

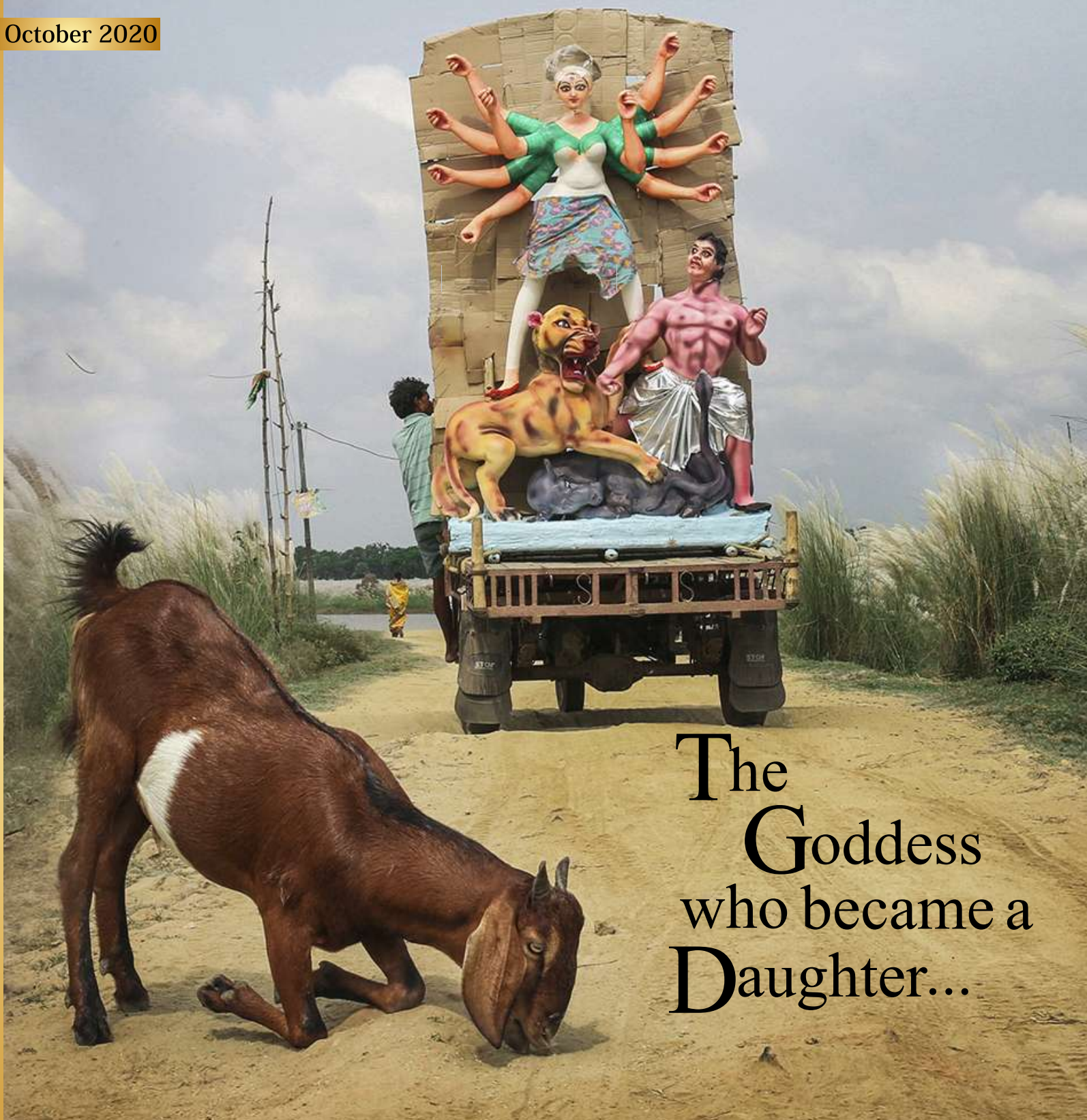
WILDLIFE FEATURE | EVENTS | PHOTO ALBUM

INDIAN

SOCIAL | DOCUMENTARIES | TRAVEL

PHOTO ARTS

October 2020



The
Goddess
who became a
Daughter...

NELOY DUTTA takes a look into what goes on behind the scenes in the making Pochampally sarees.
JAI THAKUR documents a potters' colony in West Delhi and highlights their plights.

Photograph by Debasish Kundu



The mornings have become a tiny bit cooler, the skies a little more decorated with fluffy clouds and of course, the sweet overpowering smell of 'shiuli' in the air. Bengalis everywhere know that the confluence of these events can mean only one thing. It is that wonderful time of the year again. Pujo is here, albeit in an unprecedented setting which is a result of the ongoing pandemic. Let us all revel in the spirit of the festivities while respecting the social distancing and safety protocols laid down by the authorities, let us uphold the biggest virtue of this grand festival - solidarity, the only thing which will enable us to overcome this devastating pandemic.

Rahul Bera (Editor in Chief)

Indian Photo Arts

Founder: Prasun Mazumdar

Editor in Chief: Rahul Bera

Contributing Editor: Raj Sarkar

Designed by: Rabin Paul

Technical Advisor: Debadri Mondal

 indianphotoarts@gmail.com/ submission.ipa@gmail.com

 @ipamagazine

 Indian Photo ARTS

Indian Photo Arts 2020 | 01

Contents **October 2020**



134



96



04



28



118



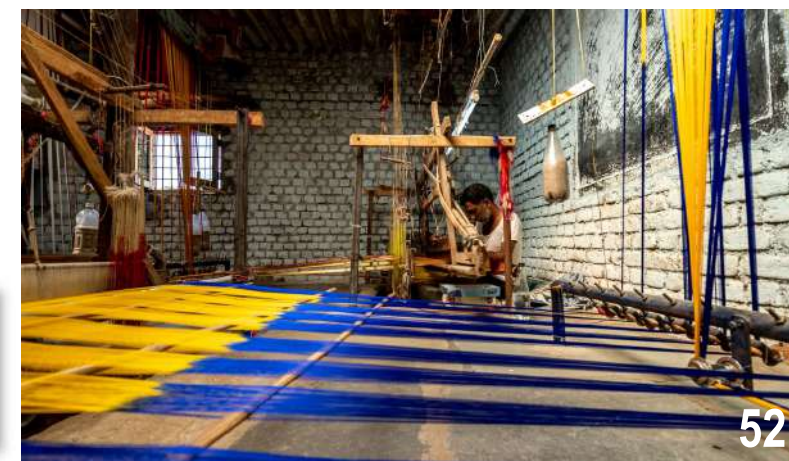
152



74



176



52

The Goddess who became a Daughter: **Debasish Kundu** documents rural Bengal against the backdrop of Durga Puja **p04**

The Wheel of Misfortune: An inside look into a potters' colony in West Delhi highlights the plights and uncertain future of this community by **Jai Thakur** **p28**

Pochampally Saree - A Legacy Woven in Six Yards: **Neloy Dutta** takes a look into what goes on behind the scenes in the making of this famed fabric **p52**

The Ghats, The Ganges and the saga of death and rebirth: a photo album by **Nilanjan Ray** depicting the soul of Varanasi **p74**

Framing the Milky Way: The nuances of astrophotography and the various tricks of the trade explained by **Jatinkumar Thakkar** **p96**

Cantao ocellatus - the diligent parents of the insect world: **Anirban Dutta** documents the early stages in the life cycle of a shield bug **p118**

The Men and Women of Pushkar: **Rupam Dey's** photo album is a tribute to the colourful and proud ancient communities of Rajasthan **p134**

Unearthing: The first part of a series that highlights some of the finest contemporary photographers around us **p152**

Beyond Borders Collective: An initiative by 5 of the most acclaimed contemporary photographers to share their unique vision **p176**

Cover page photograph by Debasish Kundu

Goddess Durga is more than a revered deity to millions of Bengalis, she is one of their own, the beloved daughter of the house, who once a year visits the homes of millions for a handful of days before returning to her heavenly abode.

The Goddess who became a Daughter

by Debasish Kundu

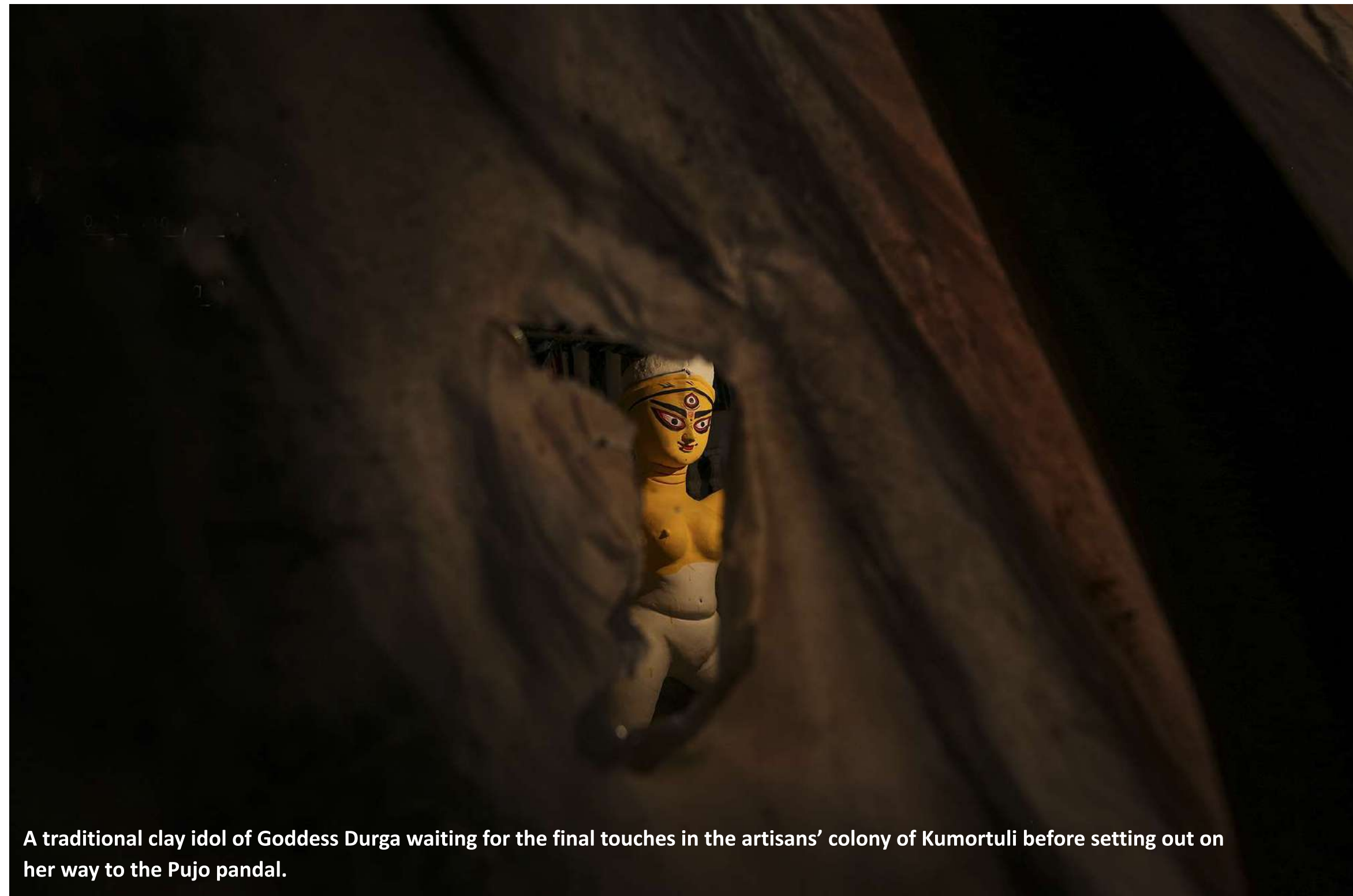
the festival of Durga Puja is all about welcoming Bengal's favourite daughter back home.



The azure sky with patches of fluffy cotton ball like clouds scattered across it, the endless expanses of the iconic Kash flower and the lush green fields together deck rural Bengal up to welcome the Goddess for another year of festivities. For the elders the Goddess is more like a daughter who is coming home after one long year for a handful of days before she returns to her heavenly abode. The sight of the idol evokes a sense of reverence along with an overwhelming sense of affection.



The journey begins from a nondescript North Kolkata neighbourhood, typically dotted with narrow lanes dominated by shanties on either side of them. There is nothing, at a first glance to suggest anything extraordinary about this place, the identifiable chaotic presence of life, the congested roads, and century old buildings, everything which is quintessentially North Kolkataan finds itself firmly rooted in the alleys and by lanes here. Yet this neighbourhood is responsible for quite literally shaping the biggest festival in the state of West Bengal and for the Bengali community all over the world. This is Kumortuli – the home of thousands of artisans who are predominantly engaged in sculpting clay idols of Gods and Goddesses, the most notable of which are the thousands of idol of Goddess Durga which roll out of these narrow lanes each year as the whole of Bengal braces itself for the extravaganza that Durga Puja is. It can be a daunting task to put in words what Durga Puja means to the Bengali community all over the world and particularly in the state of West Bengal. It is an amalgamation of a wide array of emotions. For some it is the time for homecoming, while for others the festival bridges the gap between their long forgotten roots and their present being. For some the festival is an opportunity for making merry, catching up with family members, for others the festival provides a refuge from the rigors of everyday life,



A traditional clay idol of Goddess Durga waiting for the final touches in the artisans' colony of Kumortuli before setting out on her way to the Pujo pandal.

the week-long celebrations usher in a new dawn of hope. The festival is a lot more than mere celebrations, the glitzy pandals (the often palatial makeshift shrines for the deity), the food, the new clothes, the festival tugs at the emotional chord of each and every Bengali. If you are Bengali living in far off city away from the

festivities, it is this time of the year when old and cherished memories manage to creep into the mind of the most steadfast and leave in their wake a few long-drawn sighs.

The ten day long festivities are observed in the Indian calendar month of Ashwin which coincides roughly with the months

of September- October. Fresh from the long spells of monsoon rains the rural Bengal dawns an incredibly pretty look during this time of the year. The rivers flow in all their glory and are a lot more appreciable than their arrogant avatars of monsoon, the rice fields are still cover in the iconic green of rural Bengal, the sky



An elderly artisan at Kumortuli is engrossed in his work. These are the crafty hands which shape these idols which are nothing less than incredibly beautiful specimens of art.

is a pretty hue of blue with fluffy white clouds scattered all over it and the landscape in the countryside is dotted with the signature presence of “kashphool” or Kash flower – a close relative to wild grass or reeds which grows taller than a human being and are easily identifiable by the white woolly growth on top of the reeds.

Urban Bengal however, remains mostly oblivious to these changes in nature as Durga Pujo arrives, although that doesn’t mean the cities and towns are insulated from the ever growing sense of anticipation. The pace of work at offices, educational institutions slows down leading up to the festival before coming

to a grinding halt for almost a week or so, Pujo shopping frenzies break out across the numerous shopping outlets and marketplaces across the towns and cities and giant pandals begin to tower above the neighbourhood and proudly announces – Pujo has arrived. It would be safe to say, nothing fills up the heart of an average

Bengali with more joy than the site of construction of these makeshift structures, a combination of wooden panels, sheets of clothes, bamboo poles and a whole assortment of other construction materials. Kumortuli turns into a hotbed of activities during the few months leading up to Durga Puja – the biggest festival in West Bengal. Although the preparations continue almost throughout the year, in the few months leading to the festivities the scale of activities reaches an unprecedented height. The demand for idols surges through the roof, these staggering demands both in terms of sheer number and complexity are growing with every passing season. In fact the artisans now are more than used to catering to the demands of overseas Bengali community who leave no stone unturned to fly these idols to their respective destinations across Europe, the U.S and other parts of the world. It is in these narrow lanes and by lanes, deft hands work tirelessly during these months to infuse life into moulds of clay and usher Goddess Durga in to her home for a few days each year. It would have been a difficult task to comprehend the origin of the lavish idols to such humble origins in the form of huge lumps of clay had it not been for these skilled hands. The process of creating any sculpture or idol is a painstakingly slow and difficult one. The artisans here unanimously agree the task of carving idols of Goddess Durga is the toughest one they encounter each year. This is partly due to the soaring demands

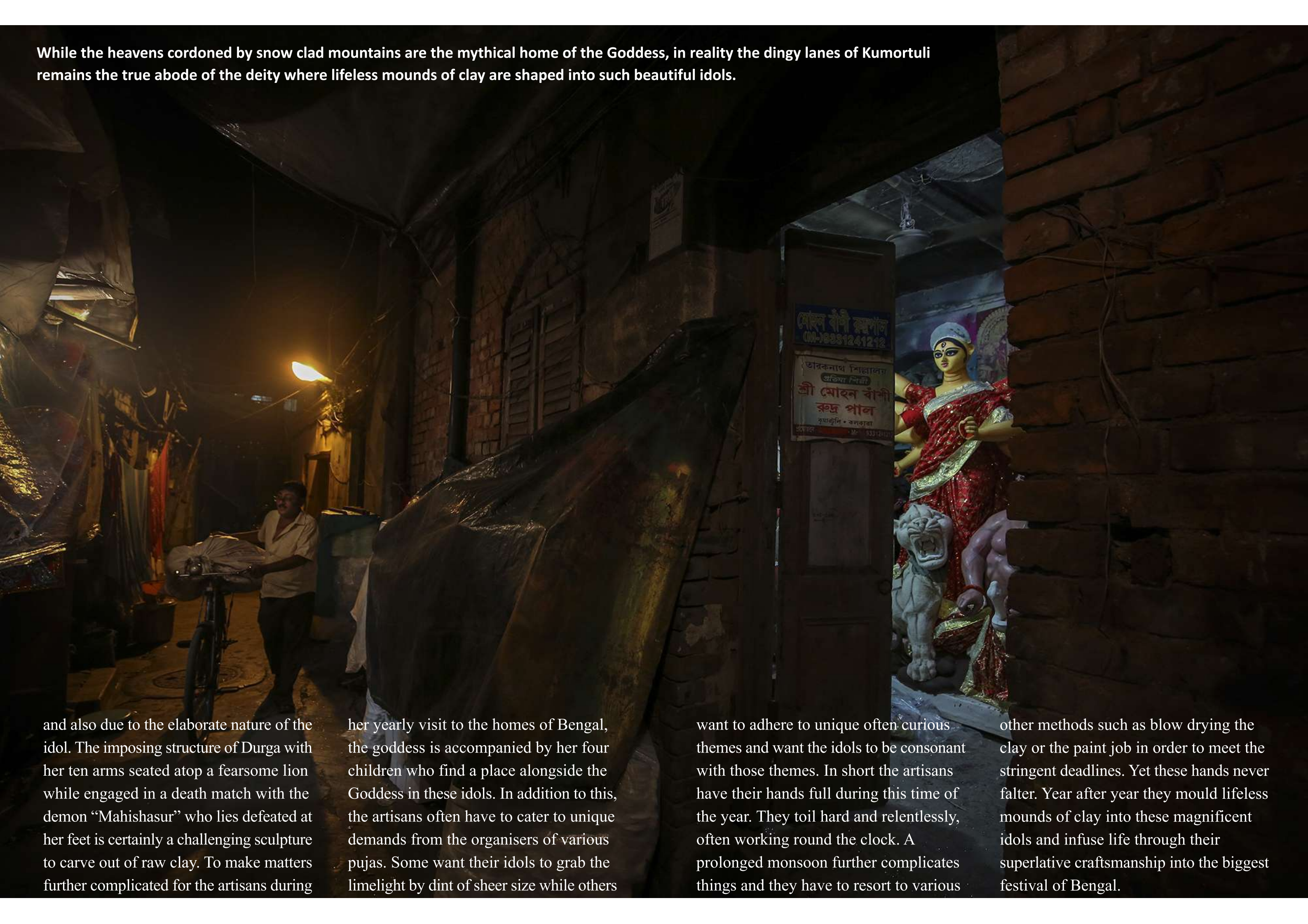
While the heavens cordoned by snow clad mountains are the mythical home of the Goddess, in reality the dingy lanes of Kumortuli remains the true abode of the deity where lifeless mounds of clay are shaped into such beautiful idols.

and also due to the elaborate nature of the idol. The imposing structure of Durga with her ten arms seated atop a fearsome lion while engaged in a death match with the demon “Mahishasur” who lies defeated at her feet is certainly a challenging sculpture to carve out of raw clay. To make matters further complicated for the artisans during

her yearly visit to the homes of Bengal, the goddess is accompanied by her four children who find a place alongside the Goddess in these idols. In addition to this, the artisans often have to cater to unique demands from the organisers of various pujas. Some want their idols to grab the limelight by dint of sheer size while others

want to adhere to unique often curious themes and want the idols to be consonant with those themes. In short the artisans have their hands full during this time of the year. They toil hard and relentlessly, often working round the clock. A prolonged monsoon further complicates things and they have to resort to various

other methods such as blow drying the clay or the paint job in order to meet the stringent deadlines. Yet these hands never falter. Year after year they mould lifeless mounds of clay into these magnificent idols and infuse life through their superlative craftsmanship into the biggest festival of Bengal.



In the lead up to the Puja, the artisans of Kumortuli are flooded with demands for idols in varying shapes and sizes.



While the celebrations in the cities are a more glitzy affair where the Puja committees often vie for the tags of superlatives in various segments, the festivities in rural Bengal are more of a family affair. Entire villages gather around as one tight knit community and contribute in their own ways to make the festivities a memorable one for everyone. They lack

the pomp and grandeur of their city counterparts but they more than make up for it with their earnestness and heart. This is a festival which bridges the divides spanning across class, communities, age and gender and ties everyone with a common thread of joy and harmony. This becomes the most evident in the villages of Bengal. Animosities are forgotten, long

standing feuds are put on the backburner for these few days, a sense of harmony becomes palpable and this magical spell is cast which in more ways than one inspires everyone to rise above their petty self and turn a new leaf. This becomes possible since the emotions attached with Puja run deep in the Bengali psyche. A Bengali kid is initiated to Puja at a very

early age, while most of the developments surrounding it remain unfathomable at that tender age, the magnanimity of the occasion leaves behind a profound impact. Even as a child without any notion of what Durga Puja is, every child is able to figure out it is that special time of the year, something worthy of looking forward to. The earliest memory of Puja for anyone

The year long wait is about to end as the Goddess makes her way to the corners of Bengal greeted by the scenic Bengal countryside.

A Bengali kid is initiated to Pujo at a very early age, while most of the developments surrounding it remain unfathomable at that tender age, the magnanimity of the occasion leaves behind a profound impact. Even as a child without any notion of what Durga Puja is, every child is able to figure out it is that special time of the year, something worthy of looking forward to.



is undoubtedly the signature baritone of Birendra Krishna Bhadra chanting the hymns from scriptures in radio waves at 4 am on the occasion of Mahalaya, which marks the beginning of the festivities and the countdown officially begins. The first clear signs that something grand is about to unfurl come in the form of the

unbounded congestion in the streets of people, sauntering without a care in the world, blissfully unaware of the maniacal honking from disgruntled automobile drivers behind them. In rural Bengal the age old playgrounds or backyards of century old temples gradually make way for the bright pieces of decorative clothing,

the bamboo poles, the wooden panels and eventually comes the day when the construction of the pandal begins and the entire village gets a new address to come together. The first sound of “Dhaak” with its rhythm unleashes this magic in the autumn air and sounds the clarion call to which resonates with millions across the

land. Days, lost, in a blur of brilliant colours, delicious smells and dulcet tones and at the end of the day, when you’re lying on your bed in the wee hour of the mornings, praying for some sleep to rob your tiredness away, comes the sound of the ‘Dhaak’ and it starts all over again, yet to the sleep deprived mind it comes as the sweetest form of music. These are emotions which tug at every Bengali’s heart, the vibrations from the conch shells and ‘kaashor-ghonta’ nudge at the heart softly, reminding those far away from home of the dusty road which leads to the doorstep of home, the fresh smell of shiuli flower wafting through the open window, never to fade away.

The festivities apart from being the most prominent symbol of Bengali culture, happens to be the source of livelihood for a large section of the population. Certain sections of the population are largely dependent on the festivities for their livelihoods, the most prominent of them being the artisans of Kumortuli. Alongside the artisans the “dhaakis” who hail from rural parts of Bengal, the pandal makers and a whole host of small scale businesses and cottage industries are dependent on Durga Puja. With time, some of the prominent Pujas in the city of Kolkata and other towns of Bengal have grown manifolds in terms of the patronage they receive from various sections of the society. This certainly augurs well for the communities dependent on Puja for a living if ensured they receive their dues.

With Puja around the corner, the mundane spectacle of daily life takes a turn for the flamboyant. All the tell-tale signs of Puja elevates the mundane chores of everyday life to a higher plane.



An incredibly poignant scene from a Bengal countryside where a Durga idol is making her way to the village pandal.



A young girl tries the headgear meant for the idol, symbolic of the aspiration every girl child harbours in her heart, and something which needs to be encouraged at all times.



of Puja and its objective lie in reinstating the sense of kinship, empathy and kindness which often tend to take a backseat in the rush hours of our lives. This year would be the perfect opportunity to put in place the true ethos of this festival and set an example as a community for the rest of the world. For all of us the Puja of 2020 should be a time for introspection and rising above our frailties, a moment to practice restraint for millions around us, if we can do that, we will succeed in paying ode to the Goddess, whom we think of as the very dear daughter of our households and for the Goddess this homecoming will forever remain special.

This year, the Puja faces its sternest test in the form of the pandemic that is still looming large and is very real. It goes without saying the graveness of the situation has cast serious concerns over the viability of organising Puja this year. A lot of organisers have opted for a safe approach and drastically brought down

the scale of their operations, while others have adopted a middle ground with restrictions in place. There can be no denying, if this year witnesses the same amount of footfall like previous years, once the festivities get over we will be staring at a health situation which by all means threatens to snowball into a state

of emergency. In fact in this prevailing situation where the COVID 19 pandemic has already claimed the lives of many and has crippled thousands of families in more ways comprehensible to us, this is the time to show the solidarity. The spirit of Durga Puja does not lie in the palatial pandals or the beautiful sculptures, the true essence



This year would be the perfect opportunity to put in place the true ethos of this festival and set an example as a community for the rest of the world. For all of us the Puja of 2020 should be a time for introspection and rising above our frailties, a moment to practice restraint for millions around us, if we can do that, we succeed in paying ode to the Goddess, whom we think of as the very dear daughter of our households and for the Goddess this homecoming will forever remain special.



About the Photographer

A chef by profession Debasish Kundu took a liking towards photography in 2011. Being the only food stylist in Kolkata, he used his professional knowledge and expertise to master the nuances of food photography during the initial days of his journey with the camera. As time went by he started taking keen interests in other genres of photography and soon started taking an active interest in the genres of fashion and street photography. The two things in life which are of utmost importance to him are – food, his love and photography, his passion.

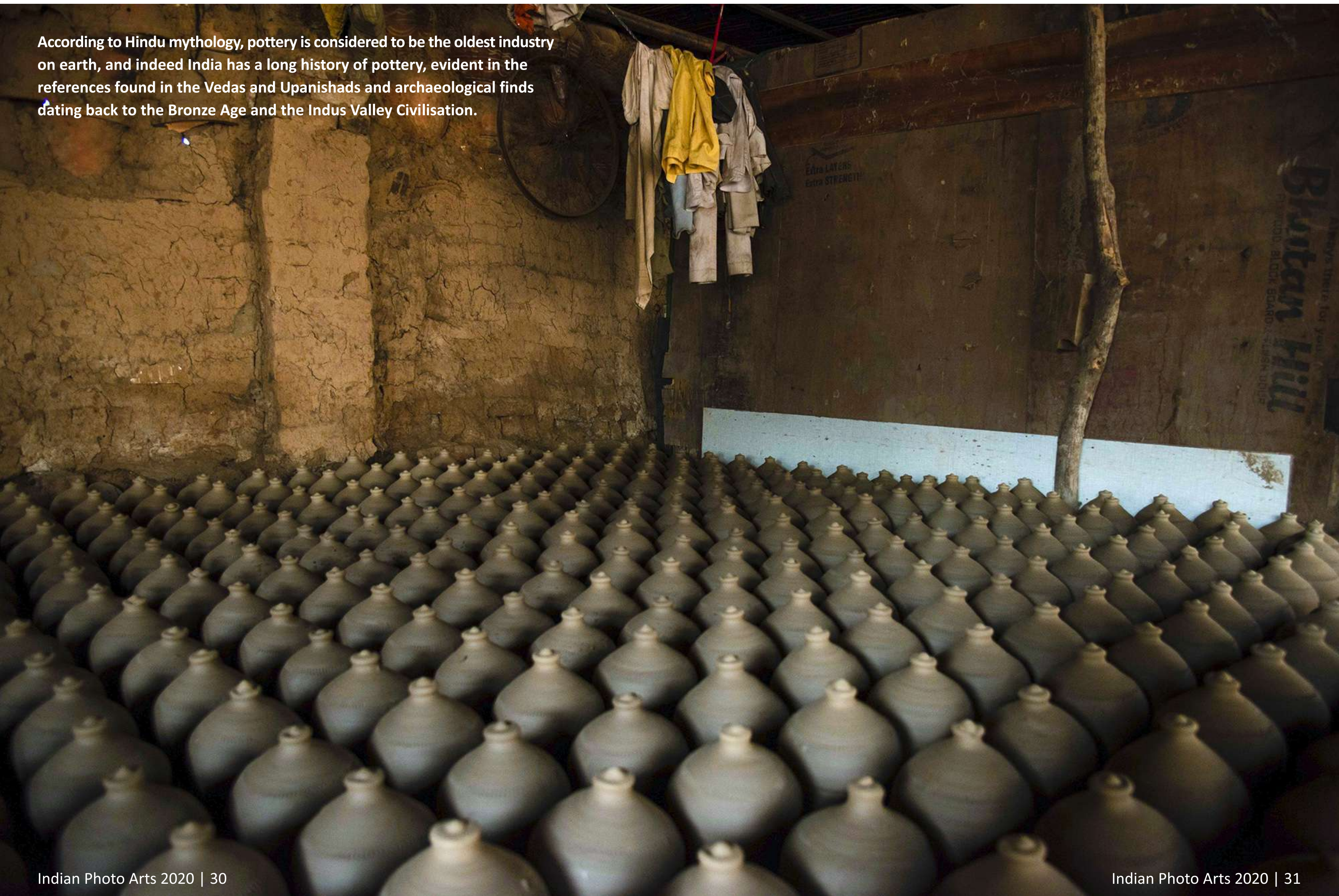
THE WHEEL OF MISFORTUNE?

by Jai THAKUR

Fledgling demands, little modernization and a lack of patronage are slowly driving an ancient craft form into oblivion, is there hope for the potters of West Delhi or is this the last generation of them?

Skilled hands of the potters in Uttam Nagar, West Delhi shape lumps of clay into some of the finest specimens of craftsmanship found in the markets.

According to Hindu mythology, pottery is considered to be the oldest industry on earth, and indeed India has a long history of pottery, evident in the references found in the Vedas and Upanishads and archaeological finds dating back to the Bronze Age and the Indus Valley Civilisation.



The winters here are notorious for their severity, ancient monuments still preserve in their carvings tales from a forgotten past and the constant power struggles in the echelons of Indian politics pan out here almost on a daily basis. This is the city of Delhi, the edifice of Indian politics and journalism, a city of bureaucrats and diplomats, a place where the jostle for power riddles it with opportunities and fresh rivalries. The old neighbourhoods and market places are home to the old timers, who all have something to say of the city's ancient past, the wide boulevards are home to diplomats, bureaucrats and ministers who are forever engaged in a tussle to outwit each other and the ancient monuments and decrypt mansions serve a timely reminder to how the lure of power has forever inebriated the city. In the middle of such never ending power tussle and the otherwise rigors of a common man's life, lies tucked away in one corner of the city, unbeknownst to the lesser acquainted – a tiny potter's colony.

In the Indian subcontinent, the potter community is known as Kumhar or Kumbhar, derived from the term Kumharkar, literally, maker of kumbha (earthen pot). The kumbha is believed to have emerged from the cosmic ocean during the Samudra Manthan (Churning of the Ocean), a mythological episode that finds mention in the Bhagavatha Purana as a tug-of-war between the devas (gods) and asuras (demons) for gaining possession

of the much coveted amrita (nectar of immortality). Interestingly, the Kumhars identify themselves as Prajapati, after the God Prajapati (alternately Brahma), who is believed to be the creator of the universe in Vedic Hinduism.

According to Hindu mythology, pottery is considered to be the oldest industry on earth, and indeed India has a long history of pottery, evident in the references found in the Vedas and Upanishads and archaeological finds dating back to the Bronze Age and the Indus Valley Civilisation. Symbolically, the kumbha is associated with fertility, a metaphor of the womb which gives birth, and is associated with Lakshmi, the goddess of wealth, fortune, prosperity and abundance.

The kumbha or earthen pot is an integral part of a number of rituals and ceremonies, religious and social alike. For instance while growing up in a Bihari family, I was exposed to myriad rituals, many of which involved the purna kalasha (full pot), adorned with mango leaves and a coconut placed on it. These were placed outside homes on the occasion of an auspicious ceremony, be it a wedding or a house warming. I also observed newly-wed brides tipping over a pot containing rice kept at the doorstep with their right foot, a symbol of her bringing prosperity to the family, when entering their husband's home for the first time. Similar rituals and more can be observed prevalent among numerous communities across the country. Curious to know more, I decided to meet

The traditional pottery 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.



and document the Kumhar community of Delhi, and understand their culture, lifestyle, oral history and craftsmanship. Kumharwali Gali in Uttam Nagar, West Delhi, is home to approximately 700 potter families who migrated from Rajasthan. While roaming the lanes of the colony, I approached a house and asked permission to interact with the family. There I met Jagmohan Prajapati, whose father had moved to Delhi from Alwar in 1965. Jagmohan now runs the family business along with his brothers Bhajanlaal and Harish. His extended family consists of seventeen members, and they all work as potters. From my conversations with Jagmohan, I gained some insights into their livelihood and method of working. The mud used in making pottery is sourced either from Kakrola in West Delhi or Jhajjar in Haryana. On the potter's wheel (chaak), they employ the throwing technique, in which a lump of clay is placed centrally on the wheel and then squeezed, lifted and shaped as the wheel is turned. Water is used as a lubricant to moisturize and mould the clay, but sparingly, as it also weakens the tensile strength of clay. Another technique is used to make hand-beaten pottery, though it is the more laborious procedure. His family believes in producing eco-friendly products and do not use any glaze, artificial colours or chemicals. Whatever paints they apply are made from natural ochres sourced locally, commonly known as Bani/Geru. Also, for some products they use white

chalk as colour.

My next destination was Maidan Garhi in South Delhi. There I met another Prajapati family, headed by 34-year-old Sujan Singh Gola, a native of Mathura. Sujan Singh is assisted by his wife Santoshi Devi, his four children, brother Balbir Singh and his family. Together, they have been running their pottery business at Maidan Garhi for more than 20 years. His parents reside in Mathura and visit them occasionally. Sujan's in-laws are also in the pottery business. Sujan Singh informed me that chaaks now run on electricity and they are small and portable. Other than ergonomic benefit, the shift to electric wheels have reduced manual labour and increased production. This has mostly benefitted the children in the family who can now find time to attend school. The mud base is prepared in a machine called pug mill which removes trapped air and guarantees consistency. The mud extruded from the pug mill is cut with the use of a thread, called jenuer chena, into solid blocks, called Shivling. Referring to the raw mud block as Shivling establishes the sacred relationship they share with their profession. Most of the Kumhars worship Lord Shiva and Shiva's father-in-law, Daksha Prajapati. Sujan's neighbour, Naresh Singh is also a potter. Originally from Palwal, in Haryana, Naresh joined the family profession after his father's demise. He now runs the business along with his two brothers, Raju and Deshraj, and his

cousins. Every Kumhar family I met, reiterated the importance of family support, an essential factor in the survival of the craft. Each individual member of the family has a certain role to play. The raw mud is cleaned mostly by the women in the family and they mix it with water to prepare a slur, also called slip. This slip is used on the chaak. The men are mostly engaged in operating the kilns and making the products. Children are not involved, unless they help their parents voluntarily.

A lot of effort goes into preparing the final

Referring to the raw mud block as Shivling establishes the sacred relationship they share with their profession. Most of the Kumhars worship Lord Shiva and Shiva's father-in-law, Daksha Prajapati.

clay products which particularly during the festive seasons are in huge demands. The most laborious of all these processes is preparing the clay in order to make it suitable for the pottery wheel. Mounds of clay after being procured from their sources are melted and kneaded thoroughly with feet in order to soften them. 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 pottery wheel and carved into various shapes and forms by the skilled hands of these artisans. The Kumhars 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 more complex disciplines of pottery such as carving the lump of clay on the pottery 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 pottery wheel is no longer in vogue although some of the old timers still prefer this traditional method. The traditional pottery 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 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 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 every potter's colony in the country. The kilns are powered by an assortment of saw dust, cotton wool, pharmaceutical wastes



A lot of effort goes into preparing the final clay products which particularly during the festive seasons are in huge demands. The most laborious of all these processes is preparing the clay in order to make it suitable for the pottery wheel. The mud used in making pottery is sourced either from Kakrola in West Delhi or Jhajjar in Haryana. On the potter's wheel (chaak), they employ the throwing technique, in which a lump of clay is placed centrally on the wheel and then squeezed, lifted and shaped as the wheel is turned. Water is used as a lubricant to moisturize and mould the clay, but sparingly, as it also weakens the tensile strength of clay.

and other combustible materials to generate a temperature of up to 450 degrees or even more. It goes without saying, this archaic method of burning the clay is not a particularly environment friendly one and leaves little room for manipulating the

temperature. In addition to this the strict environmental guidelines which have been brought into place over the years signalled the gradual fade out of this method. These days modern gas kilns which are more environment friendly, faster and cheaper

are steadily replacing the traditional kilns or "bhattis". Once the pottery items are taken out of the kilns paints are applied on them and they receive a much needed facelift through other decorations and once the paints and other adornments dry off,

the items are ready for being sold at the markets.

Earlier pottery products were used for cooking, but due to the popularity of metal utensils, Kumhars now make vase, tumblers, terracotta tiles and others.



The Kumhars 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 more complex disciplines of pottery such as carving the lump of clay on the pottery wheel, adding the finishing touches.

The lumps of clay are processed by mixing them with the right quantity of water and kneading them thoroughly with feet. Once the clay is ready and moulded into such lumps, these lumps will be put on the pottery wheels where the skilled hands of the potters will carve them into a variety of earthenware.





For the young generation of Kumhars, sticking to their ancient traditions might not prove to be a wise decision considering the fledgling demand of this craft.

While pots meant for storing water sell more during summers, during Diwali, diyas (earthen lamps) are in high demand. Peak business happens in the festival season, starting from Navratri till Diwali. During this time, retailers come from different parts of the country to buy their products and place advance orders. Even though campaigns like ‘Make in India’ has given new hope to potters, most of them don’t want their children to pursue this profession as they are apprehensive about the future. Sujan Singh sums up this crisis in so many words: ‘As long as they

Railway Ministry, due to which the humble kullhad (disposable clay tea cup) has made a comeback. With global concern over plastic pollution and need for sustainable alternatives, such initiatives, backed by fair trade practices, would definitely help potters sustain this ancient craft. In addition to being a more eco-friendly item, the earthen items can be recycled with relative ease and reflective of one ancient tradition of the country. With proper marketing techniques in place and responsible promotions from the concerned departments at the various administrative

One such silver lining in recent years has been the banning of plastic cups at railway stations by the Railway Ministry, due to which the humble kullhad (clay tea cup) has made a comeback.

are satisfied—I will leave the decision to my kids, whether they want to continue this work or want to explore other fields.’ Though the art of the Prajapati community has survived for thousands of years due to consistent demand, it may be noted here that in the last decade potter communities across India have been facing stiff competition from plastic products. Currently the Diwali lamp market is flooded with Chinese-made goods, cutting into the profits of the local potters. Though a cause of major concern, Kumhars have proved to be resilient, and take great pride in their talent and hereditary tradition. They believe that new markets will emerge and they will innovate. One such silver lining in recent years has been the banning of plastic cups at railway stations by the

levels there is every reason to believe interest in this ancient form of craftsmanship can be rejuvenated and it can be turned into a booming cottage industry.

This photo-essay has been created as part of the Sahapedia Frames.



An individual displays a recent news published in a local daily on the concerns of the potters over the pollution regulations announced by the government regarding the burning of the bhattis or the kilns



The finished earthen products are left in the sun for long hours for the clay to dry up.



Once the pottery items are taken out of the kilns paints are applied on them and they receive a much needed facelift through other decorations and once the paints and other adornments dry off, the items are ready for being sold at the markets.



Kumharwali Gali in Uttam Nagar, West Delhi, is home to approximately 700 potter families who migrated from Rajasthan.



The mud extruded from the pug mill is cut with the use of a thread, called *jenueor chena*, into solid blocks, called *Shivling*. Referring to the raw mud block as *Shivling* establishes the sacred relationship they share with their profession. Most of the Kumhars worship Lord Shiva and Shiva's father-in-law, Daksha Prajapati.



Earlier pottery products were used for cooking, but due to the popularity of metal utensils, Kumhars now make flower vase, plant tumblers, piggy banks, terracotta tiles, shrines and pots of various sizes. While pots meant for storing water sell more during summers, during Diwali, diyas (earthen lamps) are in high demand. Peak business happens in the festival season, starting from Navratri till Diwali. During this time, retailers come from different parts of the country to buy their products and place advance orders.



About the Photographer

Jai Thakur is an Indian documentary photographer from New Delhi. The majority of his works revolve around the socio-economic environment of the society. Other than a number of group exhibitions, he is a recipient of various national and international awards including Sahapedia Frames Grant, Water Hero Award by Govt. of India and National Geographic's MyIncredibleStory. His work has been published in multiple platforms like Dodho Magazine, National Geographic, HIPA.ae, Indian Photo Arts Magazine, 121Clicks, Photographers Forum's Book, Edge of Humanity, Exposure, etc. He appeared in the MX Player Web series "Express Yourself" on River Conservation. For a day job, he works as a Business Research Analyst.



An artisan is busy weaving the fabric using the traditional loom in Pochampally, Telangana.

This stunning piece of fabric which has now achieved global recognition and fame finds its origin rooted in a sleepy little town of erstwhile Andhra Pradesh (now Telangana) – Bhoodan Pochampally. This is the story of the rise of Pochampally Sarees and what lies ahead in the future by [Neloy DUTTA](#).

Pochampally Saree | A LEGACY WOVEN IN SIX YARDS

The mention of India, to someone not belonging to this land, ushers in among other things a spectacle which is an explosion of colours. For us, the citizens of this nation, this might sometimes go unnoticed under the effects of the rigors of our daily lives, yet there can be no denying this is in fact an extremely vibrant nation. There is a dash of colour in almost every nook and corner of our streets and alleys, in every aspect of our daily lives, it often escapes our scrutiny, partly because it is so abundant. The Indian society owes a large extent of its vibrant façade to the wide array of attires which can be found across the country. Like everything else in this country, the attires vastly differ from each other as one is bound to encounter across the length and breadth of the country. Some of these attires are examples of supreme craftsmanship and are part of a lineage as rich as the country's history, while others are more humble in their origin. Some found their places in the Indian society courtesy the influx of foreign cultures into the country's ethos on multiple occasions in the nation's history while others were merely means to combat some of the extreme weather conditions parts of the country experiences. Although separated by their origins, their histories, the demographics they cater to, there remains one very common trait which is starkly visible in almost every piece of clothing – the abundance of colours. There is never a dull day in India

courtesy the colourful pieces of clothing which adorn our streets, marketplaces, public transports, virtually everywhere. Besides contributing towards the vibrant façade of the country, the attires offer glimpses into the past of numerous ethnic communities scattered across the country and are of tremendous sentimental value to their people. This is best reflected during the celebration of various festivals across the country by different communities, during which the communities proudly flaunt their ethnic clothing, skilfully woven strands of silk, cotton or linen which not only connect the communities to their ancient roots, but also establishes their unique identities. One such piece of clothing which over the centuries has riveted the attention of the whole nation upon itself is Pochampally ikat silk sarees. Saree is a commonly worn, primarily women's piece of clothing in India however that alone doesn't explain the widespread popularity enjoyed by Pochampally sarees. These sarees stand out by dint of their superior design, finishing and one of the finest qualities of silk which in the hands of able artisans produce nothing less than a six yard long beautiful specimen which can easily qualify as a piece of art.

This stunning piece of fabric which has now achieved global recognition and fame finds its origin rooted in a sleepy little town of erstwhile Andhra Pradesh (now Telangana) – Bhoodan Pochampally. The

These sarees stand out by dint of their superior design, finishing and one of the finest qualities of silk which in the hands of able artisans produce nothing less than a six yard long beautiful specimen...

town's reputation of being the "Silk City of India" is a much eulogized one and it is no mere coincidence that one of the finest pieces of fabric and craftsmanship owes its origin to this town. The earliest traces of this superlative art form dates back to the 18th century. The region was already a major silk producing hub in the country which to a large extent paved the pathway for this craft. Being one of the major silk hubs, weaving predominantly was the mainstay of the 80 odd villages in Pochampally. In the initial days the weavers would weave the fine form of silk in the traditional looms and produce one of the finest forms of silk saree in the countries which soon found a strong foothold across the country courtesy the fine nature of the silk, the comfort of the fabric and the stunning designs and the geometric patterns which bore testimony to the master craftsmanship of the weavers of Pochampally. With the increasing stature and demand, the scale of operations in the villages of Pochampally too underwent major upscaling. One of the most widely recognised cottage industries of modern India, the craft is practiced by more than 10,000 families in the villages of Pochampally. While large scale commercial operations to suit the increased and wide scale demands across the globe are carried out in an organized

industrialized manner particularly after the introduction of machines in the early 2000s, the traditional form of weaving is still practiced by the artisans in many of the villages of Pochampally.

The latter half of the 20th century provided a major boost to this art form. In a bid to popularize Pochampally saree and other attires, the village chief of Pochampally in an ambitious attempt to rejuvenate the economy of the region, introduced the traditional Pochampally ikat weaving technique to the town of Chirala in Andhra Pradesh where it came to be recognised as "Chit-ku". The weavers in the town of Chirala soon learned the secrets of this form of weaving and Pochampally ikat soon established a new breeding ground for itself. This possibly marks the first step towards the pan India presence and popularity which Pochampally sarees enjoy today. This new form of weaving technique which was capable of producing superior pieces of garments soon found takers across the state of Andhra Pradesh and more and more weaving communities expressed their interests in adopting this new craftsmanship. Since then there has been no looking back. The unique nature of the fabric which oozed comfort and the rich colours and intricate designs which flaunted class were soon very well



The traditional methods are still practiced in the villages of Pochampally although it largely remains a community centric endeavour. In these villages members of the Padmashali and Devangas communities practice this craft.

-received in the garment industry and it didn't take long for the reputation of the fabric to spread across the country. As a result of which the demand for these sarees and other garments made of this fabric

kept growing manifold and within the next decade Pochampally ikat weaving had established itself as one of the major cottage industries in the country. By the onset of the 21st century, Pochampally

sarees had become a household name in the country. Proud owners flaunted them with a sense of contentment while those yet to lay their hands on one would often marvel at the prospect of donning one

someday. This increased demand also meant the artisans now had to push their limits and come up with finest pieces of fabrics and garments which were befitting of the reputation the sarees enjoyed. This

Almost every member of the weaver families pitches in and responsibilities are divided among them as can be seen here. This turns out to be a cost and time effective method at the same time.



was no easy task. The artisans kept evolving their skills, incorporated newer embroidery techniques, came up with new designs all for the sake of maintaining the superlative quality of their product. In spite of all that, the traditional intricate geometric patterns which are manually imprinted on the sarees using the ikat dyeing method still remains the major selling point for these garments.

Being a skilled Pochampally saree artisan requires decades of experience and patience. Often the techniques are passed

geometric patterns are drawn on them. The warp threads are dyed and wrapped again, this process is repeated several times in order to create elaborate design patterns. According to the designs, parts of the yarns – the warp threads are tied using colour resistant materials, usually old cycle tubes. The precision of the wrapping holds the key to obtaining clarity in the designs. Once dyed and unwrapped the areas under the ties retain their original colour. This process is repeated several times to apply multiple colours as well as designs. The designs are usually hand

The artisans kept evolving their skills, incorporated new techniques, in spite of all that the traditional geometric patterns manually imprinted on the sarees still remains the major selling point.

on from one generation to the next and the apprentices start out early in their lives, initially by assisting the senior and more skilled counterparts. Patience is another key virtue which every artisan must possess. Some intricately designed saree might take up in excess of 100 days to reach completion. At the heart of these hand woven fabrics is the warp or the weft or both which are dyed first and then added to the loom to weave the fabric. Warp and weft form the cornerstone of weaving a yarn into fabric. The vertical and horizontal arrangement of them produces a grid like structure. The ikat process begins with bundles of warp threads being strung up on a frame, in a longitudinal arrangement close together and properly tightened. Once this framework is set up,

drawn previously on a semi-transparent sheet of paper. In the next step, the warp threads are tightly strung along two parallel wooden beams or metal rods one of which is firmly attached to the ground in order to maintain a fixed position of the entire set up. Once such an arrangement has been achieved it is time for the actual weaving process to commence. The same weaving technique is applied to weft threads which are usually dyed and arranged in a vertical manner on the frame at the very beginning. After an elaborate weaving process, the warp and weft threads conjoin along with the designs imprinted on them to give rise to one of the finest fabrics. The entire process from preparing the dye, crafting the designs on sheets of paper, dyeing the threads, drying



A traditional workshop equipped with the traditional looms in Pochampally.

them and eventually weaving them into the final fabric is a time consuming one and requires a great deal of patience and labour. This is probably the reason why almost every member of the weaver families pitches in and responsibilities are

divided among them. This turns out to be a cost and time effective method at the same time.

The fabric from its humble origin in the eighteenth century has come a long way.

Apart from earning a special place among saree lovers, it has earned itself some rather noteworthy distinctions. The fabric was conferred with the prestigious Geographical Indication (GI) tag or status in 2005 in recognition to its origin in these

parts of Andhra Pradesh and the unique characteristics of it. The art form itself has made it to the UNESCO tentative list of world heritage sites as part of “iconic saree weaving clusters of India”. Hence the patronage which it has received comes



Among other things, the myriad hues of dyes are also prepared by the artisans in these workshops. Dedicated set of artisans are responsible for the preparation of dye. Off late there has been a push to prepare the dyes using organic and eco friendly ingredient.

as little surprise. A handful of senior and expert weavers with the help from Andhra Pradesh's Textile Ministry set up a handloom park some 60 odd kilometres away from Hyderabad in 2008. Since then it has remained one of the major hubs of manufacturing the fabric and a multitude of other garments most notably the famed Pochampally saree. The hub incorporates some of the modern weaving techniques and makes effective use of modern machineries and successfully combines

the individual processes of spinning, designing, tying, dyeing and weaving under a single roof. Needless to say this largely paves the path for wide scale and commercial manufacturing of this fabric. The traditional methods are still practiced in the villages of Pochampally although it largely remains a community centric endeavour. In these villages members of the Padmashali and Devangas communities practice this craft. However the hub in the outskirts of Hyderabad

imparts the know how to everyone who is skilled enough and as a result of which keeping the soaring demand of this fabric in mind presents a decent avenue for generating employment. The hub effectively makes use of the modern techniques while retaining the traditional approach at its core. For instance the separation of the yarn is considered to be the most time consuming and laborious process. At the hub this is achieved in a time effective manner by the use of

machines.

However not all is well with this craft. Dark clouds of uncertainty and anguish are looming large in the horizon. This is evident from the state of affairs inside the loom. Once a busy hub of myriad activities the set-up is now trudging along at the best. Few years ago barely a third of the installed looms were operational and the weavers cited the lack of working capital to be one of the biggest reasons behind that. Another prominent reason cited by many weavers was the lack of marketing initiatives from the government. While it is true there is still considerable interest among the buyers over the fabric and some of the major apparel brands around the globe make good use of this fabric, the overall market for this fabric has shrunk. And this gets widely reflected in the earnings of the weavers. Cheaper synthetic options have flooded the market and it seems buyers tend to gravitate more towards the cheaper options. Adding to the woe of the weavers, the synthetic fabrics often bear stark resemblance to the original fabric and in the eyes of a not so seasoned customer, can be difficult to tell apart. The weavers are of the opinion that there needs to be initiatives from the government's side to rejuvenate the interest in the fabric and its product. At the same time there is a tremendous need for revamping the infrastructure in order to bring down some of the running expenses, which in turn would make the finished



The entire process is a time consuming one and some of the sarees may take up in excess of 100 days to be manufactured. This is precisely the reason why the weavers expect the government to properly market their products so that there remains considerable interest among buyers even in the face of numerous synthetic and cheaper fabrics which are flooding the market.



Pochampally sarees are readily identifiable courtesy their traditional geometric patterns and bright colours. The sarees enjoy a special place in the hearts of saree aficionados and some specimens easily fetch upward of fifty thousand rupees in the market. The saree has been proudly flaunted by Indian celebrities on numerous occasions.

product less dear thereby attracting buyers in the lookout for cheaper options. In spite of these setbacks along the way, most weavers are of the opinion, the craft will make a resounding comeback and with renewed patronage from the Telangana Government it certainly appears to be headed in that direction. The hurdle which was faced by this industry few years ago is one which must not repeat itself. It will jeopardise the future of hundreds of thousands of families along with carrying the threat of obliterating an ancient art form which by dint of its finest artistry and craftsmanship has carved a prominent niche in the world.

It is worth saving and all the care from an economic perspective but more importantly it needs saving and looking after because if we lose it, we will lose a chunk of our glorious history, and such vibrant bits and pieces of history connected with the present make India the beautifully diverse nation that it is



At the heart of these hand woven fabrics is the warp or the weft or both which are dyed first. The ikat process begins with bundles of warp threads being strung up on a frame, in a longitudinal arrangement close together and properly tightened. Once this framework is set up, geometric patterns are drawn on them.



Being a skilled Pochampally saree artisan requires decades of experience and patience. Often the techniques are passed on from one generation to the next and the apprentices start out early in their lives, initially by assisting the senior and more skilled counterparts.



While it is true there is still considerable interest among the buyers over the fabric and some of the major apparel brands around the globe make good use of this fabric, the overall market for this fabric has shrunk. And this gets widely reflected in the earnings of the weavers. Cheaper synthetic options have flooded the market and it seems buyers tend to gravitate more towards the cheaper options.



The fabric from its humble origin in the eighteenth century has come a long way. Apart from earning a special place among saree lovers, it has earned itself some rather noteworthy distinctions. The fabric was conferred with the prestigious Geographical Indication (GI) tag or status in 2005 in recognition to its origin in these parts of Andhra Pradesh and the unique characteristics of it. The art form itself has made it to the UNESCO tentative list of world heritage sites as part of “iconic saree weaving clusters of India”. Hence the patronage which it has received comes as little surprise. The latter half of the 20th century provided a major boost to this art form. In a bid to popularize Pochampally saree and other attires, the village chief of Pochampally in an ambitious attempt to rejuvenate the economy of the region, introduced the traditional Pochampally ikat weaving technique to the town of Chirala in Andhra Pradesh where it came to be recognised as “Chit-ku”. The weavers in the town of Chirala soon learned the secrets of this form of weaving and Pochampally ikat soon established a new breeding ground for itself. This possibly marks the first step towards the pan India presence and popularity which Pochampally sarees enjoy today.



About the Photographer

Neloy Dutta is a hobbyist photographer and a software engineer by profession. He started taking photographs when he got his first mobile phone with a camera and since then photography has been one of the outlets and a medium to express himself. After graduating to DSLR, he joined a photography group and attended a crash course on “Basics of Photography by Saurabh Chatterjee” which completely transformed his vision of Photography and he started doing photography seriously. He quickly became fascinated by people, cultures and streets. He has been on a quest to explore the unique/off-beat places/festivals in India and tell their stories through the medium of photographs.

The Ghats, The Ganges and the saga of death and rebirth ...

a photo album by **Nilanjan RAY** depicting the soul
of Varanasi

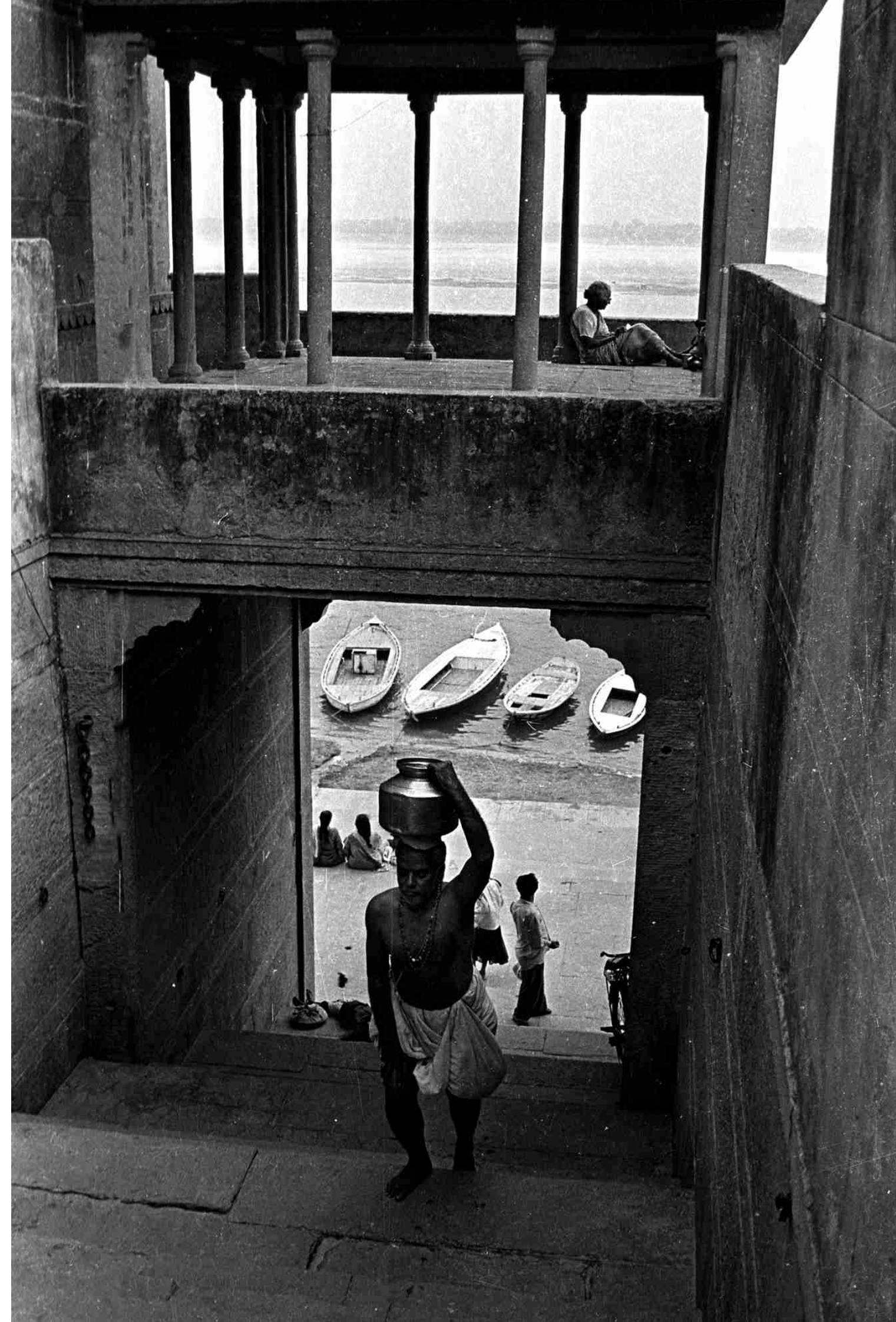


The pyres along the Ghats burn endlessly, the steps of the Ghats leading to the holy waters of the Ganges come to life at the first gentle strokes of the sun rays sweeping across them, men and women stand in knee deep water offering prayers to the rising sun, still a rather unassuming ball of orange in the distant horizon, the priests and holy men in their signature saffron robes can be seen meditating or engaged with their disciples. The temples, lined along the Ghats, serve a befitting façade for the city which to millions of Hindus in India and across the world is the holiest of all places. This is Varanasi, one of the most ancient cities, a place shrouded in folklores, where the chasms between real and mythical, ancient and modern, tumult and tranquillity often get blurred out. Beyond the Ghats and the temples lining them, lies an ancient city, the history of which is rooted deep into Hindu religion. Life in Varanasi, even in the 21st century, is very much intertwined with the practices and ethos of the myriad religious practices of Hinduism. And this ethos of the city can be best experienced at the hundreds of Ghats which run along the length of the holy Ganges.

For the devout Hindus, Varanasi or Banaras is the city of Death and Rebirth. It is believed that one who is cremated in Varanasi by the Ganges, will attain “Moksha” easily, thus breaking free from the cycle of death and rebirth. Hindus believe a dip in the sacred waters of the

Ganges will absolve them of all their sins and pave the way for an afterlife which has no bearing of one’s chequered past. Ganges is of utmost significance to the denizens of this holy city and the stone slabs along the Ghats are the nerves which establish a very humane connection of the river with the city. The city is home to nearly 100 Ghats which are thronged by locals, tourists and devout Hindus from all over the country. The Ghats are home to hundreds of temples which dominate the city’s skyline. The wide array of activities which can be witnessed at the Ghats, most of them have in some way or the other a deep religious significance. The Ghats perfectly encapsulate an average day in the life of the city. Boats, some of them rickety still relying on oars to glide across the Ganges, some more modern equipped with motors, decks, even spacious lounges, are a common sight along the Ghats. These riverine modes of transport mostly cater to the tourists and visitors for a glimpse of the city from the waterfront. Cows, which enjoy a holy status in this city, courtesy their mythical lineage dating back to ancient Hindu scriptures, are as populous along the Ghats as their human counterparts. In almost every temple along these Ghats devotees queue up to offer their daily prayers or receive blessings from their worshipped deity before they set about attending their daily business.

The city which lies beyond the rows of temples, Ghats and temples is an old and





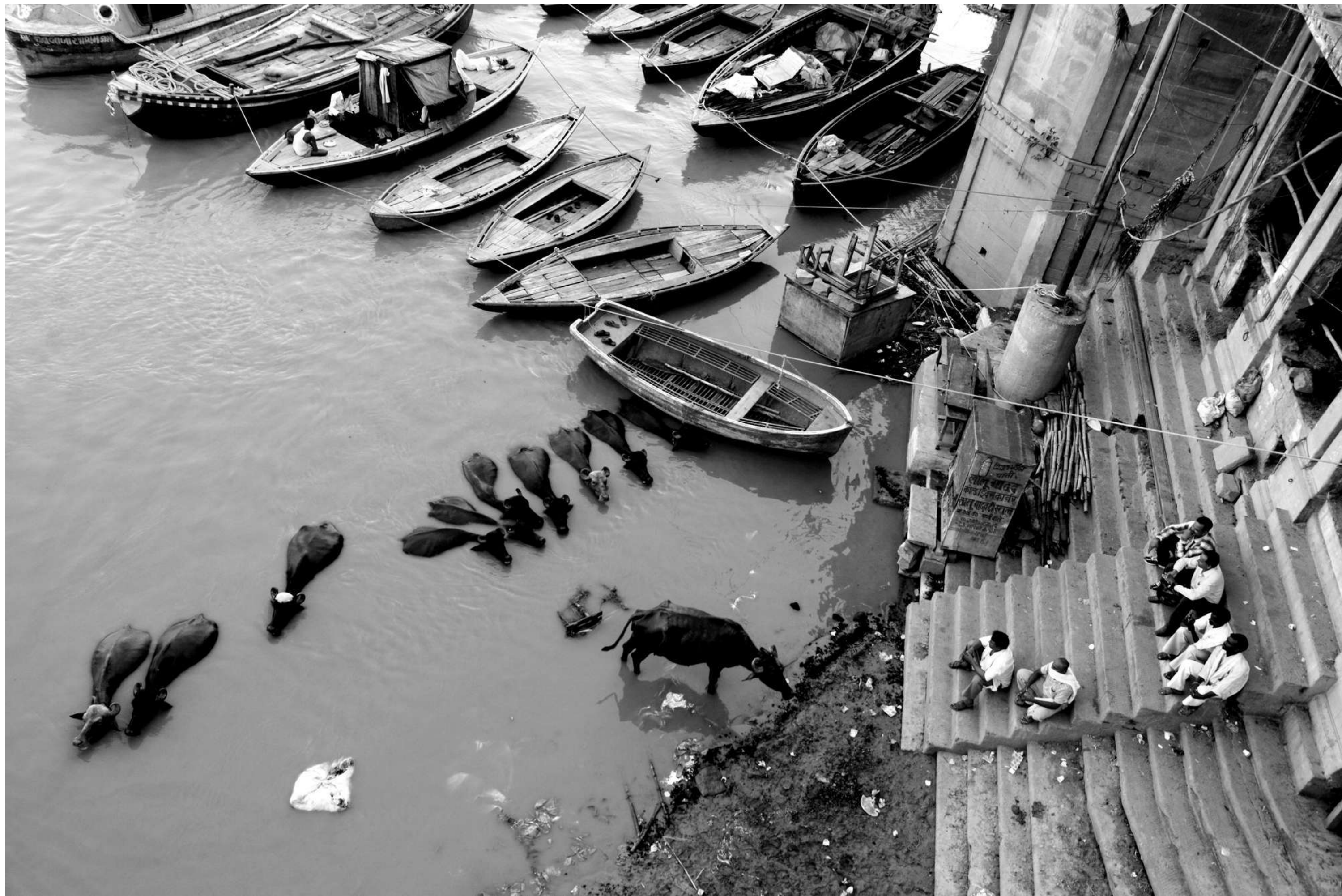
the iconic spiritual identity for the city. To an outsider, Varanasi - the Sacred City of Light - stands outside time and space, is frozen in its eternal moment of being. The Ghats themselves serve as metaphors of the spiritual city; it appears time itself emerged from the sacred depths of water, travelled along these steep steps and enchanted by the spiritual air of the place decided to stand still and leisurely bask in the calm of the gentle breeze that sweeps the stony slabs of the Ghats and the intricate patterns of the temple walls.

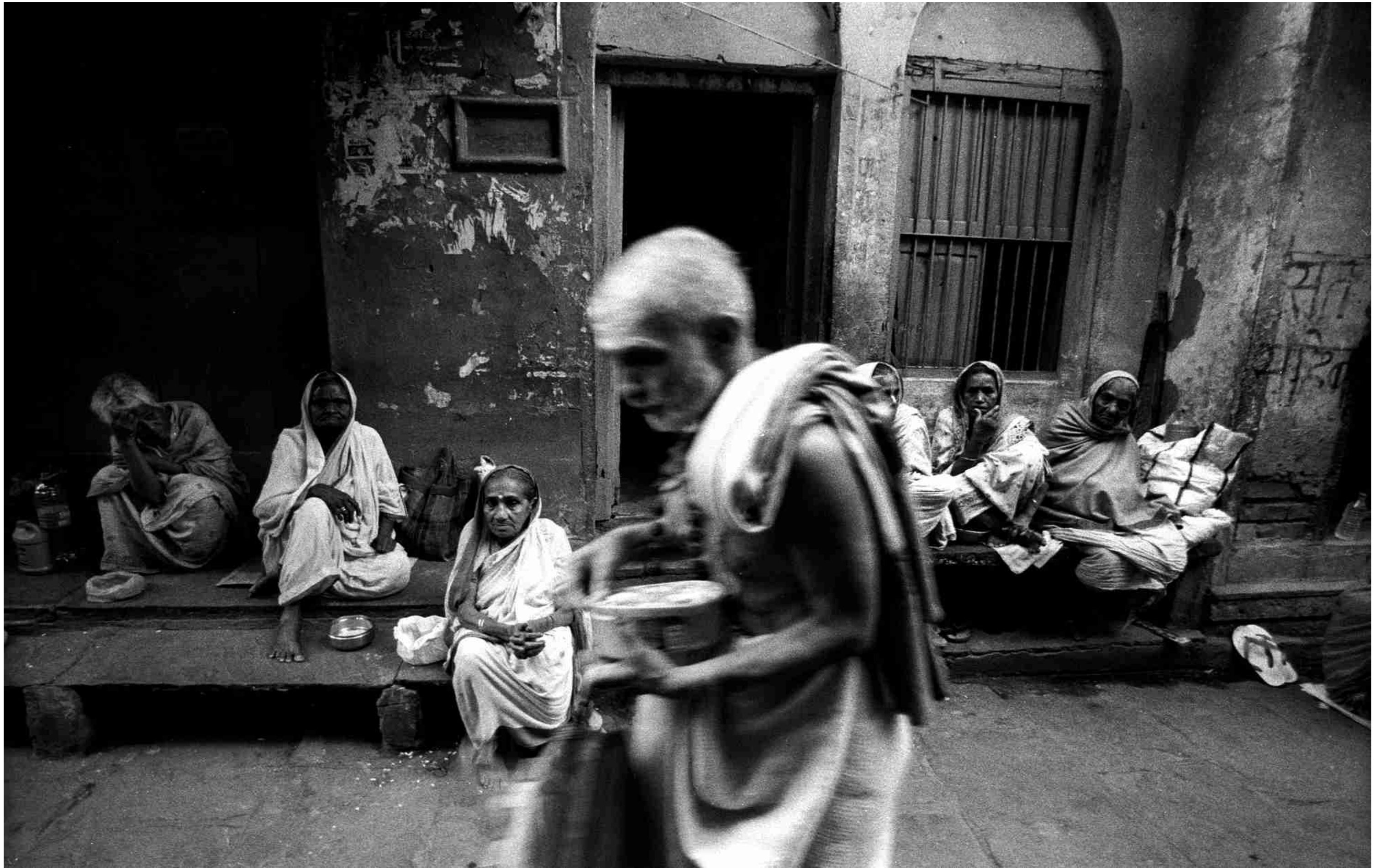
dusty one, narrow lanes, overcrowded market places, ancient homes jostling for space and an overall chaotic atmosphere being some of the readily identifiable traits. Yet the early mornings and late evenings along the Ghats overlooking the still waters of the Ganges glistening either in the gently sloping rays of a rising sun or from the light of the thousands of diyas which are

set afloat on its water, bring about a sense of calm and reverence. One's thoughts meander through the many mazes of time to a period when these temples were being built, when the Ghats were being erected, when the city was beginning to wear the lapel of the edifice of Hinduism. The Ganges has been a silent witness to all these episodes from the past, in its depths

it carefully preserves countless such anecdotes from a time long forgotten, if only the river could speak it would have brought to life many a tales from the city's glorious youth.

This photo album of Varanasi in highlights an average day along the Ghats of the city and how such seemingly day to day activities have through generations, carved



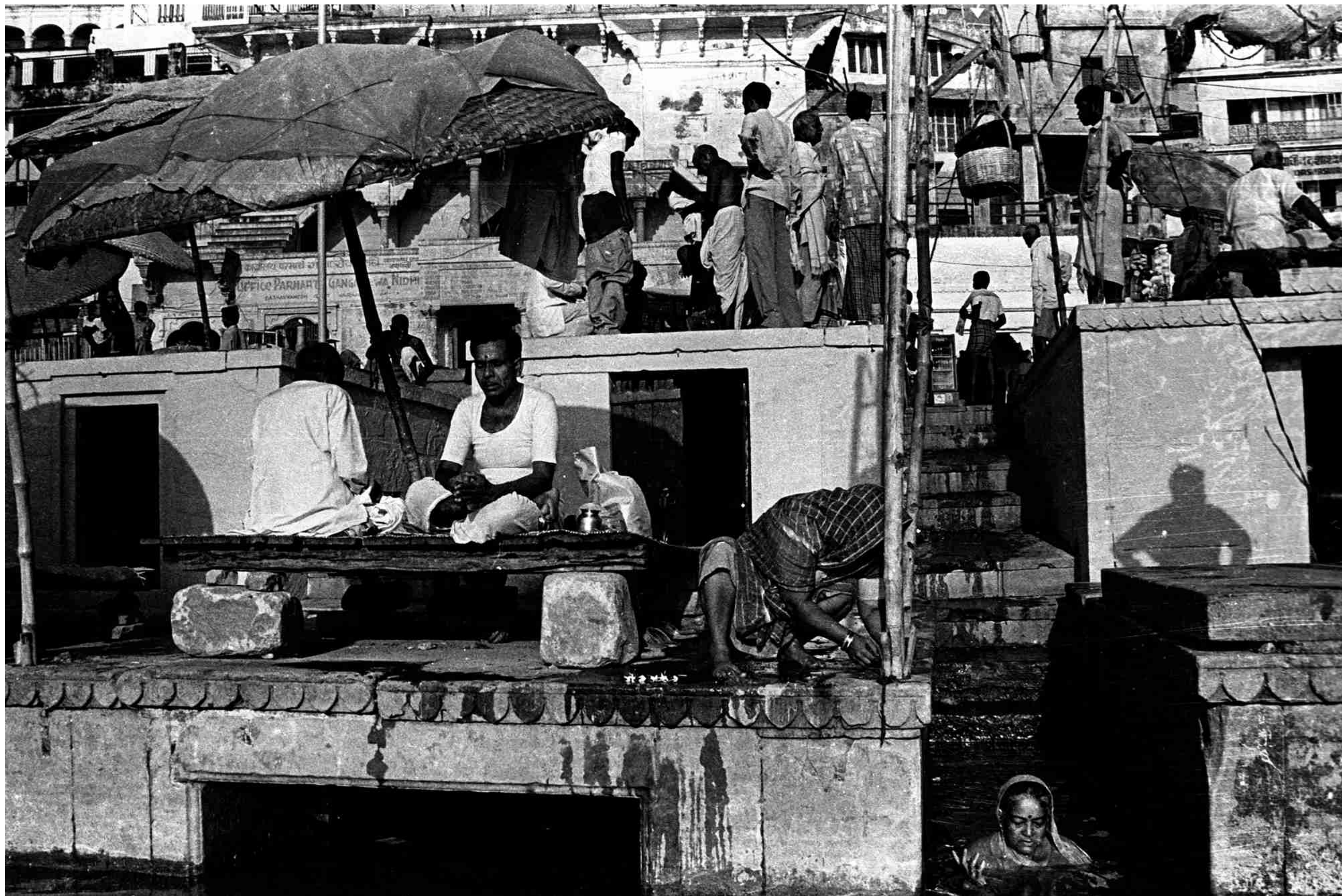














For the devout Hindus, Varanasi or Banaras is the city of Death and Rebirth. It is believed that one who is cremated in Varanasi by the Ganges, will attain “Moksha” easily, thus breaking free from the cycle of death and rebirth. Hindus believe a dip in the sacred waters of the Ganges will absolve them of all their sins and pave the way for an afterlife which has no bearing of one’s chequered past. Ganges is of utmost significance to the denizens of this holy city and the stone slabs along the Ghats are the nerves which establish a very humane connection of the river with the city.



About the Photographer

A Candid and Documentary Photographer with his own style, **Nilanjan Ray** was born in Kolkata, India in 1959. Nilanjan has a handful of exposed stock on “HUMAN INTEREST” and keeps stock of other people’s money in a Bank since it is his profession. Although he did attend some workshop and classes at the different Institute, Nilanjan is to be considered substantially a self-taught photographer. He is a life member of an oldest Photographic club in Kolkata, Photographic Association of Bengal, Kolkata.

Right from childhood, he has always been fascinated by the life on the streets and the complicated and fascinating motion it involves, and this was the spark that inspired his first long-term personal projects, photographing in Varanasi- An Eternal City and then Faith – A quaint Emotions.

Over the years he has produced long and detailed photographic projects in various subjects in West Bengal as well as India.

Framing the Milky Way

by Jatinkumar THAKKAR

Astro-landscape photographer Jatinkumar Thakkar offers his insights into the nuances of this genre of photography and shares his experiences as an astrophotographer.



The Milky Way, often conferred with distinctions such as “the galactic home of the Earth” or “the roof of our solar system” is one of the many billions galaxies which are there in the universe. For the uninitiated, there can almost never be a more humbling experience than standing under the vast expanse of the dark night sky peppered with bright stars along with a sense of belonging to this universe – which only time knows, what it hides in its dark realms. The beauty of the night sky has prompted photography enthusiasts to step out in the dark and frame the dark palate of the night through their lenses. Nowadays, we see many outstanding photos of the Milky Way in numerous publications, news portals, magazines, blogs and exhibitions. It will be worth exploring some of the basic techniques and tricks of the trade when it comes to photographing the Milky Way, and that is exactly what we are going to discuss at length in this article.

Milky Way photography is different from daytime photography where the foreground is well lit and sometimes the stark contrast is controlled with ND filters. However for Milky Way photography the primary requirement is that of a very dark sky. That means you will also require a decent enough digital camera with better low light performance, wide-aperture lens and a sturdy tripod. Once you have all the required gadgets, the following steps will help you master the techniques to

capture beautiful Milky Way pictures and post process them.

Find a dark sky

Living in a big city or town might be an advantage for various purposes in life but for Milky Way photography, you must find a location far away from ambient light pollution common to our cities and towns. Look out for National parks, State parks or even your countryside. Check out DarkSiteFinder website to see the light pollution level for the location you are seeking out. This website provides colored representation of light pollution in the area where black, grey, blue, green, yellow, orange, red and white indicate the gradual increasing levels of light pollution.

When is the Milky Way visible?

The Milky Way core is mostly visible from the month of February till October. For the remaining months, it is located beneath the horizon. In the beginning of the season, the core is visible for a very short period and that too just for a few hours before sunrise. However, by summertime, the Milky Way rises even before mid-night and remains visible for more than 5 hours.

Later in the season, the Milky Way rises just a few hours after sunset and there is a sharp decline in the visibility period as well.

Check for Weather and Moon phases

Once you have chosen your location and figured out the visibility period, consider





checking for the weather forecast for the night. Clear sky is the best situation; however sometimes shooting with fewer clouds can add a different mood to the image.

Moon phase also plays a vital role here so consider checking the time the moon rises and sets.. New moon provides the ideal setting for shooting the Milky Way. On the other hand on occasions the moon might be setting directly opposite to the location of the Milky Way; however that shouldn't act as a deterrent for taking decent Milky Way photographs. You can also plan to shoot the Milky Way while the moon is just at or above the horizon before it rises high in the sky and fades away the Milky Way.

Planning Milky Way shot using App

Once you know your location, consider using apps designed to aid you in better planning of Milky Way photography. Using such mobile applications, you can easily find out the Milky Way visibility time on a specific day, in which direction the Milky Way will be visible and the time when the galactic core will be above the horizon. Photopills and "PlanIt Pro" are two popular apps in the market and both are available on Android and iOS platforms.

Gadgets required

Digital SLR Camera: Since you will be shooting during nighttime with very little available light, you will need a digital

camera with very good low light performance, which essentially means the sensor of your camera should be able to shoot at extremely high ISO settings without introducing excessive noise. As is the custom with any other genre of photography - always shoot in RAW image format instead of JPG. RAW image collects much more information that you can use to your advantage during post processing.

Fast, wide aperture lenses: Wide angle lenses have a larger field of view that allows you to frame more of the Milky Way and a faster aperture allows you to collect as much light possible. For this type of photography, you would prefer to use a 24mm wide or shorter lens with f/2.8 setting or even faster.

Tripod: You will be capturing the Milky Way with longer exposure settings, hence achieving stability will be of utmost importance. Quite often you will be setting up your gadgets in wide open fields or rough grounds on windy nights. This is where the role of a sturdy tripod comes into play. Your tripod should be sturdy and heavy enough with a firm grip on the ground so that it absorbs any kind of shake and comfortably holds its own in the face of gusts of wind

Remote: A remote is not a necessity but can prove to be extremely handy. Any slight movement can ruin your shot. Most



modern digital cameras come with timer and/or built-in intervalometer. Make use of it if you don't have any wired or wireless shutter release remote.

Exposure Setting

Once you set up your equipment and have envisioned the frame you want to compose, at this point, make sure your camera is in manual mode, meaning your camera and lens both are on manual mode. Turn off the VR (Vibration Reduction – Nikon) or the IS (Image Stabilization – Canon) features on your lens.

Aperture and Focal Length: Go for the widest aperture that you may have on your lens and that will allow more light to come in. Now the focal length that you may choose will be playing a role in deciding exposure time. A shorter the focal length will result in a longer exposure time. You can certainly go for longer focal distance and play with the exposure time. With longer focal length like a 50mm, the Milky Way will appear much larger than you see it with a 14mm.

ISO: While shooting Milky Way images, choosing the right ISO value is a common challenge. ISO is a crucial parameter that allows you to create the right exposure with a shorter shutter speed. Modern cameras today can perform well even at ISO as high as 10000 however I would recommend starting out with ISO-3200 and go higher as and when needed.

Remember that higher the ISO value, the more digital noise you will get in your image.

Exposure Time: This is the most important setting for Milky Way photography.

Exposure time is the key parameter to capture sharp stars and not getting star trails which happens when you opt for a longer exposure. Exposure time relies on your camera sensor and the focal length. Use the “500 Rule” to determine exposure time.

$500/\text{focal length} = \text{maximum time to have sharp stars}$

For an example if you are shooting at 24mm focal length, then set your shutter speed to 20 seconds ($500/24 = 20.83$). But if you are shooting at 14mm focal length then set your shutter speed to 30 seconds ($500/14 = 35.7$). If you are shooting with a crop sensor camera then you must consider the crop factor (1.5 for Nikon and Sony; 1.6 for Canon) in calculation. 24mm focal length on Nikon crop sensor camera is equivalent to 36mm ($24 * 1.5 = 36$) so your shutter speed should be 13 seconds ($500/36 = 13.89$).

Focusing the Milky Way

Stars are incredibly distant subjects, so you need to focus to infinity. Since you are shooting in dark with full manual mode, it can be quite a challenge to focus and get sharp stars. However, this can be addressed easily with a few simple methods.



- If possible, try to set your focus to infinity during daylight. Focus automatically or manually at the subject very far away. Mark down this focus ring location on your lens so that you can easily set it back during nighttime. Don't forget to set the focus setting to manual.
- Another method involves using the live view mode on your camera. This is also my preferred method to get the stars in focus with increased accuracy. For this

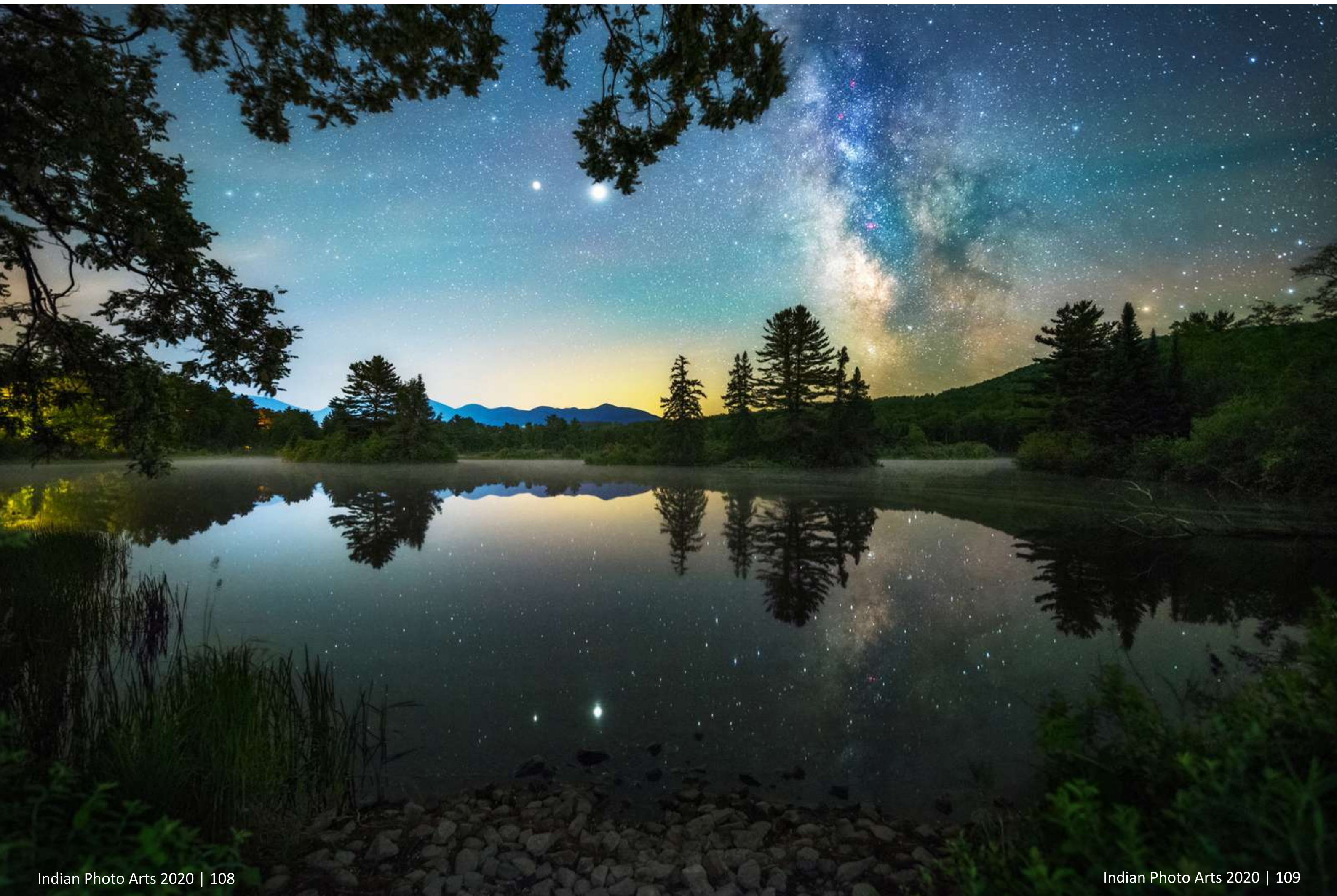
method, turn on the live view mode of your camera. In the live view mode, you can digitally magnify the scene to check out for objects that are far away. Compose the shot with the brightest star in middle. In case if you are having trouble finding a bright star then you can also choose to focus on an artificial light source (if any available) like light from a building, lighthouse, moon (if you are shooting moon at horizon) or any other distant

bright subject. Zoom in all the way until you start noticing dim flickering dots on the screen (stars) or the light object that you choose to focus on. Now start rotating the manual focus ring slowly until you notice the star as pin dot.

Editing your photos

The photos that we get straight out of the camera require some level of adjustments to make the image more appealing. There

are many RAW image editor tools available in market that can edit Milky Way photos. I use Adobe Lightroom for all basic adjustments. There are three main areas of adjustments – White Balance, Exposure & Contrast, and Noise Reduction.





White Balance Correction: White balance is referred to as Temperature and it can change the overall look of the Milky Way in your image. The color temperature of the Milky Way is around 4840K. I prefer to set the white balance at around 3700K and then adjust it as per the need to make the image appear more natural.

Exposure & Contrast: Play carefully here as this setting affects the appearance of your entire image and not just the Milky Way.

- The overall exposure of Milky Way image tends to be dark hence the Exposure slider is the next one I would like to adjust, once I get my desired white balance.

Increase the Exposure slider carefully as this one will brighten the entire image.

- The next setting I like to focus on is the black slider. Increasing the black (negative slide) not only brings out subtle colors of the Milky Way, it also reduces noise a bit.
- The white slider is the one I would

take on right after black as working with this slider in tandem with the black slider creates contrast in the image. Increase the white as needed and keep checking the overall appearance of the image.

- After selectively adjusting black and white, you may want to adjust the Contrast slider to add a bit more contrast to your image.
- Clarity is one of the powerful sliders of Lightroom, also referred to as “edge contrast”. Increasing Clarity slider gives a more three-dimensional look to the image. In Milky Way photos, increasing the clarity makes the stars pop out a bit, whereas decreasing the clarity gives a dreamy look to the sky.

Noise Reduction: The Milky Way images are shot with high ISO settings which produce noise (grains) in your image. Also, warmer the sensor and/or air temperature, you have greater risk of having more noise in your image. With increased Exposure and White adjustments, the image looks a bit noisier. At this point, we need to work with The Noise Reduction section in Lightroom.

There are two types of noise reduction modes available in Lightroom – Luminance and Color. Color noise reduction is by default set to 25 and does a pretty good job. I mostly do not tamper with this slider. Luminance noise reduction is what we are looking out for our image. Move the Luminance slider to 10 and then increase it slowly. Make sure not to



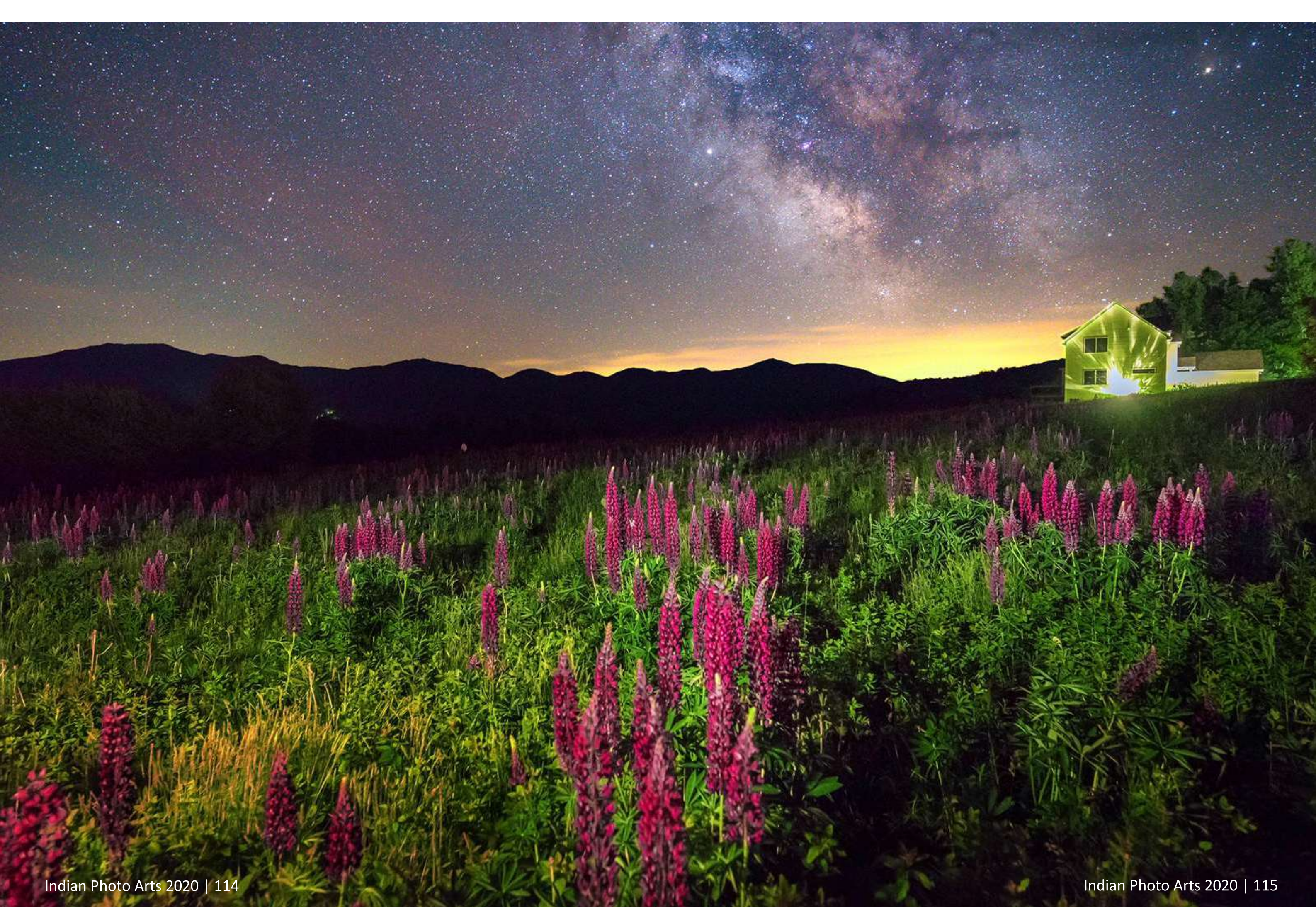
The Milky Way, often conferred with distinctions such as “the galactic home of the Earth” or “the roof of our solar system” is one of the many billions galaxies which are there in the universe. For the uninitiated, there can almost never be a more humbling experience than standing under the vast expanse of the dark night sky peppered with bright stars along with a sense of belonging to this universe – which only time knows, what it hides in its dark realms.

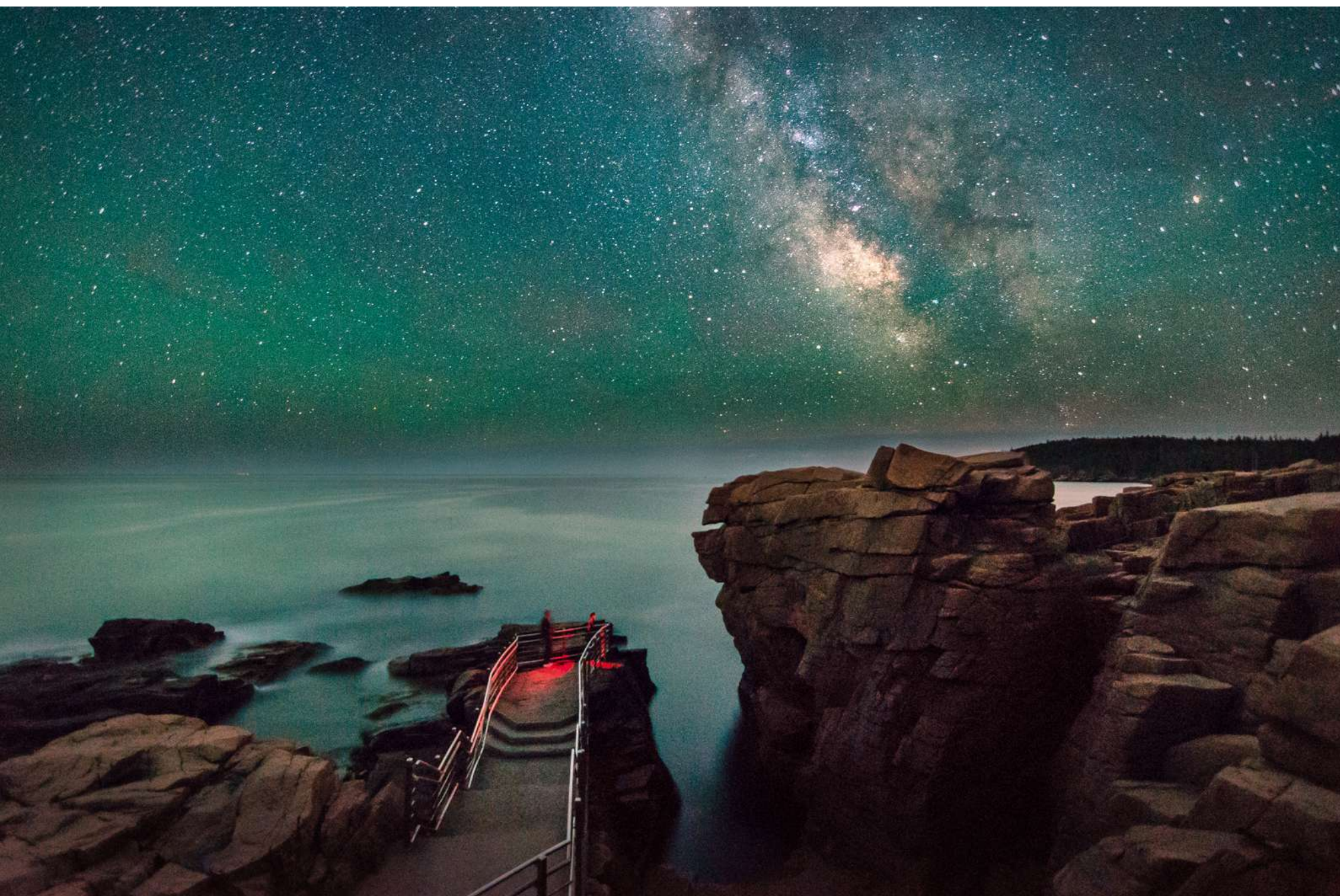
go too far as this will affect the details of your image.

Image Stacking is another method of noise reduction which requires multiple images of same composition and same exposure setting. This can be done in Adobe Photoshop tool using a median

filter. There are other tools available in market which work extremely well and give you noise free images. “Starry Landscape Stacker” is for Mac users whereas “Sequator” is an alternative option for Windows users.

There is always a learning curve before you master yourself, so keep shooting and enjoy what you do. Good Luck!!





The beauty of the night sky has prompted photography enthusiasts to step out in the dark and frame the dark palate of the night through their lenses. Nowadays, we see many outstanding photos of the Milky Way in numerous publications, news portals, magazines, blogs and exhibitions. It will be worth exploring some of the basic techniques and tricks of the trade when it comes to photographing the Milky Way, and that is exactly what we are going to discuss at length in this article.



About the Photographer

Jatinkumar Thakkar is an avid nature photographer, primarily focusing on landscape and astrophotography. Based upon the challenges which he faced while pursuing the genre of astro-landscape photography when he started out in 2013, he compiled an article -"The Milky Way – How to Photograph and Post Process" that can provide an in depth and comprehensive insight into the number of factors which go a long way in determining a successful astro-landscape photograph. He feels by sharing his experiences and the techniques which he uses for this particular genre he will be able to provide those starting out in this field with some genuine solutions and help them get effective returns for their efforts.

Cantao ocellatus | the diligent parents of the insect world.

Anirban DUTTA documents the early stages in the life cycle of a shield bug and how strict adherence to the responsibilities of parenthood has carved this bug species a special niche in the insect world.



The ocellated shield bug, *Cantao ocellatus*, is identifiable by the dark spots which are arranged symmetrically along a median ridge line running across its back. The colour of the black ranges from bright orange to a dull or matted yellow. Like most bugs, the ocellated shield bug too is equipped with a pair of wings which fold underneath its body when not in flight and remain invisible. A mating pair can be seen in this photograph.

The more imposing elements of the natural world by dint of their sheer grandeur appeal to our collective conscience, our aesthetics, although hidden in the crevices and the tiny nooks and corners; the natural world unfurls its unmatched artistry and craftsmanship in its very own miniature realm. In fact, insects dominate the land fauna in terms of the number of species, their diversity and their range of habitat. By a rough estimate, there are approximately 1 million identified insect species on this planet; although entomologists are of the opinion the actual number could be five folds. They all are highly equipped to survive on this planet, and being almost always at the bottom of the food chain, some have developed rather ingenious solutions to evade predators or keep their young ones or eggs safe from prying eyes. On the other hand, some rely upon strength which comes in numbers and build up giant colonies. Few are armed with stings, venom, mandibles capable of inflicting significant damages while others simply prefer the flight option when faced with trouble.

It is remarkable how incredibly detailed this tiny world can be. Often the denizens of this miniature world spend a great deal of time in perfecting their craft, which is evident from a spider's intricately spun web or the detailed architecture of an ant colony. The insects are hard workers, most of them put in an incredible amount of effort and time in foraging for food and

no matter how extraordinary it might sound, in many cases are extremely diligent parents and parenthood is often preceded by some rather unique and elaborate mating ritual.

One such insect species which has made a name for itself for being doting parents in the insect world is *Cantao ocellatus*, a species of shield bug commonly found across the continent of Asia. The ocellated shield bug, *Cantao ocellatus*, is identifiable by the dark spots which are arranged symmetrically along a median ridge line running across its back. The colour of the back ranges from bright orange to a dull or matted yellow. Like most bugs, the ocellated shield bug too is equipped with a pair of wings which fold underneath its body when not in flight and remain invisible. The wings can be noticed only when the bug is in flight. The bright colouration on its back usually in a reddish or orange hue appears during the mating season. Mating is followed by the laying of eggs during which the bright colourations on their bodies disappear giving way to a more subdued hue of beige or yellow. The females prefer to lay eggs on the underside of broad leaves, a rather simple yet clever way of protecting the eggs from harsh sunlight and the prying eyes of predators. However it has been observed in well concealed areas, females do not mind laying their eggs on the top surfaces of leaves. While laying eggs it has been noted, they prefer to lay their eggs on leaves of *Mallotus paniculatus*.



One such insect species which has made a name for itself for being doting parents in the insect world is *Cantao ocellatus*, a species of shield bug commonly found across the continent of Asia. Mating is followed by the laying of eggs during which the bright colourations on their bodies disappear giving way to a more subdued hue of beige or yellow.



The females prefer to lay eggs on the underside of broad leaves, a rather simple yet clever way of protecting the eggs from harsh sunlight and the prying eyes of predators. However it has been observed in well concealed areas, females do not mind laying their eggs on the top surfaces of leaves. While laying eggs it has been noted, these bugs prefer to lay their eggs on leaves of *Mallotus paniculatus*, a commonly found native tree species.



It has been observed the females do not leave their nesting sites even for feeding which bears testimony to the diligence of the would-be parents. The mother on a periodic basis moves her body in exaggerated swaying motions over her clutch of eggs. Scientists believe the females perform this movement in order to polish their clutches of eggs to rid them of any parasite.

diligent parenthood, the mothers stay close to the nymphs and keep a lookout for predators. In spite of the great care the mothers take in safeguarding their clutches from parasites and predators it is often noticed the eggs along the fringes of the clutches fall victim to parasites and fail to develop successfully or hatch. The nymphs under a close watch of their mother begin to moult roughly three days after hatching. They develop a glossy red colouration on their back while the head, thorax and limbs turn shiny black. It is only at this stage the mother prepares to move away from her young ones as the young bugs venture out on their own. However it is common for the two generations to inhabit the same host tree for the next few days and feed on the fruits of the tree. Over the course of next two to three weeks the young bugs would undergo a series of moulting and eventually attain adulthood.

After laying a clutch of approximately 100-150 eggs the female positions herself on top of the clutch and stays put until the eggs hatch. It has been observed the females do not leave their nesting sites even for feeding which bears testimony to the diligence of the would-be parents.

The mother on a periodic basis moves her body in exaggerated swaying motions over her clutch of eggs. Scientists believe the females perform this movement in order to polish their clutches of eggs to rid them of any parasite. In addition to this ,this could also be done in order to ward off

any predator approaching the clutch. The clutch hatches after 5-6 days of the females laying them. As the eggs approach maturity, they take up a darker shade of orange. The newly hatched nymphs are orange in colour and are about 2 mm in length. In a remarkable display of

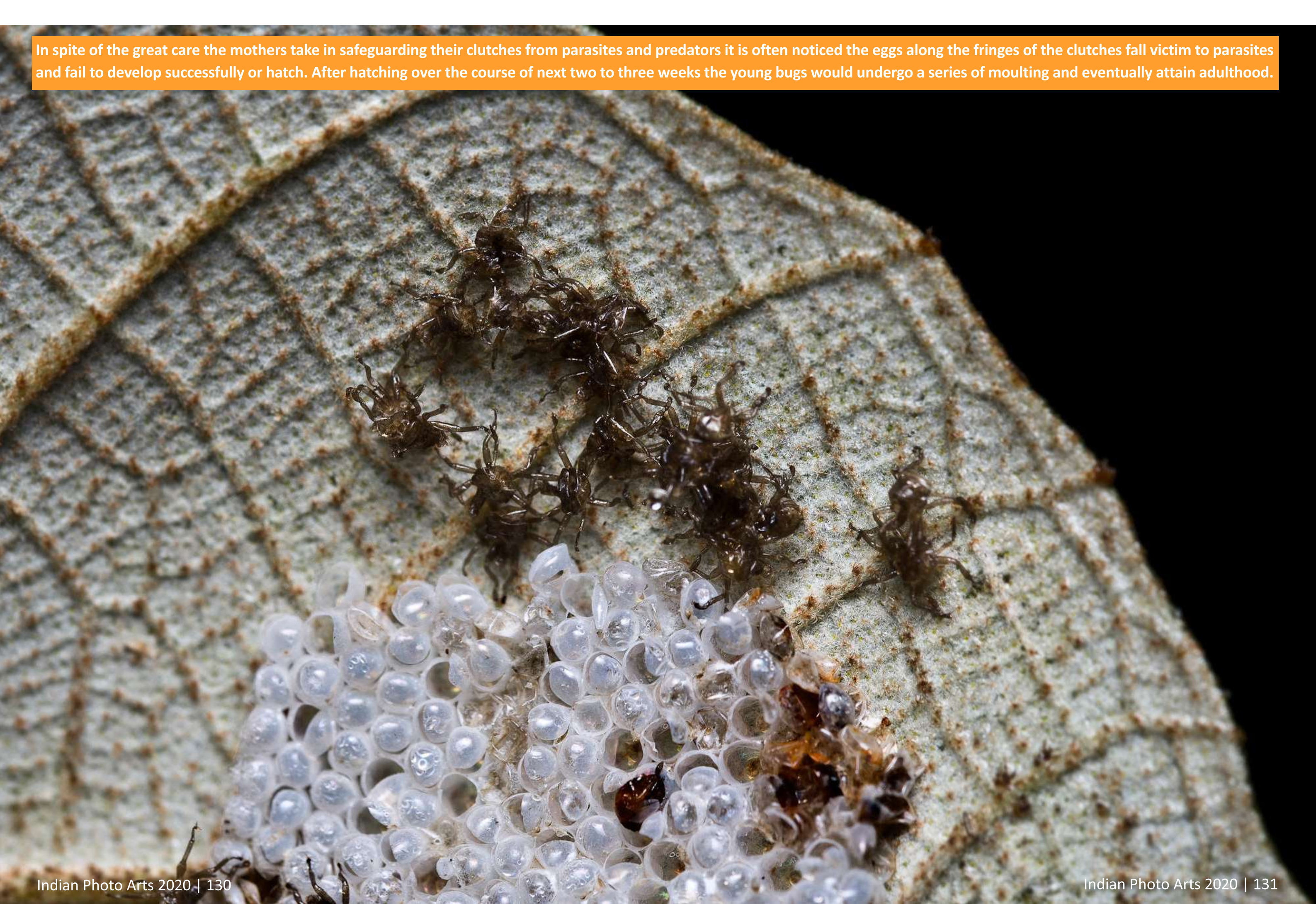
The newly hatched nymphs are orange in colour and are about 2 mm in length. In a remarkable display of diligent parenthood, the mothers stay close to the nymphs and keep a lookout for predators. In spite of the great care the mothers take in safeguarding their clutches from parasites and predators it is often noticed the eggs along the fringes of the clutches fall victim to parasites and fail to develop successfully or hatch.





A few days after hatching the nymphs prepare to move away from the safety of their mother and venture out on their own. As can be seen here, a clutch of previously hatched bugs are venturing out of the comfort and security of their nest while another female keeps a close watch on her clutch of eggs , the pronounced orange colouration of which indicates it is soon going to hatch.

In spite of the great care the mothers take in safeguarding their clutches from parasites and predators it is often noticed the eggs along the fringes of the clutches fall victim to parasites and fail to develop successfully or hatch. After hatching over the course of next two to three weeks the young bugs would undergo a series of moulting and eventually attain adulthood.





The nymphs under a close watch of their mother begin to moult roughly three days after hatching. They develop a glossy red colouration on their back while the head, thorax and limbs turn shiny black. It is only at this stage the mother prepares to move away from her young ones as the young bugs venture out on their own. However it is common for the two generations to inhabit the same host tree for the next few days and feed on the fruits of the tree.



About the Photographer

Anirban Dutta is a passionate wildlife photographer from the town of Cooch Behar in West Bengal. He is particularly interested in documenting birds and insects around him and has been pursuing his passion for more than five years now. He intends to create awareness among his peers and audience in general through his documentation of these tiny creatures in the natural world and the crucial role they play in sustaining our ecosystems. He spent a considerable three months documenting the early stages in the life of a shield bug which he has documented in this photo series. He is a frequent visitor to Buxa Tiger Reserve, which lies in the outskirts of the town of Cooch Behar. He intends to document the ecology and behaviour of many more species from this relatively lesser explored wilderness in the days to come.

The Men and Women of Pushkar

by Rupam DEY

This photo album is a tribute to these ancient communities Pushkar, some of whom are struggling for survival today while others have been slowly pushed to the brink of obscurity.

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 month of Kartik (October–November).

Such vibrant costumes and colourful characters uphold the rich and diverse heritage of the region.



The sleepy town of Pushkar in Rajasthan is a familiar name across the globe. It features heavily in the tourist brochures and is a must visit for anyone visiting the state of Rajasthan. The town owes much of its popularity to the famed animal fair which is held in the dusty grounds in the outskirts of the city each year. What started out as a means of livelihood for the many nomadic communities who call the mighty Thar Desert their home, the 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. The nomadic communities, who travel hundreds of miles across the sand dunes of Thar Desert in search of grazing lands for their livestock, have been crowding the grounds of Pushkar for many decades now with the purpose of trading their livestock. Although camels are at the heart of the frenzied activities which pan out on the dusty grounds of Pushkar, the trading is not just limited to camels; in fact cattle, sheep, goats, and thoroughbred horses are bought and sold in good-natured haggling encounters. Apart from being an animal fair the 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

hysterical 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.

With the evening moon shining at its brightest, painting the sandy dunes and ravines of Rajasthan in a hue of bright blue marking the brightest night of the year, the tribes from different parts of Rajasthan begin their journey with a common destination ahead of them. Their journeys commence from all over Rajasthan, they begin their arduous trek across the sand from some of the remotest locations, from 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 colours in the world pouring 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 beats, which are as decked up as their human counterparts. In this crowd also

In spite of the hardships and the barrenness the desert offers, life almost always wears a smile on its face and is never devoid of colours.



This elderly camel herder enjoys a well-deserved smoke after long hours of tending to his herd of camels.

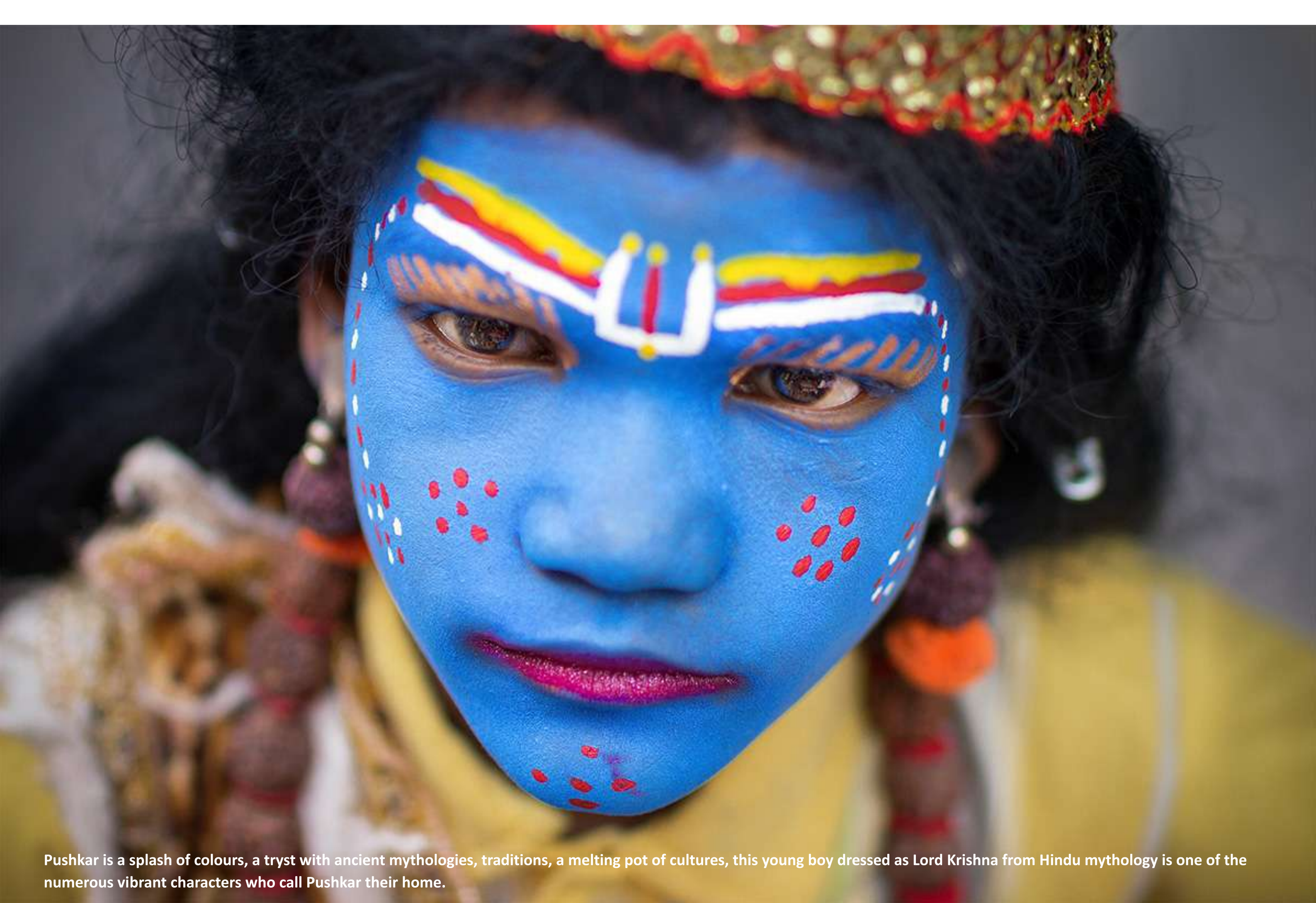


present are the musicians, performers, artists, painters all of whom are going to play an integral part in ensuing gala over the next few days. All of them are going to take part in the Pushkar Camel Fair or locally known as “Pushkar ka Mela” which is a five day camel and livestock fair held in the town 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 month of Kartik (October–November).

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 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 Lohars have traditionally excelled as ironsmiths. The Lohars join the Pushkar fair not as traders of camels or other livestock but their specialised set

of skills come in handy over the course of next few days, from repairing a malfunctioning bolt in one of the wheels of a caravan 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.

This photo album is a tribute to these ancient communities of our country, some of whom are struggling for survival today while others have been slowly pushed to the brink of obscurity. These are communities of hard working people with an enviable reputation of being incredibly sturdy, life in the sand dunes of Rajasthan is far from being a smooth sailing affair. Yet in the midst of their struggle for survival, they all have their individual tales to tell, their diverse and elaborate rituals, customs and art forms to showcase, their proud ancient lineage to uphold, all of which pan out on the dusty sandy grounds of Pushkar and transforms the otherwise quant town into the superlative spectacle that it is today.

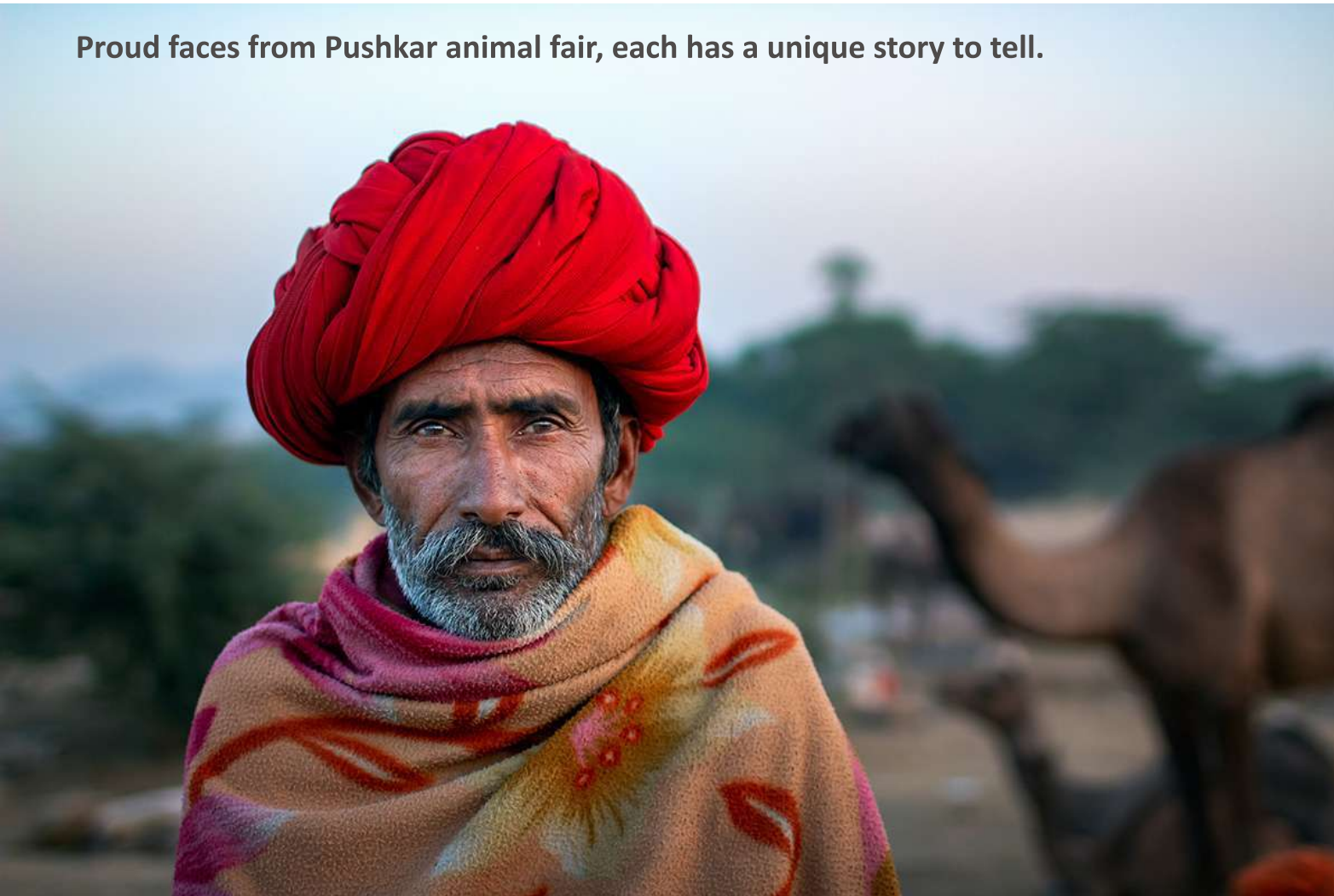


Pushkar is a splash of colours, a tryst with ancient mythologies, traditions, a melting pot of cultures, this young boy dressed as Lord Krishna from Hindu mythology is one of the numerous vibrant characters who call Pushkar their home.

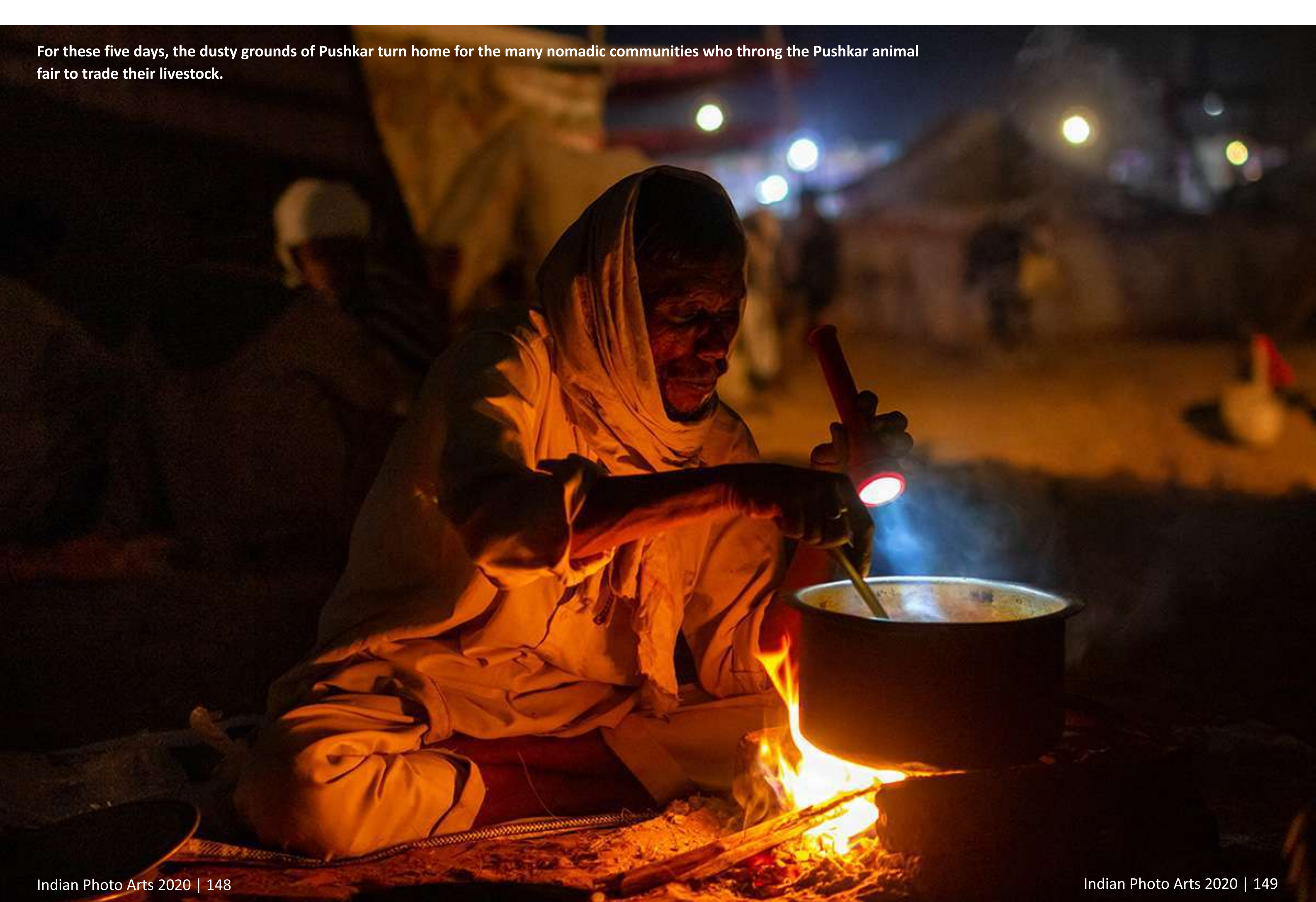
Pushkar is not only about the magnificent beasts or the rich and colourful heritage of Rajasthan, it holds a special place among devout Hindus too for being a sacred Hindu pilgrimage. At the heart of this pilgrimage is the sacred Pushkar Lake. The lake too is a melting pot of pious Hindu devotees from across the country.



Proud faces from Pushkar animal fair, each has a unique story to tell.



For these five days, the dusty grounds of Pushkar turn home for the many nomadic communities who throng the Pushkar animal fair to trade their livestock.





This photo album is a tribute to these ancient communities of our country, some of whom are struggling for survival today while others have been slowly pushed to the brink of obscurity. Yet they remain an inherent part of our diverse culture and it is their handiwork which makes the Pushkar Animal Fair each year such a vibrant spectacle which captivates the imagination of the entire world.



About the Photographer

An IT professional and an avid photographer, **Rupam Dey** belongs to Siliguri, a small city in West Bengal, India. His father was previously a camera salesperson for over a decade and due to that, Rupam could start playing with the camera from a very early age with zero knowledge of photography. However, his journey from Kodak KB10 to Canon 5D Mark III was not that easy.

Rupam shaped and reshaped his photography journey from time to time but he truly believes that he doesn't belong to a particular genre, he loves to shoot anything and everything, whatever he finds to be captured, but his centre of focus has always been people. His work has been selected, displayed and published at various national and international platforms.



UNEARTHING



It is largely believed there is no dearth of talent in any field, the same applies true for photography as well. While the advent of social media has provided these talents with a platform to showcase their works, there is also the risk of getting buried under the tremendous volume of content on social media. Our series – Unearthing is aimed at spotting the extremely talented and gifted individuals out there who through their exceptional works are enriching the field of photography. In this issue we are featuring some of the works of **Sashi Bhushan Das, Prasanta Kumar Sur, Santanu Dey, Debmalya Das** and **Debarshi Dutta** (in no particular order).





Sashi Bhusan Das, a financier by profession and a street shooter by passion, hails from Bhubaneswar-Odisha. Having worked with some of the leading banks and NBFCs in the Capacity of Head of the State has always been busy with the Excel Sheets. His journey began into the world of photography, when his wife prompted him to buy a decent camera for personal use. The machine that paints with light, winked at him and the creative person inside him adventured into capturing moments. Later he discovered street photography and completely committed to the genre. In his own words, "the thrill and excitement of getting that one Oh My god Moment keeps me motivated enough to go back to the street, even though in street photography the success rate is way below one per cent." His on-going series "Spirit of Football", covering various locations of India, has been published in leading newspapers and photography websites. His recent work on Cyclone Fani has also been recognized. He often finds it interesting to shoot the connection between human and the environment.

Facebook www.facebook.com/reachsashi/

Instagram https://www.instagram.com/sashi_b_das/



Photograph by Sashi Bhusan Das

"Being a Yoga practitioner this image is close to me. Yoga means union. And this image literally unites the textures of the cow with the sky and the human in the middle is often not conscious that he is the whole and not the part of it. In a way Aham Brahmarshmi literally means that I am the universe."

"This image was taken in a very crowded market of Mumbai in Dadar. This always reminds me of the connection that is always there everywhere between us and the environment. As a photographer, what we often need to do is to find out that connection. When we do that, an ordinary situation looks extra-ordinary."

Photograph by Sashi Bhusan Das



Photograph by Sashi Bhusan Das

"This image was taken during the famous festival of Rathayatra celebrated in an eastern Indian city, Puri (Odisha). While many photographers were busy shooting the festival, I decided to go to the beach for some time and found this young girl balancing on a rope and the two girls sitting behind were so engrossed as if they are learning an important lesson of life - Balance."





Prasanta Kumar Sur is a Higher Secondary school teacher by profession. Photography is his passion and concert photography is his favourite topic. Besides being the official photographer of Bangla Band Fossils, he has worked with singers like Armaan Mlaik, Shreya Ghoshal, Sonu Nigam, Shaan, KK and others. However he remains fascinated by the genres of landscape and street photography. He makes it a point to tag his camera along with him wherever he goes. He has been using a Nikon D750 for the last three years.

Instagram - https://www.instagram.com/prasanta_kumar_sur_photography/

Facebook Page link - <https://www.facebook.com/Prasanta-Kr-Sur-Photography-697721083584822>



Photograph by Prasanta Kumar Sur

"I took this image from the 56th floor of the iconic "42" building. The gear was Nikon D750 with a 24-120 mm lens. It was a great view of Kolkata. I took about 100-120 photographs. The Victoria Memorial, the Ganges and the dramatic monsoon sky combined together to paint the perfect landscape scene."

Photograph by Prasanta Kumar Sur





Santanu Dey, an amateur street & documentary photographer based in Kolkata is an Accountant & Logistics Manager in a leading engineering firm for the last 16 years. He started out with his mobile camera and shifted to his first DSLR two years back and started shooting on the streets on a regular basis. He finds the everyday drama unfolding on the streets fascinating and firmly believes in the words of Robert Doisneau, the famous French photographer - "The marvels of daily life are exciting, no movie director can arrange the unexpected that you find in the street." He believes in practicing his craft with utmost sincerity and ethically without violating his subjects' privacy.



Photograph by Santanu Dey

"It was pre Eid evening in the alleys near Nakhoda Masjid. Here I tried to convey the dual scenarios of our socio economic culture. The vendor was smiling there even after he had no such customer to sell his goods and the slow shutter effect on the left side of the frame depicts the story of our daily busy life as there we usually don't care about anyone's bad day. The burst light above is the significance of our lucky star as it is placed on top of the frame diversion."

It was a blissful morning at Varanasi. The Wall art of lord Ganesh & the prayer by the man in the river creates juxtaposition here. The frame also contains a boat (little blurred) at the backdrop and soft morning light in rippled water. The combination of four (Lord, Prayer, Boat & Morning Light in rippled water) depicts how we (the Hindus) usually start our daily life or how we should. It also conveys a message of the importance of all these things in our life as without water, light & blessings from almighty our life has no value nor we can make anything possible.

Photograph by Santanu Dey



Facebook : <https://www.facebook.com/sdsdey>
Instagram : <https://www.instagram.com/santanusonaidey>



Debmalya Das is a Panchayat Audit Officer with the West Bengal Government by profession and a passionate documentary photographer. He frequently travels in search of stories to the farthest corners of the country. He has featured in Vogue Italia on several occasions and has been awarded by National Geographic Travellers India on multiple occasions besides being featured and honoured by World Photographic Forum. He has been featured by many print and digital publishing houses. He is presently part of an ongoing assignment called – Project Bismillah.

Photograph by Debmalya Das

"This elderly lady has lost her husband recently and is stranded all alone in the large empty house. She eagerly looks forward to the five days of festivities during Durga Puja during which she feels the Goddess, fondly known as Uma – an affectionate avatar of the Goddess in the form of the daughter of the household, comes to visit her and fills the empty rooms and corridors with warmth and joy. It is the last day of the festivities and time for the daughter to return to her heavenly abode, the mother in her bemoans at the prospect of letting her go. Reluctantly she performs the last rituals before she sends the Goddess off to her heavenly abode. In this poignant moment the clay idol metamorphosed into something humane and tugged at the hearts of everyone present."

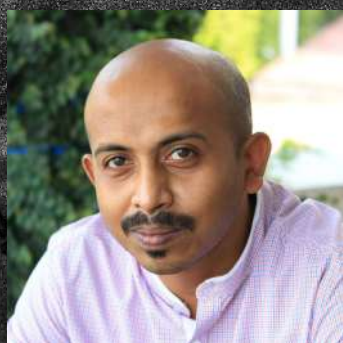


Photograph by Debmalya Das

"It is the festival of Karwa Chauth during which married women in one of the remote villages in Bihar are celebrating for the well-being and long life of their husbands. As per the rituals married women observe fast till the new moon appears and they glance at it through a sieve before glancing at their husbands' faces and breaking the fast. The wives of army personnel, who stay away from home, perform this ritual by looking at their husband's photograph."

"This photograph was taken at Mullick Ghat flower market, Kolkata, at early morning. This person was taking his bath in the Ganges, a common practice among the locals as the river is revered by millions by pious Hindus for being a sacred entity. The thing which attracted me when he started floating in water, with his hands wide open and a beaming expression on his face was the fact that beaming that he was not only enjoying that moment of relaxation but also was cut off from this world of chaos, sufferings, pain and other negativities - a universe which we could not fathom."

Photograph by Debarshi Dutta



Debarshi Dutta is a civil engineer by profession and a passionate street photographer. The photography bug bit him in 2011 although it was not until 2018 when he started exploring photography more seriously and on a consistent basis. He will forever remain indebted to the acclaimed street photographer Raj Sarkar who took an active interest in his photographs and helped him develop his craft. He thoroughly enjoys the challenges of street photography, a genre in which he feels one has to be observant, quick thinking and make the most of whatever little resources a given circumstance offers someone. He feels when he is documenting the streets around him, apart from taking photographs, every time he ends up discovering an emotional aspect in himself. His photographs have been exhibited at Kolkata International Photography Festival, World Photographic Forum Annual Exhibition and published on multiple platforms such as 121 Clicks, APF magazine Weekly Photography Challenge and many others.

Facebook Link: <https://www.facebook.com/debarshi.dutta.7>

Instagram Link: <https://instagram.com/debarshi.dutta>

"This photograph was taken at Mullick Ghat Flower Market, Kolkata, in the evening. There is a large banyan tree on the banks of the Ganges and during high tides kids jump into the river from the branches of this tree. On this occasion I decided to freeze the motion of one such kid jumping into the water midway. Among other frames I found this one more presentable where the posture of this boy gave me the feeling that the boy was walking on water."

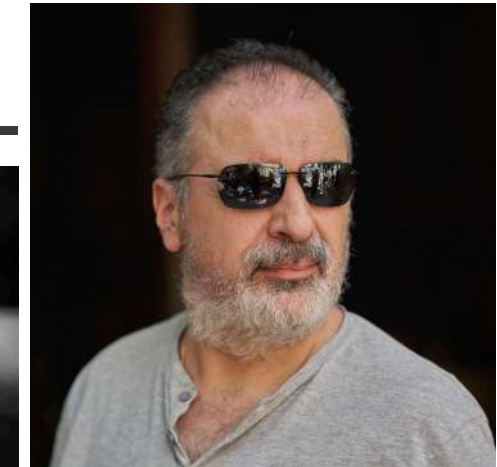
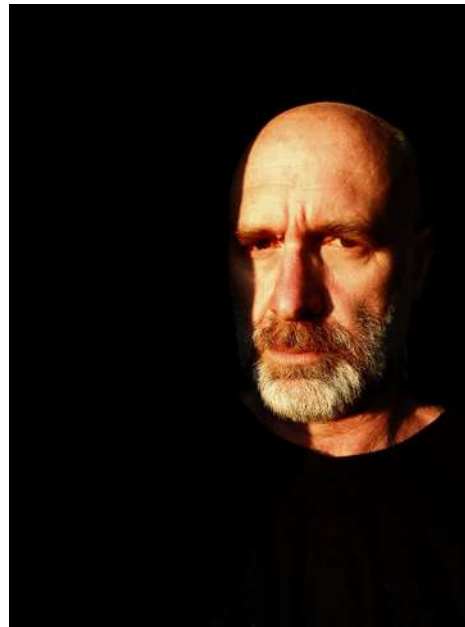




Five photographers, from different parts of the world, have come together under one roof with the purpose of sharing their common vision through their photographs.

Beyond Borders Collective is the brainchild of this vision they shared despite being separated by the geographical borders.

Beyond Borders Collective's main objective is to share with the world of art and culture, its unique way of observations and thoughts when it comes to the field of photography.



Beyond Borders Collective is looking forward to induct various activities through their social media platforms to promote young talents worldwide and provide them with opportunities to further hone their skills through the exchange of ideas and activities with the collective's members. Once selected, some of the activities in store for the upcoming talented photographers are joint/solo book projects on various cities across the world, online workshops, portfolio reviews, yearly exhibitions and a host of other events which will be launched soon.



<https://instagram.com/beyondbordercollective>



<https://www.facebook.com/Beyond-Borders-Collective-106922364501529>



www.bbcollective.in



Raj Sarkar (India)

 https://instagram.com/street_raj

Photograph by Raj Sarkar



Photograph by Raj Sarkar



Lopamudra Talukdar (India)

 <https://instagram.com/lopamudra>





Paul Mei (Greece)



<https://instagram.com/paulmei>



Photograph by Paul Mei



Photograph by Paul Mei



K M Asad (Bangladesh)



<https://instagram.com/kmasad>



Photograph by K M Asad



Photograph by Roberto Bartolini

Roberto Bartolini (Italy)



https://instagram.com/robertobartolini_



