindness, more so since these are the people who in spite of sharing their backyards with herds of elephants or an apex predator like the tiger have always displayed the magnanimity to offer their respects to nature and all its subjects.

**A blue bull or nilgai in a reserved area near Rajkot in Gujarat. These grasslands are the typical habitat for these animals and play host to a diverse and rich eco-system. However the series of buildings which dominate the background are reflective of how we are encroaching on pristine eco-systems such as this one and robbing thousands of species of their habitats.**



Roadkill results in the death of thousands of wild animals every year across India. A jungle cat lies dead after being run over by a speeding vehicle in the outskirts of Kolkata.



*Photograph by Sourav Mondal*

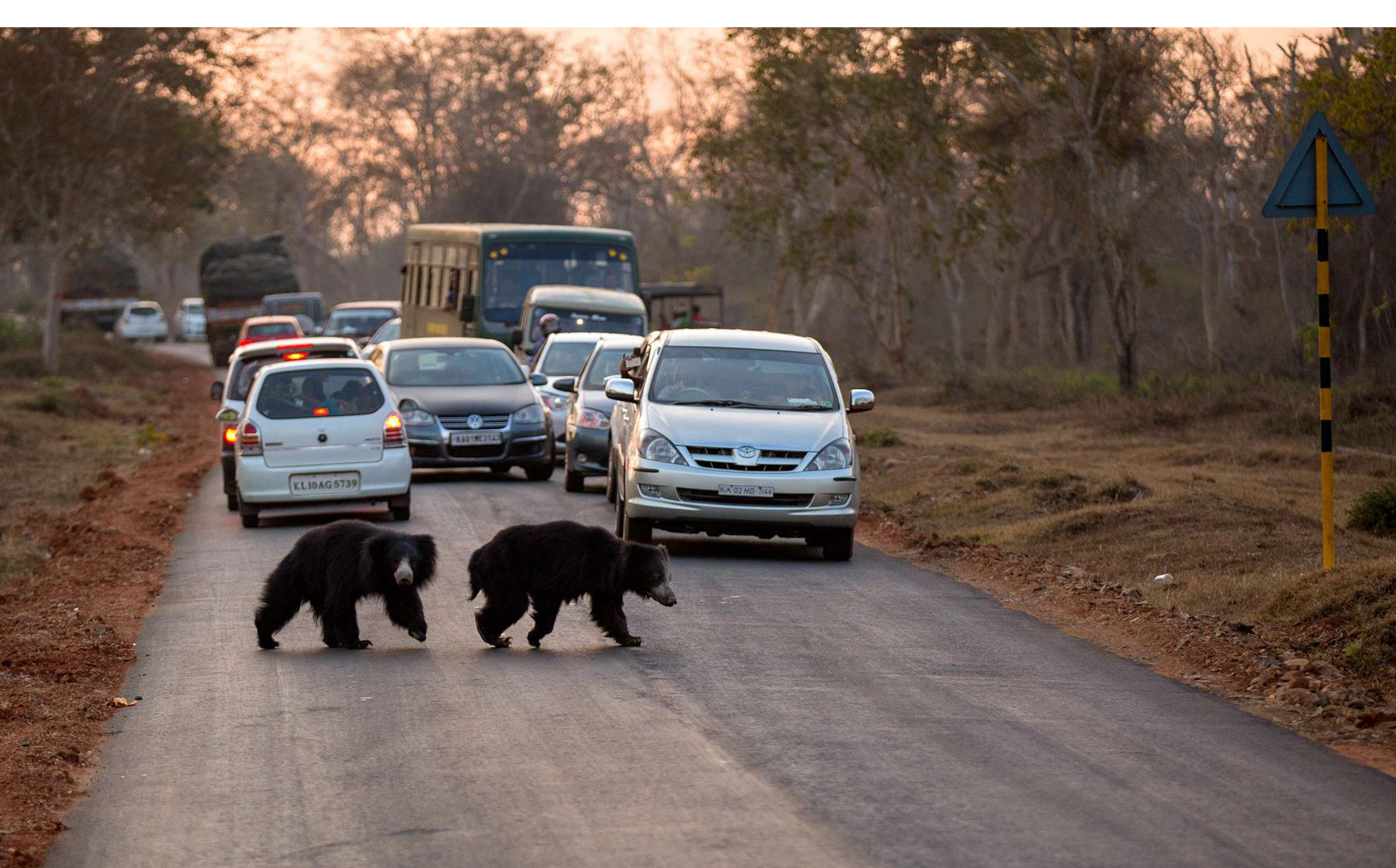




Villagers gather around a rescued Indian cobra in the outskirts of Nashik city. All over India, snakes and people often come in contact with each other and India accounts for almost half of global snakebite deaths. Crunched for space, the snakes often venture inside houses or agricultural fields in search of food and shelter leading to such encounters.

*Photograph by Abhijeet Mahale*





Loss of habitat is the biggest threat sloth bears are facing today. This scene is from the Bandipur Tiger Reserve where the Bandipur-Ooty highway cuts right through it. Despite the heavy traffic particularly during the holiday season this remains a busy animal corridor as two sloth bears make their way across it.

*Photograph by Praveen Siddannavar*





A pack of stray dogs charges at a wake of vultures scavenging on leftover debris. This ugly trend of stray dogs attacking and killing wild animals ranging from antelopes to the critically endangered bustards is on the rise and is all set to threaten and obliterate wild species which often come in close contact with our towns and villages or which are found in close proximity of human settlements.

*Photograph by Vivek Sharma*



तमान उजलो चनण समोनकाठा।  
समोन देवता गीता समोन पाठा।  
॥१॥  
सन बिन कियां जपत पजोग अजोग।  
ही जाणिये भोग महा भव रोग ॥

# The Divine Rats

by Saurabh Sirohiya

The story of an ancient temple where more than 20,000 rats are worshipped as divine beings...

An elderly man serves the rats a giant bowl of milk inside the Karni Mata Temple. Such scenes have given this ancient place of worship its unique identity which attracts devotees and visitors in thousands from all over the world.



The entrance to the Karni Mata temple in the town of Deshnok 30 kilometres from the city of Bikaner in Rajasthan. The main entrance as can be seen here is dominated by the presence of this giant marble facade with intricate designs carved upon it.





India, a land of many faiths, cultures and ethnicities is possibly the biggest melting pot of diversities. This huge diversity is quiet glaringly obvious in the thousands of languages spoken across the country, the cuisines, the festivities, the numerous rituals and traditions and in the religious believes and practices. Various religious practices and faiths have formed the bedrock of this country for many centuries now. These religious practices often garner a great deal of interest by dint of their grandeur, their celebratory themes and their all-inclusiveness. The places of worships in this country too are intricately woven into the ethos of this land. The ancient history of this land is flooded with anecdotes chronicling how countless villages and towns sprung up across the country around such places of worships. Even today, while most of India is taking giant strides towards progress and development, when India's cities are fast evolving with towering skyscrapers dominating their skylines, ancient places of worship still remain as relevant as they were many centuries ago amidst the glittering skylines and tinted glass facades of plush locations. These places of worships across the country, the temples, the mosques, the churches and chapels, the monasteries, the gurudwaras and many more are pillars of the faith for more than a billion people, who throng their doorsteps for a moment of tranquillity amidst the bickering of their daily lives, these are places where they turn to for a glimmer

of hope when darkness shrouds their lives, where the downtrodden turns to when all else seems to be lost. In more ways than one these institutions serve as cauldrons of hope.

In a country as vast as India there are literally hundreds of thousands of places of worships. Some stand out among others by virtue of their unparalleled architecture while some proudly grace the altars of their respective religions by dint of the rich history and tradition associated with them. While some are new others are centuries old still standing tall having withstood waves after waves of foreign invasions and the subsequent desecrations which followed them. However there is one temple in the state of Rajasthan which hogs the limelight and over time has garnered widespread global attention for an entirely different reason. The Karni Mata temple situated in the small town of Deshnok 30 kilometres from the city of Bikaner in Rajasthan is better known as the "Temple of Rats". This particularly interesting reputation of this temple has now spread far and wide breaching the borders of India and has metamorphosed into a global attraction. The temple which is dedicated to the Hindu Goddess Karni Mata is home to more than 20,000 black rats for whom the premises of this temple are nothing less than true heavenly abode providing them with food, ample shelter and safety. In fact the rats of Karni Mata temple are more than mere residents; the faith of those visiting this temple has

elevated them to divine status. In fact rats have found a popular mention in Hindu religious texts and mythologies courtesy the Hindu God Ganesha. As is the case with so many other deities across various religions Ganesha too remains incomplete without his animal which happens to be a rat. There are many speculations and conjectures regarding how and why the rat earned such a special place alongside Ganesha. According to the Ganesha Purana, a Sanskrit text that elaborately deals with the life and teachings of Ganesha, the celestial musician-god by

**The Karni Mata temple situated in the small town of Deshnok 30 kilometres from the city of Bikaner in Rajasthan is better known as the "Temple of Rats".**

the name of Krauncha who used to perform at Lord Indra's darbar or court accidentally stepped upon Muni Vamadeva who in a fit of rage cursed Krauncha and turned him into a mouse. As fate would have it, Krauncha turned into a massive mountain sized mouse causing severe destruction in his wake by sheer virtue of his gigantic proportions. As the trail of destruction reached the ashram of Maharshi Parashar with whom Lord Ganesha was staying at that time, Ganesha decided to take a stock of the happenings. Ganesha managed to tie a noose around the giant mouse's neck and successfully reined him in preventing further destruction. As part of a rather milder form of punishment since Krauncha had begged for his forgiveness for all the destruction he had caused, Lord Ganesha

decided Krauncha will be his vehicle from then onwards, however as soon as Ganesha alighted on the back of Krauncha he cried out in pain and pleaded to Ganesha to reduce his weight. Ganesha taking pity to Krauncha made himself lighter and since then has been using the mouse as his vehicle. Another theory suggests the mouse is a representative of pride and ego which often cloud our minds and cast a spell impairing our sense of ethics and morality. Ganesha on the other hand is the complete antithesis of a proud and egoistic being. Ego and pride akin to a mouse sneakily

enters our minds and devours the good in us. Ganesha placing himself upon the mouse is a symbolic conquest of pride and human ego. The other most plausible explanation lies in Ganesha being also known as "Vighnaharta" or the Conqueror of Obstacles. In a primarily agrarian country like India where agriculture since ancient times has formed the backbone of the economy rats have been viewed as pests which cause massive destruction to crops and grains. Rats in fact were and still in some parts of the country remain one of the biggest obstacle in the path of prosperity for thousands of farmers. Lord Ganesh by taming the mouse by sitting atop of it further reinstated his reputation as the conqueror of obstacles.

The rats at the Karni Mata temple in





A devotee offers milk to a temple rat and drinks from the same bowl.

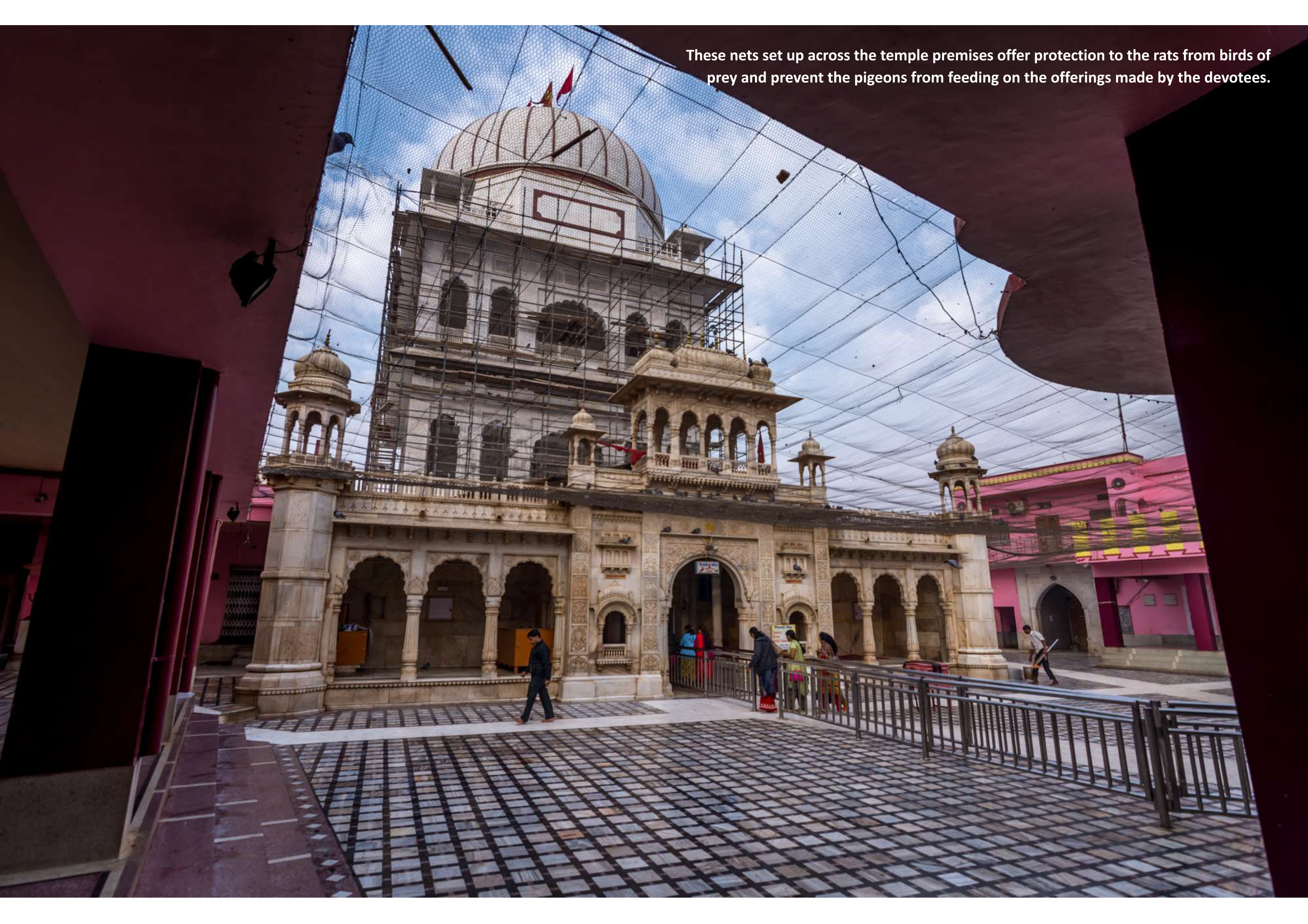
Deshnoke however have very little to do with Lord Ganesha. The rats are actually revered here and people travel great distances from all over Rajasthan and the country to pay their homages to these little creatures. Such a curious phenomenon has quickly grabbed the attention of thousands of tourists from all over the world who throng the temple premises in thousands to witness how a sizeable rodent population has been elevated to divine status by millions of devotees. According to legend the worship of Karni Mata dates back to the 1400s. Karni Mata is believed to be an incarnation of Goddess Durga herself. According to legend when Laxman, the son of Karni Mata drowned in a pond she implored Yama the God of Death to bring her son back to life. Yama having refused at first eventually agreed to bring Laxman back to life and reincarnated him as a rat. In fact since that day it is widely believed all of Karni Mata's male children are reincarnated as rats after their deaths. Karni Mata is the revered deity of the people belonging to the Charin clan. The followers of Karni Mata and the members of the Charin clan too believe after their deaths they would be reborn as rats and in turn when a rat dies it will be reborn as a human being. This cycle of life and death which alternates between human beings and rats has held a special place among the psyche of the devotees rendering the rats at the Karni Mata temple no different their human counterparts and attesting them with the status of reincarnation of their

ancestors. This does go a long way in explaining the revered status which the rats enjoy in this ancient temple. The rats were soon to realize and bask in the glory of their newfound status, a stark contrast to the pest tag they have been adorned with in other parts of the world. A steady stream of milk, fruits and other delicious offerings by the devotees ensured supply of food in abundance for these rodents. As a result of which they rarely feel the need to venture out of the premises of this temple. In addition to that in the absence of any threat or the fear of being persecuted the rats roam about freely and often venture close to the visitors and devotees accepting food from their hands.

This iconic temple in Deshnoke known for its rats that scamper over the marble floorings was built in the early 1900s. The architecture of the temple is dominated by the intricate marble panels and floorings and beautiful silver carvings on the beams and other woodworks inside the temple. The doorway leading up to the inner sanctum which houses the idol of Karni Mata is lined with a number of doors made of solid silver and wooden panels upon which various episodes from the life of the Goddess are enshrined in silver. An intricate marble façade graces the front of the temple. The construction of the temple is credited to Maharaja Ganga Singh of Bikaner who it is believed was heavily inspired by the Mughal architecture. The members of the Depavats family, followers of Karni Mata are in charge of



These nets set up across the temple premises offer protection to the rats from birds of prey and prevent the pigeons from feeding on the offerings made by the devotees.





The 20,000 strong population of black rats is looked after by the members of the Charin clan who are responsible for the upkeep of the temple. The rats, affectionately known as “kabbas”, are well fed on a diet of milk, grains and fruits.



the upkeep of the temple. Some of the families reside permanently within the premises of the temple and are whole heartedly devoted towards looking after the temple. The rats understandably are at the heart of all the activities which go on in the regular upkeep of the temple. The Depavats followers spend considerable

amount of time every day in looking after the sizeable population of 20,000 or more rats inside the temple. The rats which are affectionately known as “kabbas” meaning young ones or little children are well fed with an assortment of grains, fruits and milk. The followers work tirelessly every day to clean the temple premises of rat

droppings and excreta which becomes essential in maintaining a squeaky clean and hygienic environment in light of such a huge population of rodents which has made the temple its home. Devotees are asked to open their shoes before entering the temple premises and it is considered auspicious if a rat runs over someone's

feet. It is also considered to be incredibly auspicious if one spots an albino rat, a rarity among the existing rat population. The devotees believe an albino rat is a reincarnation of Karni Mata herself or her sons. It is their firm belief spotting a white rat will bless them with prosperity and good fortune. While rats scamper across the length and breadth of the temple, their handful of albino counterparts seem to cherish the tantalising game of hide and seek they play with the expectant devotees who come from faraway lands to catch an auspicious glimpse of them.

In spite of the privileged treatment the rats enjoy, their stay at the Karni Mata temple is not always smooth sailing. The huge population of rats is prone to contracting a number of diseases and any genetic disorder has the potential to wipe out the entire population. Cramped into tiny corners in fighting is a common occurrence as well. Quite remarkably in spite of such close association between human beings and such a sizeable rodent population there has been no recorded case of human beings falling prey to diseases contracted from these rats. Needless to say for the devotees this further establishes the divine status of the rats and consolidates their belief that these rats truly are reincarnations of their ancestors. Devotees who visit the temple actually believe accepting food that has been nibbled on by the rats to be a matter of great honour. In this peculiar setting the rats too are at ease around human presence. In a remarkable case of





The nooks and corners of the temple are home to these black rats.

adapting to their surroundings the rats gradually realised they have little or nothing to fear from the human beings inside the temple premises. These rats venture pretty close to the devotees often accepting fruits and sweets from their hands or playfully run around them and even at times sit on their laps.

The setting at the Karni Mata temple in the small town of Deshnok while pique interests worldwide, it has to be said is not ideally suited for everyone's sense and sensibilities. In other words such a setting has the potential to polarise feelings and

unfailing and stoic faith bestowed upon them by millions of devotees, for whom these much loathed creatures are the living embodiments of their departed dear ones. It is in this stark contrast quietly resides the unique soul of this unique place of worship. It would be hard for an outsider to comprehend how the sheer faith of millions of devotees elevated the black rats of this temple to a divine status and when compared to their existence in the outside world where these rodents are treated as pests the unique setting of this temple defies all logic.

**T**he inglorious pest tag which has come to define the very existence of these little black rats lies in shreds, courtesy the unfailing and stoic faith bestowed upon them by millions of devotees...

quite understandably so. Yet this ancient temple and the custom of treating these rats as divine beings have thrived and earned a special place among the hearts of the millions of devotees who throng the doorsteps of this temple every year. In rather unexpected twist and turns of events, in this bizarre setting 20,000 odd rats enjoy the utmost warmth and comfort provided to them by millions of human beings, something which truly bewilders and challenges all our previous notions. The unique temple of Karni Mata is the perfect example of how often our undying faith leads to extraordinary phenomena which are nothing short of miracles. The inglorious pest tag which has come to define the very existence of these little black rats lies in shreds, courtesy the

For the time being it certainly appears this ancient place of worship is in able hands of the members of the Charin clan. With its unique character every year the temple attracts thousands of tourists from all over the world. The unwavering faith of the devotees, the diligent upkeep of the temple by the Charin people and the ever growing interest among the global community certainly ensure this ancient temple in a small town in the state of Rajasthan will keep entralling millions worldwide for many centuries to come.

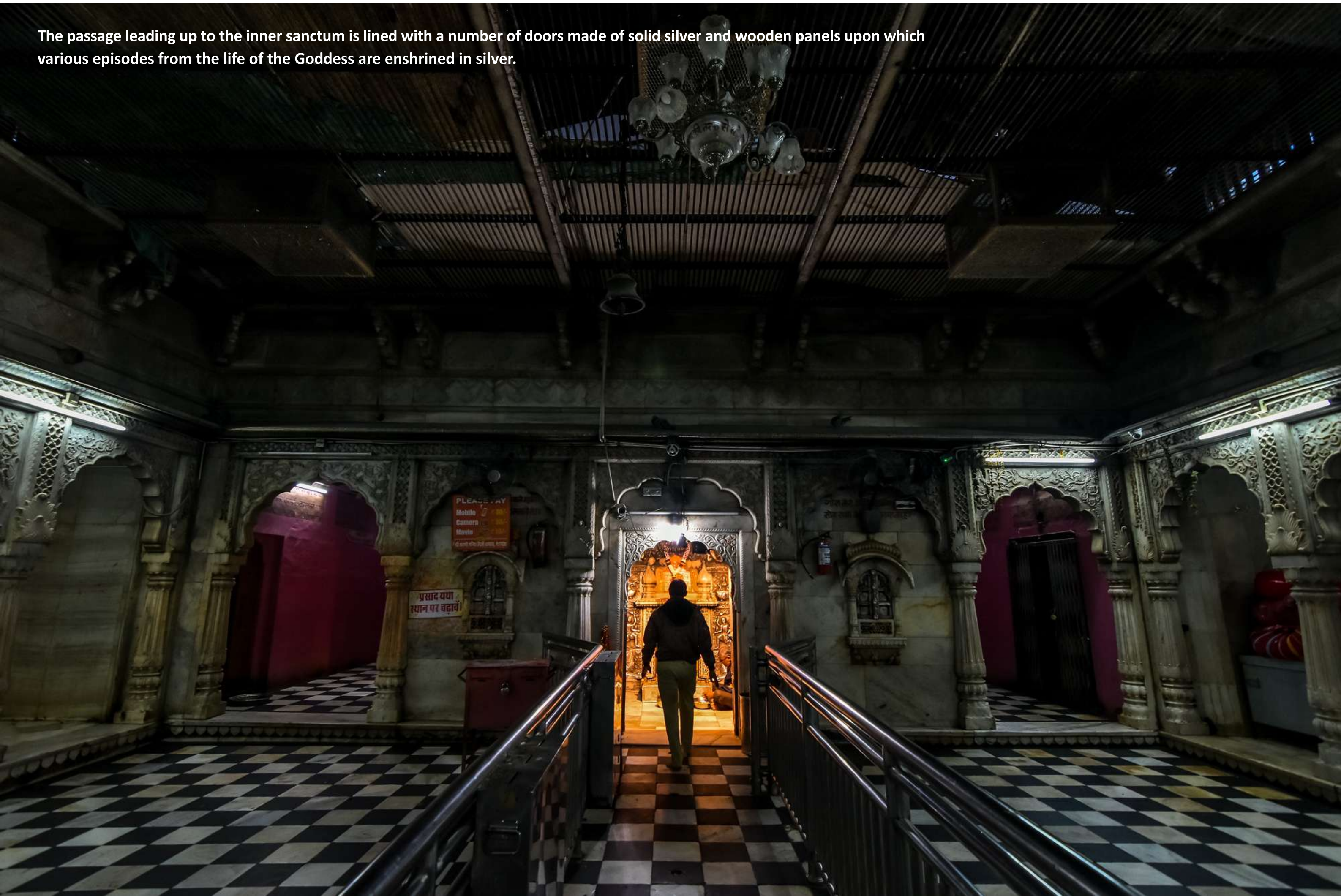




The inner sanctum of the temple houses the idol of Karni Mata. Devotees wait in the queue for their turn to offer their worships to the revered deity.



The passage leading up to the inner sanctum is lined with a number of doors made of solid silver and wooden panels upon which various episodes from the life of the Goddess are enshrined in silver.







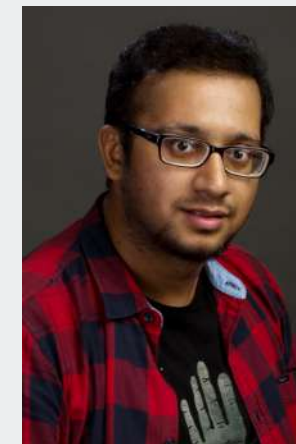
Scenes from an average day at the Karni Mata Temple in Deshnok. (Clockwise from top) Devotees queue up in front of the inner sanctum to offer their worships to Karni Mata. A black rat hangs out in one nook of the temple. An elderly devotee at the temple to offer his prayers. Visitors are requested to pay a fee for their cameras at the entrance to the temple.







The Karni Mata temple opens its doors to devotees and visitors early in the dawn at around 5:00 a.m and stays open till 10 in the night. The nearest city of Bikaner is well connected via railway networks, roadways and the international airport at Jodhpur at an approximate distance of 250 kilometres. Deshnoke is located 30 kilometres from Bikaner and is well connected with the city through a number of different modes of public transport. The families responsible for the upkeep of the temple and the rats feed the rats at daybreak when the rats are served an assortment of milk, fruits and grains in large bowls. This is the time of the day which attracts a lot of visitors who throng the temple premises to witness this unique occurrence.



## About the Photographer

Saurabh Sirohiya is a graphic designer by profession and an amateur photographer by passion. His love for photography was largely inspired by the film camera his family used to own when he was a child. Having started out with a compact Nikon digital a year into his job, he has now shifted to a Nikon D7200.

He has a particular affinity for street, travel and landscape photography. He is also fond of shooting candid photographs and portraits. He has taken part in many national and international salons, contests and competitions receiving a number of acceptances and accolades. He believes photography is never an easy job, one has to shoot in the given situation, light, shadow and composition, the photograph should look appealing without the story. The composition alone should be able to inspire the viewers as without it the purpose of photography will not be served.

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# World Photographic Forum Awards 2018



Special Feature



The World Photographic Forum is a Facebook group with a member count of over 2,50,000 - a multi genre platform to promote the works of talented photographers - both amateur and professional. WPF's prime objective is to promote quality work in the field of photography. The overwhelming response has made WPF one of the biggest such photography groups on the Facebook. Recently WPF organised an exhibition cum award ceremony from March 22-March 24 at Gallery Gold in Kolkata to acknowledge the stellar works produced by the members. The WPF Award 2018 ceremony felicitated the winner and the runner-up in each of the seven different categories, along with handing out a special award- WPF Star Photographer of the Year 2018 to one member in each of the seven categories based on his/her outstanding contribution throughout the year. Besides this the top 20 entries from each of the seven categories found a special mention and the photographers were felicitated as well. More than 6,00,000 entries were submitted in all the categories over the past year and were shortlisted by the admin panel before being judged by 5 renowned photographers in their respective fields. This feature is a special coverage of this grand event.





## Talk Shows and Seminars at WPF Awards

Special Feature



**Sandipan Mukherjee presented his photo-book “On Broken Trails” during World Photographic Forum Awards**

The members and visitors witnessed a spectacular narrative on Nubra Valley by **Mr. Sandipan Mukherjee** on 23rd March 2019.

For the past seven years of his life he has been relentless in bringing to the world the myriad aspects of life in Nubra Valley. Recently he has published a book “On Broken Trails” on the people, culture, life and the scenic beauty of Nubra Valley in Ladakh.

He sums up his experiences beautifully in these words-

“For most visitors the Nubra Valley is synonymous with camel rides on the sand-dunes of Hunder. So, it may come as a shock if I tell you that the sand-dunes had not been there before 1929.”





## Talk Shows and Seminars at WPF Awards



**Sound of Silence – an audio-visual presentation by Debiprasad Mukherjee highlighting the lives and tales of deaf and mute children across different neighborhoods of Kolkata and its suburbs.**

Another world with a presence of absence remains within the sound of silence, little world within our big planet rotating on another orbit with its own rhythm. To most it may seem insignificant yet it undeniably exists, with its own citizens, own language, own emotions, own sounds or rather its own silence too. We may lack clues about the existence of this world and hence it remains unexplored, untouched, unheard of ... isolated like a sudden mute moment inside a cacophony, a piece of erased memory, a non-existent island on a map.



# WPF Star Photographer of the Year in Seven Different Categories

Special Feature



**Lumlung Kamei**  
in Landscape Category

**Debrup Roy**  
in Travel Category

**Avismita  
Bhattacharyya**  
in Conceptual Category

**Arijit Mondal**  
in Macro Category

**Rudra Chaudhuri**  
in Fashion Category

**Somnath Mullick**  
in Street Category

**Ricky Patel**  
in Wildlife Category

## Top 20 in each category

Category: Conceptual	Category: Landscape	Category: Street	Category: Travel	Category: Wildlife	Category: Macro	Category: Portrait
Name	Name	Name	Name	Name	Name	Name
1 Ab Rashid	Aashish Barnwal	Ab Rashid	Anindya Kr Sen	Arijit Das	Agniswar Ghoshal	Alexander Sviridov
2 Agnieszka Imieliska	Ali Alta	Amitabh Mukherjee	Apares Chakraborty	Bhargavi Gokarna	Aparna Mondal	Andrew Vasiliev
3 Ajoy Saha	Ashok Dilwali	Anjan Kr Kundu	Arnab Dasgupta	Bibhas Deb	Arijit Mondal	Aninda De
4 Andrew Vasiliev	Debraj Chakraborty	Arjun Shukla	Ashoke Kr Ghosh	Dilip Shah	Arnab Debnath	Arindam Das
5 Aninda De	Dev Rishi Das	Bhaskar Kundu	Bubul Majumder	Jacob Bahar	Bibhas Deb	Debasish Biswas
6 Avismita Bhattacharyya	Dumidu Padeniya	Chinmoy Bhattacharjee	Debrup Roy	Jacob Bahar	Chidambar Javoor	Deepankar Adhikary
7 Avismita Bhattacharyya	Gagan Kaushal	D K Pattnayak	Dipayan Dutta	Jitesh KM	Hari Macro Photos	Hartmut Nrenberg
8 Bert Kubik	Gary Cummins	Debarshi Mukherjee	Gary Cummins	Jitrendren K Jithu	Hiren Kadikar	Hartmut Nrenberg
9 Christian Wolf	Kumar Sandeep	Gaurav Ghosh	Jassi Oberai	Kumar Sandeep	Manojjit BhanjaDas	Mou Aysha
10 Debasish Kundu	Lumlung Kamei	Keya Sengupta	Krishna Kumar	Naga Mutthu	Merlin Selvan	Natalia Arantseva
11 Koushik Mondal	Marko Bishop Jadro	Navin Vatsa	Manabendra Gupta	Pranay Patel	Mizanur Rahman Minhaz	Nikunja Das
12 Natalia Arantseva	Manvir Singh	Plabon Das	Manik Grover	Rajkumar Lahiri	Mono Grencel	Pabitra Mahato
13 Neetu Katyal	Naiju Varghese	Ritesh Ghosh	Nakul Sharma	Ranjan Ramchandani	Nikunja Das	Projjal Das
14 Pinkesh Modi	Nakul Sharma	Sandipan Kushary	Navin Vatsa	Ranjan Ramchandani	Ranjit Mahara	Rudra Chaudhuri
15 Prabhakar Sah	Nishad KS	Somnath Mullick	Nitesh Chhabra	Ricky Patel	Samiran Nandy	Sharif Ahmed
16 Ritesh Ghosh	Prasad Malgaonkar	Suvam Saha	Prasad Malgaonkar	Rosh Kumar	Samya Sengupta	
17 Rohit Naik	Rajani Ramanathan	Tanay Sahoo	Rajani Ramanathan	Saptarshi Paul Nil	Sandip Guha	
18 Sharif Ahmed	Rezoanul Haque Shetu	Tejal Mewar	Samya Sengupta	Sharon James	Shibajyoti Dutta	
19 Sudipta Das	Ripan Dam	Tulin Ertrk	Sarbajit Sen	Yaron-Schmid	Shibajyoti Dutta	
20 Vito Treca Ricci	Robert Juvet	Vishal Chhajer	Saurabh Sirohiya	Yaron-Schmid	Srikrishna Das	



# S n i p p e t s

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# World Photographic Forum Admin Panel



**Raj Sarkar** is a street photographer and an educator. He holds an MBA degree in Finance and a Post Graduate Diploma in Computer Application. He is the Curator of APF Magazine Street Photography. He loves exploring possibilities on street. His main objective is to freeze the emotions and actions of people. He delivers lectures on photography in various colleges and institutions like IIM (Indian Institution of Management), Union Chappel school etc and conducts countless workshops on street photography. He also curates various exhibitions and he has also been appointed as judge in various competitions. Raj is a recipient of various awards, recently he has won the International Puskar Mela Contest, Finalist of Garuda World Photo contest and HIPA and his work has been exhibited worldwide. He has reviewed various gadgets and cameras

including FujiX camera for Fujifilm. His articles have been published in all renowned magazines and websites in the world like Fujilove, Street Photography Magazine, USA, Viewfind, APF Magazine, Smart Photography, Better Photography, Asian Photography, Chiiz magazine, Saveus, 121 clicks, National Geographic ,CNN London TV and more. His photographs and their compositions have been used as study materials. Raj is based in Kolkata, India. He is an avid traveler and is always immersed in photography.

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**Sankar Ghose** is an art educator, graphic designer and event photographer by profession. An alumni of the Indian Art

College, painting remains his first love, though photography has turned into an integral part of his life at the same time. Though his main interests are people, street and daily life he also loves to shoot travel, nature and wildlife photography as and when the opportunity permits. His works have been published and recognized at different platforms like National Geographic your shot, National Geographic Traveller India, Nikon, Photovogue Italy amongst many others . He has participated in multiple photography exhibitions in India at Lalit Kala Akademi, Gaganendra Shilpa Pradarshashala, ICCR, Gallery Gold, Academy Of Fine Arts, Victoria Memorial , centre d'animation curial, Paris , Chitrakoot Art Gallery etc. His photographs are also part of different private collections in India and abroad. In his own words-

“Photography, for me , is an art of observation - a different and unique way of seeing life. It makes me look at the world with a new perspective and pushes me to search for my creative fulfillment. I do not carry any preconception and I always go with the flow. For me, the philosophy is simple – I just want to follow my heart, I shoot what I love.”

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Virtually **Soumya N Ghosh** has been traveling to places by default due to the nature of his job coupled with his interest for seeking adventure and ways to learn from and interact with cultures, which are very different from his own. Photography became a great excuse to look deeper and to make his experiences more intense. He had been a hobbyist photographer till 2013. He started taking photography seriously since 2014 after he received an award of recognition. Among the multiple recognitions the notable ones are Unicef, Nat Geo Abu Dhabi, Nikon Middle East & Africa, Camarena, India Photography Awards etc. Not restricted to a specific genre, he clicks what he likes. It has been a very interesting learning curve for him and he wishes it continues to be so.





Shutterbugs. Her photo series got selected in Rahgu Rai's Creative Image Magazine for a competition sponsored by Gionee mobile. Her works have been exhibited in many places like Kolkata, Pushkar, New York City.

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**Debrani Das** is a street Photographer from Kolkata, India. Her street photography journey started almost two years ago. She loves being on the street capturing those unseen and magical moments which are unpredictable and candid. Photography not only opens up new avenues to explore but it also helps her to reinstate herself. Debrani Das is one of the curators of World Photographic Forum and curator of Insta page of #worldphotographicforum. She is the member of StreetEye Collective. She was the guest curator of Womeninstreet Facebook group for thematic contest. Her works have been published in Eyeshot magazine, Chiiz Magazine. Her works were also featured in National Geographic, Womeninstreet. Recently her work was chosen as one of the winners of #womenstreetphotographers and was exhibited in New York City at El Barrio's Artspace PS109. She secured first runner up position in Street Photography Competition organized by Chiiz Magazine. She was chosen as one of the "Photographer of the year 2017" by Indian



**Sampurna Sarkar** is a passionate photographer and by profession she is a software developer and website designer. She loves traveling and documenting people. She is interested in exploring human emotion where she gets very much connected. She is very dedicated to whatever she intends to do. As per her opinion she should enjoy the journey first then she should freeze the moment forever so that after few years she is able to travel

the same journey again through these photographs. She believes life is all about living in the present and should go forward leaving all the miseries behind. Her favorite photographer is Henry Cartier Bresson- how he has captured the decisive moment and she is also very fond of his geometrical application in his photographs.

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**Omprakash Ghosh** was born and brought up in a small town at Habra, North 24 Parganas, West Bengal. He completed his Hons in Economics from Barasat Govt college. He started his own business in 2002, currently C&F of pharmaceuticals companies and he owns Pharma Marketing house also. He bought a DSLR and associated himself with DCP group from 2014. Till date he has received several national/international awards on wildlife photography. He specializes in macro photography. He conducts various workshops in different parts of India. His works have been featured in prestigious wildlife magazine Saevus and in Smart

Photography. He has received numerous accolades worldwide.

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**Deb Lahiri** is a travel and documentary photographer based out of Kolkata. Although he started his photographic journey long back, yet he seriously took up photography only in 2012-13 when digital era already concurred the photographic world. Since then, despite his busy and hectic professional schedules, photography occupied a major space in his mind. A few of his photographs were recognized and published in some national and international photographic platforms and print media like National Geographic, 121Clicks, Fotoflock, Photoburst, Times Photo Journal, Time of India, Telegraph, ABP etc. Deb Lahiri is a self-taught photographer, he learned most of his craft from the various photographic books,



and open tutorials available on the internet. He derives his inspiration from every day, from every moment, from numerous non-famous as well as famous photographers from India and abroad.

He likes to capture human activities through his photographs. As he loves to travel, nature and people deeply attract him to frame them forever.



**Dipabrata Sur** is a doctor by profession but photography runs through his veins & arteries. His photographs have been featured in various newspapers - The Times of India, The Telegraph and his works have been published in various national and international platforms like Nat Geo Traveller India and National Geographic and won him accolades at various competitions in the process. Presently he is the mentor of one of the biggest photography groups on Facebook - the World Photographic Forum.



**Ripan Biswas** hails from a small village in Coochbehar, West Bengal, India. He has a Masters degree in Environmental Science and presently is teaching in a school. From his childhood, nature has always inspired him. The life and death of a grasshopper, the flashing green hue of a bee eater, the sound of dry leaves smashing on a forest floor in spring always enthralled him. So, in photography he had no other option except to choose nature photography. In 2008 he started nature photography. Macro photography of insects is a special attraction to him. His pictures have been published in various national and international magazines, like Sanctuary Asia, Wild Planet Photomagazine among others and he has received many national and international

awards in wildlife photography competitions. Ripan Biswas aspires to spread awareness through his photography and work.



**Pradipta Chakraborty** hails from the small town of Burnpur in West Bengal. He is an established civil engineer working in Muscat, Oman. He started his journey as a photographer from 2012 with a Nikon D5100 and presently uses a Nikon D750. Although photography of all genres attract him, he particularly likes to photograph architecture, landscape, nature and activities of people and events.

**WPF Awards 2018 was a celebration of the superlative talents in the field of photography across the globe. The seven different categories which were included in the contest were- Creative, Portrait, Landscape, Travel, Street, Wildlife and Macro. In our next segment we have featured the Winner and the Runner-up in each of these 7 categories along with insights from the judges shedding light on what made them choose these photographs over thousands of other entries.**

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 World Photographic Forum

  
[www.worldphotographicforum.com](http://www.worldphotographicforum.com)



Winner (Category: Street)



*Photograph by Keya Sengupta*

**Keya Sengupta** considers herself fortunate for spending all her childhood days in Shantiniketan, and getting exposed to the rich cultural heritage of the place. After her schooling, she completed her B.Sc. and M.Sc. in Physics. Little did she know then that her exposure to the atmosphere of art in Santiniketan and her knowledge of Physics would come in handy a few decades later in her life when she took up the camera and dabbled in photography as a hobby. She considers the award as encouragement from mentors, judges and peers whose advice and guidance she values immensely. She is honoured to have been considered worthy of such an award.



**Julia Coddington (WPF Judge, Category: Street)**

Julia Coddington is an internationally recognised street photographer from Australia and the co-founder of the Unexposed Collective (with Rebecca Wiltshire), an online platform featuring Australian women and non-binary street photographers. She is also an administrator of @womeninstreet, an international community of women street photographers. Julia's work has been exhibited internationally, she has been a finalist in a number of street photography competitions, has presented her work globally and has been interviewed by various street photography magazines. She has conducted workshops overseas and currently conducts street photography workshops with her partner Gerry Orkin in Sydney.

**Judge's Note:**

This beautiful image is all about the light. It has a magical quality! It beams onto the wrestlers like a spotlight, rendering them as sculptures gracefully frozen in time and space, but simultaneously full of movement.



Runner-up (Category: Street)



**Judge's Note:**  
This image is intelligent, quirky and perfectly timed! It's also unconventional in its perspective. The image demonstrates the benefit of identifying a strong graphic framework for an image, and then patiently waiting for something special to happen.



*Photograph by Ab Rashid*

**Ab Rashid** is a freelance photographer from Bangladesh who likes to explore different shades of life and capture those moments. Whenever he captures a unique moment it inspires him to explore more. Those photographs take him on a journey through time. For him it was a great honor to be titled as the runner-up by the World Photographic Forum in this category which saw thousands of entries from photographers from all over the world. It is a great honor for him to be able to represent his country Bangladesh at such an esteemed platform provided by the World Photographic Forum.





Winner (Category: Creative)



**Arghya Chatterjee (WPF Judge, Category: Creative)**  
Arghya Chatterjee is one of the leading photographers in India. He organizes regular workshops on high fashion and lights along with imparting his knowledge on camera techniques during his classes where he provides practical training as well. Lately he has started reviewing high-end cameras for reputed brands like Nikon and Canon.

**Judge's Note:**

It is really difficult to freeze an intimate moment like this where the soothing colours and the ambience are perfectly complimenting each other. Some photographs stay with us for a lifetime and this is one of them. Congratulations to Andrew Vasiliev for capturing this stunning moment.



*Photograph by Andrew Vasiliev*

**Andrew Vasiliev** based in Krasnodar, Russia has been an avid art photographer for the past 10 years of his life. He started out with the genres such as landscape and architecture and continues to shoot them however these days he is focussing more on shooting portraits. For him portraits are reflections of an individual, he tries to highlight the story of that individual as well, his/her occupation, the place where that person is and the individual's emotions. He wants his works to reach a wider audience and expresses his sincere gratitude to World Photographic Forum for providing him with this platform and bestowing this honor upon him.



Runner-up (Category: Creative)



**Judge's Note:**  
This image evokes a certain emotion of uncertainty. The use of rear flash is remarkable along with the blue background. The positioning and composition of the face with proper expression made this photograph a winning entry. Many congratulations to Ab Rashid.



*Photograph by Ab Rashid*

**Ab Rashid** is a freelance photographer from Bangladesh who likes to explore different shades of life and capture those moments. Whenever he captures a unique moment it inspires him to explore more. Those photographs take him on a journey through time. For him it was a great honor to be titled as the runner-up by the World Photographic Forum in this category which saw thousands of entries from photographers from all over the world. It is a great honor for him to be able to represent his country Bangladesh at such an esteemed platform provided by the World Photographic Forum.





HART-WORX



*Photograph by Hartmut Norenberg*

**Hartmut Norenberg** was born in 1985 and has been living in “Mülheim an der Ruhr” since his childhood. He calls the entire “Ruhrgebiet”-Area his home.

As the oldest son of an orchestra-musician couple and grandson of a painting and sculptoring grandfather he got in touch with music and art very early. Motivated by his photographing father he became desirous to get better with the tools of photography and retouching. After he got educated as a media designer for digital and print media, he completed his degree as a Bachelor in Applied Cognitive and Media Science at the University of Duisburg/Essen.

Today he works as a freelance photographer and digital post-production artist. He feels more and more passionate for automotive and CGI imagery and he is confident that with his variety of education he will be a match for the unique creative requirements of future.



**Arghya Chatterjee (WPF Judge, Category: Portrait)** Argya Chatterjee is one of the leading photographers in India. He organizes regular workshops on high fashion and lights along with imparting his knowledge on camera techniques during his classes where he provides practical training as well. Lately he has started reviewing high-end cameras for reputed brands like Nikon and Canon.

**Judge’s Note:**

This image makes an instant connection. The overall balance, skin tone, color, the placement of flowers and the separation make it a classic photograph. The emotion expressed through the eyes alone speaks of an entire story. One of the finest portrait photographs I have come across in a long time.





**Judge's Note**

The mood, the processing and the placement made this environmental portrait a winning image. One could notice the questions arising out of her eyes and the uncertainty of losing something akin to noir...

Congratulations to Andrew for this immaculate frame.



*Photograph by Andrew Vasiliev*

**Andrew Vasiliev** based in Krasnodar, Russia has been an avid art photographer for the past 10 years of his life. He started out with the genres such as landscape and architecture and continues to shoot them however these days he is focussing more on shooting portraits. For him portraits are reflections of an individual, he tries to highlight the story of that individual as well, his/her occupation, the place where that person is and the individual's emotions. He wants his works to reach a wider audience and expresses his sincere gratitude to World Photographic Forum for providing him with this platform and bestowing this honor upon him.



Winner (Category: Wildlife)



*Photograph by Arijit Das*

Born and brought up in Tribeni (West Bengal), **Arijit Das** by profession is a web designer. From childhood he was attracted towards nature and wildlife, so to make it more intuitive he chose wildlife photography as hobby. He was pleasantly surprised when he was announced the Best Wildlife Photographer of the year 2018. He would like to thank all the respected admins, judges and friends who inspired him and recognized his hard work and express his sincere gratitude to World Photographic Froum.



**Rajarshi Banerji (WPF Judge, Category: Wildlife)**

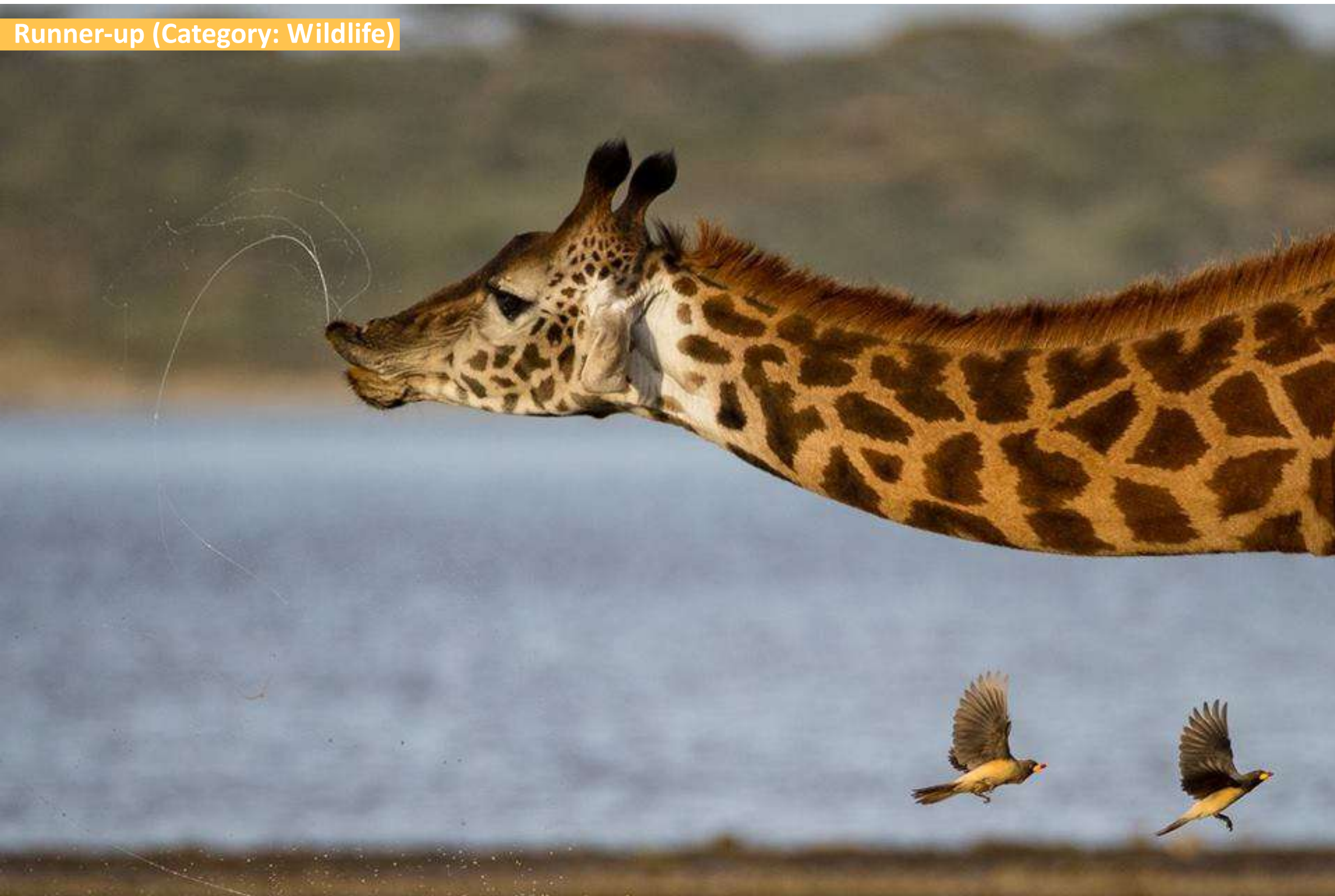
Rajarshi Banerji is an iconic wildlife photographer and avid conservationist who has photographed wildlife for over 25 years in most parts of India, Europe, USA, South Africa, Botswana, Kenya, Tanzania, Norway, Sri Lanka, South East Asia, Alaska and the Arctic Circle, making 8 to 10 trips a year to the field. His images have been widely published in the print and digital media in India, Europe and the U.S.A.

**Judge's Note:**

This is a truly exceptional image of an elusive subject - the Swamp Tiger! It shows the tremendous skill of the photographer in anticipating the jump and freezing the action in air, while maintaining the depth of field on the mudflats. The dark background adds to the mystery and mood of the image and shows the haunting habitat of the tiger that Sundarbans is.



Runner-up (Category: Wildlife)



**Judge's Note:**  
A wonderful image that breaks the rules and norms of wildlife photography while depicting dual action of the two subjects of the image - the giraffe and the birds. The flying streams of liquid from the giraffe's mouth enlivens this image further and sets it apart from the rest.



*Photograph by Jacob Bahar*  
**Jacob Bahar** is a wildlife specialist based in Tel Aviv, Israel. His love for the natural world and its denizens draws him to national parks and sanctuaries across the planet, where he loves to document the wild world and its subjects in their full glory.



Winner (Category: Macro)



*Photograph by Hiren Kadikar*

**Hiren Kadikar** is a passionate macro and bird photographer and is the In-charge Principal and head of the department in Arihant school of Pharmacy located in Gandhinagar, Gujarat. Macro photography gives him the chance to understand and discover more about what is believed to be ordinary. It takes him to a different world and makes him feel that he is seeing these small things for the first time. He is extremely honored to receive WPF Macro Photographer of the year award. He is grateful for the recognition and this will serve as a huge source of inspiration for him in the future.



**Rajarshi Banerji** (WPF Judge, Category: Macro)

Rajarshi Banerji is an iconic wildlife photographer and avid conservationist who has photographed wildlife for over 25 years in most parts of India, Europe, USA, South Africa, Botswana, Kenya, Tanzania, Norway, Sri Lanka, South East Asia, Alaska and the Arctic Circle, making 8 to 10 trips a year to the field. His images have been widely published in the print and digital media in India, Europe and the U.S.A.

**Judge's Note:**

This is a class-apart macro image in terms of composition, clarity, subject and action captured. The striking similarity of the subject with a human playing drums makes this capture absolutely incredible and a clear winner.



Runner-up (Category: Macro)



**Judge's Note:**  
Macro image of multiple subjects in the same frame is uncommon and a delight to watch, especially when it depicts a natural history moment in the life cycle of the macro subjects. The texture and leading lines of the leaf adds to the attraction of this delightful frame.



*Photograph by Merlin Selvan*

**Merlin Selvan** was born and brought up in Trichy, Tamilnadu. After schooling, he finished B.Sc., Viscom, which ultimately led to him taking up photography seriously later in his life. His love for wildlife started very early in his life, as his father used to take them to the forests during holidays. When he took up photography, these small things from his early days eventually led him to wildlife photography. He feels immensely happy and proud for being awarded as Runner-up in Macro Photographer of the Year - 2018. He would like to thank all the WPF team members, jury and all the viewers.





*Photograph by Jassi Oberai*

There are those who walk a different path, those who explore and learn each step of the way while creating glorious images. **Jassi Oberai** is one such person who has journeyed with his camera across the globe always looking for the magical light that shines on nature, one everyday life of human spectrum and capturing them. He combines his two passions Photography and Sharing to sprinkle nuggets of imagery to aspiring photographers through his workshops. In his words-  
“Winning is always good but this is special because of the sheer numbers which this image was competing against. I usually do not participate in contests so this image will always hold a special place in my life; something to be cherished for lifetime and very close to my heart.”



**Arek Rataj (WPF Judge, Category: Travel)**

Arek Rataj is a Poland-born photographer, journalist and Visual Thinking/Visual Images lecturer at the Huzhou University in China.

**Judge's Note:**

**What could possibly go wrong when photographing a beautifully lit house of prayer, seemingly in the middle of nowhere, with an absolutely breathtaking natural phenomenon in the background? If I was a religious Christian, I would say that this is exactly what I'd wish to witness during the end of days. Congratulations and hallelujah to the winning photographer!**





Runner-up (Category: Travel)



*Photograph by Gary Cummins*  
Gary Cummins is from Canada and he likes to explore everything creative. His photographic interests range from high speed to long shutter. If it's interesting and the idea inviting, he sets about devoting his time and energy in capturing it.

**Judge's Note:**  
It's a Bird... It's a Plane... It's Superdone photography! This very perspective takes all of a viewer's attention, so the viewing person gets easily sucked into this reddish-greenish-blueish realm of sports fields. Congratulations to the photographer, your drone is indeed like a bird - it hunted a visually flavorsome prey!



Winner (Category: Landscape)



*Photograph by Rajani Ramanathan*

**Rajani Ramanathan** lives by the credo “Life is a journey, a journey that shapes your life”. Photography to her, is a medium to capture precious moments in time and record it for posterity since the world is changing so fast around us and not always for the better. The amazing awe inspiring sights that can simply take her breath away that leaves her with indelible memories that she can cherish for a lifetime. Every trip and every interaction provides her with new perspectives about how different and yet same people are and the uniqueness of the myriad cultures she experiences.



**Debarshi Duttagupta (WPF Judge, Category: Landscape)**

Debarshi Duttagupta is from Kolkata.

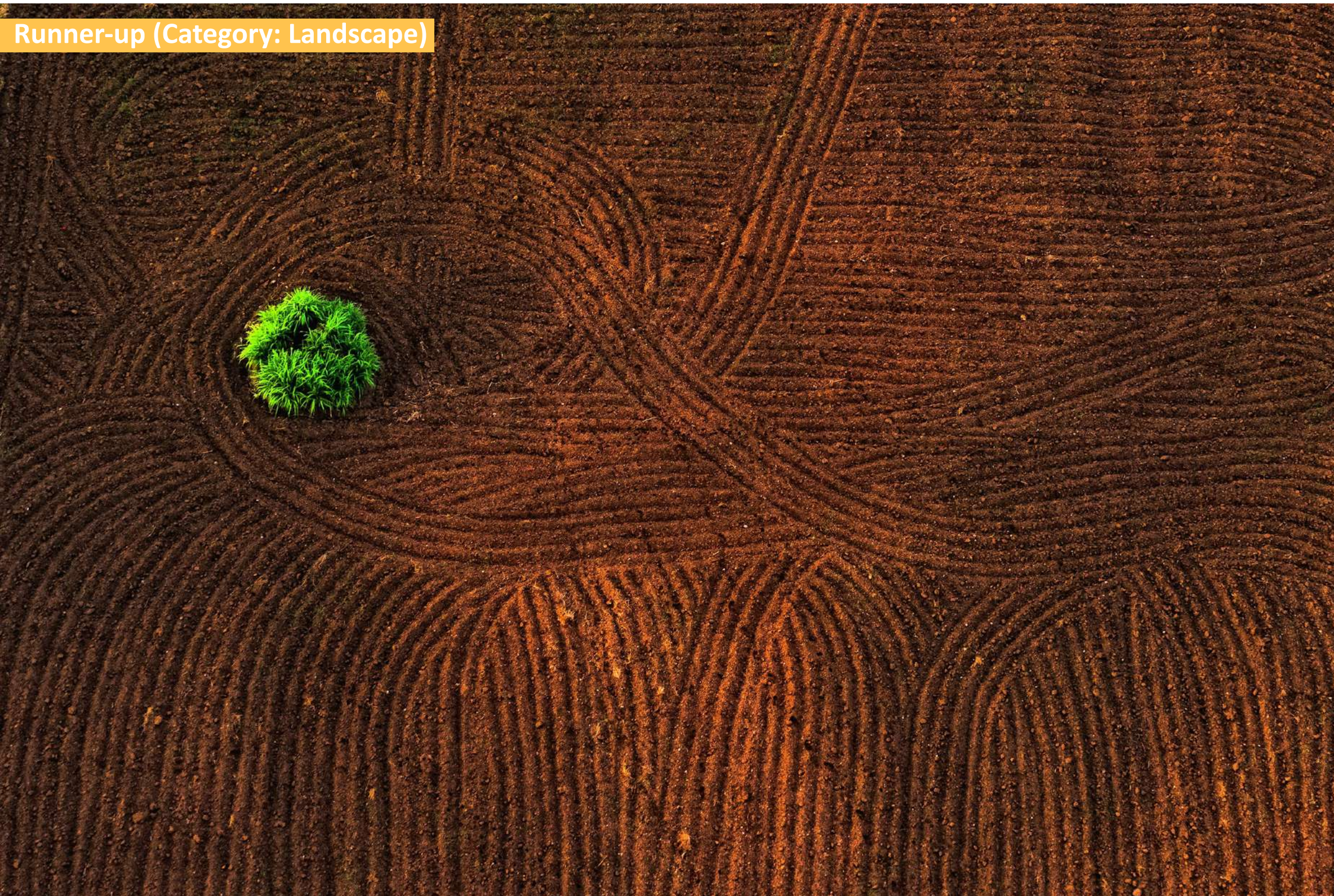
He is a nature and landscape photographer with specific interest in clouds and storm systems. He is currently a Fuji Film international Brand Ambassador representing India. Professionally he is a former practicing advocate with the Kolkata High Court and presently involved in his family business of pharmaceuticals.

#### **Judge's Note**

I was looking for something new , not the traditional landscape images. The image of the ice cave was something different. mainly because the photographer had taken extreme pains and risks to travel to such a remote location. I presume she was also carrying a tripod , as the water in the FG is blurred out due to a slower shutter speed. This to me sets apart this image and the effort behind making this image and thus i have selected this as the winner.



Runner-up (Category: Landscape)



**Judge's Note:**  
This composition is something that made me choose this image as the runner up. Drones are becoming a very valid tool for photography now a days. Technology has always played a very important role in photography and will continue to do so. Images from drones are stunning as they provide a completely different POV which we are not fully accustomed with till now. The image in question has been brilliantly thought of and composed. This deserves the runner-up position.



*Photograph by Dumidu Padeniya*

**Dumidu Padeniya** is 26 years old and a resident of Dambulla, Sri Lanka. He started his journey with his camera in 2011. Previously he won the 2015 and 2017 wildlife photography and youth color photography awards. He captured this scene from a hot air balloon. He would like to thank "Sunrise Hot Air Ballooning Sri Lanka Pvt Ltd" for all their help and expertise. For him everyday with his camera is a fresh opportunity to do new things and get better. This is just the beginning for him. He would like to express his gratitude to the admins, judges and the members of the World Photographic Forum for appreciating his efforts and this award.



**Photographer's note:** Crows are known to be a nuisance to other animals. During the early hours of morning I saw a deer standing under a tree in a beautiful setting. A few moments later a flock of crows approached the deer and started pestering it. I froze this moment when the deer responded by trying to shoo the crows away.

# Places that **INSPIRE ME**

**Featuring the 17 winning photographs from our previous online contest on the theme - “Places that Inspire Me” held in the month of May for the members of the facebook group - “World Photographic Forum”**

**H**earliest congratulations to all the 17 winners and a big round of applause for each and everyone who took time out of their busy schedules to take part in this contest. The theme - “Places that Inspire Me” was aimed at bringing out the best memories which often lie dormant in our hearts. However when certain events or episodes in our lives stoke those memories bringing them back to life, the delight, the feeling of remembrance, the warmth we experience cannot be expressed in mere words.

In our first among many future collaborations with World Photographic Forum we aimed at lending a hand to the members down that memory lane, where some of the most cherished memories stay preserved forever in the photographs we have taken, for these are more than photographs, these are episodes from our lives, episodes of bliss, of inspiration, of stories that made us who we are today. This is an ode to everything that we will forever cherish and hold close to our hearts.

*Photograph by Trikansh Sharma*



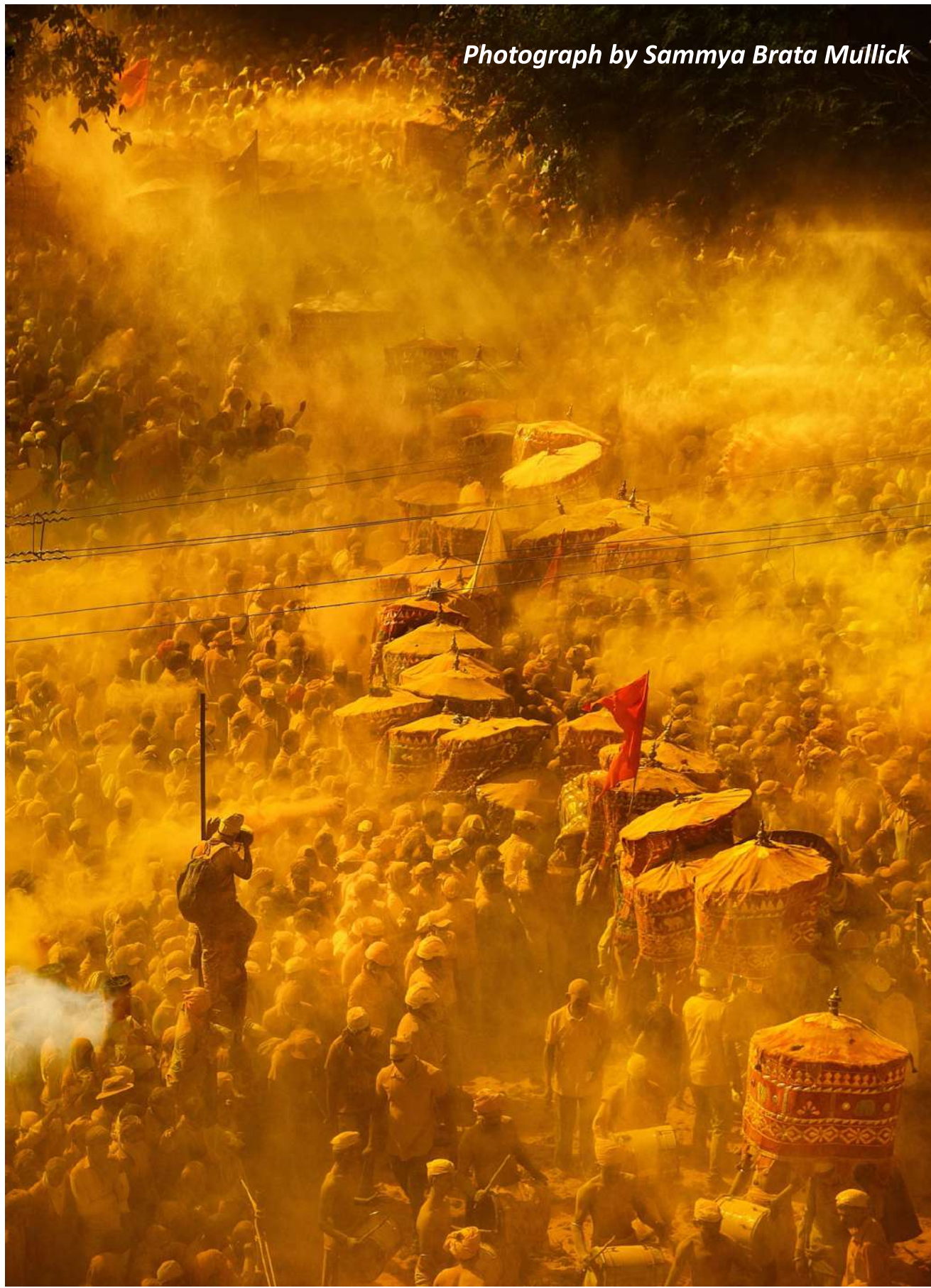


*Photograph by Manvir Singh*

**Photographer's note:** Nature never ceases to amaze , at times it is the beauty and at time it is the magnanimity. I experienced the magical combination of both on this particular morning when I was travelling back to Banff from Jasper National Park. Pristine lonely road, golden sun rays coupled with dense fog falling on the beautiful mountain terrain was nothing short of a miracle. The fact that i captured this scene by taking out the camera from the sunroof of the car in the face of strong wind made it even more special.

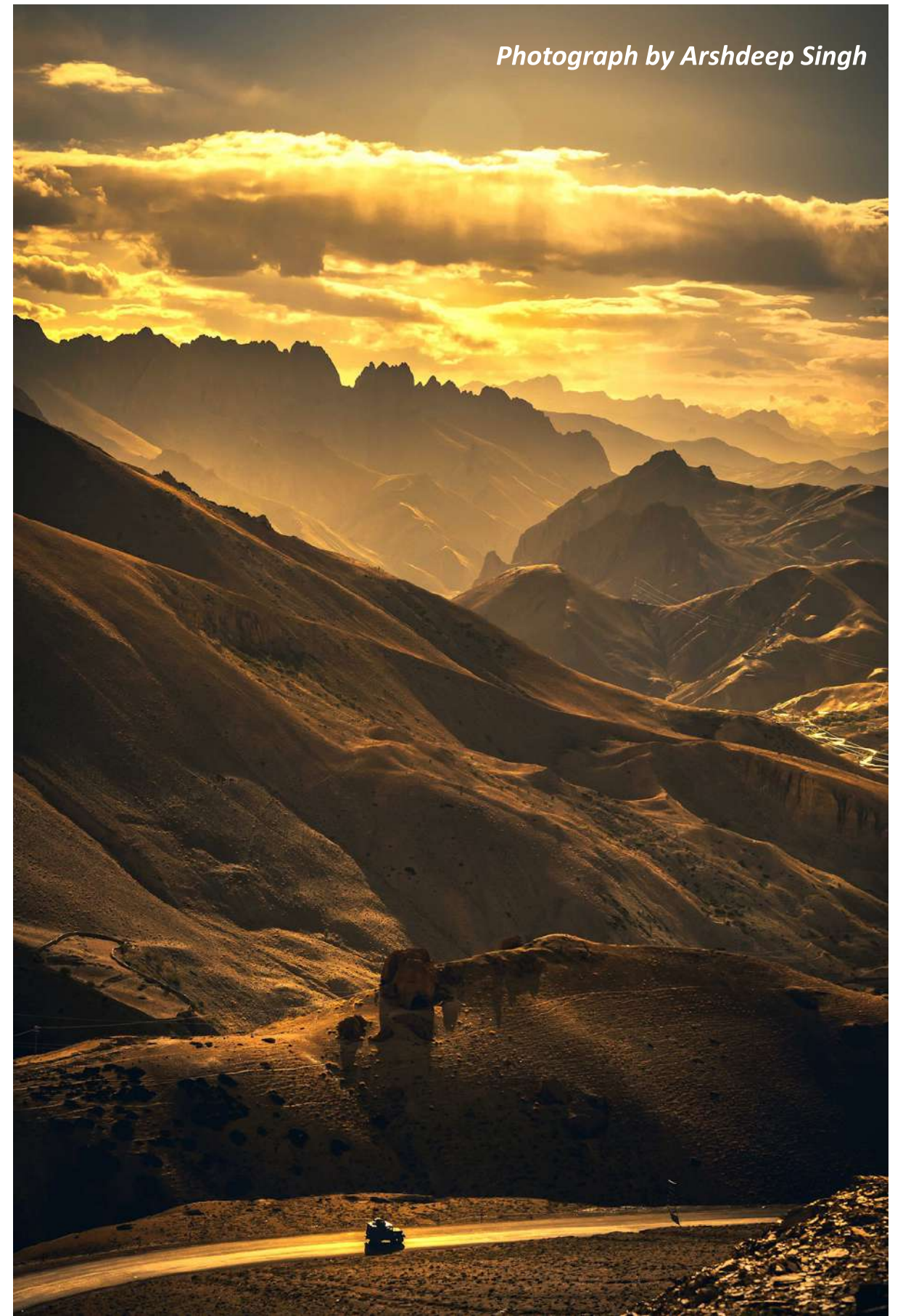


*Photograph by Sammya Brata Mullick*



**Photographer's note:** The yellow festival is an iconic celebration at Kohlapur where turmeric is used as the key component; this location is a powerhouse of strong photo-stories primarily because of the engaging activities of devotees draped in the color yellow. However, it is quite challenging to shoot during the festival since turmeric causes irritation to your eyes and you are literally blinded; shooting here is also a test of your prowess as a photographer.

*Photograph by Arshdeep Singh*



**Photographer's note:** Far from the rest of the world, there's a place that gives a home to lost souls. The barren mountains may seem devoid of everything. Yet there's an abundance here, abundance of solitude, of nature, of marvelous views and peace that fulfills the soul. As I moved forward along the Leh-Srinagar Highway the emptiness seemed rewarding, the isolation was soothing.



*Photograph by Jassi Oberai*



**Photographer's note:** A herd of wildebeest silhouetted against the evening sky in the African savannah. Wildebeest are known to migrate hundreds of kilometers in search of water and greener pastures during the dry season. This vast open landscape, the brilliant orangish-golden hue of the sun and the shapes of these majestic animals made for a spectacular viewing in this beautiful continent.





*Photograph by Lucas Pohti*

**Photographer's note:** This photograph was taken at Dawki, a small town in Meghalaya. The crystal clear water providing a clear view of the river bed and the pebbles lying on it was an incredibly beautiful sight.



*Photograph by Andrew D. Pariat*

**Photographer's note:** There is a power and a brilliance in the calm, the water tumbled down, then it flowed on its way as if nothing had occurred. From a distance it looked like a silent gushing stream cascading over the rocks. A force of nature, both beautiful and brutal. It was simply spectacular, the most magnificent sight I had ever behold .



*Photograph by Madhur Nangia*



**Photographer's note:** I got a chance to click this beautiful place called Place de Bourse covered by infinite clouds and sprinkled mist in Bourdeaux , the city of wine and magnificent architecture. As I waited for the desired frame and the right moment I suddenly noticed this lady crossing the man made reflection pond . It seemed as if she appeared out of from nowhere, her striking red dress added a vibrant dash of color to the alluring frame.



*Photograph by Sayanti Roy*



**Photographer's note:** This photo was taken at Jorpokhri Lake in Darjeeling. This beautiful lake is surrounded by an amazingly beautiful garden. When I reached the lake it was afternoon on a cloudy day and a thick layer of mist and fog had veiled the surroundings casting a spell of ethereal beauty that is absent on a clear day. I couldn't stop myself from capturing the beauty of the fog as this couple walking along the garden slowly disappeared into the misty realms.



*Photograph by Antarjit Singh*



**Photographer's note:** On an early winter morning shrouded in a thick layer of fog, this huge male elephant came out of the grassland and on to the road that cuts through the wilderness in Jim Corbett National Park in Uttarakhand. Although the vehicle was much ahead our point of view falsely created an impression that they were head to head. The beautiful landscape with the thick layer of fog and the mountain ranges added drama to the whole scene.



Photograph by Arindam Das



**Photographer's note:** The Bhubaneswar Holi, also known as Rolls Royce Holi for the vintage Rolls Royce car that is an integral part of this colourful procession is a joyous and colourful occasion which is no stranger to such vibrant sights.

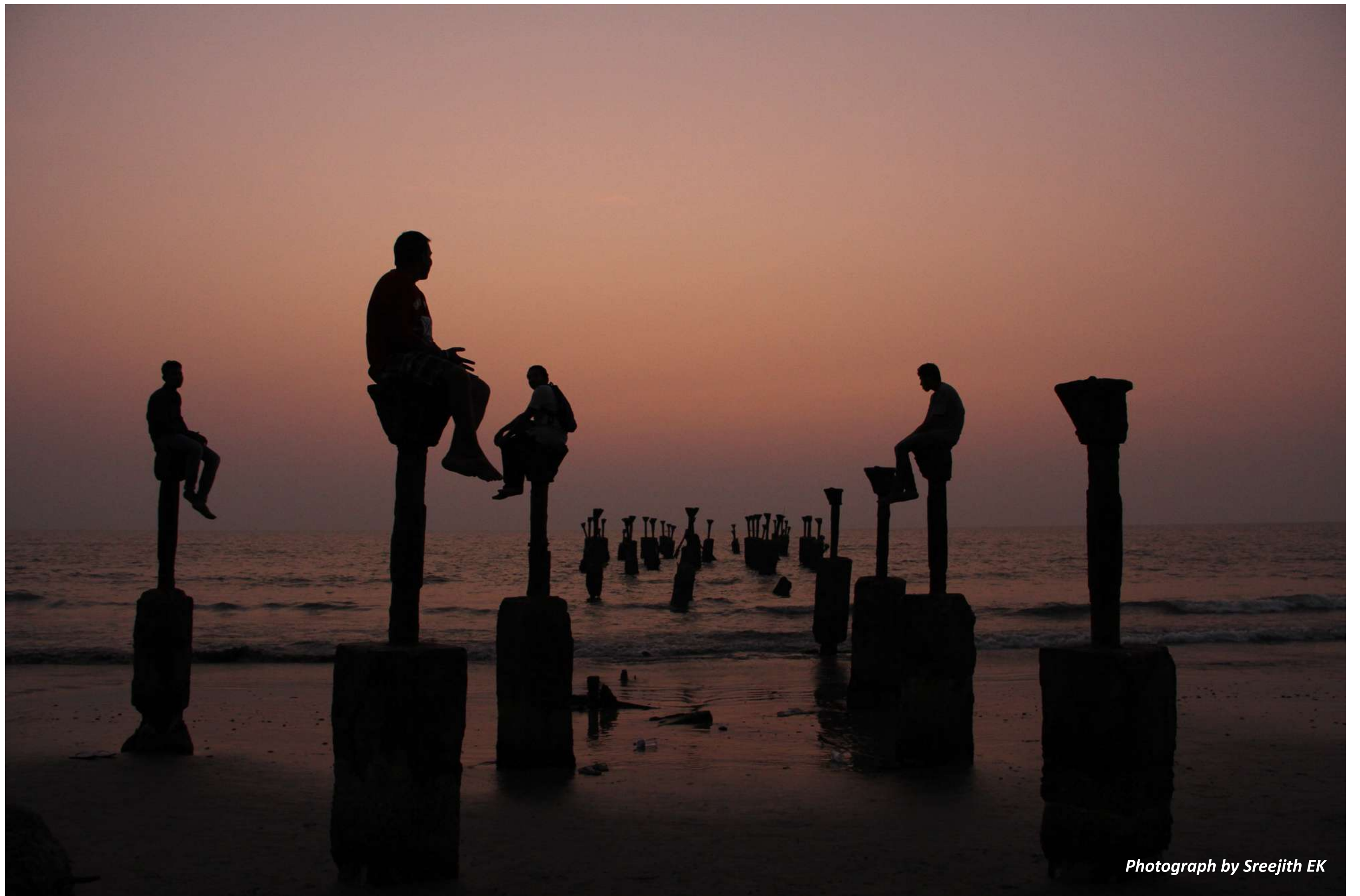




*Photograph by Debabrata Bandyopadhyay*

**Photographer's note:** Kolkata Maidan-a place of enormous activities, is fascinating on winter mornings, covered with the blanket of dense fog with a high-rise in the background. With the first rays of sun the place turns into a hub of myriad activities with grazing horses, joggers, sport enthusiasts and casual bystanders flocking the lush green stretches in huge numbers.





*Photograph by Sreejith EK*

**Photographer's note:** Along the sandy shores of the Calicut Beach these monks found a quiet place for meditation on top of these structures. The setting sun, a tranquil sea and the cool breeze sweeping the shores of Calicut provided the perfect setting for these monks to plunge deep into their meditation.





*Photograph by Nilanjan Pathak*

**Photographer's note:** Bengali Hindus observe Charak Puja on the last day of the Bengali calendar which is also known as Chaitra Sankranti. Charak Puja is widely known for its iconic rituals which involve body piercing and swirling from high poles known as Charak tree in the rural and suburban parts of West Bengal, India.



Photograph by Somanjan Ponda



**Photographer's note:** Whirling of followers ("Sannyasi") of Lord Shiva being hooked from a scale like structure named "Charak Tree" is a popular event in "Gajan Festival" mostly observed in rural Bengal. Sometimes new born babies are handed over to those Sannyasis during their whirl in order to accomplish a vow. This annual "Gajan Festival" involves a hardships like long fasting, body piercing, jumping into fire that are observed for two to three days and this is one of the most dramatic events I witnessed during my short trip.



*Photograph by Rajneesh Panwar*



**Photographer's note:** The tranquil water, the brilliant and myriad hues of blue and the patch of mountain in the distance lit up by soft rays of sun rendering it a distinct golden appearance made this scene stand out in the midst of this beautiful setting.

*Photograph by Rajiv Ranjan Sinha*



**Photographer's note:** The incredibly beautiful Northern Lights gave this scene an ethereal appearance as if it was a setting from a mythological episode. The otherwise beautiful location was elevated to a different level courtesy the Northern Lights.





**Trikansh Sharma**



**Antarjit Singh**



**Andrew D. Pariat**



**Arshdeep Singh**



**Arindam Das**



**Sreejith EK**



**Jassi Oberai**



**Manvir Singh**



**Sammya Brata Mullick**



**Sayanti Roy**



**Madhur Nangia**



**Nilanjan Pathak**



**Lucas Pohti**



**Rajneesh Panwar**



**Debabrata Bandyopadhyay**



**Rajiv Ranjan Sinha**



**Somanjan Ponda**

# The Honour Board

Our heartiest congratulations to everyone who got featured and a big thanks to everyone who participated in the contest. It was a pleasure going through all the submissions and an equally difficult task shortlisting the final images. Stay tuned for more contests and events in the future.

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Wildlife

Once widespread across Indus to Irrawaddy, the fate of the critically endangered gharial now rests firmly on the moist, sandy beaches of Chambal River in central India, the last major bastion for this ancient crocodilian.

# the Crown Jewel of Chambal

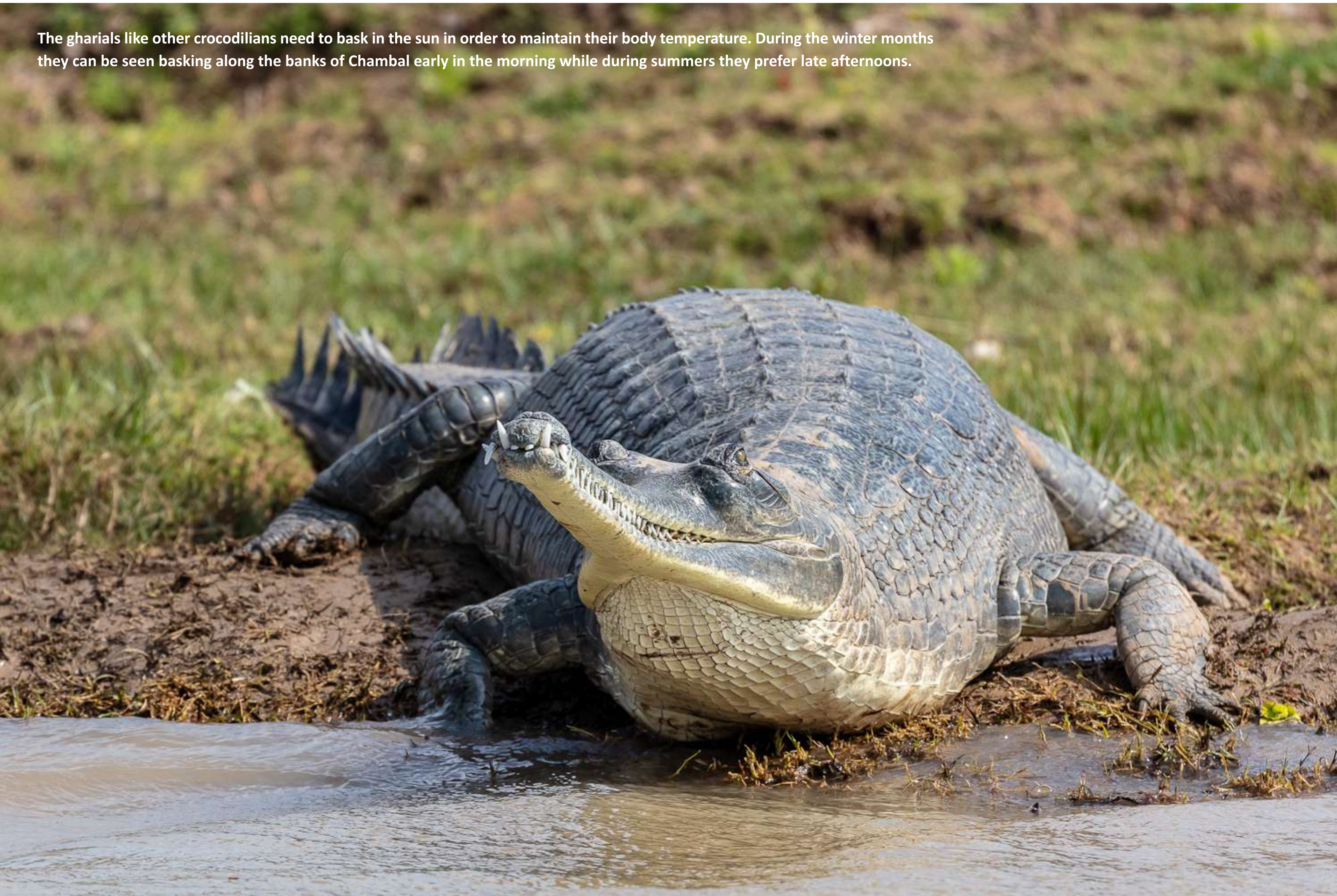
by Vikas Datta

From being home to feared bandits to the lifeline of millions the ravines of Chambal are best known as the last major bastion for the critically endangered gharial.





The gharials like other crocodilians need to bask in the sun in order to maintain their body temperature. During the winter months they can be seen basking along the banks of Chambal early in the morning while during summers they prefer late afternoons.





The Chambal River, a tributary of the Yamuna cuts through the states of Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh and Uttar Pradesh before joining forces with the Yamuna in Uttar Pradesh. Originating from the Singar Chouri peak along the northern slopes of the arid Vindhyan escarpment in Indore district of Madhya Pradesh the Chambal riverscape has served as the lifeline for millions of people in the heavily populous states of Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh and Uttar Pradesh for many centuries now. The iconic landscape along the shores of the Chambal dotted with sandy beaches, an intricate network of ravines and reddish sandstone cliffs jutting out of nowhere has been at the heart of myriad human activities since the ancient times. The vast stretches of sandy beaches facilitate a thriving sand mining industry in this region and often in the ensuing overzealousness the limits are further pushed by tweaking the rules and regulations, the number of dams and barrages which have been set up along the length and breadth of the river, the numerous irrigation projects all bear testimonies to the massive scale of human intervention the Chambal basin has been subjected to. However it must be said in this context the Chambal river basin of today which is a hotbed of a wide array of such activities is a far cry from the ancient times when the Chambal basin rather unabashedly flaunted a violent predisposition. The Chambal valley once owed its allegiance to some of the most



Like other crocodylians male gharials are fiercely territorial and will defend their territories and mating rights over the females within their territories. The females however are more tolerant towards each other as can be seen here.

feared dacoits and bandits who trotted these ravines and were cognizant of these networks of mazes like the backyard of their homes. The “beehad” or the famed ravines of the Chambal, as they are known locally, still resonate with tales from the lives of some of Chambal’s most feared names. The likes of Phoolan Devi, Paan Singh Tomar, Man Singh, Nirbhay Singh

Gujjar who were once considered some of the most notorious criminals by the government enjoyed demi-god status in these dusty, arid ravines. For the local population these names invoked a sense of fear for some, while for thousands of downtrodden people trapped in a remote landscape far removed from the echelons of the Indian judiciary, these names were

synonymous with a sense of justice and hope. The undulating ravines of Chambal interspersed with thorny scrubs were home to these feared bands of dacoits or “baaghis” as they were known among the locals. The “baaghis” after conducting their loots in the households of the rich and the upper castes would kick up a dust storm with the hooves of their horses and



vanish among the maze of ravines only to return afresh eluding the government security personnel. The present day Chambal though paints a picture of stability, with the last reported encounter taking place between the bandits and the security forces dates back to 2007. The guns have fallen silent in the valley, with most dacoits with numerous cases of murders and robberies against their names serving sentences in prisons or they are leading a regular life after surrendering to the government and availing the various schemes put up by the government for them. The Chambal River finds repeated mentions in various episodes of Hindu mythology too. The Chambal River basin since its ancient days when it made headlines in numerous Sanskrit scripture till the time the ravines echoed with gun fights and trotting hooves of horses with the most feared bandits atop and eventually to its present day when the violent past has been engulfed by a steady series of infrastructural and developmental activities the waters of Chambal have carefully preserved its most treasured gem – the gharial, which is also known as the fish eating crocodile. In spite of its violent and colourful past it is this crocodilian which has contributed like none other in forging a unique identity of the Chambal basin. The gharial (*Gavialis gangeticus*), one of the longest among the living crocodilians, is a critically endangered species and is on the brink of extinction. The Chambal River basin and the designated National

Chambal Gharial Wildlife Sanctuary remain the last major bastion for this species engaged in a fierce battle for survival. Once widespread across Indus River in the east to Irrawaddy River in Myanmar in the west, the present distribution of this crocodilian is a heart wrenching mere 2% of its former habitat. Widespread loss of habitat, depleting sources of food and killings have brought the number of gharials to an alarming low with more than 80% of the global

*The gharial (*Gavialis gangeticus*), one of the longest among the living crocodilians, is a critically endangered species. The Chambal River basin and the designated National Chambal Gharial Wildlife Sanctuary remain the last major bastion for this species engaged in a fierce battle for survival. Once widespread across Indus in the east to Irrawaddy in the west the present distribution of gharials is a mere 2% of its former habitat.*

population living in the Chambal Wildlife Sanctuary. Smaller populations can be found scattered across rivers in other parts of India and Nepal, although Chambal remains the last major population stronghold for these animals. Gharial derives its name from ghara, which in Hindi means earthen pot. The bulbous knob at the end of its long slender snout resembles the earthen pot still common in

many Indian household. This knob or ghara is present only in the males of the species thereby rendering the gharial the only one among visibly sexually dimorphic crocodilian. Apart from exhibiting sexual dimorphism the gharial stands out among other crocodilians in terms of its diet as well. The species largely feeds on fish and the long snout, rows of uniform sharp teeth and an agile, muscular and relatively long neck make up for the near perfect fishing mechanism found in the natural world. These animals display a preference for river systems with deep, fast flowing streams of water. The rocky and sandy shores of the Chambal act as the perfect setting for gharials to bask in the early morning or late afternoon sun. Their basking patterns are largely determined by the time of the day and also the particular season. During winters gharials venture out of the cold water at daybreak to catch the early rays of sun in order to heat up their bodies. During summers they prefer to spend most of their days under water and venture out late in the afternoon to catch the last rays of the sun. Young gharials prefer living in the shallower pools until they are big enough to venture into the deeper waters. The young of this species feed on insects, tadpoles, small fish, frogs, small crustaceans or in other words anything they can dig their teeth into. While young the adults of their own species pose the biggest threat to them. The shallow pools provide them with the much needed refuge during which they

focus on growing bigger and perfecting their fishing skills before they can venture out into the deep water territories. Adult gharials primarily feed on fish and fish makes up for the majority of their diet. However it is not quite uncommon among gharials to feed upon crustaceans or turtles. Through the annals of Hindu mythologies the gharials survived, they held their own during the chapters of violence in the blood patched history of these ravines, yet these incredibly resilient creatures are faced with the serious peril of extinction looming large today. Gharials who harbour an affinity for deep, fast flowing waters are being gradually robbed of their habitat at an alarming rate today. The Chambal water crisis, a result of irrigation projects to support the huge population of human beings dependent on the river and the construction of major dams along the stretch of Chambal to divert the waters of its tributary is threatening to dry up the river basin in certain patches. Under such circumstances the drying river bed ceases to be a contiguous stretch of water body hindering the movement of the gharials and other species. Confined to isolated stretches of the river or pools particularly during the dry season, the gharials are the most vulnerable to falling prey to starvation or some contentious fishing methods which involve the frequent use of dynamites. The flourishing sand mining industry in this region which carries on its operations often unchecked has engulfed large tracts of nesting sites for the gharials. The ever



The moist sandy beaches of Chambal act as the perfect setting for gharials to soak up the sun and also for laying their clutches of eggs. The females usually lay their clutches by the end of February when they dig up a burrow at their preferred location and after laying the eggs in the burrow cover them up.





Gharials are excellent swimmers and spend almost the entirety of their lives under water. The slender long snout armed with razor sharp teeth has helped them evolve into the near perfect fish hunters in the natural world.



encroaching human settlements along the banks of the river often lead to the nesting sites being destroyed or the ensuing chaos forcing gharial mothers to abandon their nests and young ones. In the wake of catering to the requirements of a fast growing human settlement along these waters these above mentioned problems certainly nurture the untapped potential to metamorphose into gigantic proportions in the years to come. Squeezed into narrow confines where they have to jostle for their territories and fight for food resulted in a fast depleting population of these animals. As these events went on unchecked quite

predictably there was a rapid decline in the number of these reptiles between 2003 and 2006 when records stated the number of breeding adults was a mere 250. This was a massive blow to the future of this species and the ignominy of these events elevated the gharials to the critically endangered status in the IUCN Red List. In yet another cruel twist of fate, Chambal witnessed the untimely and unexplained death of as many as 100 odd individuals in 2008. This was widely perceived as the end game for this species and served as the last wake up call for the authorities and naturalists in a last ditched attempt to

bring these reptiles back from near extinction. As part of this effort, certain measures were implemented and the overwhelming causes for this rapid decline were identified. It turned out, to little surprise, the unchecked and often illegal sand mining along the banks of the Chambal contributed heavily towards the demise of not only the gharials but a wide array of other species, threatening to rob the Chambal of the distinction of being a diverse and flourishing ecosystem. Regulations in terms of sand mining were put into place and in certain parts of the river which fall under the Chambal

Wildlife Sanctuary sand mining was banned. Other human induced activities such as fishing were brought under the ambit of regulations and guidelines were laid down regarding the implementation of certain fishing techniques. In addition to all of these a number of organisations, wildlife enthusiast and the concerned authorities came together in educating the local people and communities and spread the awareness. These approaches needed coordination among all the three states of Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh and Uttar Pradesh, which was successfully achieved up to a certain extent. In this context it





A female gharial basks in the afternoon sun along the bank of Chambal. Over the past few years due to the proper implementation of conservation strategies the gharial population in Chambal is on a steady incline.



The gharials share these waters with their crocodilian cousin the mugger crocodile, also known as marsh crocodile. The muggers, like the gharials inhabit freshwater lakes and rivers and a sizeable population of them inhabits the waters of Chambal.



*At the Kukrail Gharial Rehabilitation Centre eggs are retrieved from the natural nests and are incubated for about a month or so at about 30-35 degree Celsius. Once the eggs hatch the young gharials are looked after at the centre until they are about three years old and big enough to fend for themselves in their natural habitat. It is then these young adults are released back in the waters of the Chambal. The role played by this organisation is crucial for gharials...*

must be mentioned the Kukrail Gharial Rehabilitation Centre near Lucknow which was established in 1978 with a view of recovering the dwindling population has steadily contributed towards bringing this species back from extinction. After a brief mating period the female gharials lay a clutch of eggs in the month of February.

After a gestation period of a little over than a month the female digs up the burrow and the young gharials hatch from the clutch of eggs. However in the wild the mortality rate among young gharials is extremely high. Out of a clutch of 10-97 eggs a significant proportion gets destroyed before they are even hatched and among

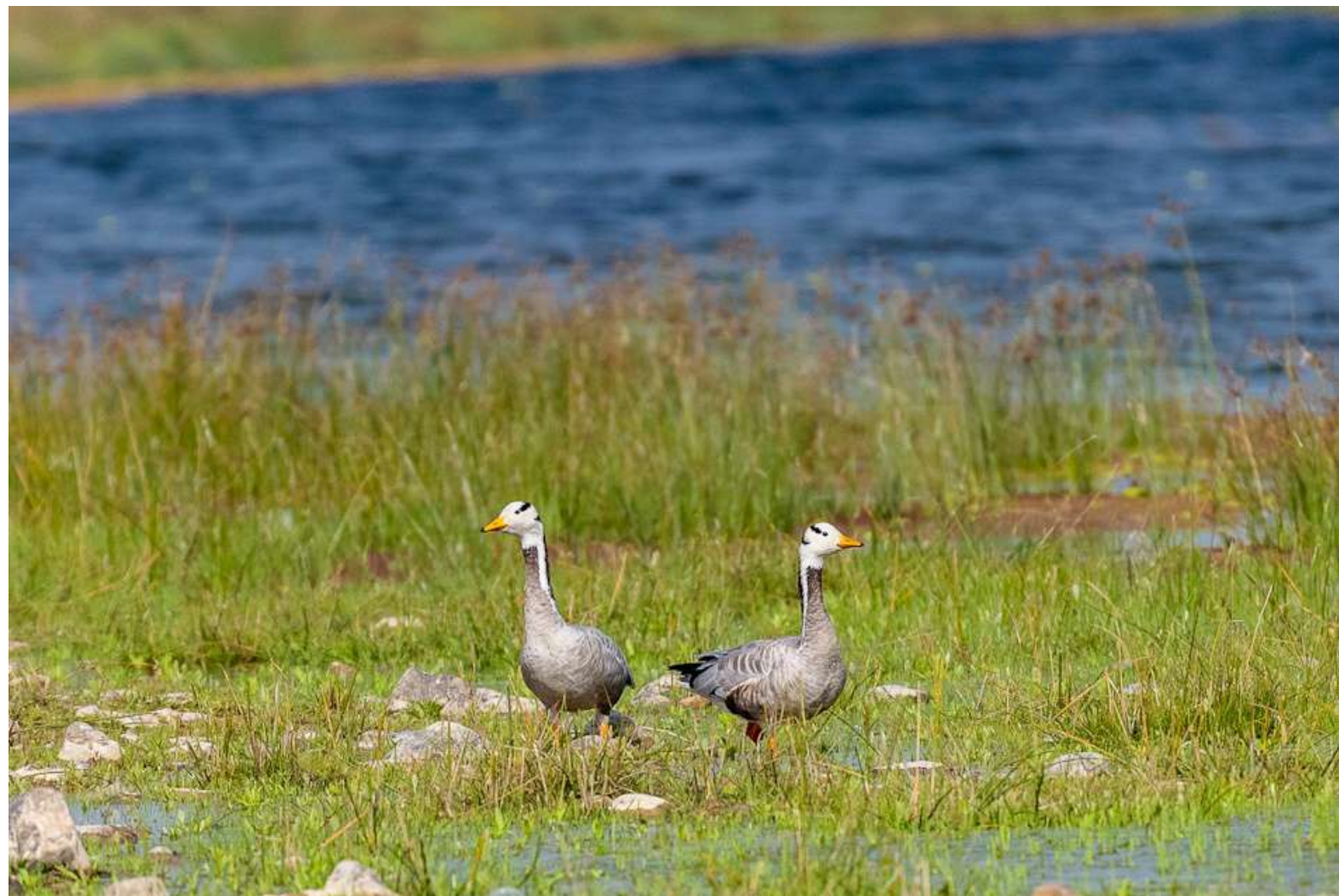
the newly born gharials barely 2% successfully make it to adulthood. Such high mortality rate posed a serious threat in recovering the population of the gharials. At the Kukrail Gharial Rehabilitation Centre eggs are retrieved from the natural nests and are incubated for about a month or so at about 30-35 degree Celsius. Once

the eggs hatch the young gharials are looked after at the centre until they are about three years old and big enough to fend for themselves in their natural habitat. It is then these young adults are released back in the waters of the Chambal. The role played by this organisation since its inception still stands out as one of the success stories in the conservation map of India. The result yielded by all these efforts is evident in the recent census conducted in the Chambal Wildlife Sanctuary. From a paltry 250 breeding adult individuals in 2006, the population of gharial in 2018 stood at over 1680 with a recorded highest ever increase of 426 individuals in a single year. The increase in gharial population had its very own ripple effect on the entire eco-system. The fate of this diverse eco-system is deeply intertwined with the fate of the gharial, more so since gharial is the apex predator





While Chambal is best known for its crocodilians, most notably as the last remaining stronghold of the gharial, Chambal is also home to a large number of bird species, a significant percentage of which is migratory. During winter months Chambal hosts a plethora of migratory bird species who throng the beaches to escape the bitterly cold northern winter.





in this set up. With an increasing gharial population, other species too registered an increase in their populations. The mugger crocodiles, which share these waters with the gharials too experienced an increase in their population as did the thousands of migratory birds which make the sandy banks of Chambal their homes for few months every year.

While these news are a welcome change from the grim ground reality which once threatened to wipe out this critically endangered species, it cannot be said with absolute certainty the species no longer faces any of the previously mentioned threats. These threats are still prevalent and loom large in the horizon. The growing dependency on the waters of the Chambal still remains a cause of concern for the authorities. Illegal sand mining has been successfully contained in parts of the sanctuary but without proper monitoring mechanism at place threatens to return to the favoured nesting sites of the gharials. The commitment from the local population too will remain crucial in the days to come. The Chambal has been the lifeline of this region for centuries now. And the river will keep playing a huge role in shaping the lives and futures of millions who will be forever dependent on it. Yet the river doesn't solely belong to us. It primarily belongs to the hundreds of species who have inhabited its watery depths since long before we staked any claim to its fast flowing streams. And it is in these depths of Chambal, lies its beating heart, a watery

kingdom rich in life, a self-sustaining model which is the silent guardian of the Chambal. This watery realm and its denizens including the redoubtable gharial need protection from every external force threatening to upscale this balance like never before. In this quest to safeguard the future of the gharials and in turn that of Chambal's we cannot afford to relax. The recent figures bear testimony to the painstaking efforts which have yielded positive results, yet this remains only the beginning. The fate of the Chambal rests firmly in the jaws of these formidable predators, once on the brink of extinction they are staging a remarkable comeback, with a little effort from our side this could be the beginning of a new era for the Chambal which would once again elevate these ravines to the pristine natural wonder with a diverse eco-system it once used to be.

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## About the Photographer

**Vikas Datta** is a Mumbai based self-taught photographer who has been learning on the job, one photograph at a time, since the past fifteen years. He is an avid traveller and is passionate about capturing life around him. Nature and wildlife photography are among his favourite genres and he regularly takes time out to document nature's beauty. His work has been featured thrice in Asian Photography magazine and one of his photographs was published in The Independent Photographer as Talent of the Year, 2017-2018. National Geographic Magazine adjudged one of his photographs in the "Top 20" photographs of the year 2017.





*“I am hugely influenced by the beauty that lies in its natural formation from mountain to desert to the ocean.”*

Renowned landscape photographer Soumya N Ghosh speaks about his journey and experiences as a landscape photographer and how the landscape of Oman has shaped his craft.

**Tell us something about yourself**

Currently I am in Oman, though my heart and soul remain in the City of Joy, Kolkata, India from where I belong.

Virtually I've been traveling to places by default due to the nature of my job coupled with my interest in seeking adventure and the lust for nature and new cultures.

Photography became an excuse to look deeper and make my experiences more intense and vivid.

I have been relishing my experiences as a hobbyist photographer since 2012. I started taking photography seriously from 2014 as some awards came my way. To mention a few among them recognitions from UNICEF, Nat Geo Abu Dhabi, Nikon Middle East & Africa, Camarena, India Photography Awards further encouraged me. Not restricted to a specific genre, I click what I like. Till date it has been an

interesting learning curve for me, one which I have cherished thoroughly and wish to continue with it.

**What made you choose landscape photography as your most favoured genre of photography?**

I started with photographing people, but gradually shifted to landscape after I moved to Oman. Being a keen lover of the outdoor and having travelled extensively throughout Oman, I am hugely influenced by the beauty that lies in its natural formation from mountains to desert to the ocean.

**Was there one specific moment or incident which inspired you to take up photography?**

A very casual click from one of my trips to Arunachal Pradesh trip earned me my







first recognition at my very first attempt at participating for a social cause organised by UNICEF. I would say this event triggered my love affair with photography.

**Who are your favourite photographers; the ones who inspire you or the works of those you follow closely?**

There are many but consciously or unconsciously the great Ansel Adams comes to my mind before anyone else. I am also a huge admirer of the great works of Guy Tal.

**What are the challenges involved in shooting landscapes?**

There is no specific set of challenges only if one plans meticulously which involves knowing the place, getting familiar with the weather patterns and carrying all the necessary accessories while travelling.

**What made you fall in love with the landscapes of Oman?**

I can say with absolute certainty the iconic sand dunes with their different patterns, texture and structures.





*“... in the end it all boils down to the individual style of the photographer which makes it unique from the rest...”*

**As a landscape photographer what is your dream destination?**

I would have to say Namibia.

**What are those essential elements which go into making a stunning landscape frame?**

The weather conditions play a big role particularly at sunrise or sunset, when the light is soft and beautiful. Cloud formations too add dramatic effects to landscape photographs. But in the end it all boils down to the individual style of the photographer which makes it unique from rest. In short it is a combination of light, interesting subject, connecting composition and skilled editing.

**During a shoot, typically how much time do you spend in the field? How important is it to be patient while shooting landscapes?**

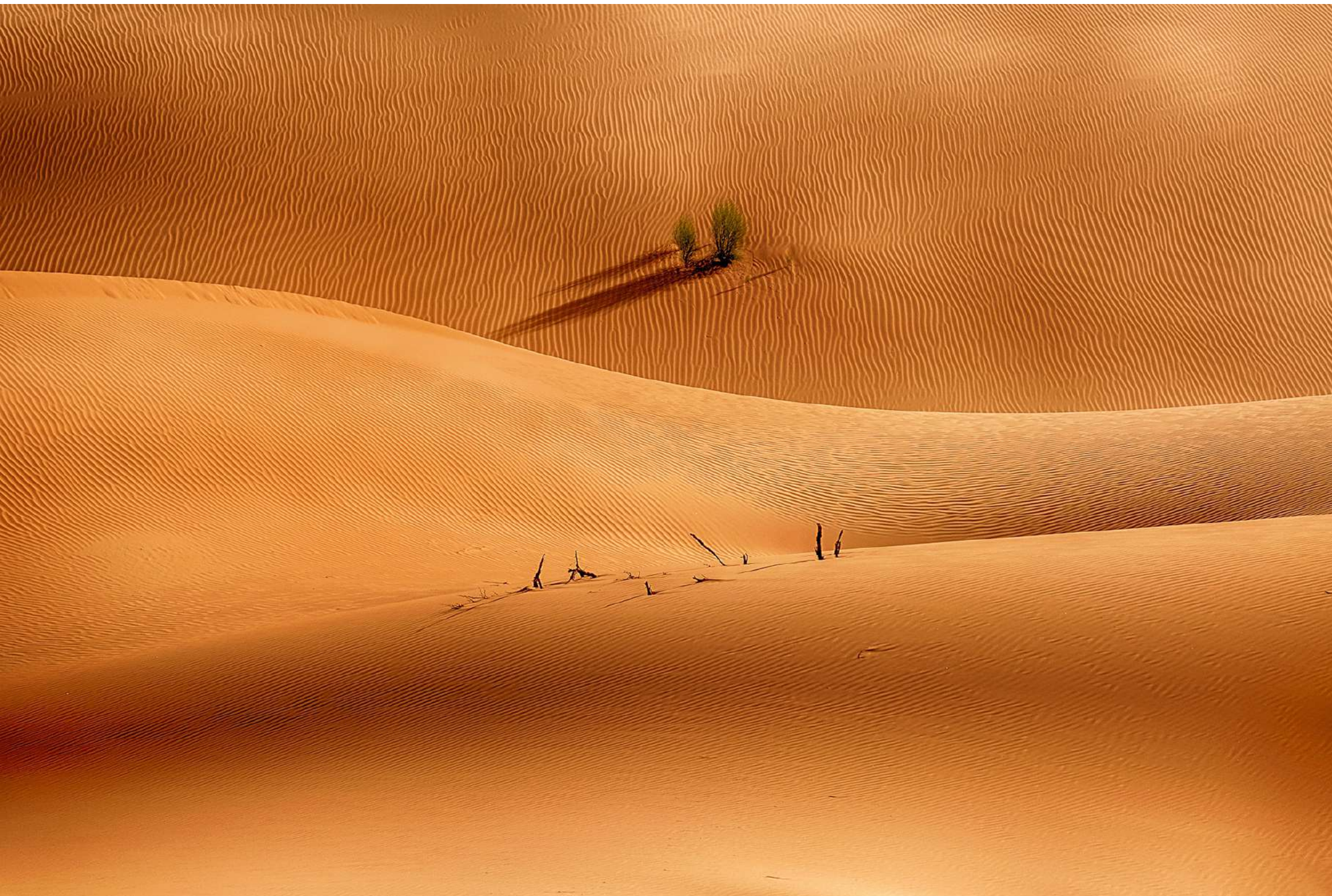
These days I am more focused on documenting art through my landscape photographs hence it would be difficult to ascertain a particular time frame to my projects. The thought process commences

long before I actually go looking for the desired frame. Often I spend days at the same location without getting the desired result or I am forced to settle with only a handful of decent images which certainly puts my patience to test.

**As a landscape photographer how important is it according to you to have a prior knowledge about the place, the terrain and the weather patterns leading up to the shoot?**

It is extremely important. One should have a thorough knowledge about the special restrictions, risk factors, the local support available and most importantly weather conditions. Also, a little knowledge of meteorology helps, although these days with so many applications all the necessary information is available on the internet. However, nature is unpredictable and the chance factor always remains hence it is always a good idea to have a backup plan.





**What are the basic composition techniques any aspiring landscape photographer should keep in mind while shooting?**

In the era of internet so many guidelines are available; even so many books are available in the market to refer. However, I believe it all depends on an individual's style of work but one of the most important aspects is to constantly keep on changing one's point of view.

**As a landscape photographer what are your visions regarding this genre of photography for the future?**

I think it goes for all genres of photography, keep learning and improving but most importantly have fun while taking pictures and be excited about your next project.























# Ruling the World of Fashion



*“I started my journey a decade ago with a SLR camera gifted by my grandfather.”*

Ace fashion photographer **Arghya Chatterjee** speaks exclusively to Indian Photo Arts and offers his valuable insight regarding the genre of fashion photography and his journey from a hobbyist to one of the most well known names in the world of fashion photography.

**Could you tell our readers when and how did your journey with the camera start?**

I started my journey a decade ago with a SLR camera gifted by my grandfather. As I started shooting with it I couldn't help but be amazed at how I had the tools to capture everything from nature to humans, the two subjects which attract me the most.

**How important is the role of retouching in a genre like fashion photography?**

Nowadays retouching is extremely important in fashion photography as it goes a long way in bringing out the actual

colour tone, light and the mood as per the requirement. A sound knowledge of various retouching techniques is crucial to compete at the international arena as well as contests.

**What are the elements you are most concerned about or pay the most attention to while setting up a shoot?**

Firstly, in every shoot we have to consider the theme for the shoot. According to the theme we have to choose our models, makeup, wardrobe and location. Setting up of the lights properly is the key to







produce a great photo. With the variety of light setups the mood is created to support the basic theme of any photoshoot. A successful workshop is a result of a good team work, sincere effort and relentless commitment.

**If you have to name one famous personality you would like to photograph one day who would that be?**

I would like to shoot Shri Amitabh Bachchan since he is the biggest icon in the Indian film industry.

**A lot of your photographs are shot in the outdoors, what are the most formidable challenges you face during an outdoor fashion shoot?**

The most formidable challenges in outdoor fashion photography involve the weather and the light, and the place of shooting which should be able to support the demands of that particular shoot.

**In your opinion what are the elements that make up for a good fashion photograph?**

A proper model for the theme is important



along with a good make-up artist and an experienced designer who can create the perfect mood. A good production depends on a mutual understanding and a healthy relationship within the entire team which is ready to accept any challenges in any given situation. Finally, perfect post processing makes a fashion photograph appreciable as a whole.

**Are there other photographers from the past or the present era whom you look up to for inspiration?**

My childhood hero was Sir Raghu Rai and he is still someone I look up to in the field of photography. Sir Prabuddha Dasgupta is my inspiration for fashion photography.

**In a genre like fashion photography, where you mostly shoot human subjects, how important it is according to you to share a relationship based on trust and confidence with the models?**

A model is one of the key factors through which a photographer can express his/her views and creativity. Expressions of the model and his/ her body language make the photograph perfect. So a healthy relation, unwavering trust, understanding and mutual respect are crucial in forging a bond which goes a long way in achieving



the desired goal.

**From envisioning a concept to executing it during your shoot, what are the steps that you follow?**

We all know that no plan is good enough unless it is implemented properly. As I said earlier apart from the key elements such as model, designer, make-up artist, the experience and perception of the mentor make the difference. In this genre light plays the key role which needs to be mastered before implementation.

**Which one has been your most memorable assignment till date?**

Shooting a jewellery campaign for a reputed brand was my first big commercial assignment. Till date I hold that experience close to my heart.

**What kind of impact you would like to bring upon in the genre of fashion photography in the future through your works?**

I would like to bring out human emotion through my works as it is very difficult thing to reproduce the exact emotions each time.

**What would be that one piece of advice you would like to give to aspiring fashion**



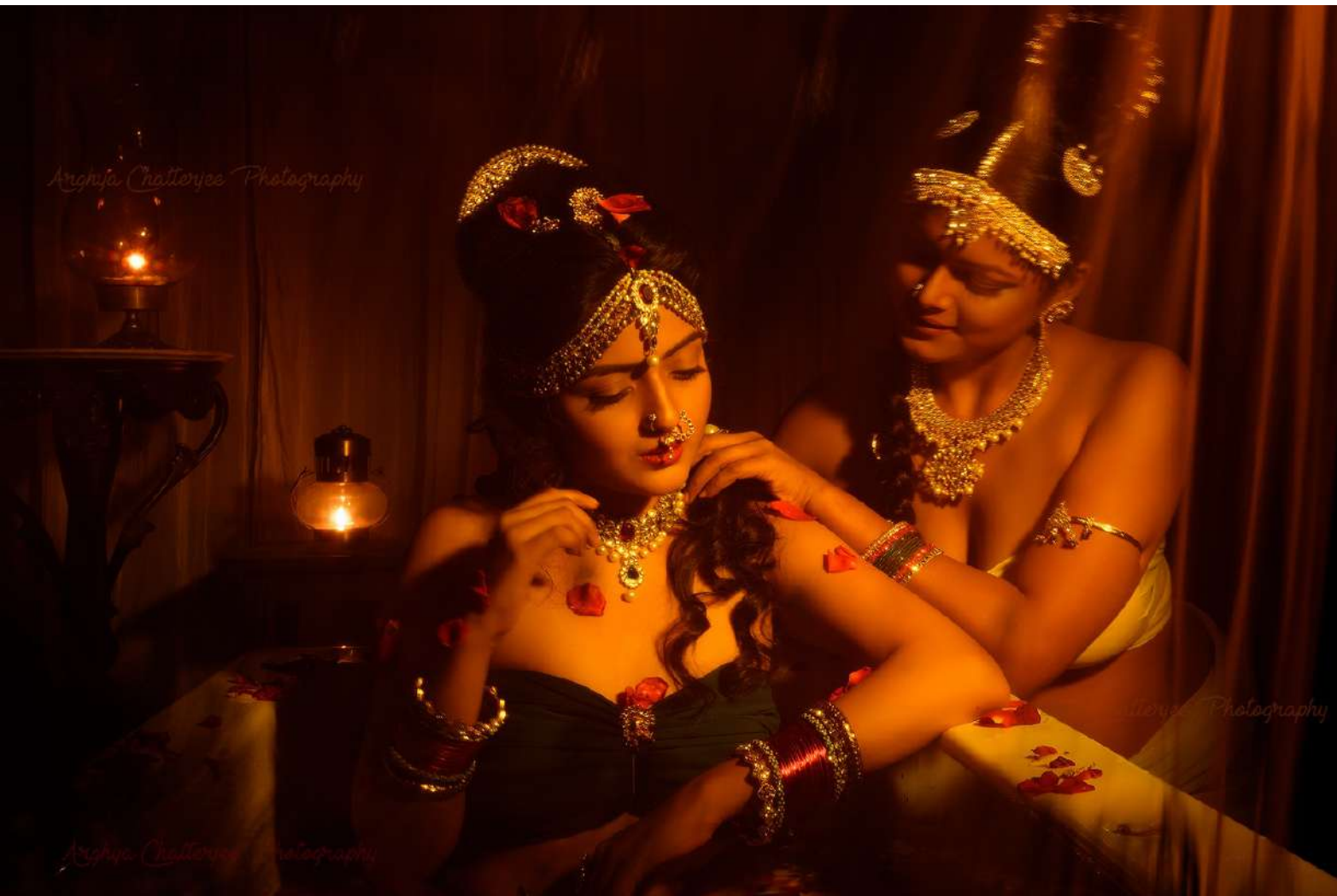


**photographer?**

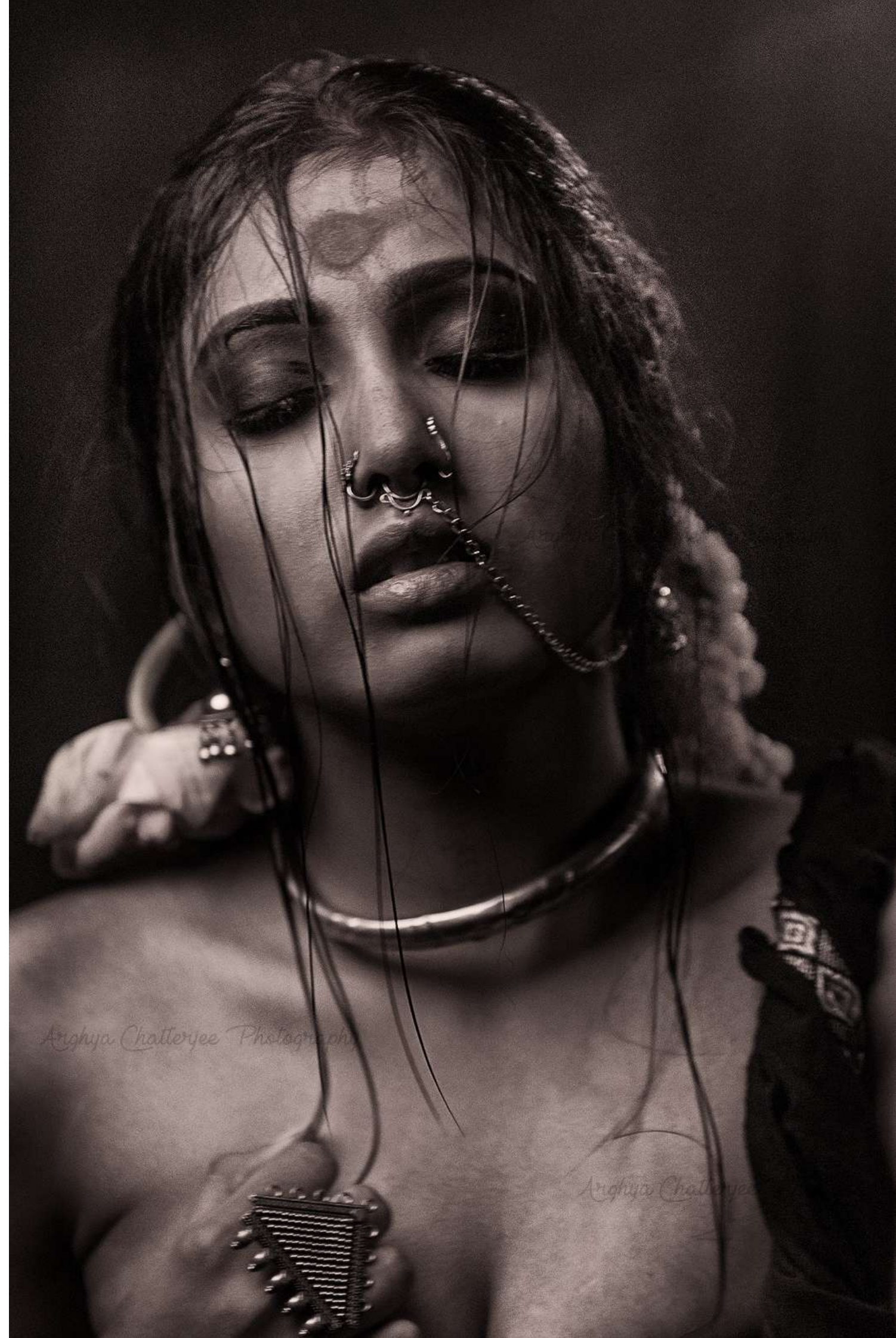
For any photographer courage, devotion and mastering your craft is the key factor. A good fashion photographer must acquire a thorough technical knowledge about camera, lights. Creating your unique style and evolving that during the course of time remains the key to success.

*“My childhood hero was Sir Raghu Rai and he is still someone I look up to in the field of photography. Sir Prabuddha Dasgupta is my inspiration for fashion photography”*























# Spotlight

 | Highlighting the best talents from the world of fashion photography in Kolkata

Aninda De started his professional career as a graphic designer and worked in different advertising agencies. Few years later he started his own graphic firm. He joined the Udaan School of Photography to learn the nuances of photography. During this period he met the eminent photographer from Kolkata Mr. Arghya Chatterjee and learnt each and every detail of photography and with Mr. Chatterjee's guidance his skills blossomed like never before. Since then he has been working as a professional photographer. As a professional he is mostly involved with fashion, product and wedding photography although he is extremely fond of travel photography. He has his own team dedicated towards wedding photography and his own work was recently displayed at Kolkata International Photography Festival. He has received several appreciations from National Geographic editors in the Your Shot community of National Geographic website.









# |Spotlight



Rudra Chaudhuri has always wanted to capture the perfect shot. However, it was not until, 2014, that he started to pursue photography as a hobby. At first he began with nature photography – taking pictures of birds and landscapes. He also tried his hand at street photography – capturing some rare shots of his beloved city – Kolkata. He learnt the subtle nuances of photography on his own, reading all that he could get his hands on and attending different workshops on lighting and photography. The hobby soon became a passion when he turned to fashion photography and never looked back. Rudra has won many accolades from World Photographic Forum, Camarena, Portraits India, World in Black and White, and many more. Rudra’s work was displayed at Kolkata International Photography Festival and he continues to make strides every day in his search for that perfect moment and perfect shot!



© rudra chaudhuri







# |Spotlight



Aniruddha Das is an Inspector of Kolkata Police by profession and a passionate photo artist by heart. He completed the basic and the advance photography courses before completing specialized courses in "Model and Fashion Photography" under the tutelage of renowned photographer Mr. Arghya Chatterjee. He believes and states that "A Photographer is an artist who expresses his creativity and emotion through his photographs." His works have been published in various newspapers such as The Telegraph, Ei Samay, Ei Bela among others. The diversity of the range explored through his photography and the various facts of life captured with the superlative skill and empathy have won him recognition and ovation of the discerning enthusiasts who have had the privilege of admiring his various exhibitions at prominent venues like the ICCR, Gaganendra Pradarshanshala and Birla Academy. Every year his photographs have been exhibited and awarded at various exhibitions and contests. He continues to search "new life" and "journey towards life" through his photographs.









# |Spotlight



Arkadeep Kanrar was born in a small town in West Bengal, in 1988. At the age of 26 he moved to Bangalore to find a job in the hotel industry. However he was quick to realize it was not his cup of tea and he returned to his hometown with the agenda of starting his own business. At that juncture the tragic event of his father's demise threatened to tear his world apart and for a brief period he lost all hopes. There were a few individuals who stood by him during those difficult times and gave him the strength and support to overcome his grief. He has always been fond of photography and cameras. Since his childhood days he was particularly drawn towards photography and during his travels with his parents while growing up he would always carry his camera with him and take plenty of photographs. This passion and love for the craft prompted him to take up photography as his profession. He became interested in the

genre of fashion photography in 2015 and started learning more and more about this genre. He decided to shift to Kolkata and pursue his career as a fashion photographer. However things didn't go quite as planned! To him fashion photography felt totally out of reach. However instead of losing hope he decided to build up his own wedding photography team which eventually gave birth to "THE BONDING FRAME". For him wedding photography is like a key to unlock his dream of becoming a fashion photographer. He feels he is on his path to achieve his goal.















# Kolkata Cloud Chasers:

The story of a group of eight fearless individuals in the city of Kolkata who prefer to be in the eye of the storm instead of seeking refuge from it.



*Photograph by Debarshi Duttagupta*





Monsoon evokes myriad emotion among us with its arrival. For most of us, monsoon ushers in a season of plenty, the swelling waters in the rivers, streams and lakes symbolic of that. For the huge agricultural community the thundering clouds and the torrential downpour are nothing short of gifts straight from the heavens. For others monsoon brings about the much needed relief from the hot and sweltering heat of the summer. The cool breeze which precedes the murmur of the clouds and the flashes of lightning brings more than momentary relief from the scorching heat; it brings about a sense of calm and soothes us. And then there are some, for them the dark clouds cumulating in the horizon and the odd flash of lightning before the downpour is a sight which transcends all of the aforementioned emotions, for these sights and sounds stoke their passion, a unique feeling which resonates with a very few in the world and even fewer in the city of Kolkata – the incredibly unique passion for chasing clouds. The notifications, even warnings issued by the India Meteorological Department (IMD) are nothing less than music to these ears. While most of us admire the might of monsoon, the symphony of raindrops pattering on the world around us from the safe confines of our homes these individuals literally lust for being there in the eye of the storm and become a part of this spectacle which plays out in nature's very own theatre. They are the Kolkata

Cloud Chasers, a group of eight passionate individuals belonging to different walks of life, all united by their common passion of chasing storm systems and cloud formations.

The inception of Kolkata Cloud Chasers (KCC) dates back to 2010, when through a series of events and their shared love for photography and storms and clouds brought these individuals together in their quest of chasing storms and cyclonic formations. What readily set them apart was their exclusiveness; they were the first of their kind in the city of Kolkata and possibly in the entire country. Their initial liaisons were restricted to various online photography forums and groups and the group was yet to be named. What started out then as weekend photography outings involving some of the members – Debarshi Duttagupta, Chirasree Chakraborty, Diganta Gogoi, Krishnendu Chakraborty, Abhishek Saigal, Joyjeet Mukherjee, Suman Kumar Ghosh and Indranil Kar gradually metamorphosed into something far more serious involving clouds and storms as the members in due course of time became cognizant of their shared love affair for the meteorological activities. While all of them were already drawn to various genres of photography there was one binding thread which brought them together, which was their relentless pursuit to photograph any frame involving cloud formations or lightning. In fact their acquaintance can be attributed to the photography group Kolkata

Photographers Club through which they came to know each other in 2006, much before they started venturing out on overcast days eagerly anticipating a cyclonic formation since 2010 a tradition which is still very much alive among the members and has steadily garnered widespread attention over the years. It was in 2014 the members decided to christen themselves as – Kolkata Cloud Chasers, a title which befits them to near perfection. However apart from their shared love interest, there were a few other incentives and motivations for the members which would set them loose on crazy cyclone hunts, even at times by sacrificing their jobs. The members feel strongly and passionately about the most pertinent problem the planet is facing today – the perils of climate change and global warming which often leads to erratic and disruptive weather conditions including cyclones and storms. With their expertise and knowledge of meteorology and understanding of the releases by various weather forecasting agencies, the group started out with notifying people and friends over the social media regarding a developing cyclonic formation and what precaution should be taken along with generating a greater awareness regarding climate change and global warming and how it is affecting the world at large. The overwhelming response they received soon prompted them to expand to other avenues of social media where they regularly post updates on the weather patterns backed

by their own photographic documents, their field reports, screenshots of radar images and various other data available from a number of weather agencies. Based in Kolkata, quiet understandably the group has developed a particular expertise on nor'westers or "kalbaishakhi" as they are known as in Bengal. The nor'westers is a spell of torrential downpour coupled with thunder storm which sweeps across the landscape of West Bengal and neighbouring Bangladesh beginning from the month of March till the arrival of monsoon. It would be incredibly difficult to find a single Bengali on either side of the border who is not familiar with this phenomenon. In fact during the intense hot summer months when the humid days sap out the last ounce of energy from the bodies the earnest prayer for nor'westers resonates with every poor soul. When it finally arrives it brings about a sense of relief and happiness, but for the Kolkata Cloud Chasers these are opportunities to attend to their insatiable lust for weather formations and they set about chasing these thunder storms during these months more often than ever. But they are not among the ones with prayer on their lips and hopes in their hearts waiting for a nor'wester to unleash its wrath on Kolkata's skyline. In fact they meticulously track it from the very beginning, when it appears as a tiny blue dot over the Chhota Nagpur Plateau on the radar. They track its every movement as the tiny blue dot rapidly grows in



*Photograph by Krishnendu Chakraborty*





proportion. These storms grow at a rapid pace, what appeared as an inconspicuous dot on the radar over Jharkhand, within a span of few hours unleashes itself on the streets of Kolkata with a formidable entourage of squalls of over 100 kmph, blinding rain, streaks of lightning and thundering clouds. The members of the group in the past, had often found themselves in the middle of this mayhem and all of them readily admit – it is a scary ordeal. Often in the past in their overzealousness to pursue their passion they ventured to close and witnessed the rampage unleashed by one of nature's most potent forces from close quarters. On few occasions a bolt of lightning struck within a few meters of them, while on other occasion the fierce winds threatened to blow them away as they saw debris ranging from metal plates to bamboo poles whizzing past them. However on hindsight they feel it was dangerous and risky on their parts to have ventured so close to the eye of the storm and having learnt from their previous near fatal experiences the group now exerts a certain degree of caution, in other words there is a method to their madness these days. The group often corresponds with some of the celebrated lightning photographers across the globe and these days when they are out in the field chasing a fast moving nor'wester or a gradually developing monsoon cyclone they exercise these cautions and implements the valuable advices they have received from some of

the most celebrated names in this particular field. The members of the group strongly feel chasing a storm or a cyclone and tracking its every movement in order to be present at the right place at the right time is not a matter of luck, in fact it all boils down to thorough research a sound knowledge of weather patterns and an advanced technology at hand. They refer to radar images available on the website of IMD and other agencies in order to track the progress of any formation. With the advancement in technology and advanced satellites in the orbit these images are updated more frequently than ever and give them a cleared and precise idea regarding the progress of any storm or cyclonic formation. These developments and advancements in technology have these days, significantly improved their chances of catching a storm and they have to depend a lot less on guesses even though they were educated ones. With their fast growing reputation and their increasing commitments to their passion, the team has upgraded their equipment and infrastructure as well. They have acquired modern communication devices which work fine even in the face of severe weather conditions, modern cameras blessed with the advanced technology to produce beautiful images even in low light conditions, better applications and software to track the progress of any storm and most importantly the two powerful and customised SUVs which ferry the team

braving violent storms and cyclones. These chases often take them to the outskirts of Kolkata and deep into rural Bengal. For the team members while it is important to track and successfully chase down a storm, the pursuit is no less romantic. The changing sceneries as they drive towards the eye of the storm, the numerous interactions which they have had with people on the way, the simple pleasures of life such as gorging on a sumptuous meal to wash away the disappointment of the occasional failure, everything in the bigger scheme of things is a learning and cherish able experience for all of them. Being in constant touch with one of nature's most potent subjects allows them to stay rooted, humble and escape to their own happy and peaceful domains in the midst of this madding everyday life. The incredible work produced by this fantastic bunch of individuals can and certainly will go a long way in generating the much needed awareness regarding climate change and weather patterns in general. The effects of which can be far reaching, especially to those in rural and impoverished settings who often are at a greater mercy of nature than most city dwellers. The passion, the energy, the commitment, the relentlessness of this group is contagious and one can't help feel it indeed would have been a better world to live in if such passion towards a greater cause resonated with more and more individuals. In the meanwhile the Kolkata Cloud Chasers will be eagerly

glued to their radios and radars, following the inception and progress of the next storm, only to head out fearlessly in their quest to document it when it sweeps across Bengal's landscape. For some they will always be these unique human beings who literally throw all caution to the wind in some mad quest while for most they will be this inspirational team which embraced a mighty force of nature in an act where their love for their passion left no room for fear or self doubt.

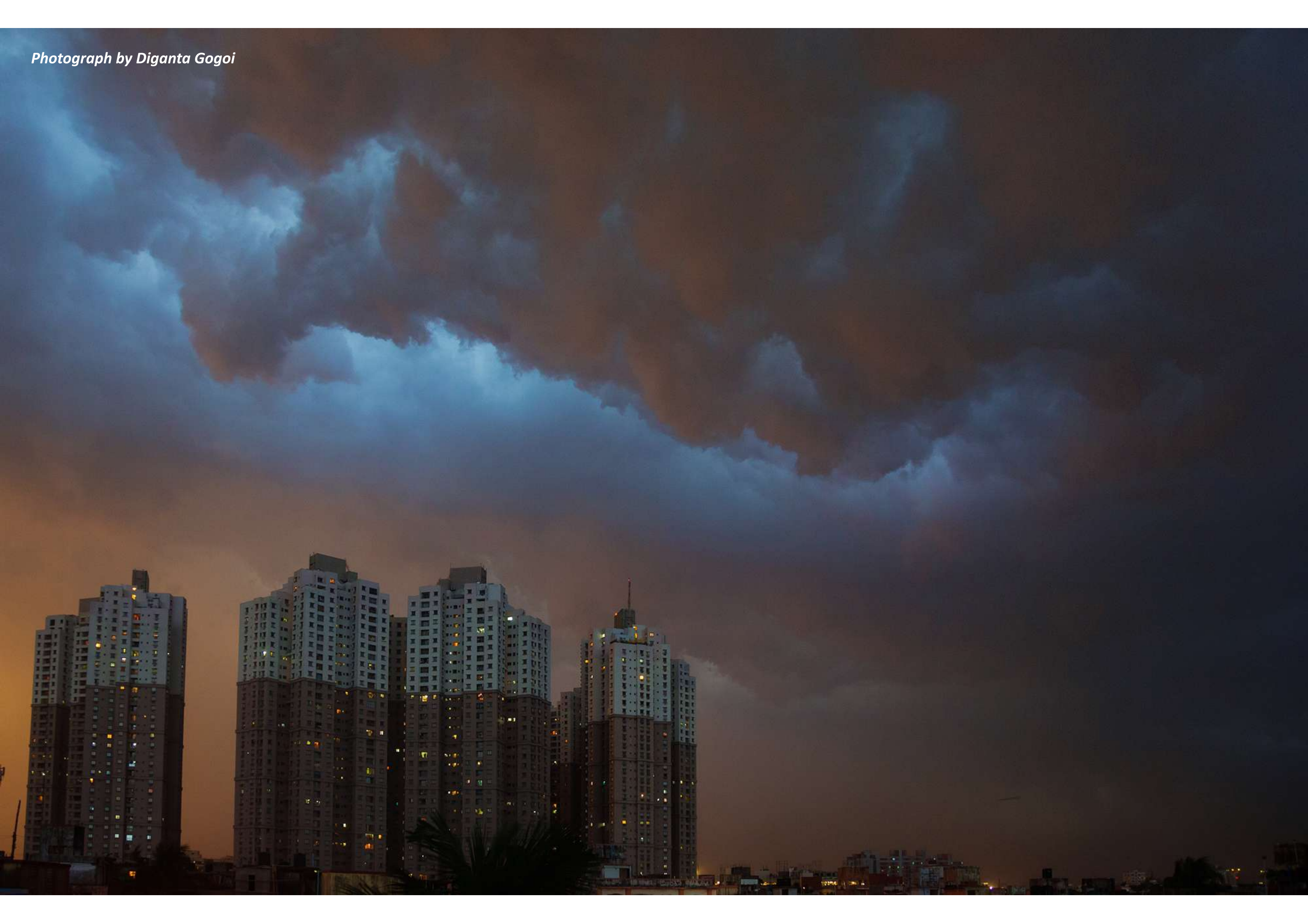


*Photograph by Chirasree Chakraborty*





*Photograph by Diganta Gogoi*





*Photograph by Indranil Kar*





*Photograph by Joyjeet Mukherjee*





*Photograph by Suman Kumar Ghosh*





# Team KCC |



**Debarshi Duttagupta** is a former practicing advocate in the Kolkata High Court. He is currently working in the pharmaceutical industry. When he is not chasing clouds he keeps himself busy by shooting rivers.



**Chirasree Chakraborty** is into her family business of printing. An avid traveller and birder she likes to photograph birds when she is not chasing storms.



**Abhishek Saigal** is involved in his family business of manufacturing of construction materials. Apart from being a storm chaser he makes time for industrial/commercial and event photography.



**Indranil Kar** runs his own adventure trekking company. He is a high altitude mountain rescuer and is in love with the mountains.



**Krishnendu Chakraborty** is an engineer by profession and works with some of the major corporate organisations. Apart from being an integral member of Kolkata Cloud Chasers he is an ace street and travel photographer.



**Joyjeet Mukherjee** is a debt recover consultant by profession. He is yet another avid traveller and birder of this group.



**Diganta Gogoi** is a professional photographer and a fearless stormchaser. As a professional photographer he is mainly involved in event and fashion photography.



**Suman Kumar Ghosh** is an engineer by profession. He loves to trek in the Himalayas and is extremely fond of shooting landscapes when he is not chasing storms.



# Those who keep us Clean

**Kashish Bharti** documents the extreme hardships endured by the ragpickers as they grind it out braving the fierce elements of nature to eke out a meagre living while the society still continues to ostracize them.





India, a rapidly growing economic force which chugs along with its insanely huge workforce towards development also generates its fair share of waste on a daily basis along the way. Being the second largest populated country in the world it goes without saying the waste which the country produces is enormous in proportion, very much in accordance with the booming population. However surprisingly the country is blessed with a robust and rather effective recycling machinery which is incredibly efficient in recovering the recyclable waste produced on a daily basis. At the heart of this system which quietly performs in the background are the ragpickers of India. The ragpickers colloquially referred to as “kabadiwals” are part of the country’s huge informal sector and they are the wheels which have kept this machine rolling. They clean up our cities, the alleys, the dumping grounds, they segregate the recyclable wastes and often toil harder than anyone else under inhuman conditions for meagre returns. The society as a whole has never really acknowledged their presence let alone the crucial services they render. Apart from the challenges their profession poses in front of them which few of us would even dare to undertake, this hardworking community battle a multitude of problems on a daily basis. These problems range from poverty, lack of hygienic facilities, poor living conditions, social discrimination to the scary prospect of no real change in the foreseeable future. The



meagre income which they can make out of collecting recyclable waste depends on the rate of the items they can recover, for instance the rate for a plastic bottle is different from that of a plastic utensil or glass items and tetra packs. Once collected the ragpickers sell these items at the

designated rates to those organisations that would recycle these items into brand new products. However the ragpickers being part of this informal sector often receive no assurance or benefits from the government or the concerned authorities in terms of transparency in these dealings.

As a result of which they are often at the behest of middlemen or dealers who exploit their helplessness. Further complicating their problems these days various municipal bodies across the country have devised their own methods and employed their own workforces to





them more so in face of the apathy they have faced from the civil society. This photo album is an ode to these hardworking people, highlighting the perils of their job, the uncertain nature of it, the inhuman conditions in which these people have to toil hard everyday braving the fierce elements of nature for meagre returns which don't even guarantee them the basic facilities each and everyone in this country is entitled to. The time is ripe, we as a nation, as a society wake up from our slumbers and embrace these human beings for the services they provide to us, for these are the people who get our dirty job done so that our hands stay clean.

collect waste from the neighbourhoods across cities. In the face of such trying circumstances these human beings even after toiling hard under extreme weather conditions while sinking deep in huge piles of garbage have to do with a meagre return of 200-300 rupees per day. The burden of a job which exposes them to

unimaginable filth and the almost non-existent returns for their toils ensure there is no respite for these people. Most of the ragpickers are destitute migrants, from the poorest strata of the society, who due to lack of any other opportunity are forced to leave their homes and float along the fringes of our cities while eking out a

grim living by venturing into the mountains of trash in the dumping grounds of our cities. In slightly heartening news for these people various NGOs and social organisations are responding to their perils and have come up with a number of welfare schemes for these people which certainly augur well for a better future for

















## About the Photographer

Kashish Bharti is a photographer, traveller and blogger and he has been active in all of these three roles for the past two years. He is based in Delhi and loves to document the different issues and sights of Delhi. He is primarily into street photography and he loves to document the reality of the world around him, be it harsh, with his camera. He believes as a photographer he has the ability and is blessed with the opportunity to freeze time in his frames. This ability which comes his way by dint of being a photographer drew him to this field and this is what he likes the most about being a photographer.