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PHOTO ARTS

January 2019



Camargue's White Fleet

France's white horses and very own cowboys

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Mumbai's
own Potter's
Wheel **p140**

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and their
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A JOURNEY ACROSS SPITI VALLEY through the lenses of ADITYA PAUL
PUSHKAR ANIMAL FAIR through the lenses of SAURABH SIROHIYA

Dear Readers

In this issue we bring to you stories from the iconic Camargue region of France. The region best known for its signature white horses is also a prominent biodiversity hotspot, in fact a large section of the Camargue has been designated as a UNESCO biosphere reserve. The white Camargue horses are semi-feral, they are owned by the Camargue locals although they still roam about freely in the marshy terrain of the Camargue. The Camargue is also home to France's very own cowboys, the "gardians" as they are locally known as. The gardians along with their white horses are at the heart of the busy animal husbandry industry in the Camargue which centers around another iconic species, the Camargue bull. Find out much more about this region and the myriad aspects of it in this issue. The issue also contains stories of hardworking people from different corners of the world. From the hardworking, skilled potters of Kumbharwada to the elderly fishermen along the Li River in Yangshuo County who are the last remaining exponents of the ancient method of cormorant fishing, this issue celebrates their hard work and dedication and also explores what lies in store for them in the future. We have taken a look into the incredibly rich biodiversity that lies hidden in the depths of our seas and oceans and have travelled along the winding roads of Himachal Pradesh leading up to Spiti Valley to celebrate the remarkable beauty of the place. Find out all these and much more in this January 2019 issue of Indian Photo Arts.

Regards

Rahul Bera (Editor of Photography & Design)

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 Indian Photo ARTS

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*cover page photograph by
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Reader's Section

Featuring the best entries by our readers



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Ascetics and devotees gathered around the banks of the Ganges during the recently concluded Ardh Kumbh Mela in Prayagraj (Allahabad) for the first “Shahi Snan” or the first dip in the holy waters of the Ganges to absolve themselves of all their previous sins.

Photograph by Pranay Mishra





Kirkjufell, or “Church Mountain”, is a distinctly shaped peak found on the north shore of Iceland’s Snæfellsnes Peninsula. It is claimed to be the most photographed mountain in the country due to its dramatic formation and isolated existence. This extraordinary frame with the Kirkjufellsfoss or “Church Mountain Falls” in the foreground attracts millions and was one of the filming locations for the “Game of Thrones”.

Photograph by Priyanka Prabhugate





Photograph by Abhisek De

The Sagar Island in the Ganges delta along the Bay of Bengal plays host to thousands of pilgrims and ascetics each year from all over West Bengal and the country for the annual Gangasagar Mela. Elaborate arrangements are made on part of the concerned authorities. This young pilgrim belonging to a family of priests explores these blue plastic containers meant for the purpose of supplying fresh drinking water.

The Ardh Kumbh Mela of 2019 was held at Triveni Sangam, the confluence of three sacred rivers- the Ganges, the Yamuna and the mythical Saraswati in Prayagraj (Allahabad) in Uttar Pradesh. The Ardh Kumbh Mela of 2019 saw millions of devotees, ascetics, pilgrims and tourists visiting this holy confluence. An ascetic offers his blessings to the crowd gathered around these holy waters.



Photograph by Sachin Chauhan



Varanasi is believed to be one of the oldest continuously inhabited city in the world and the spiritual edifice of Hindu religion. Time seems to have frozen still in this holy city along the bank of the Ganges. The city is home to many such ascetics or “sadhus”, reminiscent of the rich spiritual lineage of the city.



Photograph by Jaideep Thakur

Ranganathittu Bird Sanctuary in the state of Karnataka in India is one of the most famous birding locations in the country with an impressive array of bird species. A spot-billed pelican feeds her younger one although the chick is quite grown up and will soon venture out on its own. These birds prefer shallow freshwater swamps and Ranganathittu provides them with the ideal home.



Photograph by Alvis Lazarus



Camargue's White Fleet

by Rajani Ramanathan

Semi feral horses with their signature white coats and France's very own cowboys- the "gardians" have become synonymous with the Camargue, one of the most biologically diverse regions in the whole of Europe.

A herd of semi-feral Camargue horses on a marshy terrain which is characterisitic of the Camargue. Over the years the Camargue has become synonymous with these iconic white horses.

The Camargue horses are known for their iconic white mane and whitish fur. They are born with darker coats in shades of brown or black, as they mature they lose their darker coats and assume their signature whitish appearance.



The two arms of the Rhone River, the Petit Rhone and the more formidable Grand Rhone join forces with the Mediterranean Sea to carve one of the most iconic natural regions and also western Europe's largest river delta system- the Camargue in France. Widely acknowledged by many as France's very own Wild West the Camargue is a vast stretch of plain land interspersed with clear lakes and lagoons, marshy pastures blanketed by thick reed like vegetation and vast swathes of cultivable land. The region's marshes are treasure troves of a wide spectrum of flora and fauna with the unmistakable bright pink presence of hordes of flamingos who during the spring months are engaged in a relentless display of courtship when they unabashedly flaunt their bright plumage gracefully poised in a few inches of shallow water. These shallow expanses of waters particularly during Spring and Autumn take centre stage with thousands of migratory bird species and waterfowls turning them into their temporary retreat for the purposes of breeding and raising their young ones. Such huge avian traffic to these marshy lands has led to a large section of this region being designated as a UNESCO biosphere reserve. While the whole of Camargue and the nation pride over the biodiversity at display in this magnificent natural setting, the Camargue is dear to the French for another reason, one of a very different nature. The Camargue offers the unique opportunity to boast over the

proposition that there are cowboys in France, a tradition which many might think was monopolised by states like Texas, Utah, Colorado or Montana in the United States of America. The horses in question are the semi feral Camargue horses, distinguished by their signature white mane and whitish hair coat which assiduously conceals a darkish grey skin rendering them with an almost whitish appearance. In spite of its rich biodiversity no other creature defines the Camargue better than these ancient indigenous breed of horses. In fact in their unique semi wild disposition these horses' way of life is deeply intertwined with yet another iconic creature from this region- the Camargue bulls. The Camargue horses are generally reared to round up the herds of bulls which form the bulwark of the animal husbandry occupation in this region.

Widely regarded as one of the more ancient breeds of horses the Camargue horse is smaller in dimensions compared to most other horse breeds and is blessed with a strong and stocky frame, perfectly suited for this terrain. A Camargue foal is usually dark brown or black in colour, however as they mature they lose the darker shades of their coats and gradually attain a whitish appearance by the age of four or five years. These sturdy animals are perfectly built for this habitat, the strong and long legs with hard as nails hooves are perfectly suited for this rugged and marshy terrain and an ability to withstand hot summers and bone chilling winter months allows

them to lead their preferred semi feral way of life without compelling them to surrender to the comforts of a stable or human upkeep. Quite remarkably most of the horses are owned by the people living in this region, yet they are never looked after, they prefer to stay in the outdoors even when it is snowing and forage on their own. These tough creatures since ancient times have been hugely favoured by humans, among whom some rather illustrious names feature prominently. It is said Napoleon himself found these horses perfectly suited to carry forward

It is said Napoleon himself found these horses perfectly suited to carry forward his military ambitions. Historic documents chronicle these horses taking part in a number of prominent skirmishes...

his military ambitions. Historic documents chronicle these horses taking part and playing a crucial role in a number of prominent skirmishes during the mediaeval times across Europe. In this vast almost barren plain land somewhat isolated from other parts of France by the Rhone delta system, cattle rearing and farming form the backbone of this region's economy. The horses are in prime demand for rounding up herds of cattle when the ranchers or France's very own "cowboys" take them out for grazing. The horses cater to the needs of the farmers and the cattle herders who own the cultivable lands in this region which fall outside the designated protected wetlands. In this bizarre setting where human settlements and the natural world with its plethora of

species have co-existed peacefully for ages the delicate balance of nature hinges on mutual respect. The residents of the Camargue realise the importance of safeguarding the biodiversity and the ecological balance of this region with a view of safeguarding their own future and livelihoods. As a result of which the local settlements along with the concerned authorities take it upon themselves to ensure no large scale commercial activity in terms of infrastructural projects such as building of roads or bridges or irrigational projects or any ambitious

tourism projects are not carried out or planned on the plains of the Camargue. However many are of the opinion such a truce is temporal at the best and despite some of the measures put into place mindful of the needs of all the parties concerned, continue to remain a fragile one. Many framers and cattle herders keeping in tune with the steadily increasing tourist presence in the region have decided to convert their old ranches into guest houses or settlements where they offer horse riding lessons and the opportunities to explore the region on horseback. Such initiatives taken by the local farmers have resulted in an increased interest in the Camargue among the global crowd. This also offers the local people with a number of fresh opportunities to further boost their

economy which is largely dictated by agricultural and animal husbandry related activities.

However the old settlers in this region are of the opinion such preventive measures in terms of regulating the infrastructural and commercial activities in fact have little

or negligible potential when it boils down to safeguarding the fragile ecological balance of this region. Such views certainly hold merit particularly since these vast open lands are hubs of large scale human activities in the form of growing rice or raising cattle which are in direct conflict

with the conservational interests of this region. In fact some old-time farmers believe that the best way to protect the nature of these wetlands is not through the implementations of certain rules and guidelines but can be achieved by the way of promoting the local culture and way of

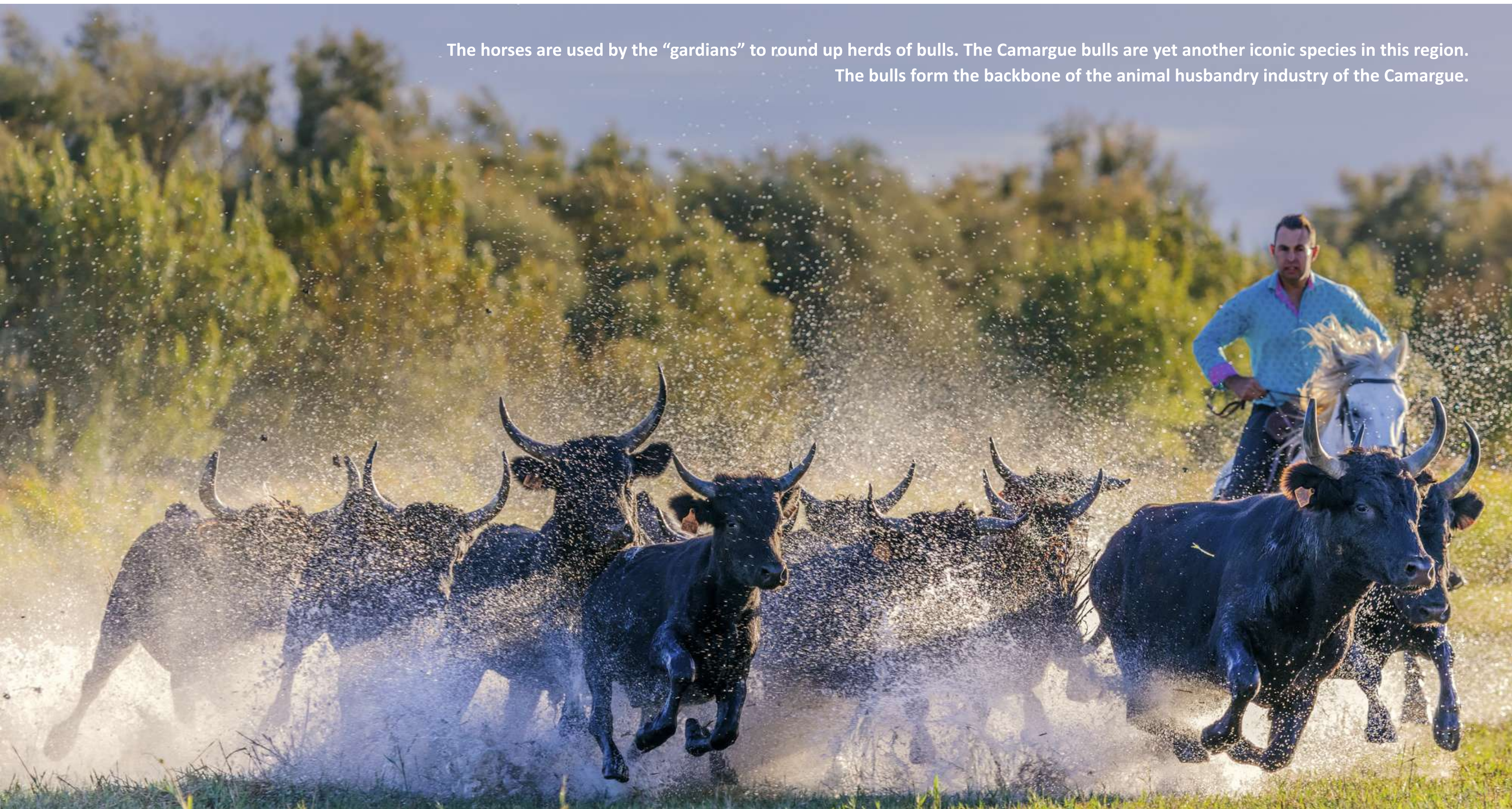
life of the Camargue. This is where the fate of the Camargue as a biodiversity hotspot and the fate of France's cowboys and their famed white horses become intertwined.

In fact most of the cowboys or "gardians" as they are locally known harbour such



A Camargue horse gallops along the waters of the Mediterranean Sea.

The horses are used by the “gardians” to round up herds of bulls. The Camargue bulls are yet another iconic species in this region. The bulls form the backbone of the animal husbandry industry of the Camargue.



sentiments. The existing bond between the gardians and their horses can be traced back to the ancient time when the first settlers arrived in this region. The breed has existed in the area since prehistoric times and much of life in the Camargue

including the leisurely activities are centred on these beautiful animals. Its origins are shrouded in mystery. Although the exact origins of this breed has faded with time it is believed these horses owe their origin to the now extinct Solutre horse, a pre

historic horse whose fossilised remains and bones can be found in the southeast of France. These sturdy animals feature prominently in every aspect of life in the Camargue. On a regular work day the gardians hop on to them and keep a close

eye on their herds of cattle or make a dash at any straying cattle before rounding them up to the safety of the shelter. Even on a lazy weekend the Camargue turns to its favourite horses for various leisurely and entertainment activities. One such event



The topography of the Camargue is dotted with numerous such marshes. These sturdy horses are perfectly built for this rugged terrain and their rock hard hooves and sturdy legs allow them to trot on these grounds with rather ease.

is a “ferrada”. In olden times a ferrada was associated with the branding of the bulls with red hot iron pieces carved into certain numbers, which the bulls would wear on their skins as permanent marks for identification all their lives. However with changing times this tradition took a backseat and faded into oblivion only to be replaced by more humane methods of branding the cattle. In today’s Camargue ferrada is a rather friendly sport which is devoid of any bloodshed or painful occurrences. The gardians chase the younger bulls with an attempt to trip them off with a long, blunt stick. The bulls in the Camargue are also reared for such sporting activities and are in prime demand during these events. Bull fighting and bull racing also feature prominently in the Camargue popular culture. The exact origins of these events can be hard to trace although it is quite understandable that in a culture where these animals feature so prominently most activities would involve the active participation of the animals. The gardians, just like their horses are almost always impeccable in their appearances. Although it is on the occasion of the annual Fête des Gardians or the Festival of the Gardians they put their best foot forward. This is a festival which in more ways than one celebrates the ancient history and tradition of this region. The gardians prime their best horses, don the finest pieces of clothing they possess and with their wives or girlfriends also dressed in their traditional wears riding behind

them make their way to the town of Arles. The highlight of this festival is the competition between the gardians to determine who is the fastest and the most accurate among them in rounding up the bulls and coercing them to fresher pastures.

On this particular occasion the town of Arles comes to life with the locals gathered around the arena which plays host to the events, filling the air with a sense of joy and celebration. The festival is presided over by the Reine d’Arles (Queen of Arles), a token position which is usually graced by a young lady in possession of unmatched beauty and a detailed knowledge about the rich cultural history and tradition of the region. Although the Queen of Arles is chosen during a different ceremony her presence is much sought after in various cultural events in the town, the Festival of the Gardians being one such occasion. Local accounts suggest this festival and the competition are more than 500 years old when it originated as a much needed source of entertainment. Since then this festival has firmly etched itself in the annals of the Camargue.

The Camargue in its vast expanses of marshy lands and rice fields preserves many such traditions, most of which have remained confined to this region through centuries. The razeteurs or the Camargue bullfighters bear a testimony to this claim. This is a part of the many family traditions which have stayed alive albeit in obscurity in this region. The rest of the world is not particularly enlightened in the courageous

A herd makes its way through the woods. Though the horses are owned by the locals, these animals still lead a semi-feral way of life and roam around freely in the region withstanding the hot summers and the bone chilling winters.





sagas of the brave bullfighters from the Camargue. And it is in these traditions the beating heart of the Camargue lies, which many are of the opinion holds the key to the successful conservation of the rich biodiversity and the natural beauty of this

region in spite of the human interference. In fact the Camargue is no stranger to human intervention. The current state of affairs at the Camargue cannot be entirely accredited to natural phenomenon. More than a century ago human efforts to

channelize the water of the Rhone into its two main branches and the attempts made at preventing the inflow of the saline sea water into the vast agricultural fields contributed significantly in shaping the topography of this region. Needless to say

such measures went a significant way in providing precious irrigation water from the branches of the Rhone to the rice fields in the Camargue and turning the Camargue into one of the few rice producing regions in the northern part of Europe. In fact the

The gardians round up their horses across the marshy terrain of the Camargue. The gardians own these horses and these magnificent animals are at the heart of most of the activities in the Camargue.



A herd of semi-feral Camargue horses splash their way across the waves of the Mediterranean Sea. The semi-feral way of life allows these horses to roam about freely in the Camargue.



sights, each of which deserves a special mention and looking after. The beautiful white Camargue horses which have trotted over these landscapes for centuries now, the gardians who proudly hold their reins, the Camargue bulls known for their shiny black coats, the thousands of flamingos who paint these shallow waters pink, all form an integral part of this incredibly beautiful tapestry of nature. Different from one another in more ways than one can imagine, all of them have found ways to co-exist in a peaceful manner which has wrought a rich mosaic of characters for the Camargue. The trotting horses are symbolic of how the Camargue's traditions have galloped through ages and still manage to find relevance in a society which like so many others has been touched upon by the winds of change. Yet the beautiful sight of these white creatures galloping through shallow marshes, spraying millions of water droplets with every kick of their rock hard hooves has remained as one of the most iconic sights from this beautiful region, one which promises to enthrall millions for many more years to come.

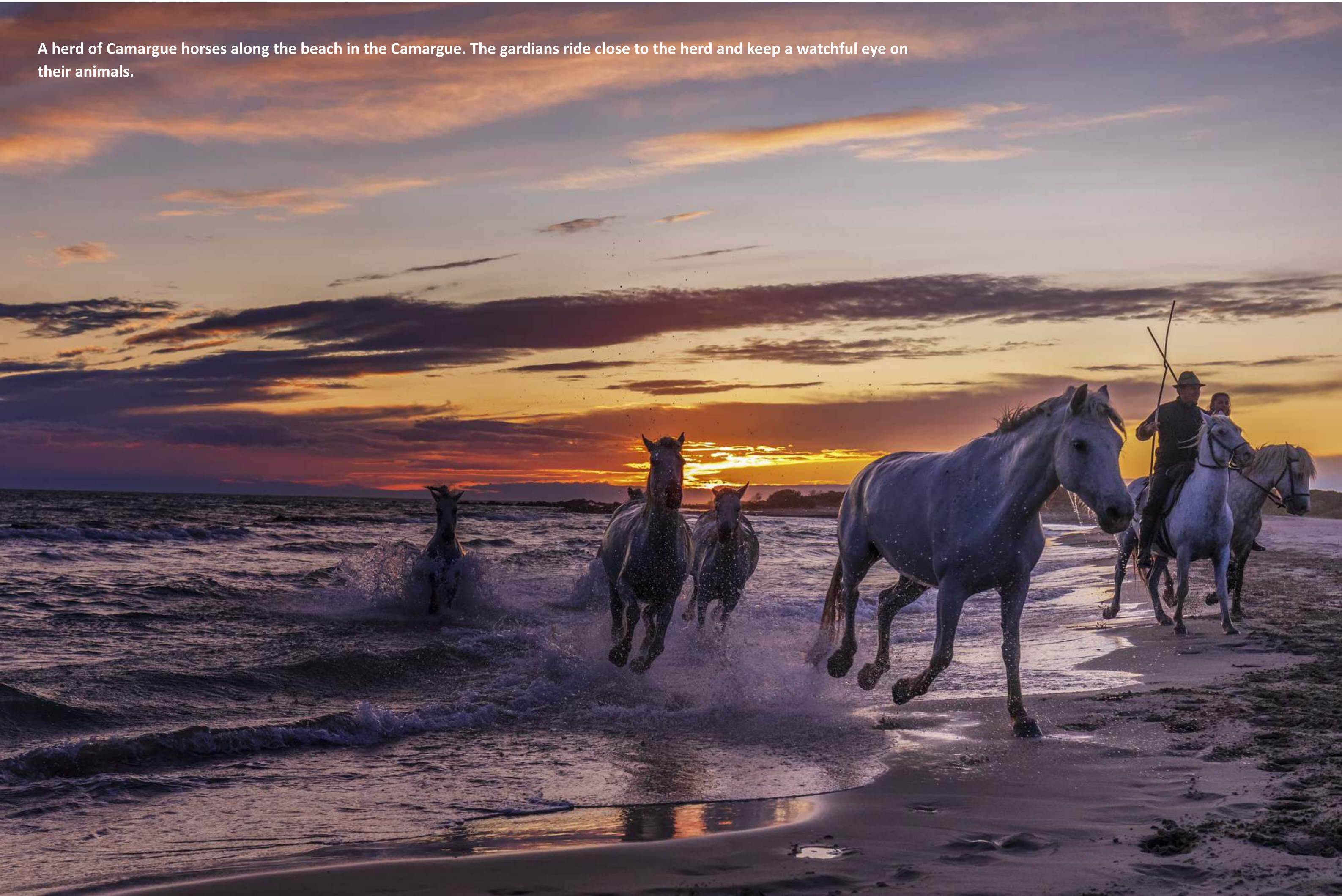
Camargue has been producing rice since the mid-1800s and happens to be the northernmost reaches on this planet to cultivate rice. There will always be this lingering concern regarding the impact of such farming activities and the human presence on the ecological balance and biodiversity of the Camargue.

Large scale cultivation of rice and the use of fertilizers along with the pollution of the Rhone River do have the potential to wipe off a significant majority of the Camargue's water fowls and other migratory bird species. Yet the Camargue strangely enough have devised ingenious ways of incorporating its wild subjects

and human presence within its realms and bind them in a synergy which is reflective of the very fabric of this vast region. The Camargue is known for many an endearing

There will always be this lingering concern regarding the impact of such farming activities and the human presence on the ecological balance and biodiversity of the Camargue.

A herd of Camargue horses along the beach in the Camargue. The gardians ride close to the herd and keep a watchful eye on their animals.



Such scenes are common across the marshy terrains of the Camargue. Historic documents chronicle these horses taking part in a number of prominent skirmishes during the mediaeval times across Europe.





A gardian atop one of his horses in the Camargue. The gardians of the Camargue are France's very own cowboys. Animal husbandry, particularly rearing the famed Camargue bulls forms an important part of this region's economy apart from rice cultivation. The pre-historic lineage of the Camargue horses means they have existed in this region long before the earliest human settlements. As the human settlements increased in this region along with a growing economy, these horses became the preferred choice for a number of activities which also include traditional sporting events.



About the Photographer

Rajani Ramanathan lives by the credo "Life is a journey, a journey that shapes your life". She wants to immerse all her senses with the colors, smell, taste and sounds, (to borrow John Denver's words,) in a sleepy blue ocean, like a storm in the desert, like a night in the forest, like a walk in the rain, like a mountain in springtime...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. 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, 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/>

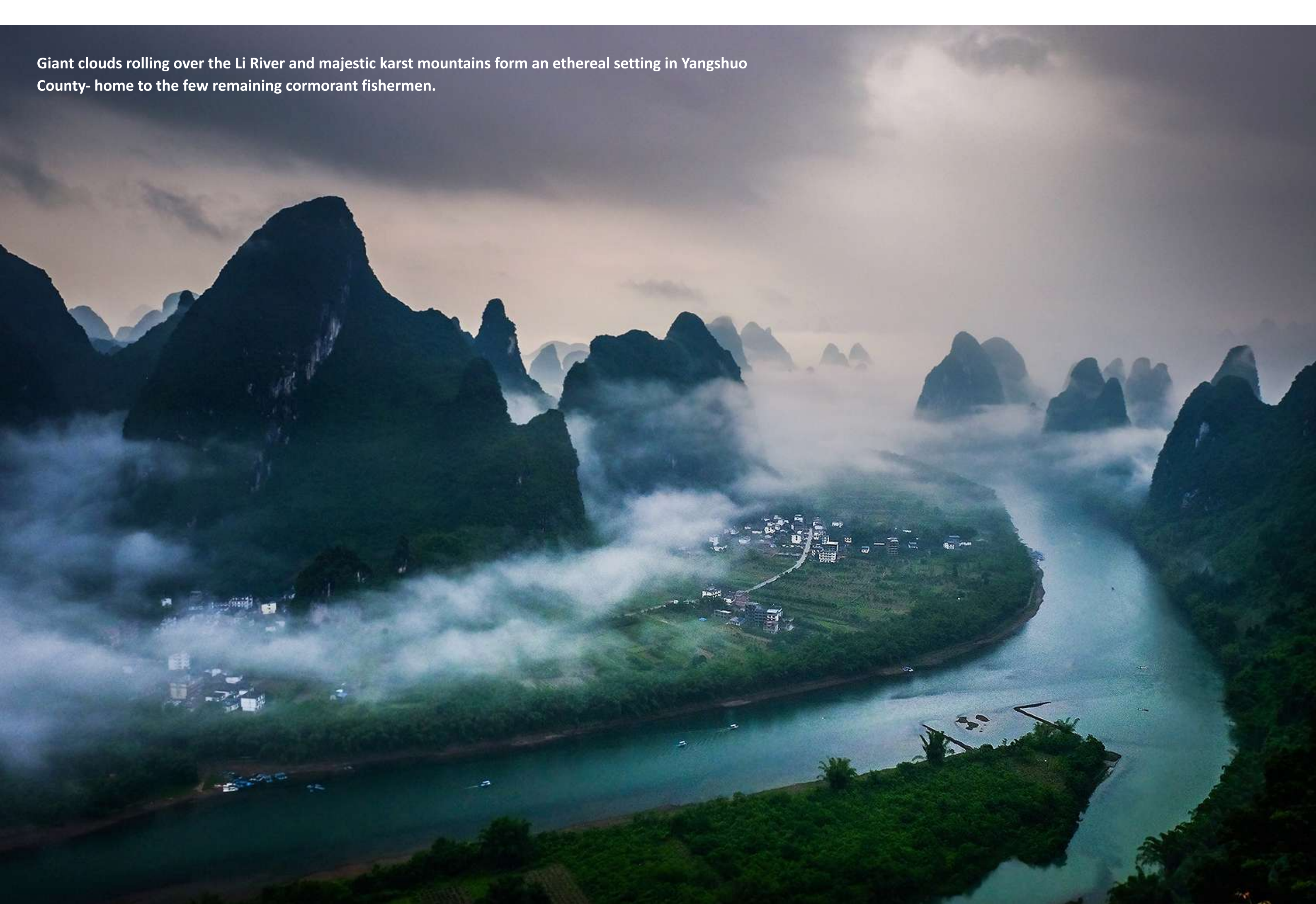
The Old Men *and* their Birds by Mangalika Ghosh

the Li River still remains home to the fading art of cormorant fishing, courtesy a few hardworking old-timers and their birds



A cormorant fisherman streams ahead on his bamboo raft at wee hours of the morning. His birds, the great cormorants with a snare loosely tied around their necks swim next to his raft or wait perched on it before he releases them into the water to look for fish.

Giant clouds rolling over the Li River and majestic karst mountains form an ethereal setting in Yangshuo County- home to the few remaining cormorant fishermen.



Surrounded by spectacular karst topography, interspersed with lush green meadows and winding rivers, Yangshuo is a scenic county in Southern China. Anecdotal evidences clearly suggest millions of years ago this entire region was submerged in sea waters. Over time, a sequence of geological events, strong uplifts followed by spells of erosion carved the rather strange limestone hills which stand proud today like sentinels keeping a watchful eye over this landscape. Rising sharply from the lush green banks of the winding Li River which flows through this region, these limestone hills along with the Li River and an ever present veil of cloud and mist create a fairy tale setting steeped in rich ancient history and tradition, some of which unique to this region. The Li River has played a mighty crucial role in shaping the landscape and the lives of people living in this picturesque setting. The river covers a distance of almost 83 kilometres from its source till mouth, flowing through the city of Guilin to the town of Yangshuo. The banks are flanked by rice terraces along the foothills of the iconic limestone hills which with their dagger shaped peaks pierce through the misty veil and reach out for the sky. The Li River however finds mention in the Chinese culture and draws a fair amount of attention from across the globe for one particular activity of a very different kind. Li River happens to be the very few of the last remaining places where fishermen still practice the age old traditional fishing

method of using cormorants to catch their fish. Cormorant fishing as this traditional method is better known as has been a favoured mode of fishing among fishermen in countries like China, Japan and Korea. It is believed this ingenious method of fishing originated in the rivers of Japan some 1300 years ago. Cormorant fishing or “Ukai” as it is known in Japan flourished considerably, more so under the patronage of Japanese emperors and soon earned favour among fishermen in China and neighboring Korea as well. Along with more commonplace measures, this unique way of catching fish from the depths of the rivers soon proved to be an effective one and gained prominence among the fishing communities in these countries. This ancient tradition can be found enshrined in numerous ancient Japanese and Chinese chronicles and paintings. The Li River has a rich, long history of cormorant fishing. Rapidly fading and having disappeared from many of its previous bastions, this indigenous way of fishing still lives on in the waters of the Li River. As the name suggests, the cormorants are at the heart of all the core fishing activities in this ancient method. Cormorants are aquatic birds and feed almost exclusively on fish. Like most aquatic birds, cormorants too are excellent swimmers and can dive up to depths of more than 50 meters in search of fish. In addition to these abilities cormorants are blessed with tremendous eyesight. Such superlative skills and their widespread



A fisherman prepares to release one of his cormorants to dive into the waters of the Li and come up with a mouthful of fish.

The Huang brothers in their 80s are among the oldest cormorant fishermen in Yangshuo County. The elder brother fondly speaks about their relationship with their birds and the various aspects of cormorant fishing.



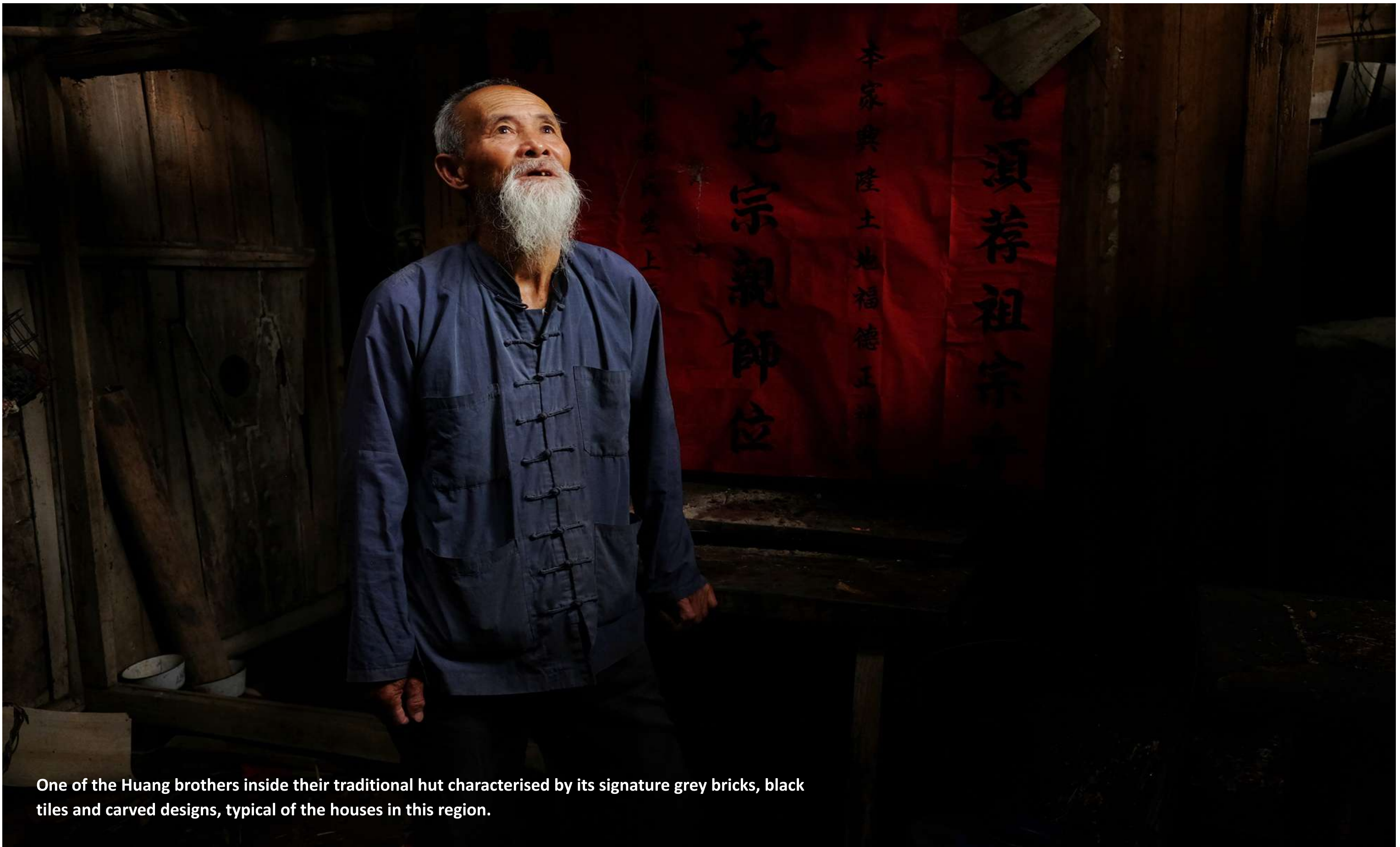
colonies made these birds a favourite among these fishermen. Gulls and other aquatic bird species often crowd fishing harbours or other fishing settlements with the hope of finding an easy meal from the scraps, leftover or discarded catches. It is this reliance on human induced fishing activities which gradually brought the

cormorants in close contact with the fishermen, who realising the larger prospect started petting them. In China cormorant fishermen have traditionally used great cormorants which are non-migratory and are often raised by the fishermen from a young age. Cormorant fishing in the waters of Li

River is practiced during the wee hours of dawn or in the hour following sunset. The birds with a snare tied loosely round their neck swim next to the bamboo rafts used by the fishermen. One extremely important component of this set up is an oil lamp, which is a permanent fixture at one edge of these rafts. In the shallow

depths of the Li River the light of this lamp illuminates the surrounding patch of water and attracts the fresh water fish locally known as “ayu”. As fish gather round the raft the cormorants dive into the water and gobble up mouthful of fishes. Cormorants feed by swallowing their catches. As a result the instinctive reaction of these birds is to swallow their catch. However the snare tied around their necks doesn’t allow them to devour the larger fish. The fishermen reel them in on the raft and make them cough up the larger fish still stuck in its throat. Hours of work every dawn or dusk and repeated fishing dives made by the cormorants often ensure a rich haul of fish from the shallows of the Li River.

The cormorants and the fishermen share an amazing relationship. Most of these birds are raised by these fishermen since infancy and with time they develop a close association with one another. Their camaraderie is clearly at display in the highly effective manner in which they go about their daily business. This mutual understanding plays a big role in helping both the parties to understand each other’s body language better and facilitates communication through the use of various gestures and movements. The fishermen know all too well the key to this technique lies in the fishing skills of their birds. Quite understandably the fishermen spend considerable amount of time everyday looking after their birds and priming them for their daily fishing trips. The fishermen



One of the Huang brothers inside their traditional hut characterised by its signature grey bricks, black tiles and carved designs, typical of the houses in this region.

even when not on these trips with their birds, keep on interacting with their birds, an exercise aimed at further strengthening their bond which might prove crucial on

the waters of the Li. The Huang brothers, in their 80s are among the oldest cormorant fishermen in this region. Sitting inside their old rustic home, made of grey bricks

and black tiles they fondly recall how they have been involved with cormorant fishing since they were teenagers. The Huang brothers are particularly concerned about

feeding their birds. “When we cannot go fishing we buy cut fishes from the market to feed them though they prefer freshly caught fishes” remarked the elder among

The snares tied around the birds' necks prevent them from swallowing the larger catches and also allow the fishermen to pull them out of water. A cormorant fisherman in the Li River takes a break as he smokes his bamboo pipe accompanied by his two birds.





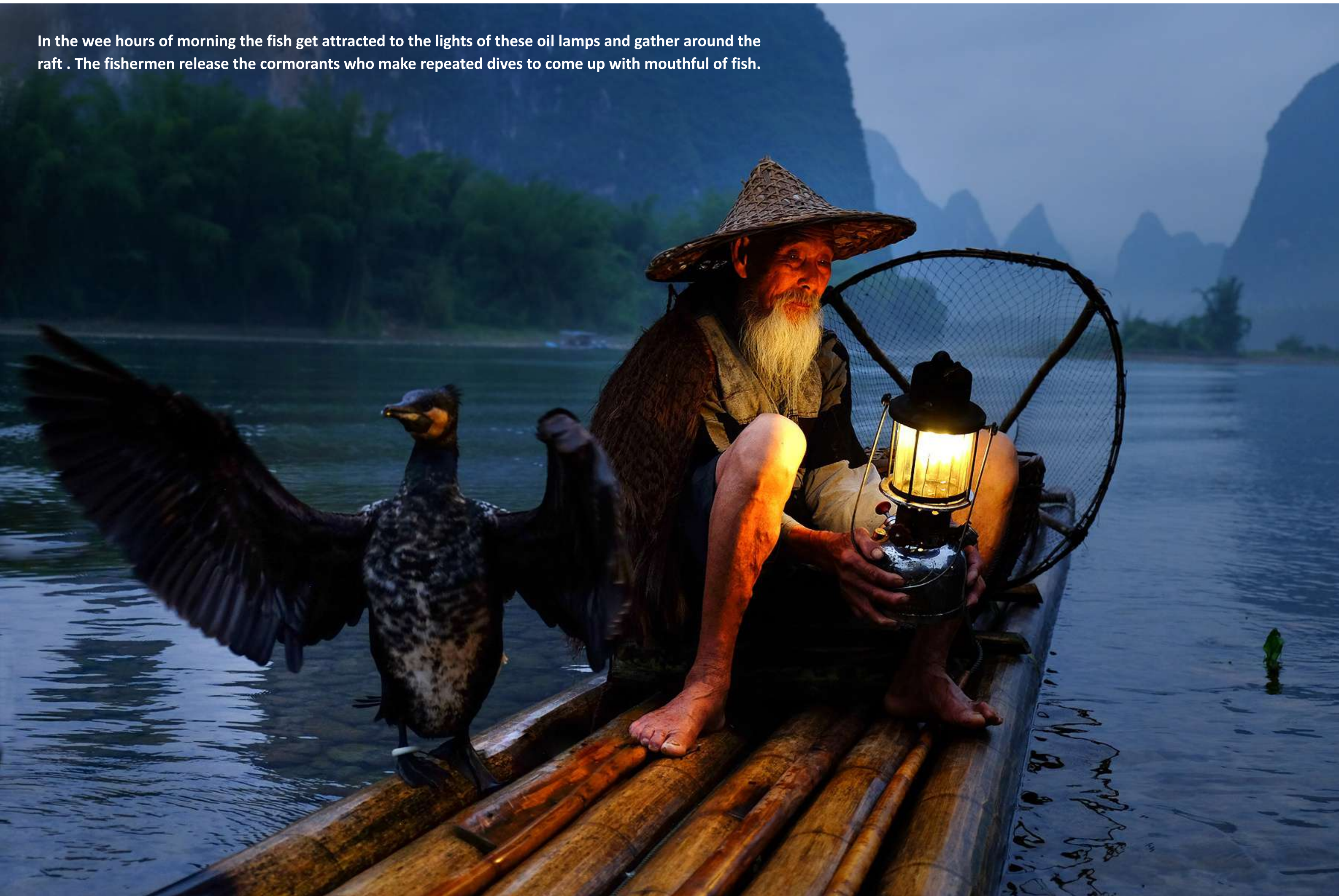
The elder of the Huang brothers smokes his traditional bamboo pipe inside his kitchen. Sitting inside their old rustic home the brothers fondly recall how they have been involved with cormorant fishing since they were teenagers. The brothers are particularly concerned about the health of their three birds and what they are eating. “When we cannot go fishing we buy cut fishes from the market to feed them though they prefer freshly caught fishes” remarked the elder brother. The three healthy birds, waiting near a perch bore testimony to the healthy and diligent upkeep.

the two. The three healthy birds, waiting near a perch bore testimony to the healthy and diligent upkeep. However they didn’t seem too hopeful of the future. The elder brother lamented-“These days not too many young people are practicing actual cormorant fishing due to huge competition in the market. People with large nets and boats can easily beat the men with bird”, his voice soaked in nostalgia. His words were a reminder of the reality on the grounds.

The techniques involved may trick one into believing that majority of the effort is put in by the cormorants and the fishermen have it easy. However that is far removed from the truth. Being a cormorant fisherman can be an arduous task. A cormorant fisherman is busy round the year even during the off season. The birds have to be looked after even when they are not out there fishing, which is particularly during the winter months. They have to be fed regularly and kept in prime condition for the next trip. Apart from looking after the birds the wooden rafts need careful looking after too. They squeeze time out of their daily schedule to repair their fishing boats, the snares, small fishing nets, splitting the wood necessary for their rafts and sewing their traditional attire which they put on during the nightly shows catering to the needs of the tourism industry.

Once popular and favoured by the royalty, this ancient method of fishing has rapidly faded from a number of provinces or

In the wee hours of morning the fish get attracted to the lights of these oil lamps and gather around the raft . The fishermen release the cormorants who make repeated dives to come up with mouthful of fish.





Inside the traditional kitchen in the houses in Yangshuo. Wood plays an important role in the daily lives of people in this part of China. The giant stack of wood will probably be used for cooking and building a new raft or repairing the older one.

villages in China over the past few decades. The situation is no different in countries like Japan and China. The advent of modern day techniques, bigger boats and modern day equipment as pointed out by the elder of the Huang brothers, promise richer hauls of fish. In these changing times it makes more sense to rely on giant

machineries churning out tons of fish from the depths of rivers than pinning hopes on the fishing skills of the cormorants. In addition to that the fast depleting populations of fish in these rivers too have contributed significantly towards the decline of this tradition. Even a few decades ago these waters used to teem

with fish, offering enough for everyone to earn a sustainable living. Fish were in abundant supply during the off season and the fishermen often used to spend days at a stretch on their rafts along with their birds as they travelled from one part of the river to the other in search of rich hauls. With time the river they once knew

changed its nature too, the changing climate patterns have altered the dynamic in the waters of the Li River and the availability of fish as well.

In the face of such trying times this age old tradition received a new lease of life courtesy the flourishing tourism industry in this region. There is a conscious effort on part of the concerned authorities to preserve, even revive this ancient tradition since it is deeply engraved in the cultural heritage of China. Tour operators regularly organise nightly cormorant fishing shows for the tourists, independent travellers on the other hand are drawn to this region with the hope of witnessing this method of fishing and often encourage the fishermen in exchange of various benefits to put on display their unique efforts. These have certainly encouraged the old timers to stick to their traditional ways and some from the younger crop too find it profitable particularly keeping the surging tourism industry to engage in this traditional method. Yet on the whole this remains a dying art and one which in due course of time will probably find its place confined only to the annals of Chinese history. As the evening mist gently cast its veil upon the Li River covering the distant bamboo forests and karst peaks the Huang brothers along with others ventured into the waters of the Li. With every stroke of their oar the light from their oil lamps faded into the thick veil of mist, a fitting reminder to the present-day circumstances engulfing this dying tradition.

Fishing nets require regular upkeep and need to be in perfect condition before an ensuing fishing trip. This elderly man thoroughly examines his net to look for any snag in it.





The fishermen share a special relationship with their birds which is based on mutual trust and understanding. It requires both the parties about two years to completely understand each others body languages even hand gestures, which prove to be crucial when they go fishing. In the face of rapid modernisation and the advent of newer techniques and modern machineries, this could be the last generation of cormorant fishermen, an art which is fading fast. The growing tourism industry however has provided a fresh lease of life to this dying art, with patronage from the concerned authorities to showcase this ancient tradition to tourists this age old method of fishing might just have a second shot at former glory.



About the Photographer

Mangalika Ghosh is an Indian travel photographer who loves documenting people, places and traditions through the lens. Reading expedition stories, browsing history of a place, scribbling her own travel moments are some of her next favorite things to do. Photography grabbed her attention some 9 years ago but travel and photography mingled when she got hitched to another passionate shutterbug. Together they roamed around various known and not-so-known places in India and South East Asia. She feels If any of her photos ignites the viewers to preserve the serenity of this wonderful planet, appreciate its people and culture that would her biggest achievement.

Website: www.mangalika.com

In the depths of LIFE

by Samya Sengupta

A look into the rich marine biodiversity of our planet

Bigfin reef squid, Lembah Strait, Indonesia

Bigfin or long-finned reef squids are warm salt-water marine creatures. They have pronouncedly large fins which may sometimes make up for 90% of their sizes. They use the dark cover of the night for foraging in order to avoid being detected by potential predators. The bright colourations which these creatures display are aimed at attracting the opposite sex for the purpose of mating. These squids are short lived (less than a year) and lay eggs all the year round. Like many other species the future doesn't appear promising for these creatures. Not yet classified as threatened species but may be soon as a result of the rapidly dwindling population due to unrestricted fishing. The long fin reef squid features regularly in the commercial fishing industry for human consumption and medicinal purposes as well, especially in the south-east Asia. This individual was photographed at Lembah Strait in Sulawesi Sea in Indonesia.

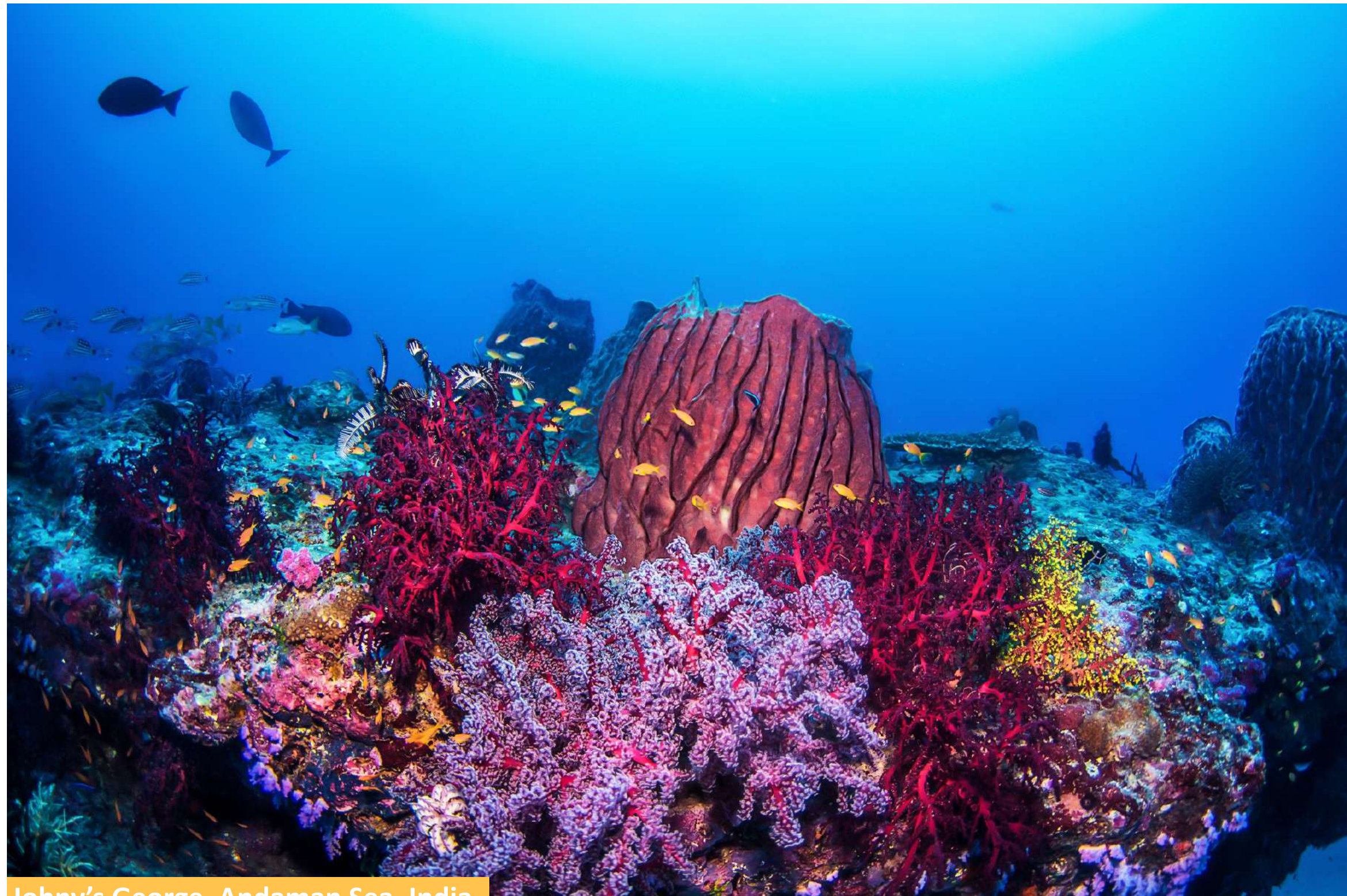
Manta rays by dint of their peculiar yet graceful appearance and their graceful swimming patterns have become one of the most popular, fascinating and sought after marine creatures amongst the underwater divers and photographers. Their sizes vary around 20-24 feet sidewise including fins and the sting gives them a devil like appearance. But practically there is nothing devilish about them and they mostly feed on zoo planktons. Manta Rays are large creatures belonging to the families of other rays such as the sting ray, eagle ray and devil ray among others. They can be found in the warm waters of Indian, Pacific and Atlantic Oceans. Manta rays are an endangered species and protected by many international initiatives. They are affected by pollution, uncontrolled fishing, climate change and various other factors including demand for their flesh and other body parts as ingredients for traditional medicines. In Indian fish market thousands of manta rays are sold each year. Sadly there is hardly any awareness or consciousness even amongst the educated ones. A number of atolls in the Maldives are known safe havens for manta rays and they can be found hovering over underwater cleaning stations, where they get cleaned by small cleaner wrasses. This one was photographed in the waters of North Male Atoll in Indian Ocean in the Maldives.

Manta rays, Indian Ocean, Maldives



Among the popular definitions of travel as listed out by Google, features the essentially technical description of travelling-“Travel is the movement of people between distant geographical locations. Travel can be done by foot, bicycle, automobile, train, boat, bus, airplane, or other means, with or without luggage.....” There can be little or no contention regarding the technically correct nature of this description. However most of these descriptions are aimed at human beings’ exploits on the surface of the planet. Often we tend to forget the incredibly huge world which lies below the surface of water on this planet. This watery realm is a gigantic entity, with an unparalleled diversity seen nowhere on this planet. The seas and oceans of our planet are home to millions of creatures, each unique and magnificently well equipped to thrive in this often hostile set up. And yet in spite of all our technical expertise and infrastructure we have barely been able to make forays into a relatively small portion of this underwater kingdom. This blindingly colourful and mysterious domain is teeming with life, a plethora of species inhabit the nooks and corners of this planet’s underwater kingdoms. In this cold, dark domain the eternal struggle between life and death appeared billions of years ago, when much of this planet, at least the terrestrial realms were hostile and nature itself deemed them unstable for life to blossom. In fact, the natural world was always partial towards its

watery realms and considered it to be the best bet for breeding ground for its most potent force till date- life itself. In these unfathomable depths, most of which still remain inaccessible to us, some of the earliest prehistoric organisms were the first ones to lay down the protocols of life on this planet. It was much later life successfully managed to venture into earth's land surface. From its earliest emergence in rather simplest of forms life has evolved, at an unprecedented pace, in a relentless pursuit akin to the zealousness of a maniac this redoubtable force of nature kept on weaving intricate pattern, changing and refining its very own ways, all with the singular purpose of creating a wide array of eco-systems superbly rich in diversity and formidable enough to lay their justified claims to some of the most inhospitable patches of real estates on this planet. In other words nature pitted its favoured subject-life against some of its very own formidable elements which goes without saying resulted in an explosion of life on this planet which as of now is home to close to ten million life forms. In this context it would be entirely unfair and calamitous to ignore the very bedrock of life, the underwater creeks and vents in our oceans, the submerged meteorites, the stretches of seabeds all of which formed the framework for the few first of these millions to emerge on planet earth and instantly elevated this mass of rock to the much coveted home for life. Life has come a long way since it made



Johnny's George, Andaman Sea, India

Havelock Island situated in the Indian part of the Andaman Sea is home to some of the most remarkably colourful and ecologically rich coral reefs and gardens. Johnny's George is one such site which is widely known for its rich diversity and colourful coral reefs. Corals are not plants but invertebrate animals belonging to the phylum Cnidaria, a large group of colourful and fascinating creatures . Most corals are colonial in nature and they all share the same distinguishing characteristics; a simple stomach with a single mouth opening surrounded by stinging tentacles. Each individual animal is called a polyp, and most live in groups of hundreds to thousands of genetically identical polyps that form a 'colony'. The colony is formed by a process called budding, which is where the original polyp literally grows copies of itself. There are more than 2500 corals found and identified so far and majority of them require sunlight to survive and can be found within 60 meter of depth.



False clownfish, Andaman Sea, India

The false clownfish courtesy its much publicised and endearing stint with the Hollywood as Nemo in the widely acclaimed movie “Finding Nemo” is a well-recognised species today. These small fish, measuring between 1-11 cm are skittish in nature and share a symbiotic relationship with Anemone coral. They feed on the microorganisms and cleanse the coral in return the coral offers them shelter and protection from their predators. There are about 25 types of clown fishes which have been found so far. They are mostly found in Eastern Indian Ocean, South East Asia, Japan, Western Pacific Ocean and parts of Australia. This particular individual was photographed in the waters of Chidhiya Tapu in the Andaman Sea in India.

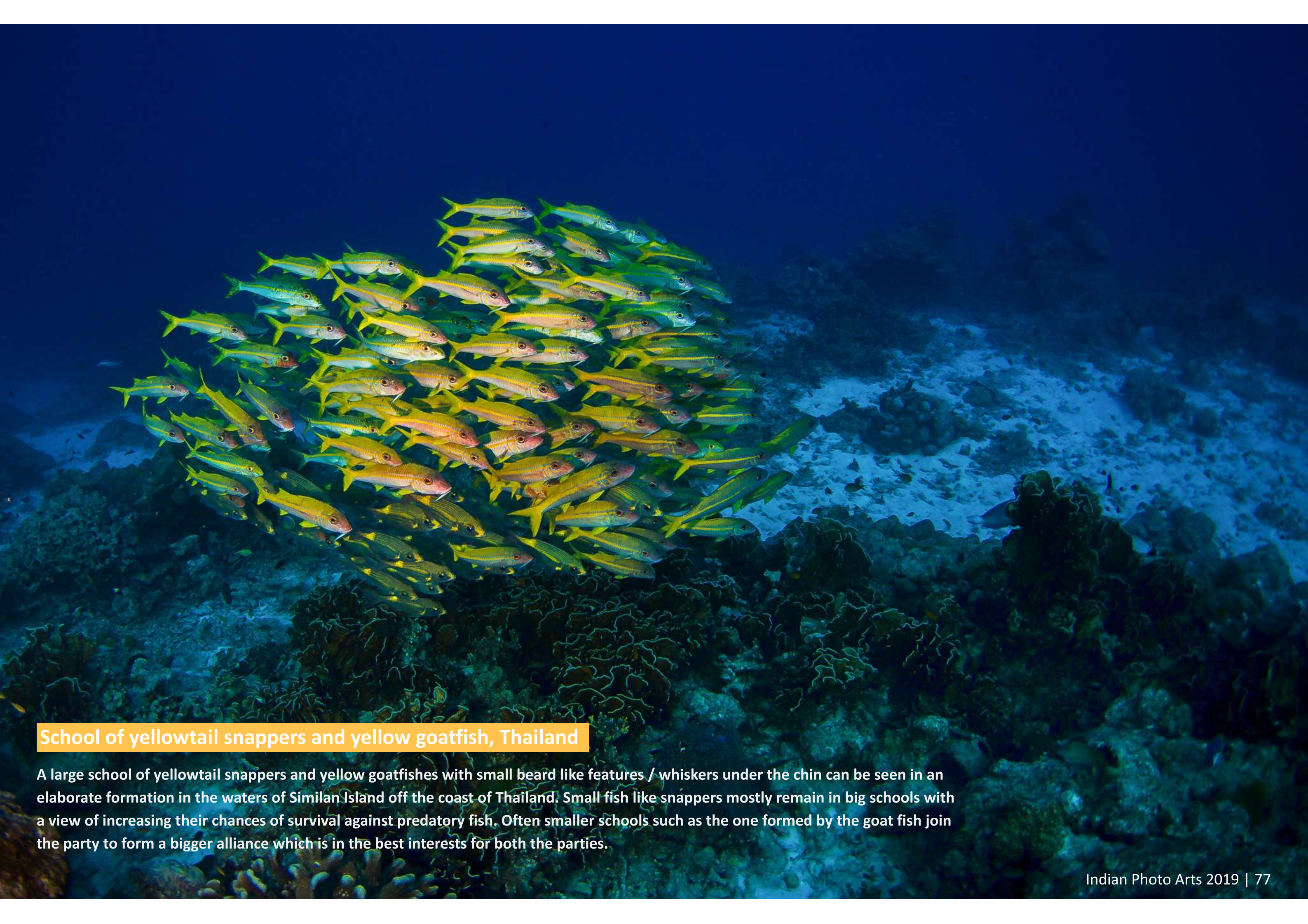
its very first appearance in the form of microorganisms. The earliest forms of microbes or single celled organisms have since then evolved into more complex and sophisticated creatures, superbly capable of mastering and thriving in some of the most hostile places and conditions. The underwater world of today, which appeared rather simple billions of years ago, is a beautiful tapestry of colours. Home to millions of species numbering in millions to a few hundred our seas and oceans are home to the true giants on this planet where they gracefully glide next to billions of invisible microscopic planktons which in spite of their minuscule actuality form the essential bulwark of every underwater ecosystem. This undoubtedly is the most comprehensive advert of the incredibly rich diversity of life in the deep underwater dominions on this planet. Since ages these rich offerings have lured many scientist, naturalists and adventurers into their watery domains, offering them glimpses of what lies beneath the surface of water. However nature never intended to make it easy on those bent on seeking out this underwater treasure trove. Bone chilling sub-zero temperatures which the terrestrial world is a total stranger to, absolute zero visibility below certain depths, vigorous currents and increasing water pressure in the face of which even the most inviolable entity known to humans can be found wanting, these are the very few challenges our seas and oceans pose in front of anyone trying to penetrate their secret realms. It

comes as a little surprise that we have managed to explore only a small fragment of this natural world. What still stays hidden in the dark and cold depths can be even more diverse than our imaginations render to be, this secret world is home to creatures which with their physiology and adaptations can alter the course of science altogether and throw open a wide range of new possibilities previously unthinkable. The underwater world which is fairly explored and already known to us is no less fascinating. It is only until recently we have successfully managed to send probes to the deep sea floors devoid of a single ray of sun where the pressure of water amounts to tons per square inch. Yet life has not only thrived in this hostile environment, the diversity of it can rival even that of a rainforest ecosystem. Some of the species known to us are of prehistoric origin and in a remarkable feat have withstood the test of time and have stayed unchanged for few hundred millions of years. In addition to the wide array of species, our seas and oceans are homes to a wide range of ecosystems as well. The rays of sun can only penetrate up to a certain depth under the water surface. The ecosystems in these depths of the ocean are primarily governed by the availability of sun rays, which gives rise to a wide range of underwater vegetation. As the depth increases the rays of sun fade and eventually lose their way in the cold, dark mysterious realms. Life in these depths is not dictated by light; in fact it is the lack



Unicornfish, Indian Ocean, Maldives

A unicorn is a mythical horse-like creature, something amazing and incredibly rare and unique in appearance by dint of the single spiral horn like structure on its forehead. The unicornfish is one such rare creature; with an extended spine which resembles the single horn of a unicorn this small fish is practically a saviour to the coral reefs. These fish primarily feed on algae and thereby serves the very important purpose of cleaning up the waters of the oceans; otherwise the spurt in the growth of algae would cloud the waters robbing the coral reefs of the much needed sunlight in the absence of which the coral colonies particularly the ones at shallow depths suffer an untimely death. This particular individual was photographed at Ari Atoll in Indian Ocean in the Maldives.



School of yellowtail snappers and yellow goatfish, Thailand

A large school of yellowtail snappers and yellow goatfishes with small beard like features / whiskers under the chin can be seen in an elaborate formation in the waters of Similan Island off the coast of Thailand. Small fish like snappers mostly remain in big schools with a view of increasing their chances of survival against predatory fish. Often smaller schools such as the one formed by the goat fish join the party to form a bigger alliance which is in the best interests for both the parties.

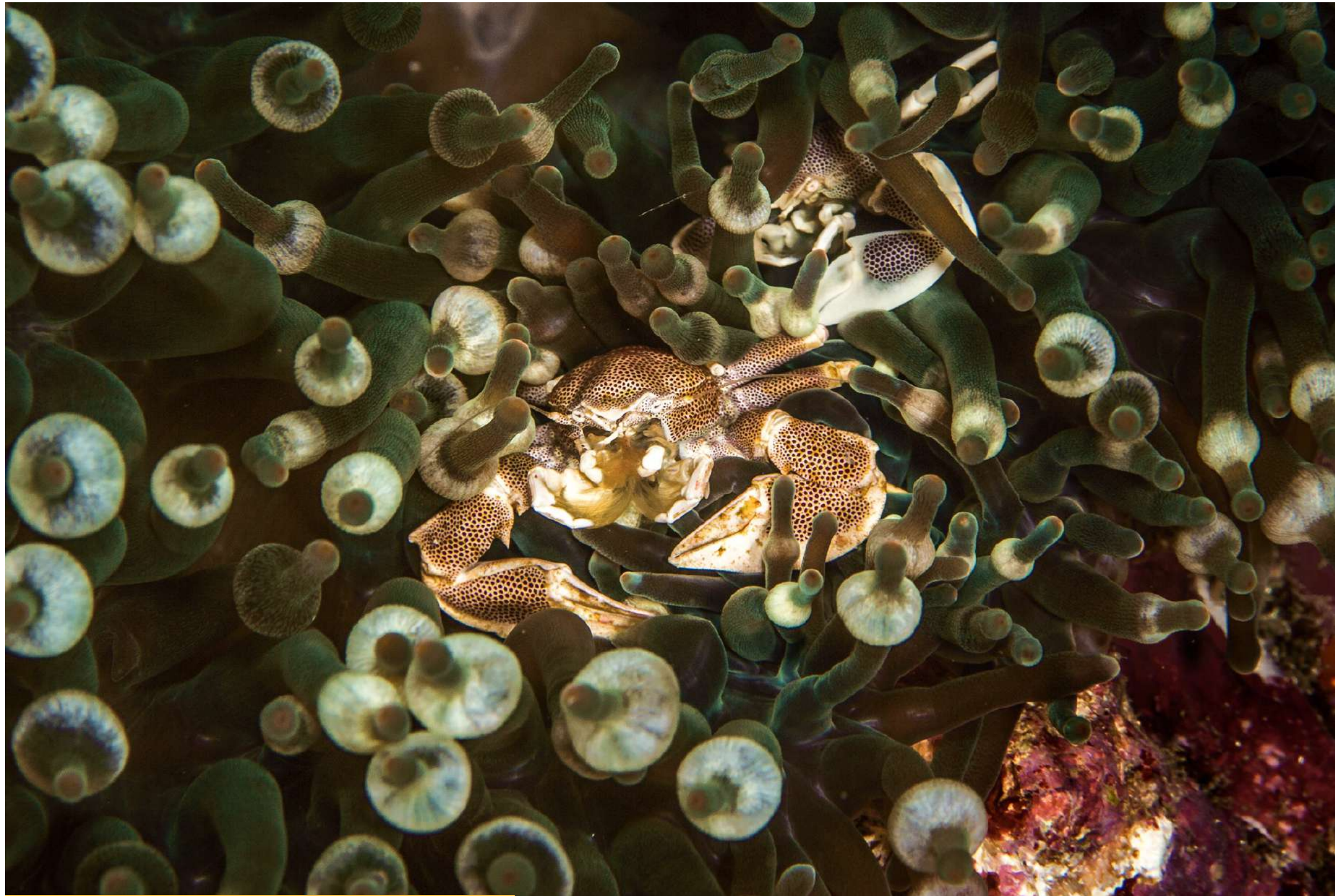


Ornate ghost pipefish, Visayan Sea, Philippines

Ornate ghost pipefish are incredibly difficult to find and inhabit these waters much like an apparition, which led to their nomenclature. However their elusive nature can be attributed to their excellent camouflaging skills which in spite of their colourful disposition allow them to blend in seamlessly with gorgonian corals or colourful floating weeds. They are extremely colourful but difficult to spot when camouflaged with gorgonian corals or floating weeds. This individual was photographed along the Malapascua Island in the Visayan Sea in Philippines. They are not hunters so hiding is the best possible defence mechanism for them. About 10 cm in size, these small creatures are found in areas with strong currents. The strong currents bring with them a rich haul of small crustaceans and other nutrients on which these fish feed regularly.

of it which has shaped life in ingenious ways. From gigantic coral reefs home to hundreds of creatures, critters which often seamlessly blend in with their surroundings in an attempt to safeguard their fragile existence, the giant blue whale- the largest living creature on this whole planet , which ambles gracefully in these blue depths, the huge shoals of fish in striking colours to the exquisite creatures with unique adaptations to survive the intense cold and pitch dark ambience of the greatest depths, our seas and oceans are treasure troves of life, it is in this watery world nature chose to celebrate the attainments of life in the most unabashed manner.

A healthy sea is crucial for the survival of this planet. Tragically though our seas and oceans are under an unprecedented threat, one which has the potential to destroy a vast majority of earth's marine diversity and damage the health of the water-world beyond the scope of any repair. A vast majority of this threat is an amalgamation of various human induced activities, all of which contribute in their own signature manner to erode the planet's rich marine biodiversity. Every day huge quantities of human and industrial waste products flow unchecked into the waters of our seas and oceans, the death of various sea creatures caused by plastic waste has become commonplace, unregulated large scale commercial fishing is wreaking havoc on the delicate balance which is essential for any marine ecosystem, the change in climate patterns leads to alterations in the



Porcelain crab, Andaman Sea, Thailand

In spite of what the name and the appearance suggest, the porcelain crab is not a crab; rather they belong to family of squat lobsters. The large claw and three pair of legs and other characteristics are results of millions of years of evolution which has enabled them to survive under the rocks or hide under the corals. These crustaceans are small (about half an inch) and fragile in nature. They often shed their limbs to escape the predators. The large claws are not meant for hunting but for defending their territories from any intruder. They feed on planktons and other particulate matters. In this photograph the porcelain crab photographed in the waters of the Similan Island in the Andaman Sea in Thailand can be seen sharing a symbiotic relationship with anemone coral, whereby the crab is cleaning the coral bed by feeding and the coral bed is providing the much needed refuge from potential predators.

currents, the threats to our oceans are far too many to list comprehensively. We have taken significant steps in addressing some of these problems such as the dumping of untreated sewage waste and radioactive waste into our oceans yet a lot more needs to be done. Our oceans act as natural sinks, absorbing more than half of the carbon dioxide emitted through the burning of fossil fuel. However over the years the amount of carbon dioxide produced by us has increased manifolds. A significant portion of this gets dissolved in our oceans and produces carbonic acid. This in turn increases the acidity of water and creates an environment which is not at all well suited for a wide variety and number of marine organisms such thereby disrupting the already fragile nature of this ecosystem further. Almost two thirds of this planet is made of water, it is absolutely imperative for the health of this planet that we start caring for our water bodies. The oceans of our planet have been bearing the brunt of our activities for centuries now; they have been magnanimous in every respect and have tried their level best to cope up with our aggressive approach which one may argue is bordering on turning into madness. But there is a limit up to which our seas and oceans will be able to cope up with this abuse, following which there will be little or no life left in them to fight this relentless battle. The natural world is an incredibly resilient place, and life, the most potent force of the natural world has overcome many such hurdles, yet this is



Spider squat lobsters, Visayan Sea, Philippines

Spider squat lobsters are often referred to as “Daddy Long Legs of Underwater”, a rather endearing way of describing their physical appearance which is dominated by their unusually slender long legs. These creatures are closely related to lobsters and are mainly found in the West Pacific Ocean. An incredibly adaptable creature the spider squat lobster can be found both in the deep waters as well as the shallows in rocky coral crevices. The spider squat lobster can grow up to a length of 7.5 cm and feeds primarily on zooplanktons. This particular individual was photographed in the waters of Gatu Island in Visayan Sea, Philippines.

one battle they cannot fight on their own, for the obstacles this time are far too many, far bigger in scale and ridiculously twisted for any natural force to find a way past them. We need to act now and save our oceans, it is vital for each and every one of us to come together and develop a thorough understanding regarding what we can do even on a day to day basis which will have a positive and lasting impact on the health of our water bodies. If we fail to do so that day won't be too far when the frolicking of an adorable clown fish or the sight of a beautiful coral colony with all its colourful denizens or the graceful gliding of the giants- the whale shark or the blue whale will become a thing of the past, leaving our oceans barren, lifeless, robbing the largest treasure trove of life empty.

Chromodoris annae Bergh, Lembah Strait, Indonesia

A *Chromodoris annae* Bergh, one type of nudibranch in Sulawesi Sea at Lembah Strait in Indonesia. Sea slug or nudibranchs are common names for sea invertebrates. In other words sea slugs are marine snails without shells. These creatures can be found in various shapes and colours and can grow up to 5-6 cm. The bright colourations which are found in nudibranchs are all part of their defence mechanism. Bright colour in the natural world often is synonymous with toxicity, as a result of which it may act as a deterrent for predators. There are more than 3000 types of nudibranchs which have been found so far and identified. These creatures enjoy a lot of attention courtesy their colourful appearances. In some parts of coastal Australia and America there are dedicated fairs which are based on nudibranch theme. Nudibranch themed toys and other merchandise, even ice creams and cakes are sold at these gatherings.



Whale shark, Visayan Sea, Philippines

Whale Sharks are the known largest fish or non-mammal in the world. The largest reported individual measured a little more than 41 feet. They can be found swimming in shallower and warm waters and use their huge gaping mouth to suck in crustaceans and plankton rich waters before filtering out the water after absorbing the nutrients. These slow moving sharks do not pose any threats to divers or to creatures that do not feature in their menu. In fact they can be easily labelled the “Gentle Giants” of the oceans. The shark in the photograph in Visayan Sea, Philippines is about 30 feet long and the scuba diver is appeared to be dwarfed by its size.



A close-up photograph of a whip coral shrimp (Stomatopoda) perched on a large, brown, textured coral polyp. The shrimp is small, with a brown and white patterned body and long, thin, translucent appendages. The background is dark and out of focus, showing more of the coral structure.

Whip coral shrimp, Andaman Sea,

In these beautiful waters around Havelock Island in the Andaman Sea, life can be deceptively harsh and unforgiving. For creatures lacking the size or the pace to escape predators, blending in with their surroundings using camouflage is the best bet for survival. The Whip coral shrimp is one such prime example of a creature which relies on camouflage to escape predators. At a centimetre in length the whip coral shrimp remains perfectly camouflaged in the coral reefs, in fact it often resembles the structure of a polyp. Like many other creatures they too share a symbiotic relationship with the coral in which they clean the coral beds in exchange for shelter.



Bearded scorpionfish, Visayan Sea, Philippines

Bearded scorpionfish belongs to a large family of venomous species, with sting and venomous mucus. Most of them are strikingly colourful and superbly adapted to camouflage with their surroundings. In fact their blending skills often make it incredibly difficult to tell them apart from the coral reefs they inhabit. Most of them are dwellers of shallow waters and are found at depths up to 35 meters. Mostly found in the Indo-Pacific waters, these creatures are nocturnal and ambush hunters and feed on small fish and crustaceans. Lion fish, stone fish, sting fish belong to the same family of scorpionfish, little less than 400 sub families have been identified so far. This particular individual was photographed in the waters of, Malapascua Island, Visayan Sea, Philippines.



Big-eyed moray eel, Visayan Sea, Philippines

A big-eyed moray eel in the waters of Gato Island in Visayan Sea in the Philippines. The big-eyed moray eel also known as greyface moray eel belongs to the family of salt water eels. They are nocturnal and spend most of the day in the burrows, often with other species of moray eels. Big-eyed moray draws its name from its distinctive big eyes and can be more than 65 cm in length. Its body is serpentine in shape and dotted with small spots. In spite of their big eyes, like other moray eels, the big-eyed too is burdened with the handicap of poor eyesight and depends on its acute sense of smell to hunt down its prey. Due to small gills morays have to continuously open and close their mouth to breathe. These creatures are known for their lightning fast strike when threatened or cornered. Scientific studies have shown hermaphroditism in morays, some being sequential (they are born male only to metamorphose into a female at a later stage in their lives) and others are synchronous (having both functional testes and ovaries at the same time) and can reproduce with either sex.



About the Photographer

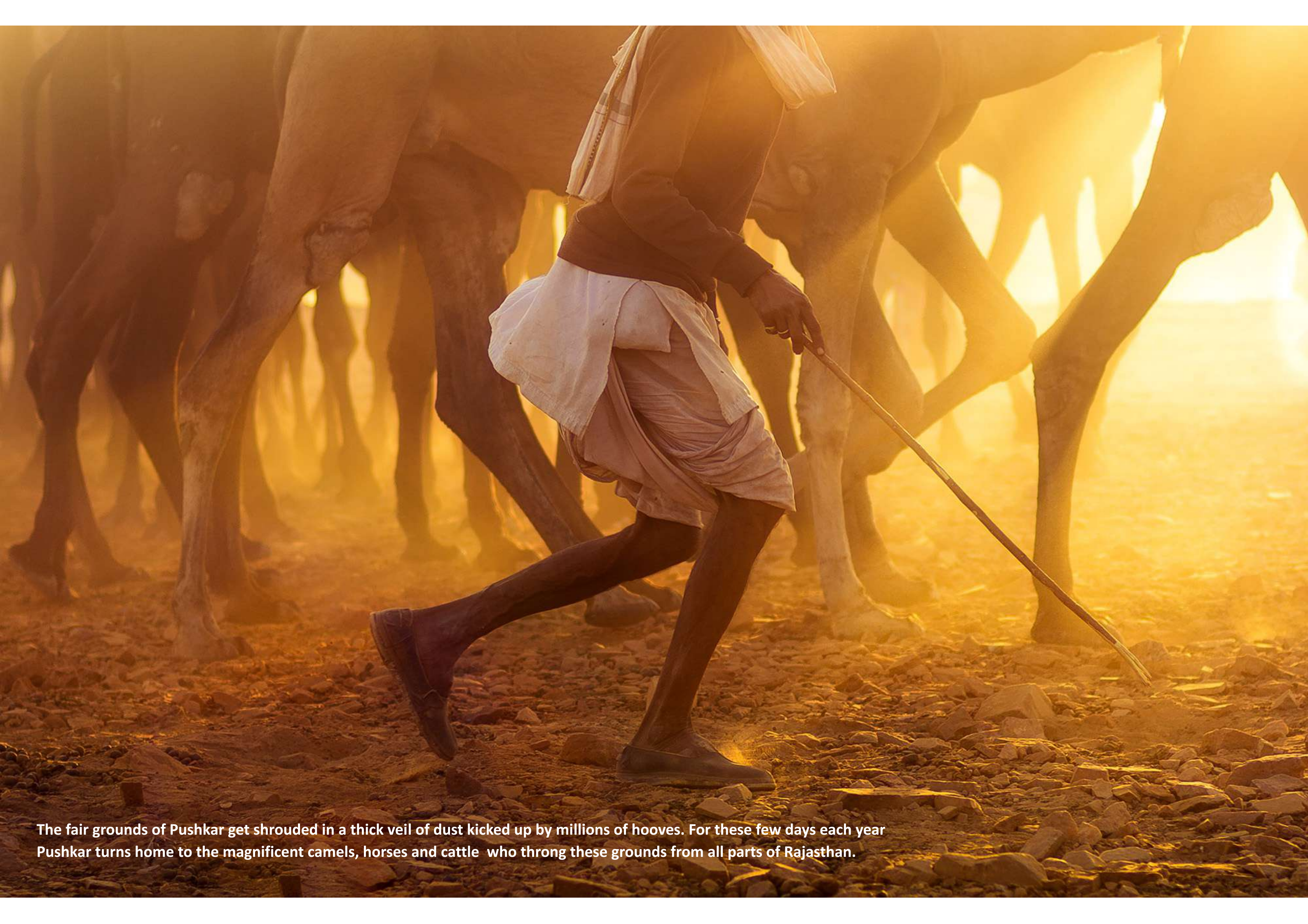
Samya Sengupta was born and brought up in the city of Kolkata. Samya is an adventurer, photographer and a certified scuba diver. He has trekked across the Himalayas for more than two decades and dived across various circuits for the last 4 years. He is one of the few underwater photographers hailing from India. He has carried out photographic assignments for various international non profit organizations. The Indian gallery and the theme poster of India at WTM London Fair 2013 were decorated with his photographs. The 'Experience Bengal' campaign of ITOC and Department of Tourism, West Bengal has featured many of his works. Samya doesn't want to confine himself to the usual genres but loves to explore the unexplored. His love for adventure and aspiration to witness the unknown had drawn him towards scuba diving, underwater, aerial and travel photography.

Pushkar: a Tale of Hooves, Colours and Sands

by Saurabh Sirohiya



Majestic animals, humongous crowd, dusty grounds and splashes of colour everywhere, the Pushkar animal fair is not only one of the largest of its kind but also a melting pot of diverse cultures from across the globe



The fair grounds of Pushkar get shrouded in a thick veil of dust kicked up by millions of hooves. For these few days each year Pushkar turns home to the magnificent camels, horses and cattle who throng these grounds from all parts of Rajasthan.

With the evening moon shining at its brightest, painting the sandy dunes in a hue of bright blue the tribes from different parts of Rajasthan embark upon an epic journey. Their journeys commence from all over Rajasthan, they begin their arduous trek across the sand from the remotest of locations, from quant villages hidden

in obscurity, only to emerge in the flowing moonlight to become a part of something grand. Their journeys take them through the scrub-lands and deserts, while others find their ways through the thickets of thorn trees and bristly fields of bajra. Their convoys of camel drawn caravans adorned in colourful decors seem like a tapestry of all the pouring colours in the world carefully stitched together against the backdrop of the mighty Thar Desert. They are all headed in the same direction, with their destination being the town of Pushkar. Accompanying them are their slobbering beasts, which are as decked up as their human counterparts. In this crowd also present are the musicians, performers, artists, painters all of whom are going to play an integral part in ensuing gala over the next few days. All of them are going to take part in the Pushkar Camel Fair or locally known as “Pushkar ka Mela” which is a five day camel and livestock fair held in this small town of Rajasthan. Every year the Pushkar fair is organised keeping in accordance with the lunar calendar for five days from the Kartik ekadashi to Kartik Poornima, the full moon day (the 15th) of the Hindu month of Kartik (October–November).

For these five days the fairgrounds truly become a melting pot for people from all over the world. The Raikas who are historically well known for their camel herding skills can be seen ensuring their supercilious beasts are getting the care and the right kind of treatment which they richly deserve; wandering Gujjar’s stalk the grounds of Pushkar fair, ever so finicky about finding the right spot for their prized camels for the next few days, they are joined by their women who further add to the already colourful diaspora of Pushkar with their friendly banters in laughing groups and their gypsy-bright skirts which dot the fields of Pushkar with colours alien to a barren desert landscape as their silver jewellery clinks and glitters in the sun. The nomadic community of Gadia Lohar also makes Pushkar its home during this time of the year. The gritty Lohars have traditionally excelled as ironsmiths. The Lohars join the Pushkar fair not as traders of camels, horses or other livestock but their specialised skill sets come in handy over the course of next few days, from repairing a malfunctioning bolt in one of the wheels of colourful caravans to fixing a domestic utensil for everyday use, the Lohars are indispensable. The confluence

of such a huge number of people from all over Rajasthan provides the Lohars with an opportunity to make some fast cash over the next few days. They are joined by Bhills, traditionally known as the “Bow Men of Rajasthan”. Not so long ago their ancestors mastered the wilderness of the scrub-covered ravines with their bows and arrows. The pride with which the Bhills stride across the fields of Pushkar is a tell-tale sign of the warrior lineage so engraved in the blood of these men.

Over the years Pushkar animal fair has metamorphosed into one of the world’s largest and most colourful livestock fairs and receives a footfall in hundreds of thousands not only from parts of India but across the globe. For these five days the otherwise quant town of Pushkar springs to life and goes on an overdrive to attend to all its guests and tending to their needs. The trading is not just limited to camels; in fact flocks of cattle, sheep, goats, and thoroughbred horses are bought and sold in good-natured haggling encounters. Apart from being an animal fair, the dusty fair grounds of Pushkar also provide the perfect opportunities to everyone to catch up with an old friend, meet family members and celebrate brotherhood and kinship. There is no lack of activity all around and certainly multiple options available to keep one amused. The hysteric screams from

those atop the swirling giant wheels, shooting ranges with brightly coloured balloons staring down the barrel giving everyone a chance at testing their mettle, the smell of freshly fried snacks filling up the air, the shopping, the bargaining, the laughter, all of these combined make Pushkar much more than just a livestock fair.

While those in charge of their camels and other livestock are more concerned about their crucial business transactions, Pushkar certainly does have something in store for everyone and offers more than glimpses into aspects of India’s rich and ancient cultural traditions. A number of events are organised during the course of this fair which are aimed at an exchange of culture and intermingling between the locals and the visitors. While most of these events cater to the entertainment needs of people some are even aimed at benefitting the vibrant local communities. Specially built amphitheatres play host to number of such events. Needless to say when these events are a part of one of the biggest livestock fairs in the world the spotlight is bound to be firmly riveted on the main players, the animals. Hence almost all of these events incorporate the magnificent beasts in some form or the other. As a result of which, the Pushkar camel race, camel decoration contest, camel and horse dance

Over the years Pushkar animal fair has metamorphosed into one of the world’s largest and most colourful livestock fairs and receives a footfall in hundreds of thousands from across the globe.

The magnificent camels are synonymous with Pushkar animal fair. The camels are in prime demand and their handlers leave no stone unturned in ensuring their animals are enjoying a comfortable stay.





In spite of the huge presence of horses, cattle, sheep and other livestock, the camels remain the cynosure of Pushkar animal fair.

off, competition to select the best cattle in various breeds and events along these lines all form integral part of the Pushkar itinerary. Like the animals, Pushkar is also a confluence of people from all over Rajasthan, and they have devised methods to forge stronger bonds of friendship on the grubby fields of Pushkar. A contest to

find out who is the fastest to tie a turban which is so synonymous with the males belonging to these tribes, a careful and precise measurement of the length of the moustaches of the participants to declare the winner, a game of wrestling among the brave heart participants, a game of kabaddi, a race among women where they

carry earthen water pots on their heads to the finish line, all add to the increased feeling of kinship and the prevalent cordial mood.

Over the years the number of foreign nationals visiting the fields of Pushkar to witness the amazing spectacle which unfolds over five days every year has

steadily increased. Keeping in mind their ever increasing numbers the authorities aimed at showcasing various aspects of the region's tradition and culture which would allow the visiting foreign nationals glimpses into the inner workings of these societies and provide them with a more fulfilling and enriching experience. And nothing quite builds up this sense of camaraderie better than a well competed game of football between the locals and the visitors. However the one event which grabs the maximum eyeballs is reserved for the ladies. In this event the ladies belonging to different nationalities dress up as Indian brides along with traditional Indian ornaments and jewellerys. Such events truly allow people belonging to different nationalities dawn the Indian-ness albeit briefly. The popular Mandana competition has always been a favourite among the locals and proves to be one of the biggest draws in the fields of Pushkar. This event is organised exclusively for the present local people. Mandana is folk art competition which celebrates the rich heritage of folk art which is still widely practiced all over Rajasthan. This event witnesses an overwhelming participation from girls and women belonging to different tribes and parts of Rajasthan, who all get an opportunity to showcase their respective traditional art forms. During the course of this event the participants diligently create elaborate designs, paintings, murals and other beautiful pieces of art and decorations on

This elderly man standing next to his herd of camels greets the tourists visiting the fair grounds of Pushkar. Pushkar animal fair apart from being a livestock fair is a melting pot of cultures and traditions.



A young woman dressed in the traditional colourful attire, typical to the indigenous people of Rajasthan tends to her young child.



Ancient Hindu mythologies and scriptures describe Pushkar Lake as the most sacred of the pilgrimage sites among those which are related to water bodies. It is often described as “Tirtha Raj”...

huge mud canvasses created on the walls of some permanent structure. Some of these pieces of art being as elaborate and detailed as they usually are often take up

hours at a stretch to reach completion. All the paintings are done by primarily using just two colours which are locally made. These colours are white and the main

ingredient used for preparing this colour is white chalk which is locally known as “khadiya” and the other colour which is extensively used is reddish ochre which is locally known as “geru”. Some of the participants along with these two primary colours prefer to use a lighter hue of blue

which further enhances the beautiful pieces of artwork. The motifs and murals usually are elaborate and colourful depictions of some mythological episodes and events, while some showcase geometrical patterns whereas some of them are about the rich floral and faunal diversity in Rajasthan’s nature. These giant canvasses showcase the rich history of the region, the ancient conquests, glory days of the ancient kings, the flourishing kingdoms; they serve as a throwback to the ancient time when entire Rajasthan used to be the proud bastion of empires.

Pushkar is not only about the magnificent beasts or the rich and colourful heritage of Rajasthan, it holds a special place among devout Hindus as well for being a sacred Hindu pilgrimage. At the heart of this pilgrimage is the sacred Pushkar Lake. Pushkar Lake or Pushkar Sarovar as it is known among the pilgrims is located in the outskirts of the town of Pushkar. Ancient Hindu mythologies and scriptures describe Pushkar Lake as the most sacred of the pilgrimage sites among those which are related to water bodies. It is often described as “Tirtha Raj”- the most sacred of all pilgrimage sites. The pilgrimage site of Pushkar Lake is dedicated to Hindu God Brahma, who is considered by the Hindus as the creator of the universe. The pilgrimage site of Pushkar Lake is an ancient one; the lake finds its mention in primordial coins whose origins can be traced back to as early as the 4th century BC. For a long time it was believed the



(photographs) While the fair grounds bustle with myriad activities the mood in the town of Pushkar reflects the overall festive atmosphere prevalent all around.



its kind. However that assumption is not entirely correct. There are at least four major temples of the god still in use today. These are at Pushkar in Ajmer, Rajasthan; Dudhai in the state of Madhya Pradesh; Khed Brahma in Kerala; and Kodakkal in the Malabar region of Kerala-Karnataka. Presently there are five principal temples of Brahma in Pushkar and all of them are of recent construction since most earlier buildings were destroyed by the Mughal emperor Aurangzeb during the late 17th century. Numerous bathing areas where a series of stone steps lead up to waters surrounding the Pushkar Lake locally known as “ghats” are places for the pilgrims to take a dip in the waters of the

sacred lake to wash away their sins thereby cleansing their souls and bodies. Some believe the waters of Pushkar Lake have special healing properties which help in curing skin infections and other skin related ailments.

While the fair grounds on the outskirts of Pushkar teem with traders and their livestock, the town of Pushkar too turns into a hotbed of activities during these five days. This fair marks a period of prosperity for hundreds of small to medium scale traders who earn a living in the town of Pushkar. The hotels and guest houses remain packed with visitors, the small eateries and tea shops along the streets overflow with the huge influx of tourists,



Dressed in such elaborate costume with an eye for the minutest of details, this burly man impersonating Lord Shiva was undoubtedly the centre of attention in the marketplace of the town.



In Pushkar town people dress up in elaborate costumes impersonating various Gods and Goddesses from Hindu mythologies. This individual dressed as Goddess Kali visits the households offering blessings in exchange of money or food items.

it is brisk business time for everyone in the town. The colourful sights in the streets and alleys of Pushkar are no less endearing than the fair grounds. The streets are lined with talented local musicians who churn out traditional folk songs accompanied by their many traditional musical instruments. People dressed in colourful costumes

impersonating the various mythological characters and Hindu deities roam the streets of Pushkar blessing the tourists and devotees and in the middle of all this the persistent langur monkeys benefit from the left over scraps or successfully coerce their human counterparts into feeding them, it is a time of plenty for everyone.

On the penultimate day as the morning sun emerges over the eastern horizon, the long and slow moving queue of thousands of pilgrim snake their way through the

water slicked streets of Pushkar town and climb the steps of the temples of Brahma to pay homage to him. This ritual of paying homage to the creator also signifies the end of the Pushkar fair, the magnificent spectacle which had painted the dunes of Rajasthan in myriad hues over the past few days. As the last night of the fair approaches the flickering reflection of the great white full moon of autumn on the holy waters of Pushkar Lake marks the beginning of another important ritual, the “Deepdaan” ritual. As a part of this ritual as the distant temple bells chime in the background, the incense sticks cloud the air with various fragrances, the pilgrims carry their lamps to the water’s edge and set them afloat in homage to the lake of the Creator.

By the time the early morning sun casts its golden hue across the fields of Pushkar next dawn, most of these lamps would flicker out, the hard working hands busy over the past few days in setting up their tents would be engaged in dismantling them, the traders who had made the grubby grounds their new homes would be busy wrapping everything up in their neat and tidy ways, the horses and the camels would be prepared for the long and arduous trudge back home across the sands, the grounds of Pushkar would be preparing themselves to embrace the eerie calm that is about to

As the last night of the fair approaches the flickering reflection of the great white full moon of autumn on the holy waters of Pushkar Lake marks the beginning of the “Deepdaan” ritual.



This young girl dressed as some mythological character makes her way through a security cordon seeking alms from the tourists in exchange of her blessings.



A tourist poses with a camel during the Pushkar fair. For tourists from different parts of the world the Pushkar animal fair is the perfect opportunity to experience this rich and diverse ancient culture from such close quarters.

dawn upon them only to welcome the next autumn, before the huge Poornima moon casts its signature bewitching spell across the night sky, when the tribes will emerge from all parts of the desert, when they will be back with their camels and horses and bright caravans and thousands of tourists from all over, all of them no matter how

different from each other bound together by the single common thread which is the irresistible charm of Pushkar.



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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An average day in Spiti Valley unfurls such beautiful sights, the lure of which attracts many to this Himalayan hamlet.

The Spiti Valley Parable

tales from a magical realm of the Himalayas, rich in culture, heritage and scenic beauty

by Aditya Paul

Clear skies in their distinct blue shade dotted with patches of woolly clouds, semi-barren landscapes tinged in a golden-yellow hue and towering snow capped mountain peaks welcome one into the magical realms of Spiti Valley.



Nestled high up in the Indian Himalayas lies an arid land, a high altitude desert-like natural beautiful terrain punctuated by small patches of green and tiny, cozy villages with its flat-roofed houses and cottages perched just below the stark rocky hillsides and the jagged snow-covered peaks of the Himalayas. Imagine if you will, high mountain passes which are blocked by heavy snowfall and ice for more than half the year round, intermittently scattered by the brightly coloured prayer flags of the Buddhist monasteries fluttering in the strong cold winds originating from the high Himalayan range.

Immediately, one's mind goes to Ladakh, it has to be; you might think, the famous and immensely popular tourist destination which is the go-to Himalayan playground for lovers of beautiful and utterly extraordinary landscapes, of tourists and photo-journalists alike who seek not only natural beauty and Instagram moments but also wilderness adventures and spiritual horizons. However, you would be mistaken. Although this place looks and sounds a lot like what Ladakh has to offer, the correct answer is a little known albeit equally beautiful place with nearly the same description.

This place which is on the fast track to becoming a major tourist destination falls in the wild, undulating valleys of Spiti and Lahaul, contiguous with the rugged western fringes of the Tibetan Plateau and easily overlooked by the hordes of tourists

who rush each year to the much more popular towards Ladakh in search of their own little quest to find their inner sanctum sanctorum.

Located about 550 Km South of Ladakh, in the State of Himachal Pradesh, Spiti-Lahaul Valley has historically fallen more under the influence of Tibet than that of India, and remain far less known to the outside world. Travel here remains one of Asia's great adventures, whether you get around by car (Four-wheel drive essential), on rickety buses, or for the more adventurous souls, on motorbikes; keep in mind that these are some of the most challenging motorable mountain roads not just in India but the entire world. There are just a handful number of ways to reach this peaceful and heavenly abode. Many travelers approach Lahaul and Spiti via the 3978m-high Rohtang La pass, which rises north of the tourism hub of Manali – a spectacular experience in itself and only passable from about May to October. A more convoluted approach physically involves approaching this region from the East, starting out from India's most famous hill station, Shimla. This backdoor to Spiti traced the valley of the Sutlej River through Kinnaur district, where the mountains got steadily higher, the gorges more precipitous, and the terrain starker and drier, with every passing kilometer. Compared to the road to Spiti Valley from Shimla, the road to Spiti Valley from Manali is not that shorter in distance but definitely in the time taken to traverse

The scattered human settlements in Spiti Valley are cradled in the laps of these mighty mountains with their jagged peaks reaching out for the sky.





Buddhism is the dominant religion in Spiti Valley and its formidable presence is palpable in every nook and corner of this region.

the route. The difference in distance between Delhi – Shimla – Kaza (791 km) & Delhi – Manali – Kaza (772 km) is just mere 19 km. However, you can reach Manali that is 570 km of drive within a day or about 12 hours journey from Delhi due to mostly excellent and wide roads leading to it. Next day, remaining 202 km can be done to reach Kaza by evening. However, you have to brave the AMS(Acute Mountain Sickness) as the altitude difference is abrupt while travelling along this route. But, if you are short on the number of days and road to Spiti Valley from Manali is open, better run through it to save around one complete day. The road between Gramphu and Kunzum Pass is treacherous but an experience plus beauty in itself. Moreover, this route from Manali is less susceptible to landslides as compared to roads in Kinnaur Valley especially in monsoons. If you leave early from Manali, the water crossings are manageable but in Kinnaur Valley, monsoons wreak havoc and there are many numbers of zones where constant shooting stones and slides happen, major being Malling Nalla ahead of Nako. And this is time window when this route from Manali is open and can be used to reach Spiti Valley.

The district of Lahaul-Spiti is a cold desert area as it hardly gets any rain. So places to visit in Lahaul and Spiti have a unique terrain that is exciting and adventurous. Mountain ranges here are bare, bereft of any vegetation. As you drive up and down

the Trans-Himalayan range, you see the region's stunning landscape. Snow is a common feature here and some peaks never let it go, no matter what season it is. Tourist places in Lahaul-Spiti are known for their enchanting character, as they are extreme and mostly rare from every other place in India. For example, try the stunning Spiti Valley Trek. The rivers swiftly flow at the base of these mountains, carrying the water formed by melted snow. The sky here has a special shade of blue that you don't get to see elsewhere, especially in the cities.

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Complementing the blue sky well are small, beautiful meadows of the valley. As mentioned earlier, colourful Buddhist flags can be seen fluttering in the breeze, indicating the culture of the land. Large prayer wheels and stones carved with the Buddhist mantras can be witnessed at the entrances to many of the small villages in this region. When you reach a village, you might wonder how these communities live in such isolation.

The culture gradually changes, from Hindu to Buddhist as you gain altitude and lose

vegetation in the rain shadow of the Himalaya. From the Sutlej's confluence with the Spiti River, the road zigzags endlessly upwards to the village of Nako – a cluster of medieval-looking stone and mud-brick houses set beside a sacred lake 3660m above sea level. By the Buddhist culture and Tibetan facial features of Nako's hardy inhabitants, you know that

you have indubitably reached Spiti Valley. The language, culture, and populations of Lahaul and Spiti are closely related. Generally, the Lahaulis are of Tibetan and Indo-Aryan, while the Spiti Bhot are more similar to the Tibetans, owing to their proximity to Tibet. In the pre-independence era, the ethnic tribal belt was into the British Lahaul and the Chamba Lahaul,

which was merged with Punjab post-1947. This is the second largest district in Indian union. The present administrative center is Keylong in Lahaul. Before the two districts (Spiti and Lahaul) were merged, Kardang was the capital of Lahaul, and Dhankarr the capital of Spiti. The languages of both the Lahauli and Spiti is Bhoti, Spiti Bhoti, it belongs to the Tibetan

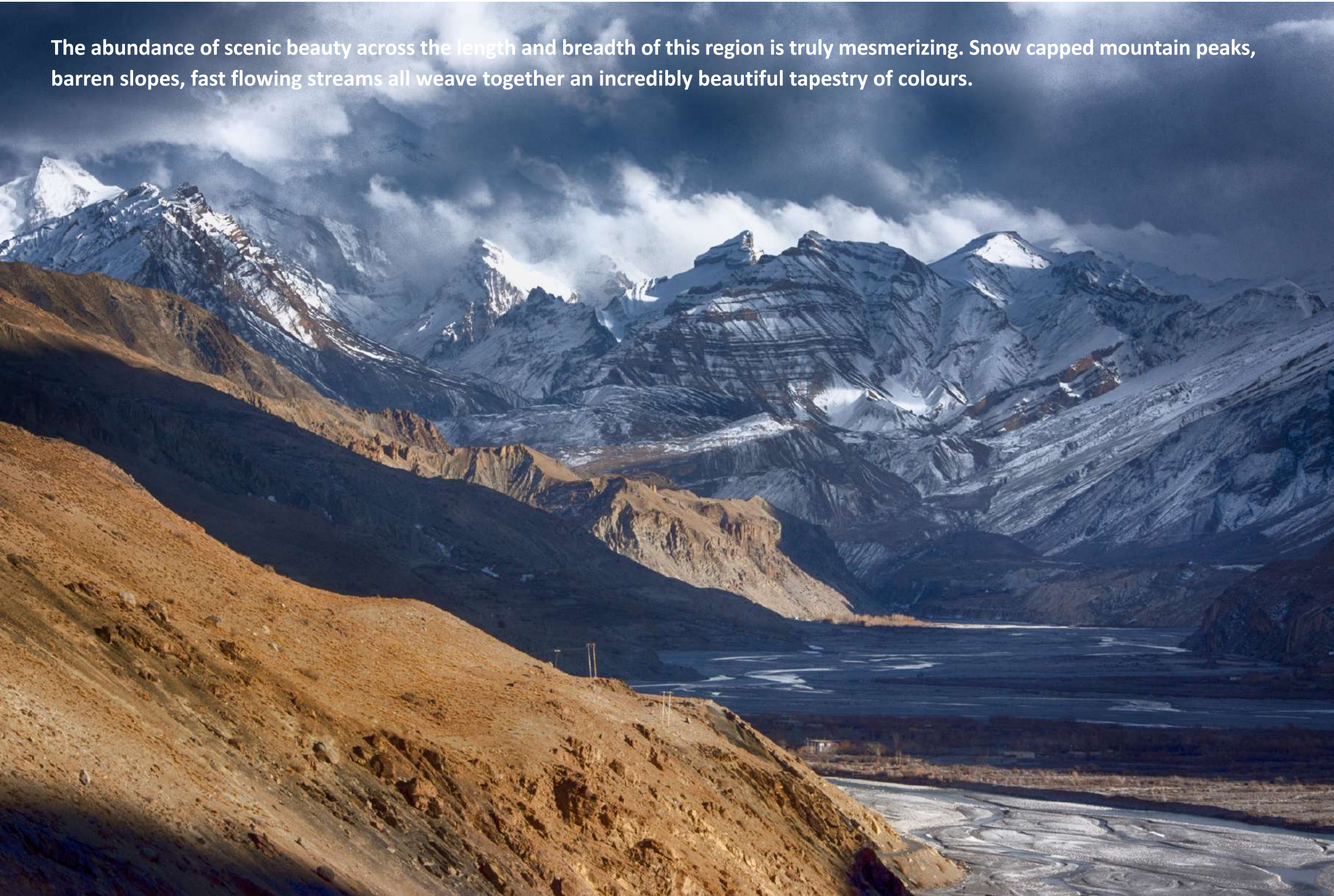
family. They are very similar to the Ladakhi and Tibetans culturally, as they had been placed under the rule of the Guge and Ladakh kingdoms at occasional intervals.

Among the Lahaulis, the family acts as the basic unit of kinship. The extended family system is common, evolved from the polyandric system of the past. The

Among the residents of this region, the Tibetan lineage is still very pronounced. This little girl well protected from the ensuing cold night makes her way to her home.



The abundance of scenic beauty across the length and breadth of this region is truly mesmerizing. Snow capped mountain peaks, barren slopes, fast flowing streams all weave together an incredibly beautiful tapestry of colours.



family is headed by a senior male member, known as the Yunda, while his wife, known as the Yundamo, attains authority by being the oldest member in the generation. The clan system, also known as Rhus, plays another major role in the Lahauli society. The local Spiti Bhot community has an

inheritance system that is otherwise unique to the Tibetans. Upon the death of both parents, only the eldest son will inherit the family property, while the eldest daughter inherits the mother's jewellery, and the younger siblings inherit nothing. Men usually fall back on the social security

system of the Trans-Himalayan Gompas. Agriculture is the main source of livelihood in this region. Potato farming is common. Occupations include animal husbandry, working in various government programs, government services, and other businesses and crafts that include weaving. Houses

are constructed in the Tibetan architectural style, as the land in Lahul and Spiti is mountainous and perilously prone to earthquakes.

This region is rich with culture and heritage sights and places to visit and is famous for the number of Buddhist monasteries. From Nako, the dusty road climbs higher into the Spiti Valley, at times snaking along beside the rushing, turquoise-grey river, at times clinging to cliffs high above. At the neat, whitewashed village of Tabo, lies

Agriculture is the main source of livelihood in this region. Potato farming is common. Occupations include animal husbandry, working in various government programs, government services and other businesses and crafts that include weaving.

the Tabo Gompa, founded, according to legend, in AD 996, by Ringchen Zangpo, the 'Great Translator' – a key figure in consolidating the hold of Buddhism on the Tibetan plateau. Five of the nine shrines inside the gompa's curious, mud-walled buildings bear outstanding murals painted by some of the best Buddhist artists of their time. The centerpiece is the main assembly hall, the Tsuglkang, whose walls are lined with stunning near-life-size clay sculptures of 28 bodhisattvas (enlightened beings).

Tabo has a handful of simple but appealing guesthouses and cafes, and after a night

A group of local women on their way to their daily jobs. Agriculture forms the backbone of the economy with potato farming taking center stage. A handful are also involved in animal husbandry and government services.



in a warm bed and a hot meal you can continue on to Dhankar, where the most spectacularly-sited among all of Spiti's monasteries hugs the edge of a high cliff, hemmed in by eroded rock pinnacles. Its main courtyard contains a stuffed goat hanging above the stairwell, a room where the Dalai Lama slept, and a meditation cave – there are monasteries with greater treasures, but the views over the confluence of the Spiti River and its tributary the Pin, and soaring mountains in every direction, are phenomenal.

The beautiful natural scenery and ancient Buddhist monasteries, notably the Kye, Dhankar, Shashur, Guru Ghantal, Khungri Monastery in Pin Valley, Tnagyd Gumpa of the Sakya Sect in Komic, Sherkhang Gumpa in Lahlung (believed to be older than Tabo Monastery), the only Buddhist Mummy of a Monk in Gue around 550 years old and Chandra Taal Lake are the main tourist attractions of the region. One of the most interesting places is the Tabo Monastery, located 45 km from Kaza, Himachal Pradesh, the capital of the Spiti

region. This monastery rose to prominence when it celebrated its thousandth year of existence in 1996. It houses a collection of Buddhist scriptures, Buddhist statues and Thangkas. The ancient gumpa is finished with mud plaster and contains several scriptures and documents. Lama Dzungpo heads the gumpa here. There is a modern guest house with a dining hall and all the facilities are available. Another famous gumpa, Kardang Monastery, is located at an elevation of 3,500 meters across the river, about 8 km from Keylong.

Kardang is well connected by the road via the Tandi Bridge which is about 14 km from Keylong. Built in the 12th century, this monastery houses a large library of Buddhist literature including the main Kangyur and Tangyur scriptures. The treacherous weather in Lahaul and Spiti permits visitors to tour only between the months of June to October, when the roads and villages are free of snow and the high passes (Rothang La and Kunzum La) are open. It is possible to access Spiti from Kinnaur (along the Sutlej) all through



Spiti Valley is also home to some of the rarest and elusive species such as the snow leopard. A sizeable population of Ibex as seen here serves as the major prey base for the very elusive ghost cat of these mountains.

Amidst the abundant beauty life can be deceptively tough for the small human settlements here. During the winter months heavy snowfall cuts off this region from the rest of the world, something these people have to deal with each year.



the year, although the road is sometimes temporarily closed by seasonal landslides or avalanches. For trekkers, the Spiti Valley is a paradise, offering some challenging treks to explore the newer heights of the

Himalayas. The treks take people to the most remote areas including the rugged villages and old Gompas followed by the exotic wildlife trails. Some of the popular trekking routes in the area include Kaza

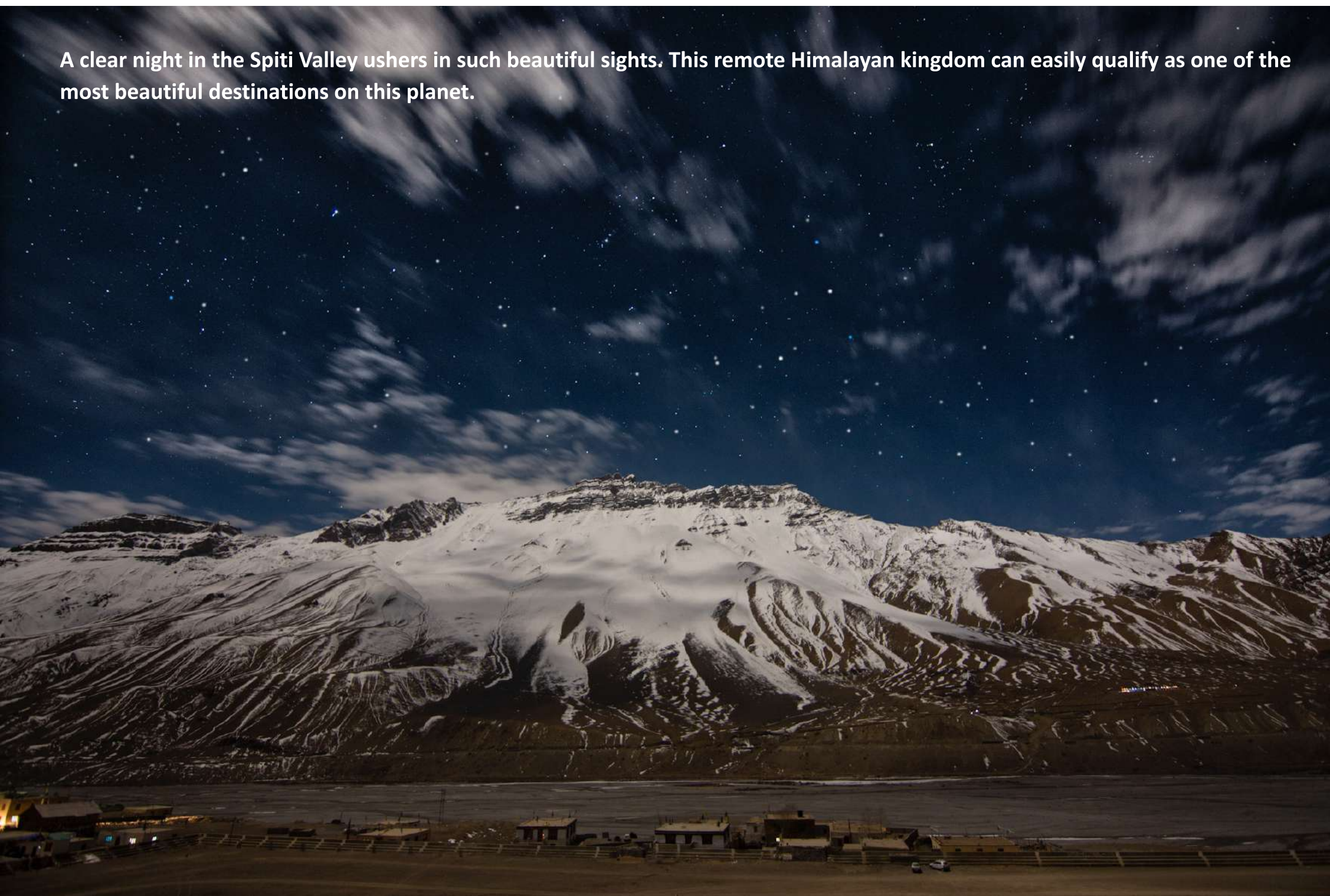
-Langza-Hikim-Komic-Kaza, Kaza-Ki-Kibber-Gete-Kaza, Kaza-Losar-Kunzum La and Kaza-Tabo-Sumdo-Nako. There are some very high altitude treks also where you have to cross passes- like

Parangla Pass (connecting Ladakh with Spiti Valley), Pin Parvati Pass, Baba Pass, Hamta Pass trek, Spiti Left Bank Trek are few to name. Please note that you carry all the necessary things before you head

This beautiful Himalayan destination is steadily etching its mark on the global tourism map courtesy a plethora of natural beauty and warm and hospitable people.



A clear night in the Spiti Valley ushers in such beautiful sights. This remote Himalayan kingdom can easily qualify as one of the most beautiful destinations on this planet.



out for a trekking tour to Spiti. Skiing is the popular adventure sports in Spiti and has been popular in India from the past few years. The amazing snow clad mountains with the added advantage of inspiring heights are enough to allure the adventure spirits of the avid skier, providing all the thrill and fun attracted to the sport.

Although this region is sparsely populated and quite remote even though it lies very close to the notoriously famous tourist destinations such as Ladakh and Lava and Leh villages and other mountain passes if you are looking for serenity and inner peace and solitude, this place comes highly recommended. There are plenty of other places to see apart from the ones mentioned

and of course, the blue sky and the snow-capped peaks not too far away from clouds you can sometimes walk through, render this gorgeous valley a mention in the list of must-see places in any adventurer's notebook. For those willing to take a chance and stray off the beaten path, this is the destination that is calling out to you.



About the Photographer

A self taught passionate travel photographer from Kharagpur, West Bengal, especially capturing lives of the people from various regions of Himalaya and its majestic landscapes, **Aditya Paul** is currently pursuing Mass Communication from AAFT, Noida, and lives in New Delhi. He started photography from the age of 15 and started to click daily life and nature around him. After passing the higher secondary exam, he started travelling in various parts of India to capture the color and culture of India. Trekking around in the Himalayas for clicking pictures is also what he loves for adventure and leisure. He has been awarded by various National organizations like IIMC, Delhi in which he achieved the 1st prize in a photography competition held throughout the country. In 2018, January he has also been awarded the 3rd prize in a landscape photography competition held by HAIDA FILTERS INDIA. His works can also be accessed through: - **Facebook** - <https://www.facebook.com/adityanikon> **Instagram** - <https://www.instagram.com/adityanikon>

Tradition

Kumbharwada

Mumbai's own potter's wheel

by Rahul Machigar

the story of a potter's colony, one of the early settlers in Dharavi and how their craft has thrived for more than a century now

Home to “Bollywood”, the “Financial Capital of India”, “the city that never sleeps, Mumbai has been conferred with multiple titles like these. In the busy streets and lanes of Mumbai life flows at a breakneck speed. The struggle is relentless and palpable everywhere. In this mega city which has served as the bedrock for dreams for many decades, the lure of life on the fast track spreads its tentacles and pulls one into its realms. The same Mumbai doesn't flinch before crushing those dreams if it seems so fit. With its growing reputation as the land of opportunities the city too has expanded far and wide in an attempt to make adequate room for those dreams to blossom. The island city's ever expanding suburbs harbour the undying, almost aggressive ambitions of the city, much like its denizens.

Yet at the heart of Mumbai there still remains small pockets, reminiscent of an old world charm, keeping the city firmly grounded and connected to its roots which are reflective of a time when the humble origins of Mumbai were a far cry from the glittering modern day metropolis it has metamorphosed into. In fact it is this juxtaposition of modernity and ancient root which forms the firm backbone of this city, one which firmly lays down the platform upon which the city dreams and peaks above the cloudscape in an attempt to reach dizzying heights. Kumbharwada is one such settlement in Mumbai, which takes one back to the early days when the

city was still taking baby steps towards today's stardom.

Kumbharwada is located in the Dharavi locality of Mumbai. Dharavi is a densely populated area with a sizeable population close to 10 million people squeezed in an area of barely 2 square kilometres. In fact considered as one of the largest slums in Asia, Dharavi also happens to be one of the most densely populated areas in the world. Kumbharwada resembles a regular Dharavi establishment with dingy lanes, single storied shanties jostling for space and an overall downtrodden appearance. However there is one particular aspect of Kumbharwada which gives this small settlement its very own identity. In fact Kumbharwada happens to be one of the early settlements in Dharavi.

Kumbharwada, more than a century old is home to the largest community of potters in Mumbai. Almost the entire population of Kumbharwada is made up of Gujarati people, whose ancestors migrated to Mumbai in the latter half of the 19th century from Kutch and Porbandar in Gujarat. Traditionally they have been in the ancient business of pottery; in fact Kumbharwada got its name from the profession of its settlers. “Kumbhars” means potters and “Wada” means colony, which makes Kumbharwada the “colony of potters”, a name which is perfectly suited for this century old establishment in Dharavi.

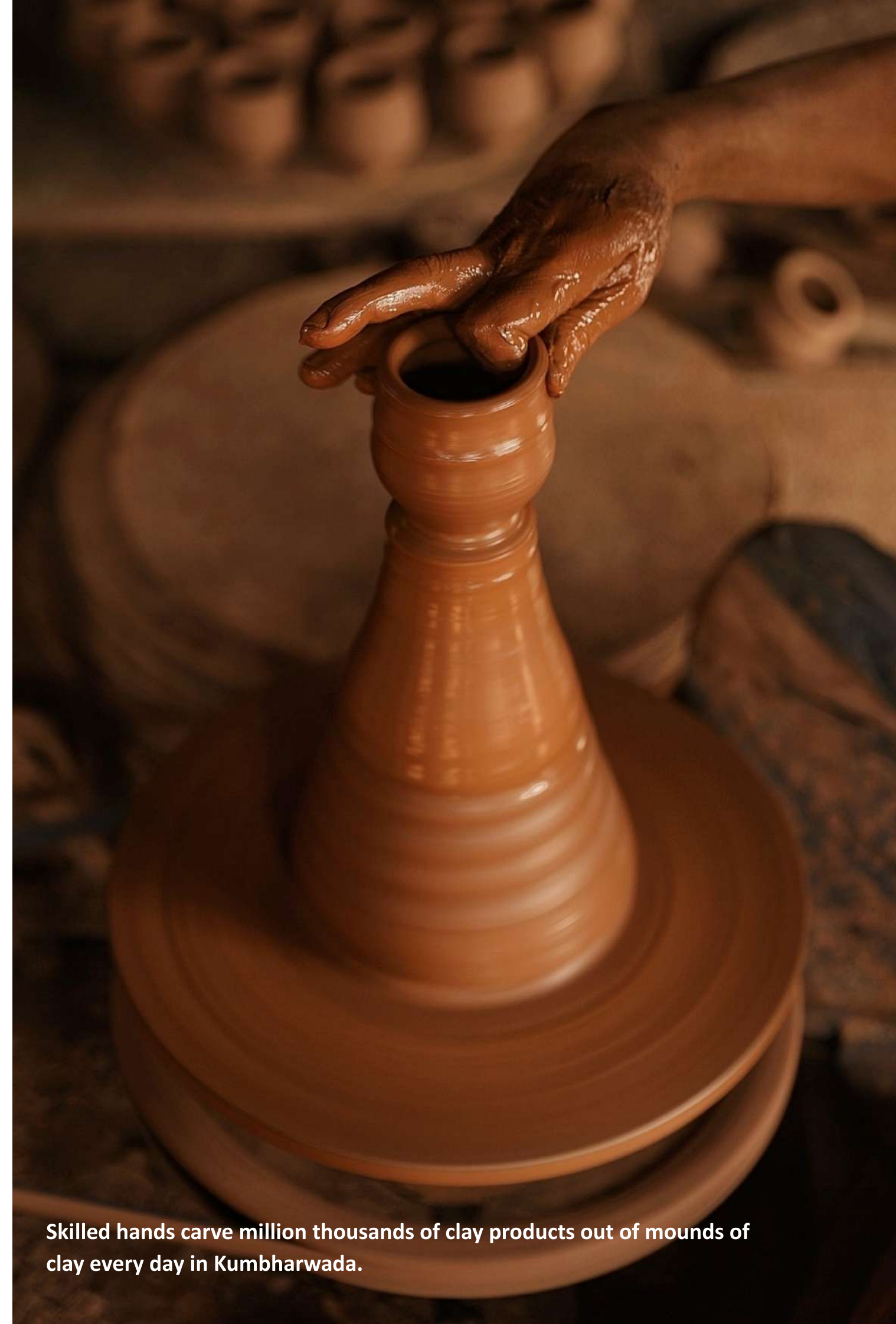
The pottery industry of Kumbharwada has

stood the test of time and presently boasts of being one of Dharavi's most famous local craft. Of the 5000 odd families living in Kumbharwada at least 500-1000 of them are still actively involved in the pottery business. The final outputs which are results of the hard work and skills of these artisans may range from various earthen utensils such as small cups, large water pots to diyas (earthen lamps) or

Kumbharwada, more than a century old is home to the largest community of potters in Mumbai. Almost the entire population of Kumbharwada is made up of Gujarati people, whose ancestors migrated to Mumbai in the latter half of the 19th century from Kutch and Porbandar in Gujarat.

various items for home décor. It is quite fascinating how an ancient craft from faraway Saurashtra not only made its way into Mumbai (then Bombay) but thrived and managed to hold its own and be relevant even today, when the winds of change have affected and shaped almost everything around them. The artisans who migrated from Gujarat brought their craft along with them and continued to practice their trade in this establishment of Dharavi. With time their numbers kept growing and today they make up for a sizeable chunk

of Dharavi's population. Some of the potters are the sixth or even seventh generation of potters in their respective families. The profession and all the nuances associated with it have been passed on through generations. Most of these families still have relatives living in their homeland of Kutch. Some of them fondly remembers how their ancestors in their homeland villages were master craftsmen and how even the European settlers almost a century ago would be impressed by their ancestor's unmatched skills and reward him generously for his artistry. The strong link with their homeland still remains very much intact. In fact the potters insist on procuring their clay from Gujarat for its finest quality. A lot of effort goes into preparing the final clay products which depending on various festive seasons are in huge demands. After procuring the clay a lot of work goes in making the clay suitable for throwing into a pottery wheel. Giant lumps of clay are melted and kneaded with feet and softened. This is followed by making smaller lumps of clay which can be rolled into doughs of various sizes as per the requirement. Once the dough is made it is put on top of the rotating potter's wheel and carved into various shapes and forms by the skilled hands of these wonderful artisans. The kumbhars start practicing their skills at a very young age, mostly by observing the elders. They start out with the simpler tasks of kneading the clay or preparing the dough and gradually move on to the



Skilled hands carve million thousands of clay products out of mounds of clay every day in Kumbharwada.



The finished items are often left in the sun to be dried before they can be put into the kilns where they are baked for over 8-9 hours.

The clay needs to be thoroughly kneaded with hands and legs before it becomes suitable for making various utensils and other earthen products.



more complex disciplines of pottery such as carving the lump of clay on the potter's wheel, adding the finishing touches, the paintings or the decorations and others. With time the techniques involved have also undergone certain changes. For instance the traditional manually operated potter's wheel is no longer in vogue although some of the old timers still prefer

this traditional method. The traditional potter's wheel has been gradually replaced by the electric wheel, which makes the job of the potters a lot less arduous and increases the productivity as well. Another new technique which has increased the productivity is the use of moulds. The moulds come in handy for mass production of certain items which are in huge demand

during particular time of the year such as the festive seasons or the wedding seasons, when such demands skyrocket. Once the carving process is completed the brick kilns come into play for heating the items and hardening the clay so that it becomes durable and lasts for a long period of time. Generally the brick kilns are ignited in the afternoon only after all the pottery related

work comes to an end. These kilns which are traditionally known as "bhattis" are an integral part of this society and can be found in almost every household in this part of Dharavi. The potters use cotton wool or earthen tiles to light the kilns. The clay products are placed on the kiln on top of one another depending on their shapes and sizes and also on the degree of heat suitable for their sizes. The entire process may take over five hours during which the burning temperature is gradually increased with the maximum temperature reaching up to 450 degrees or more. Once the inner walls of the kilns turn red, it is time to take out the pottery items. Like many other traditional techniques involved with this profession the traditional brick kilns are fast losing favour among the potters of Kumbharwada, the primary reason being the massive pollution caused by the traditional brick kilns. This happens due to the use of saw dust, cotton wool, pharmaceutical wastes in order to light the fire in traditional kilns. In order to curb down on pollution and have a better control over regulating the temperature of the kilns which increases the efficiency many families have slowly graduated towards the modern gas kilns. Apart from this the gas kilns have proved to cost effective as well since they bring down the production cost by a substantial margin by eliminating a lot of extra expenses in terms of labour costs to light the fire, raw material to light the fire, construction and maintenance of the brick kilns. Once the

The potters in Kumbharwada make thousands of such earthen items each day. While many families have migrated towards the use of electric potter's wheel, traditional ways as can be seen here are still very much in vogue.



pottery items are taken out of the kilns paints are applied on them and they receive a much needed facelift through other decorations. Usually the womenfolk in the families are entrusted with such responsibilities making this business a true family affair in Kumbharwada. In this closely knit society business is fairly brisk throughout the year. However during the festive season, particularly during festivals such as Diwali, Makar Sankranti the 1000 odd potter families of Kumbharwada are burdened with huge demands and barely get time to breath. These festivals also mark a period of prosperity in the lives of these hardworking men and women.

For the migrant potters from Gujarat, Dharavi was not their preferred choice to settle down and practice their craft. Initially, towards the latter half of 1800 when the first bunch of potters arrived they had settled down towards the southern fringes of the city. However the smoke from their kilns and the resulting pollution led to the municipal authorities taking a note of the situation and eventually they intervened. The potters were moved to Dharavi which was a far cry from the Dharavi of today. Sparsely populated, Dharavi in the late 1800s bore a desolate look. In fact the kumbhars were some of the early settlers in Dharavi. Since then along with the rest of Mumbai, Dharavi too metamorphosed into one of the most densely populated localities in the world.

Along with the kumbhars from Gujarat thousands of such small scale traders and artisans related to other cottage industries made Dharavi their preferred location to settle down and eke out a living in the city of Mumbai. As Mumbai expanded and spilled over to the suburbs, Dharavi was pushed to a more central location and being located at the heart of the city naturally grabbed a lot of eyeballs. This

For the migrant potters from Gujarat, Dharavi was not their preferred choice to settle down and practice their craft.

Initially, towards the latter half of 1800 when the first bunch of potters arrived they had settled down towards the southern fringes of the city before being moved to Dharavi

eventually helped the potter community of Kumbharwada who has benefitted from this centralised location of Dharavi. In this cramped neighbourhood thousands of families including the families of the potters jostle for space. The living and working conditions are far from ideal, the safety measures or rather the lack of them pose serious concerns regarding the safety of this entire neighbourhood, in spite of the use of gas kilns by some families pollution and toxic fumes from the kilns still remain one significant problem in

An elderly artisan uses his hands to shape mounds of clay into such earthen pots.





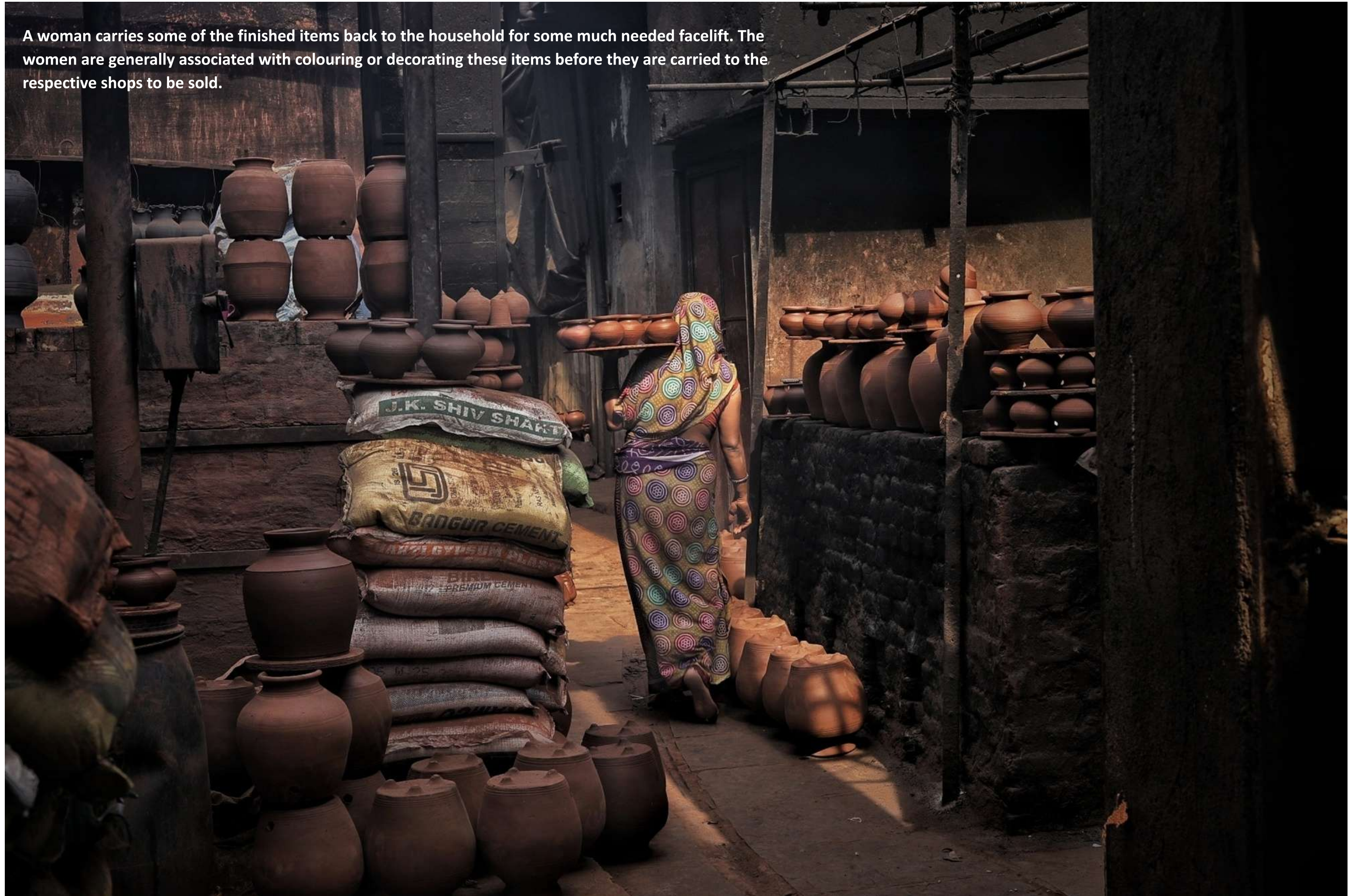
A worker sits in front of a brick kiln in Kumbharwada. These brick kilns, traditionally known as “bhattis” form an integral part of the potter’s colony in Dharavi and can be found in almost every household in Kumbhaarwada. These age old set ups however are fast losing favour among the potters, primarily due to the massive pollution caused by these kilns due to the use of cotton wool and pharmaceutical waste to keep the fire burning, their limited efficiency and higher running costs. The brick kilns are gradually being replaced by gas kilns which provide better control over regulating the temperature thereby increasing the productivity as well as the efficiency manifolds and also cut down on the expenses.

Kumbharwada. A number of proposals have been placed for the development of Dharavi however the concerned authorities failed to take any concrete decision and all those proposals at least for the time being are lying on ice. In the meantime Kumbharwada along with the rest of Dharavi continues to churn out some of

the finest clay items in the country. Amidst the shoddy, decrepit setting of Dharavi, Kumbharwada stands proud and tall, courtesy the skilled hands which carve out exquisite pieces of craft from lumps of clay and in turn has carved out a prestigious niche for Kumbharwada amidst this frantic, glittery and ambitious city.

A number of proposals have been placed for the development of Dharavi, however the concerned authorities failed to take any concrete decision...

A woman carries some of the finished items back to the household for some much needed facelift. The women are generally associated with colouring or decorating these items before they are carried to the respective shops to be sold.



The clay products are placed inside the kilns on top of one another depending on their shapes and sizes and also on the degree of heat suitable for their sizes.



A worker engaged in keeping the fire burning in one of the brick kilns.



Finished items are left to dry in the sun before they are sold in the shops.





Yet another regular day in the life of one of the thousands of potter families of Kumbharwada. The pottery industry of Kumbharwada has stood the test of time and presently boasts of being Dharavi's most famous local craft and a thriving cottage industry. The clay products are in huge demands during the festive seasons, particularly during Diwali, when the earthen lamps or diyas along with other items for home decor sell in thousands every day. Of the 5000 odd families living in Kumbharwada at least close to 1000 are still actively involved in this craft. Some of these individuals are the fifth or the sixth generation of potters in their family. The profession and the nuances of it have been passed on through generations.



About the Photographer

Rahul Machigar hails from a small village near Sion, Mumbai. A passionate photographer he is primarily interested in street and travel photography and has already travelled to various locations across the country in search of stories which are worth telling. His passion for street photography prompted him to explore the narrow alleys and bylanes of Dharavi when he stumbled upon the potter's colony in Kumbharwada. He was fascinated by the history and heritage of Kumbharwada and decided to cover in details the myriad aspects of this small settlement of potters whose ancestors migrated from Gujarat to Mumbai in the late 1800s.



Photograph by Payel Thakur

The festival of Eid al-Fitr marks the end of the holy month of Ramadan. Eid al-Fitr translates into “festival of breaking the fast” in reference to the fast observed by the Muslim community during the month of Ramadan. On the morning of the festival practicing Muslims all over the world gather in the premises of mosques to offer their worship to Allah. However childhood has little time for these time honoured practices and is much more concerned about the fun and games. As the elders around him observe the rituals with utmost sincerity, the young boy is impatient and can’t wait for the ceremony to get over so that he can go back to his toys and friends.

Our Traditions

Featuring the 8 winning photographs from our recently concluded online contest on the theme-“Our Traditions”.

We live in a strange world that is changing by the minute. It seems life itself has embarked upon this mission to add more pace to its flow. Amidst the bustle of our daily lives a lot remains unsaid, unnoticed, our finer sense and sensibilities often drown in the rigours of our daily lives. However in spite of the grim realities of the struggles of our everyday lives, our traditions some ancient still firmly bind us together, still instill in us compassion, respect for others and a sense of strong fellowship and reiterates everything that is so humane about us. Sometimes our traditions could be a small family affair, a ritual which is followed everywhere, on other occasions it can be a magnum opus, which involves millions. Irrespective of their scale, our traditions represent a critical piece of our culture and instill a sense of comfort and belonging.



Photograph by Abhinandan Bhaduri

During the Kulasai Dasara festival, which spans over 12 days in Tamil Nadu, male devotees wear elaborate costumes in an attempt to impersonate various Gods and Goddesses from Hindu mythology. The devotees taking part in this festival are expected to dress up in these costumes and abstain from a life of luxury or impure thoughts or feelings. It is absolutely imperative for the devotees to have a pure mind and body. One such devotee during the festival who is dressed up impersonating some Goddess from Hindu mythologies can be seen performing some kind of ritual with fire.



Photograph by Dhiraj Chavan

The Haldi Festival is primarily celebrated by the members of the Dhargar community in the state of Maharashtra. Each year a quant village on the outskirts of Kolhapur in Maharashtra dawns a cloak of yellow. The village of Pattan Kodoli springs to life on the auspicious occasion of Vitthal Birdev Annual Yatra, a procession which is attended by thousands of hardcore devotees from the neighboring villages of Maharashtra as well as from Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh. Pattan Kodoli's signature yellow appearance during the course of these festivities can be attributed to the use of turmeric powder or "haldi" in profusion by the devotees, who offer haldi to the worshipped deity during the course of the rituals.



Photograph by Kaushik Dutta

Among the devotees of Lord Murugan, the Vel Festival is of extreme significance. According to Hindu mythology Goddess Parvati presented her son Murugan with a spear or “Vel” which was said to contain all of Parvati’s powers, in order to defeat the evil Soorapadman. Primarily a festival of the Tamil communities in India and Sri Lanka, the Vel festival is celebrated across parts of West Bengal as well. As can be seen here, it is common among the devotees taking part in this festival to pierce their skin and mouth with a skewer and march towards the nearby temple of Lord Shiva to offer their worships. Amidst the beats of drums and cymbals people gathered around cheer this devotee and egg him on.

Kulasai Dasara is the grand old festival of 300 year old Kulasai Mutharammam Temple, located at Kulasekharapatnam in Tamil Nadu, India. In essence, Dasara is celebrated on the 10th day after 9 days of Navaratri festival across India. Around 2.5 million devotees visited the temple during the 2018 celebrations. Teams are formed from different villages sponsored by the village headman or the richest family. One member is chosen to don the avatar of Goddess Kali, the central deity to these celebrations. The prerequisites are- the person impersonating the Goddess has to be a man and should fast for 41 days. Other male devotees dress up as other Gods and Goddesses from the Hindu mythology. Two devotees can be seen here dressed up as Goddess Kali.



Photograph by Udayan Sankar Pal

Photograph by Nitin Sidhpura



The annual Pushkar animal fair is one of the largest in the world of its kind. What started out as a few days of camel and livestock trading among the various tribal communities of Rajasthan, has over time metamorphosed into this global tourism spectacle which draws to its folds thousands of tourists from all over the world. For five days these dusty grounds of Pushkar teem with majestic camels, horses, cattle along with their handlers and a never ending queue of tourists who throng these grounds to experience this amazing spectacle.



Photograph by Abhishek Aneja

Triveni Ghat, in Rishikesh is one of the biggest and the holiest of all the ghats in Rishikesh along the bank of the Ganges. The ghat derives its name “Triveni” from the fact that this place happens to be the confluence of three major rivers- the Ganga, Yamuna and Saraswati. Each year millions of devotees visit Triveni Ghat to experience spirituality and absolve themselves of any sin by taking a dip in the holy waters of Triveni. The evening worship which involves an elaborate “aarati” session is one of the major attractions. Thousands of tourists throng Triveni Ghat to be a part of this amazing spectacle and offer their worships.



Photograph by Suman Bhattacharjee

The Mahabodhi Temple in Bodhgaya stands tall and proud and can easily boast of being the spiritual edifice of Buddhism. The phenomenal journey of Bodhgaya from a nondescript village to becoming the bedrock of Buddhism is a fascinating one. The monks who stay inside the Mahabodhi Temple complex, as part of their daily ritual encircle the temple on foot a number of times during two separate occasions in a day. This monk can be seen in the middle of this particular ritual.

The winners of the contest on- “Our Traditions”



Our heartiest congratulations to everyone who got featured and a big thanks to everyone who took part in our contest! It was a pleasure going through all the submissions and an equally difficult task shortlisting the final 8 images. Stay tuned for more contests and announcements.

The Honour Board



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Contest

A photograph of a man swimming in a river, with his head and shoulders above water. He has a joyful expression, with his mouth open as if laughing or shouting. The river is surrounded by lush green trees and foliage. On the left bank, there is a small hut with a thatched roof and green walls. The scene is bright and sunny, with sunlight filtering through the leaves.

Happiness!!

Photograph by Udayan Sankar Pal

Featuring the 8 winning photographs from our recently concluded online contest on the theme- “Happiness”

We crave for it, it plays a game of cat and mouse with us, sometimes it comes our way, at other times it eludes us, on occasions it proves to be a true master of deception and lies hidden in the mundane, but when it does grace our lives we truly realise

its worth. Happiness is that one entity the eternal quest for which gives all of us a reason to keep going against all odds, to be a finer version of ourselves, to embark upon a journey which is worth a lot more than reaching the destination.

Photograph by Abhishek Kundu



Durga Puja happens to be the biggest festival of the Bengali community. The festival is celebrated every year during the Hindu month of Ashwin, which coincides with Autumn. The festival is characterised by some unique features and none stands out more prominently than these tall grass which bloom during this period. These whitish woolly flowers known as “Kash” in bengali marks the arrival of Goddess Durga. In a Bengal countryside these joyous kids are reflective of the festive mood prevalent everywhere.



Photograph by Abhay Kasture

The widows living in the ashramas in Vrindavan have had little to celebrate throughout their lives. Ostracised from the society after the death of their husbands these elderly women were tragically pushed into obscurity by an unaccepting and insensitive society. They are not allowed to be a part of any tradition or ritual or festival. However for the widows in Vrindavan happiness came knocking on their doorstep when old shackles were finally broken and the widows took part in the festival of Holi, a much desired change in the lives of these women.

Photograph by Gopal Parbat



Happiness cannot be measured or defined, in spite of all our troubles, shortcomings we manage to devise ways to keep ourselves happy, to find happiness in little things that come our way. These two young boys share their little moment of happiness against the backdrop of the bustling metropolis that Kolkata is.



Photograph by Ramchander Sanjaykumar

The Hornbill Festival of Nagaland is a celebration of the rich cultural heritage of Nagaland, with representatives from all the ethnic Naga tribes taking part in these celebrations with a view of upholding their rich traditions. The celebrations are aimed at instilling a sense of happiness and camaraderie which get reflected in the joyous nature of these performances.

Photograph by Anant Vinayak



There is something so pure, so sacred about a child's smile that it is worth more than all the wealth combined in the world. Often the smiling face of a child reminds us that the greatest privilege one can have is to be a part of this wonderful world and find our own cozy niche of solitude and happiness.



Photograph by Puneet Verma

This autorickshaw driver was all smiles as he drove his passengers around the island of Rameshwaram. Being a local he has a wide range of knowledge regarding the various aspects of the town and kept on sharing bits and pieces of them with his passengers as he drove them around. In today's fast paced life, it is hard to come across a smiling face often, and when one does appear amidst the mundane, it creates beautiful moments such as this one.



Photograph by Rajarshi Chakraborty

On a chilly afternoon in one remote corner of Spiti Valley in Himachal Pradesh this joyful man was nothing less than a treat for the weary travelers. The hardships of his life in one of the remote places on this planet have done little to dampen his spirit. He was happy, he was content as he spoke in length about his family, his life and narrated funny incidents from his life.

The winners of the contest on- “Happiness”



The Honour Board



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Tradition

A young student inside the Brahma Vidyalaya, a Vedic school in the city of Varanasi.

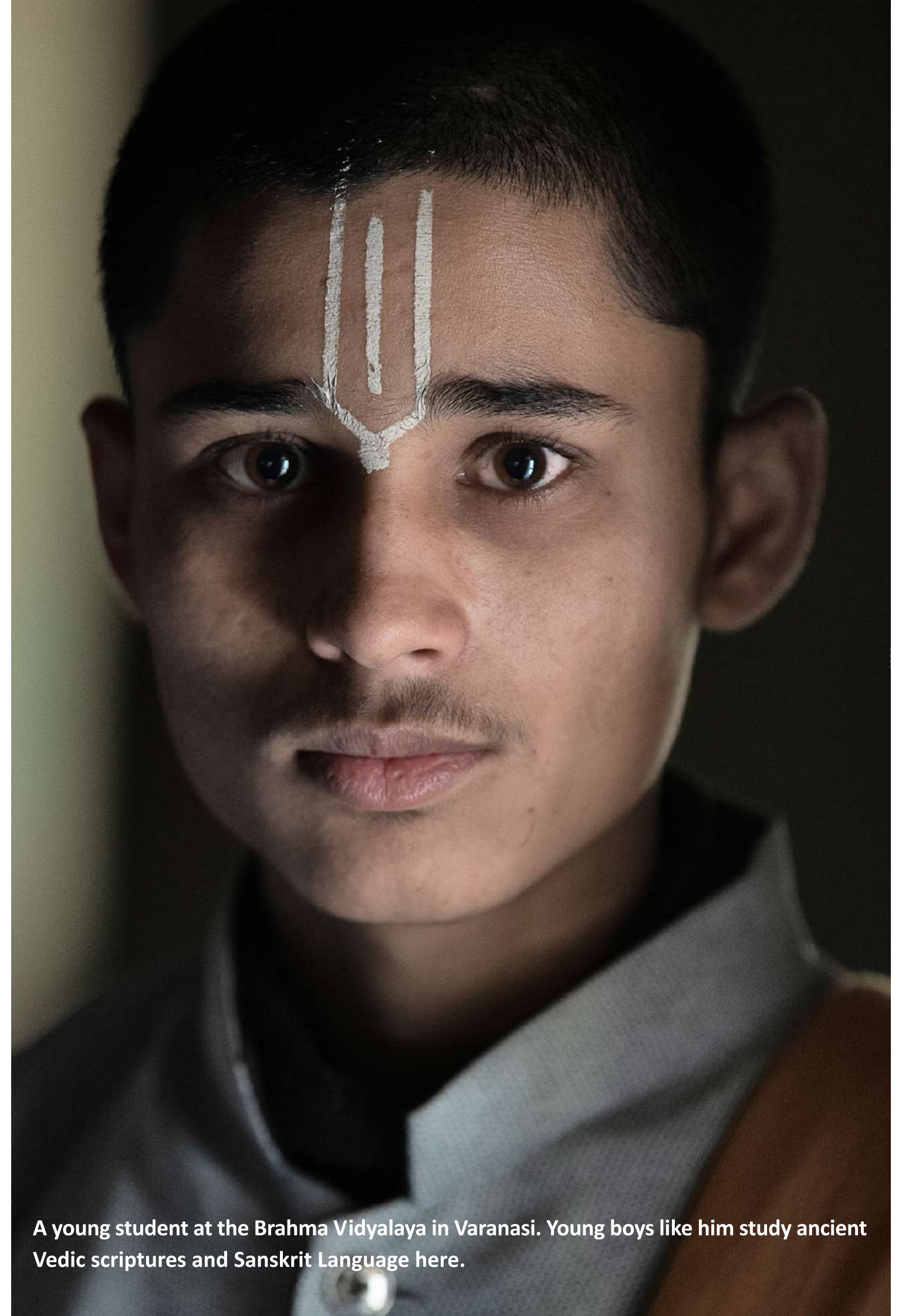
Brahma Vidyalaya a Vedic school in Varanasi

by Govind Kiran Kumar Reddy

| A look into an establishment still imparting the ancient Vedic education to young minds in the holy city of Varanasi

It will be extremely difficult if not impossible to find any literature or literary work which has played a more significant role in shaping the collective conscience and the ethos of a society than the role played by the Vedas when it comes to the Hindu society, dating back to the ancient times. In fact the impact which the Vedas had was not only restricted to the Hindu society, in fact this profound influence spilled over and was felt in different corners of the Indian sub-continent and parts of Southeast Asia as well. The origin of the Vedas can be traced back to 1500 BC, and was a by-product of the large number of Aryan migrating across the Hindu Kush Mountain and settling down in various parts of northern India. The Vedas are written in Sanskrit, an ancient language in which lies the root of almost all the present day languages spoken not only in India but across various parts of Southeast Asia. The ideas encompassed in the Vedas were passed on orally from one generation to the next. In fact it was long after their origin the Vedas were actually formatted into texts. The basic Vedic texts are a collection of the four Vedas, namely- Rig-Veda, Sama-Veda, Yajur-Veda and Atharva-Veda. Vedic literature provides a transparent view of the society during those times by highlighting the traditions, the moral and ethical structure on which the societies operated and clearly reflects the worldview, the spirituality and the social attitude of the Brahmins or the upper caste during

those times. In this regard it must be mentioned the Vedas were in no way a true depiction of the society, in fact the ideas, views and the narratives propagated in the Vedas were almost exclusively lend its voice to the priestly or the upper caste of the society, thus the narrative too was heavily dominated by their views and biases. Yet, in spite of their biases, these ideas have been passed on from one generation to the next and have lived through generations, through centuries and the Hindu way of life remains firmly rooted in these teachings. The teachings of the Vedas have contributed greatly towards the Hindu way of life and find their relevance even today as all of these teachings form the backbone of the Hindu way of life. However it would be incredibly difficult to ascertain the due credits for these pieces of literature to any particular person since the Vedic literature was more concerned about the idea that was being propagated instead of who was propagating them. Also since the Vedas are a collection of religious texts and hymns composed between 1500-1000 BC it is impossible to comprehensively suggest one singular source or entity responsible for the origin of the entire body of text. The relevance of the Vedas and the profound impact it still has over a large section of the Hindu society can be best demonstrated by establishments in the city of Varanasi which even in this modern day and age serve as hotbeds for Vedic education. In fact the city remains the last



A young student at the Brahma Vidyalaya in Varanasi. Young boys like him study ancient Vedic scriptures and Sanskrit Language here.



This young boy, a student of this organisation is busy preparing his lessons in Sanskrit. Most of these literature are allusions to the ancient Vedic literature.

bastion of the ancient Sanskrit language with over a dozen establishments imparting Vedic education in Sanskrit. These establishments still encourage their young students to practice the way of life as prescribed by the ancient Vedas. These organisations are also places where young boys belonging to Brahmin families receive their education and training in Vedic literature, learn the ways essential for a Brahmin and receive training in priesthood. These includes reading of various scriptures, learning more about the Hindu mythologies, practicing the art of chanting and above everything abstain from a life of riches and luxury. Among Varanasi's several such establishments the Brahma Vidyalaya is one such place which still imparts Vedic education to the young boys who come within its folds. This Vedic school was set up in 2012 near the Pushkar Talab in Varanasi and is being run by a trust since its inception. Most of the students here come from the neighbouring states of Bihar, Uttaranchal as well as parts of Uttar Pradesh. These young boys live together, within the premises of the school and lead a life of austerity. It would be hard to suggest what drove these young boys or their families to take up Vedic education. The answer probably lies in the humble background which is common to all of these young boys. The meagre resources possibly proved as a handicap for these boys in terms of gaining access to a decent mainstream education. The parents too, benefit from these Vedic

schools, since apart from imparting this ancient knowledge to their wards the Vedic schools also take care of their stay, food and other necessary upkeeps in exchange for a meagre sum of money. The young boys, who all are a part of this set up, hope to find a decent job upon the completion of their courses and be able to support their respective families.

In this remarkable setting the teachings from these ancient texts still continue to enlighten these young minds, amidst a modern world, dominated by the ever changing technology and an increasingly digitized way of life. Varanasi, considered to be one of the world's oldest continuously inhabited cities and the modern day edifice of Hindu spirituality acts as the perfect setting for the Vedic education to carve a niche for it in this modern world. It is hard to predict whether the ancient Vedas will find a firm place in the mainstream education system followed across the country, particularly keeping in mind the ever changing nature of education with a view of incorporating the more modern methods and techniques. However there can be no denying that in these institutions in the ancient city of Varanasi, the Vedas have found their homes and continue to be relevant even now. These texts in which the ancient lineage of Hinduism and the Hindu society remains engraved still enlighten young minds such as the ones part of the Brahmavidyalaya in Varanasi and will continue to do so.



The students of the Brahma Vidyalaya of Vedic education in Varanasi. This Vedic school was set up in 2012 near the Pushkar Talab in Varanasi and since then is being run by a trust.

Organisations such as this one are some of the few last remaining bastions for the ancient Sanskrit Language, which is considered to be the mother of most languages not only in India but across the whole of Southeast Asia.





Most of the young boys who study in such Vedic schools spread across Varanasi come from humble backgrounds. These boys come from the neighbouring states of Bihar and Uttaranchal as well as various parts of Uttar Pradesh. Once they become a part of these organisations they are expected to master the Vedic scriptures in Sanskrit over the course of the next seven years. The boys also undergo training in priesthood and are taught how to perform various Hindu rituals and chanting of various hymns and mantras as well. In addition to that the students in these schools are expected to lead a life of austerity.





Another young student in the Brahma Vidyalaya for Vedic education in the city of Varanasi. In this remarkable setting the teachings from these ancient texts and scriptures still find significance, even in the 21st century and continue to enlighten these young minds amidst a modern world dominated by ever changing technology and an increasingly digitized way of life. Varanasi, one of the oldest continuously inhabited cities and the modern day edifice of Hindu spirituality acts as the perfect setting for the ancient Vedic literature and Vedic education to carve a niche for them in this rapidly changing world.



About the Photographer

Kiran Govind is a travel photographer from Hyderabad, India, who captures moments of life, culture and beauty through photography. He is drawn to locations which have a rich cultural background steeped in tradition and is especially interested in portrait photography.

Kiran is a contributor to photography, travel and IPA magazines. In 2016, he was awarded third prize in Best Landscapes of UAE through Genius Reflections and was awarded in Photography live, the photo was judged by Danny Eid & Subodh Shetty. Also, Kiran's works was presented in November -2018 addition of IPA Magazine and photos favorited by Natgeo editors & Gulf news.

Kiran is an active member of Photowalk Dubai since March 2018 and have travelling Barsana, Agra, Ladakh, Himachal, North East, Varanasi by sharing his works and mentoring fellow photographers to excel in their Portrait and street photography.

Bacardi 8th Summer



BACARDI

8th Summer

Our Bartender from East India, Rahul Sandilya Tiwari currently working at The Oberoi Grand Kolkata is representing East zone in The Bacardi Legacy Global Cocktail Competition Organized by Bacardi.

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