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INDIAN

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# PHOTO ARTS

December 2019

## The Crumbling Frontiers



A SPECIAL COVER STORY ON HOW OUR COASTS AND COASTAL MANGROVES ARE  
VANISHING FAST UNDER THE SCOURGE OF CLIMATE CHANGE





Photograph by Rahul Bera

**What** once used to be a lush green wetland, home to scores of birds, reptiles, amphibians and countless other creatures all part of a robust eco-system, has been reduced to this lifeless barren stretch of land used for dumping fly ash and other waste products from the industries in the background. Such scenes in our suburbs are becoming increasingly common as we are losing more of our green cover by the minute. There cannot be a black or white approach or absolute solution to this issue, although it can never hurt to make ourselves aware of the ground reality which sadly resembles such scenes.

Regards

Rahul Bera (Editor of Photography & Design)

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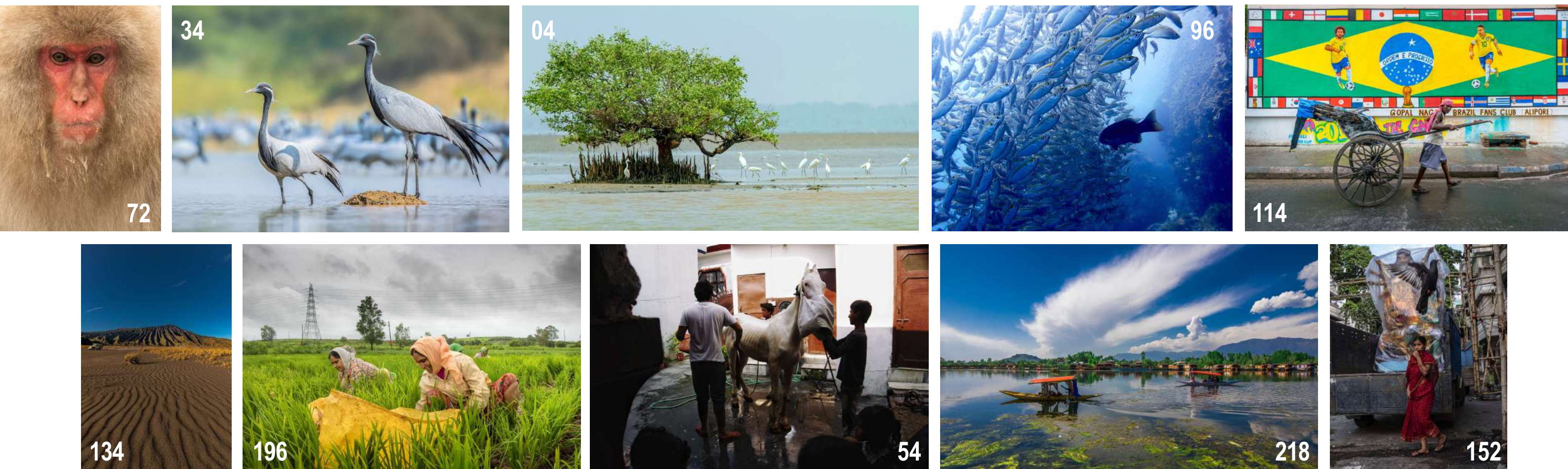


Indian Photo ARTS

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*Cover page photograph by Srikanth Mannepuri*



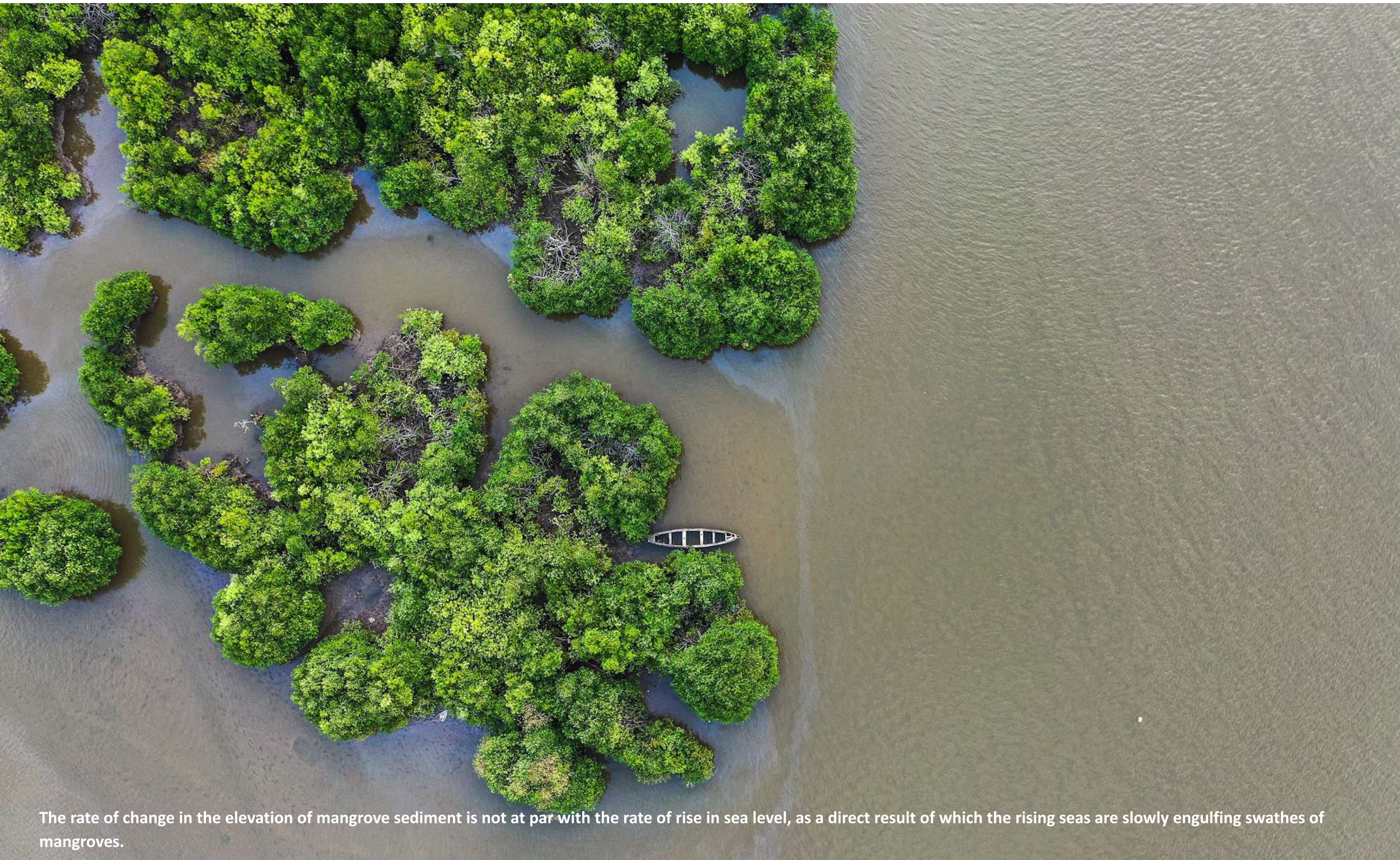
# the Crumbling Frontiers...

by **Srikanth MANNEPURI**

Climate change is destroying our mangroves, obliterating thousands of species and rendering our coastal towns and cities defenceless against the wrath of nature.

Mangroves are our first line of defence against cyclonic formations which wreak havoc on our coastal cities and towns. Worryingly these defences are crumbling, and they are eroding away, not in the face of some cyclonic storm, the menace of climate change is weakening these ancient frontiers and the situation is graver than ever.





The rate of change in the elevation of mangrove sediment is not at par with the rate of rise in sea level, as a direct result of which the rising seas are slowly engulfing swathes of mangroves.



Climate change is a raging issue worldwide, it is impossible to find anyone well acquainted with the internet not familiar with this term. A topic which always seems to grab the headlines, trend above all else on social media, polarise opinions, spark movements, even bring countries and agencies at loggerheads. This has clearly been one of the most talked about topics in recent times, one which has triggered fierce reactions, yet there seems to be a prevalent sense of denial among many of us. This denial or disconnect from the ground realities partially stems from a lack of awareness which in spite of the arduous efforts made by many concerned authorities have borne little fruit and also from the many billion dollar commercial interests which are short-sighted enough to focus only on the immediate gains which are going to fill up their coffers. Truth be told, this indeed is a vast topic with manifold implications which manifest them even at the micro level and over a scale of time which is not that easy to comprehend. There are no radical before-after consequences of this issue which can be cramped within a comprehensibly small time frame. In other words the demons of climate change often lurk stealthily among us without giving away the slightest of hints of their presence while eating away in a steadfast manner at the health and well-being of this planet. We often hear or read about how one natural disaster ranging from flood, drought, wildfire to

low crop yield are attributed to the scourge of climate change however it is not always easy to connect the dots. On the other hand by now we are almost equally well versed with yet another term – global warming, which possibly made its first appearance in popular parlance by the turn of this century. These two terms combined, we are often left in a confused area, often the correlation between an intensely hot and dry spell of summer in one part of the world and an unusually prolonged monsoon in some other part makes no sense to us, in fact might even seem contradictory. However the correlation does exist, and one is intricately linked with the other and this becomes obvious if we break up this vast topic into smaller segments and focus on one of the most key aspects of it. Climate change is affecting the planet on a daily basis, some of the damages it has caused might be irreversible and the rate at which its menacing tentacles are gaining an iron grip on the planet is unprecedented. In our attempt to understand climate change the Arctic almost always comes to the fore. Since its origin almost 4.5 billion years ago, earth has been swept by several spells of ice ages. The occurrence of the earliest ice age can be traced back to approximately 2 billion years ago and the latest one to have occurred was 3 million years ago and is still very much prevalent. The pugmarks of yesteryears' ice ages are evident in today's world in places where the landscape is still heavily dominated

by snow and ice. The northern reaches of the continent of North America, places like Greenland, Iceland - closer to pole, are meticulously sculpted in ice. There is very little contention if none at all that the earth is progressively getting warmer, at an alarming rate a phenomenon which is quite commonly referred to as global warming. To break it down even further, scientists unanimously have pointed out the expansion of the greenhouse effect which almost single-handedly bringing about such changes. Certain gases in the earth's atmosphere tend to be long-lived and absorb and emit radiant energy. In this context it would be wrong to sweepingly vilify every greenhouse gas, the truth is had it not been for these gases life on earth wouldn't have been possible. In the absence of greenhouse gases earth's surface temperature would have plummeted to - 20 degree Celsius or even less, rendering it useless for sustaining life in general. However, the rising levels of greenhouses gases meant a gradual increase in earth's surface and atmospheric temperature. The greenhouse gases which have the ability to absorb heat, retain and radiate are water vapour, carbon dioxide, methane, nitrous oxide and CFCs or chlorofluorocarbons. An increasing concentration of greenhouse gases have over thousands of years created a close knit thick blanket in the earth's atmosphere trapping the radiated heat instead of allowing it to disperse into the space. This trapped heat has progressively led to the increase in earth's temperature

which eventually leads to the melting of the polar ice caps which in turn leads to the rising sea levels. While the poles, especially the Arctic garners much attention, climate change has possibly hit our coasts the hardest, especially the coasts which are blessed with a thriving eco-system have been worst affected. The rising sea level due to the melting of polar ice is slowly engulfing our coasts. Alarmingly the rate of global sea level rise has accelerated at a rate which couldn't be predicted before. This puts millions of human beings and hundreds of eco-systems directly in harm's way. And our coastal mangroves are in the direct line of fire. Quite understandably the situation is no different in India and the single greatest threat being the rising sea level. The rate of change in the elevation of mangrove sediment is not at par with the rate of rise in sea level, as a direct result of which the rising seas are slowly engulfing swathes of mangroves. In addition to this the increased salinity of the mangrove soil due to the encroaching sea water renders it unsuitable to support vegetation. The consequences are for everyone to witness. Over the past decade we have lost hundreds of acres of mangrove eco-systems along our coast. In a populous country like India, huge populations of human beings rely upon the mangroves, namely in Sundarbans in West Bengal, Godavari Mangroves in the east coast as well as other parts of the country. The mangroves provide them with the necessary means to

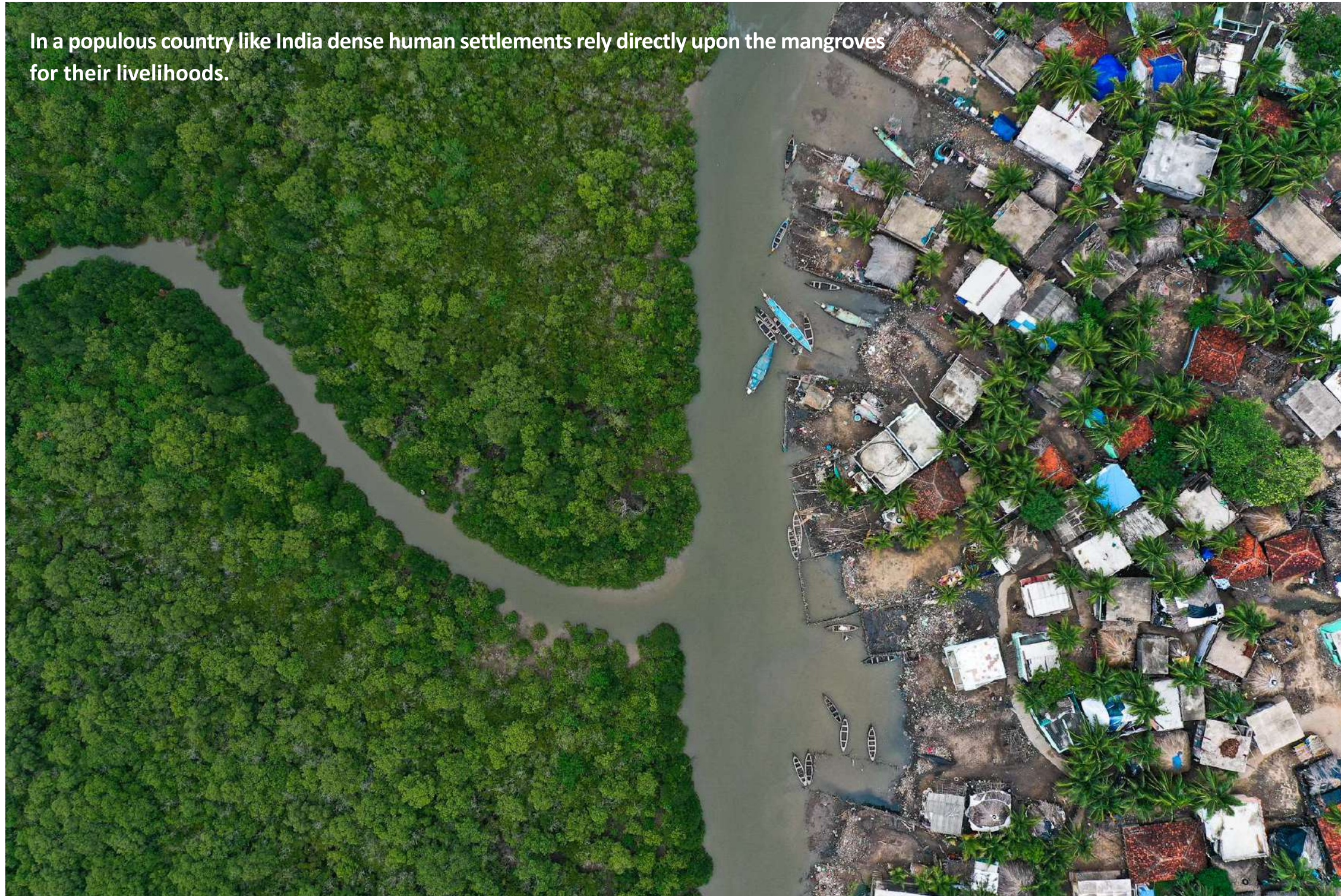




The mangroves along the coast act as the first line of defence against any wrath of nature and considerably reduce the impact which otherwise our coastal towns or cities would have borne.



In a populous country like India dense human settlements rely directly upon the mangroves for their livelihoods.



sustain a livelihood. The disappearance of mangroves not only snatches these means of livelihoods from these people, also puts the wildlife under tremendous stress as conflicts with humans become more and more frequent, sometimes leading to fatal consequences.

Climate change manifests itself in various

forms. Frequent cyclonic formation is one of them. When a cyclonic formation makes landfall our coasts are the first to bear the brunt of it and suffer the heaviest of losses. The mangroves along the coast act as the first line of defence against such wrath of nature and considerably reduce the impact which otherwise our coastal towns or cities

would have borne. The Sundarbans in West Bengal and Bangladesh has suffered great losses when repeatedly battered by cyclones while safeguarding prominent cities like Kolkata. In November 2019, a tropical cyclone coined Bulbul battered the Sundarbans and left in its wake unmitigated disaster in Sundarbans, on

both sides of the international border between India and Bangladesh. Uprooted trees, carcasses of animals, desolate villages with crippled mud huts partially reflect the damage which the Sundarbans suffered. The true damage lies in the irreversible changes in the nature of the eco-system that are brought about by such events. An upheaval like this irreversibly changes the nature of the soil. Studies also show that cleared mangrove forests fail to recover due to changed hydrodynamics, salinity and acidity as well as low nutrient levels and poor essential substrates. The mangrove forests are some of nature's last remaining strongholds for hundreds of species, some specifically evolved to survive in this maze of land and water. The rate at which we are losing our mangroves to our seas it won't be long before hundreds of species for whom our mangroves have been home for centuries perish in the depths of the seas and oceans.

When the mangroves are affected such adversely due to the impacts of climate change it goes without saying our coasts too are bearing the brunt of this phenomenon every single day. India has a densely populated coastal line of approximately 7500 km. The familiar problem of erosion and inundation persists. The ever persistent problems of sea water encroaching upon human settlements and engulfing swathes of agricultural and economic properties come as huge blows to the economy of the region. With such



Our mangroves are home to a wide array of species. The Brahminy kite and the black capped kingfisher (*right*) are among some of the commonly found avian species in the mangroves across India.



**T**he rate at which we are losing our mangroves to our seas it won't be long before we lose hundreds of species for whom our mangroves have been home for centuries.

an extended coastline which supports millions coupled with such regular occurrences, the losses incurred run in billions and quite understandably throws the GDP of the country off the track. Frequent cyclonic formations threaten the way of life, often prompting the concerned agencies to undertake extensive evacuation measures which bring all forms of business to a standstill amounting to losses running in millions. The incoming sea water permanently changes the nature of coastal marshes and wetlands wiping off entire eco-systems as well as opportunities for livelihoods in terms of various fishery related activities. The fertility of ground soil around coastal region has been on a progressive decline over the past few decades and agricultural activities in

coastal villages and settlements lead to considerably reduced yields. A huge section of India's population living along the coast depends on various maritime activities namely fishing to sustain themselves. The warming of earth's temperature eventually leads to erratic patterns of ocean current. Large shoals of fish often follow these ocean currents while migrating from one part of the ocean to the other. The increasingly erratic pattern of ocean currents leads to unpredictable movements of fish which often lead to meagre catches for the fishermen even during the once famed seasons of plenty. Faced with such issues, often the fishermen resort to catching some of the endangered species, those which would fetch them generous profits. Illegal fishing of sharks,





The fishing cat is an iconic species which lives in the wetlands, swamps, marshes and mangroves. This medium sized cat is primarily nocturnal and feeds mostly on fish. This member of the cat family, in addition to being excellent hunters are brilliant swimmers as well. It enjoys the privilege of being the state animal of West Bengal. Like hundreds of other species the fishing cat too faces the threat which comes from the widespread loss of its habitats including the mangroves.



particularly tiger sharks, black tip sharks, sting rays, sailfish, marlins in huge numbers ensure hefty returns for those associated with the fishing business but extracts a massive toll on the health of the ocean. The more exotic the catch is, the bigger the return is going to be in the fishing market. Quite often such misadventures are results of lack of awareness, greed and the regular supply of fish from the seas and oceans getting disrupted. The reduced supply of fish from the depths of the ocean also at the same time points towards the deteriorating health of our seas and oceans. While the impact of sea level rise is obvious and visible to everyone, it is much harder to ascertain the impact ocean warming has on the marine eco-system. It may not be as obvious on the surface of the water, the ocean hardly bears a different look, yet there is a massive upheaval which is taking place in the watery depths of our seas and oceans. There is a marked temperature difference among the warmer surface water and the colder deeper water in our seas and oceans. The transitory layer between this warmer stream of water and the colder water in the depth is marked by a layer known as the thermocline which varies in thickness in various parts of the ocean. The warm and less dense water rests above the colder heavier water at the thermocline which effectively acts as a barrier preventing the warmer oxygen rich water from mixing with the colder water at the depth which is much less in oxygen



Freshly caught tiger sharks and black tip shark at Kakinada fish market in Andhra Pradesh, India. Accidental and illegal fishing of these creatures are exacting huge tolls on their populations.

content. As the temperature of the planet increases which has been the case over the years the surface water kept getting warmer leading to higher temperature difference at the thermocline and leading to a more stable thermocline. As a result of which the flow of warmer oxygen rich water into the cold depths of the ocean has been further restricted, thereby robbing the depths of the seas and oceans of vital supplies of oxygen. In a situation like this marine life in the depths suffer greatly, primarily due to the lack of oxygen. Many species face the potential threat of extinction, while others emerge out of their watery depths and climb up the depths in search of oxygen, throwing the entire eco-system in a chaos. The eco-system is an intricately linked mesh, if a single component of it is out of place, the ensuing instability threatens to collapse the entire set up. The ripple effects of such chaos and imbalance in the depths of our ocean are being felt all the way up as it contributes to the overall deteriorating health of our oceans.

Marine species are quite sensitive to temperature changes. Even the slightest change in the water temperature may result in massive turmoil in their way of life. Huge shoals of fish, those which are fished commercially have been observed moving gradually to the colder reaches of the oceans in order to escape the rising temperature. This could go a long way in explaining the frequent complaints from the fishermen regarding meagre returns





**Mobula rays are gentle giants which play an important role in the marine eco-system. They are indiscriminately hunted for their gills which are sold for their perceived medicinal properties.**

from the ocean. This can also be attributed to the shifts in the breeding grounds for many species of fish. The rising temperature of our seas and oceans force them to look for suitable breeding grounds where the comparatively cooler temperature might be more suitable for the development of their eggs and embryo, thus often altering the spawning course which eventually leaves commercial fishermen empty handed. In addition to all of this it must be said a marine eco-system is not only comprised of creatures living under water. Hundreds of bird

**Illegal fishing of sharks, sting rays, sailfish, marlins in huge numbers ensure hefty returns for those associated with the fishing business but extracts a massive toll on the health of the ocean.**

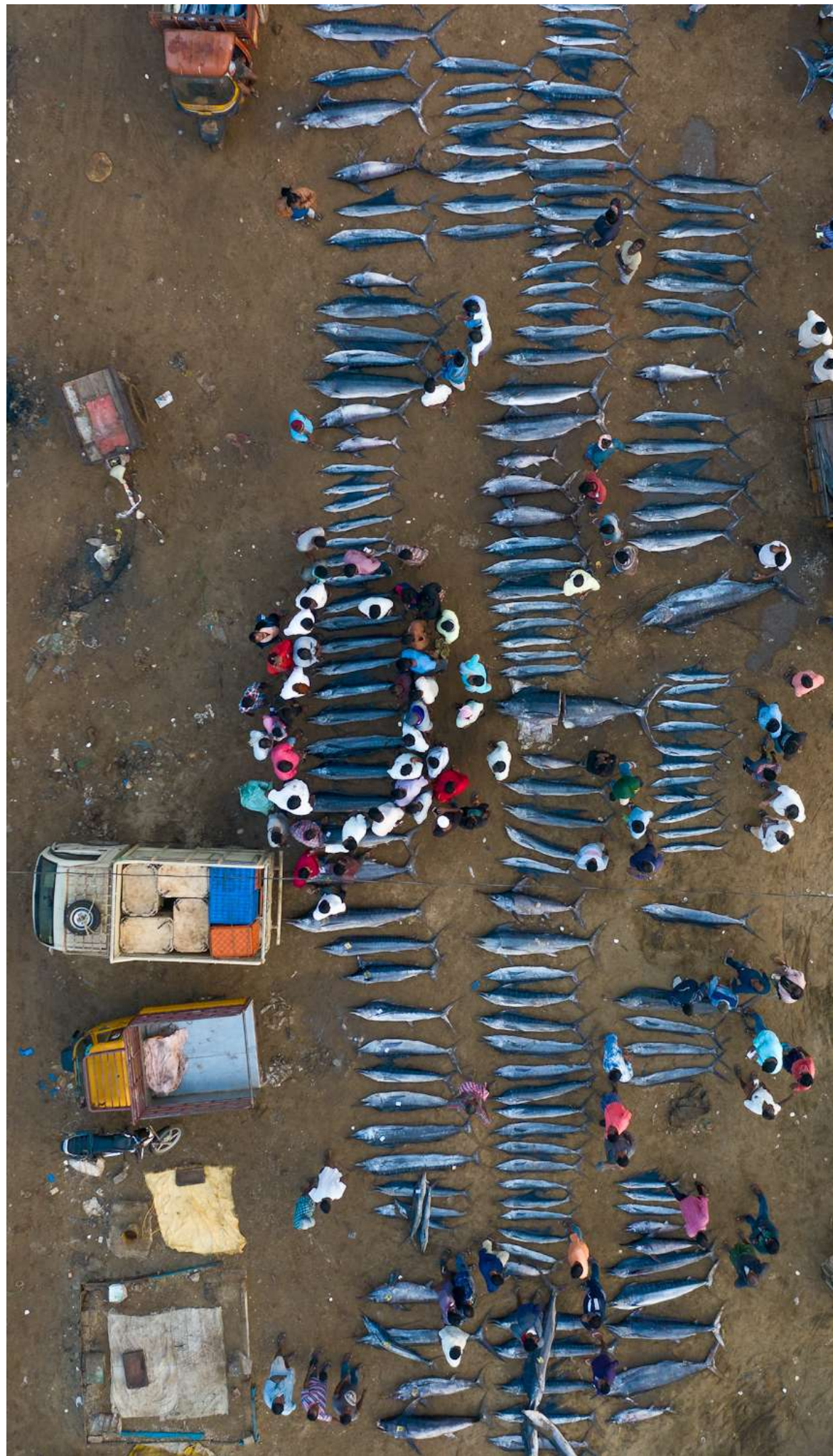
species are a part of this food chain as well. Such developments under water affect their way of life on the skies above our seas and oceans as well. In this marvellously intricate yet delicate model of nature every creature is in its rightful place to serve a certain purpose in maintaining the ecological balance. The entire model stands upon a fragile platform where no creature irrespective of their size or shape or their position in the food chain is dispensable.

Climate change is the single biggest issue which is threatening the existence and well-being of this planet. While we continue to live in denial, squabble with each other, try and pass the blame on to others, the fact remains with every passing

day this nemesis called climate change is slowly pushing the planet another step closer to complete annihilation. We may take solace in the fact that it might take more than our lifetime for the planet to reach that stage, however only a fool would find any comfort in that thought. Our cities are choking, our rivers are running dry, our forests are disappearing and our coasts are under severe threat. This enemy which threatens our coasts today and in turn our entire country and our entire planet is a faceless one, yet one with which we all should be extremely familiar with for

this monster is our creation and none of us is innocent in this. We all leave our excess carbon footprint on this planet; we all contribute directly or indirectly towards global warming leading to climate change and that day is not far away when collectively we all are going to pay a hefty price for this since we all have failed this planet collectively and in doing so we have jeopardized the existence of millions of creatures on this planet. If a mangrove eco-system gets obliterated within the next few decades in any part of the country, the sea will not be responsible for engulfing the mangrove; the blood of hundreds of species will be on our hands. There is no quick fix way to solve this issue and there can be no exclusivity in those approaches. The approach needs to be a holistic one





*(right)* Sawfishes live in coastal and riverine habitats, which are disappearing due to unsustainable developmental activities. Recently, the local fisherfolk from Kakinada area caught this 9 feet knifetooth saw fish from Uppada coast in Andhra Pradesh. This saw fish species was thought to be locally extinct as there were no reports of sighting for many years. Heart wrenching end to yet another threatened creature.



*(left)* What appears to be an arrangement of seafood is actually an array of some of the world's fastest fishes of the oceans - the sailfishes and marlins. Every day hundreds of such exotic marine creatures fall victim to unsustainable fishing activities which threaten to upset the delicate balance of our seas and oceans and deteriorate the health of marine wildlife globally.





**A female olive ridley sea turtle emerges out of the ocean depths to lay her clutch of eggs. A number of beaches across India are prominent nesting sites for this species. With our coasts under threat these creatures too are losing out on their nesting sites.**



**A freshly hatched olive ridley turtle makes its way to the sea. Most of these hatchlings perish during this arduous journey back to the sea from their nests. Only a handful make it to the seas or oceans only to face a plethora of fresh challenges.**

for the evil which is threatening our coasts is the same evil which is plaguing the arctic or choking our cities. There is only one way to ward off this evil-by reducing the carbon footprint on this planet. This is the job of every single individual on this planet; each and every one of us can bring about small changes in reducing our carbon emissions without having to depend on anyone. The threat is so severe that to strengthen the global response to the threat of climate change, countries adopted the Paris Agreement in Paris, which went into force in November of 2016. In the agreement, all countries agreed to work to limit global temperature rise to well below 2 degrees centigrade. As of April 2018, 175 parties had ratified the Paris

Agreement and 10 developing countries had submitted their first iteration of their national adaptation plans for tackling the scourge of climate change. However one can't blame anyone for thinking all of this was too little too late, which in fact became obvious in the UN Climate Action Summit of 2019. Held in September 2019 in New York, the summit revealed the measures taken after the Paris Agreement were not yielding satisfactory results as global emissions are reaching record levels. A number of proposals were put forward and a number of plans were chalked out with the goal of reducing carbon emission by 45 percent across the planet in the next decade. The summit successfully shed light on a number of issues pertaining to



India has a densely populated coastal line of approximately 7500 km. The ever persistent problems of sea water encroaching upon human settlements and engulfing swathes of agricultural and economic properties come as huge blows to the economy of the region.



climate change and ways to tackle them and made a prominent statement in this battle to fight climate change. However how successfully these plans are translated into actions and whether they are enough to combat this threat is something that remains to be seen. It was unanimously agreed that unless the global temperature rise is restricted to 1.5 degree Celsius by the end of this century this battle might never be won, and in order to achieve this all the countries need to work together in collaboration to achieve the very ambitious goal of achieving zero emission by 2050.

It was unanimously agreed that unless the global temperature rise is restricted to 1.5 degree Celsius by the end of this century this battle might never be won...

75 participating nations agreed to submit their respective strategies by the end of 2020 in order to achieve this target. Although the goal seems to be an ambitious one, if properly implemented and effective strategies are put into place there is no reason why this cannot be achieved. However the government alone can achieve only little, there has to be greater participation from the civil society, from the corporate entities, the business organisations; unless there is a collective effort this goal will forever remain a distant dream. Emphasis should be given upon making renewable and clean energy accessible and affordable to everyone, in this regard the developed nations have a major role to play in making such technological advancements available to

the developing nations. The need of the hour demands us to think individually as well as collectively beyond our greed, our comfort and embrace all the measures and make all the necessary sacrifices possible in order to safeguard the future of this planet we call our home. We can begin with taking small yet significant steps in our daily lives, steps which would reduce our carbon footprints such as availing public transport more, lowering our power consumption, recycling whenever we can, raising awareness, all of which can go a long way in tackling this menace. This

planet which has given us everything, which is home to not us but millions of species most of which are ancient than us, is under threat of the worst kind today. The time is ripe for every one of us to introspect and figure out a way to heal the planet, for this is where home is, if we still fail to act together then someday we will lose the right to call this beautiful planet our home which paved the pathway for life, the most potent force of nature, we will forever lose life in the drying up mangroves or along our barren coasts as that is what we are going to be left with.



Large colonies of spot billed pelicans roost along the edge of the coast and wetlands in Andhra Pradesh. These birds may appear not to be intricately linked with the marine ecosystem, but their fate remains intertwined with the fate of our seas and oceans. Threats to our seas from climate change threatens thousands of species such as this one.







*(clockwise from top)* The smooth coated otter, the spot billed pelican, the black-headed ibis, the golden jackal are few among the hundreds of creatures which are part of our coastal and mangrove eco-systems, all of which are staring at grave consequences.





Our cities are choking, our rivers are running dry, our forests are burning and our coasts are under severe threat. This enemy which threatens our coasts today and in turn our entire country, our entire planet is a faceless one, yet one with which we all should be extremely familiar with for this monster is our creation and none of us is innocent in this.



## About the Photographer

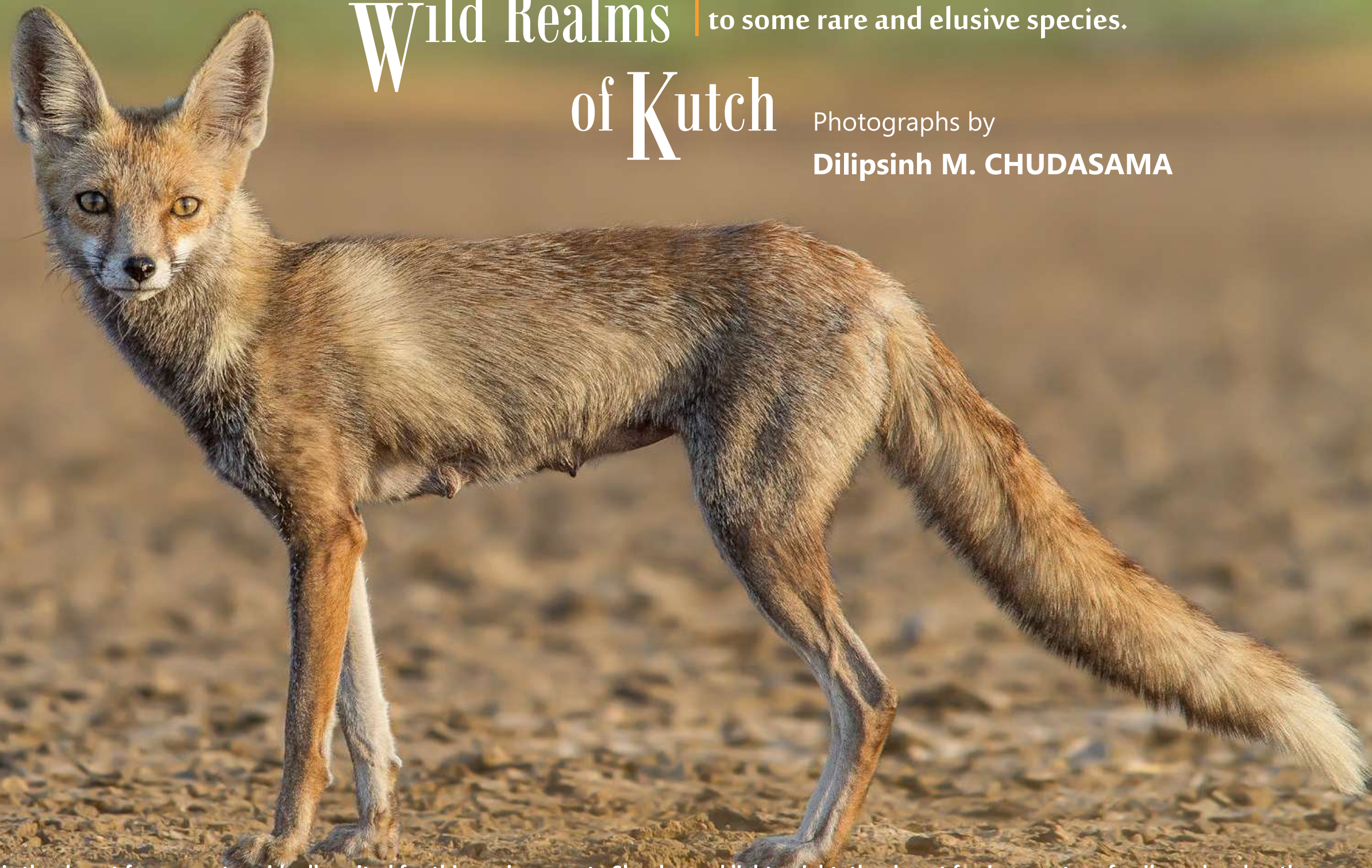
**Srikanth Mannepuri** is a wildlife conservationist and a wildlife photographer and filmmaker, working at an organization called Fishing Cat Conservancy. He is involved with research and documentation work in the East Godavari District of Andhra Pradesh on threatened marine and mangroves species like sharks, rays, birds, fishing cats and smooth coated otters among others. He is also working for the Andhra Pradesh Forest Department and other NGO's as a consultant and volunteer in their various Wildlife Conservation projects.



# Into the Wild Realms of Kutch

The arid plains and wetlands of Kutch celebrate their incredible biodiversity by becoming home to some rare and elusive species.

Photographs by  
**Dilipsinh M. CHUDASAMA**



Among the denizens of this sandy realm is the desert fox, a creature ideally suited for this environment. Slender and lightweight, the desert fox is a master of guile and makes the maximum use of its environment.



A desert fox mother suckles her litter in the arid plains of Kutch. These creatures are perfectly adapted for life in these arid plains. Dried river beds, sand dunes, thick scrubs are their preferred homes and the females dig up their burrows around similar sites where they give birth to the young ones. No bigger than a house cat, the desert fox a subspecies of the red fox sports a coat which is a mix of white , grey and the ochre of sand, rendering it with the perfect appearance to camouflage in this environment.





The Thar Desert in the western Indian state of Rajasthan is known globally for its colossal sand dunes and its colourful native human settlements. This vast landscape dominates a better part of Rajasthan particularly along the eastern border between India and Pakistan. This vast ocean of shifting sand dunes and billions of sand grains however doesn't restrict itself to the state of Rajasthan alone and makes its way further south into the Kutch district in the neighbouring state of Gujarat. Here it takes up a whole new identity and is better known as the Rann of Kutch. The desert besides taking up a new name metamorphoses into something unique, into something extraordinary. The Rann of Kutch although located in the Thar Desert bio-geographical region possesses certain features which are unique to it, features which make this region stand out in its own right instead of remaining under the shadows of the much celebrated Thar Desert. The Rann of Kutch also known as the Rann happens to be the world's largest salt desert spreading over an area of more than 30,000 square kilometres which includes the Great Rann of Kutch, the Little Rann of Kutch and the Banni grasslands. Once a part of the Arabian Sea a series of geological changes transformed this vast expanse into a lake and ultimately to a desert. The arid desert like features of this landscape are prominent through most part of the year although come monsoon the ensuing rains create pockets

of marshes which lie scattered across this vast swathe of flat plain. In all fairness the white low lying mudflats, in spite of their surreal, almost otherworldly appearance, provide only a partial account of the Rann of Kutch. In this ancient land remains etched in the grains of sands, the chronicles from a time long lost in history. While the White Desert of the Rann has assumed iconic status with time, some of the other topographical aspects of Kutch hold in their hearts anecdotes from the bygone eras which are no less fascinating. The entire district of Kutch can be categorized into four main zones on the basis of their geology and topography, the coastal fringe which lies towards the southern end of the region, the Banni grasslands characterised by their mud flats, marshes and salt pans, the Kutch mainland which is dotted by rocky hills and plateaus and the two Ranns, the Great Rann in the north and the Little Rann towards the east comprising of vast barren saline flatlands. However the barren appearance of the region could not be more deceiving, for this region is home to one of the most complicated and diverse eco-systems in the country. The vast expanses of sand and mudflats at a casual glance may appear devoid of any sign of life only to conceal life in myriad forms under its sandy cloak. The Rann is home to some of the rarest species of animals on this planet, some of which remain critically endangered. These species are ideally suited to survive in this

ancient landmass where life unveils itself every day in the harshest of ways. The creatures which have made the Rann their home are results of millions of years of evolution, a painstaking process which has perfected these animals to counter every hardship and challenge that the Rann throws at them. The diverse nature of the Rann's wildlife is a testimony to the diverse topography of the region. The arid plains and the sand dunes are home to a wide array of species which prefer the desert eco-system, the seasonal wetlands attract millions of waterfowls and are

The Rann is home to some of the rarest species of animals on this planet, some of which remain critically endangered. These species are ideally suited to survive in this ancient landmass...

home to a rich variety of wader birds while the coastal Kutch boasts of a rich marine eco-system. Among all these, the desert eco-system of the Rann deserves a special mention purely due to the masterful deception in its appearance. Among the denizens of this sandy realm is the desert fox, a creature ideally suited for this environment. Slender and lightweight, the desert fox is a master of guile and makes the maximum use of its environment to forage and hide itself from potential predators. What this creature lacks in terms of brawn, its feisty nature more than makes up for it. Dried river beds, sand dunes, thick scrubs are their preferred homes and the females dig up their burrows around similar sites where they give birth to the young ones. No

bigger than a house cat, the desert fox a subspecies of the red fox sports a coat which is a mix of white, grey and the ochre of sand, rendering it with the perfect appearance to camouflage in this environment. At one first glance the unusually long ears and the long slender legs stand out among its features. Both of these adaptations play crucial roles and ensured the desert fox survived in one of nature's most brutal settings. The large ears amplify the slightest rustle among the sand grains and allow them to zero in on a prey hiding beneath the sand grains while

the long legs ensure a quick escape when faced with an aerial threat, usually in the form of the large birds of prey such as the steppe eagle. Desert foxes prefer to spend most of the day hiding in the comfort of their underground dens or burrows to escape the scorching sun and venture out after sunset in search of food. The bare minimum resources and the not so generous nature of the desert prompt them to dig their teeth into anything which comes their way ranging from berries, shoots, to rodents, insects, spiders, small birds and even reptiles. The other notable creature which roams these barren scrublands has a much bigger fight on its hand apart from mastering the challenges of this unforgiving environment. The Great Indian Bustard



with an estimated population of a paltry 150 is critically endangered and is staring down the barrel. Once widely dispersed across Rajasthan, Gujarat, Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh and other parts of the Deccan Plateau, widespread loss of habitat and indiscriminate killing have resulted in their paltry numbers being mostly restricted to the rugged plains of Rajasthan. The Rann is home to a few individuals although it is hard to ascertain the exact number. The great Indian bustard is a large bird and prefers to spend most of its time on ground. The body is usually brownish in colour with a long white coloured neck and a black patch on the crown of the head. Being ground dwellers these birds mostly feed on insects, smaller reptiles and rodents although they are not averse to the idea of feeding on nuts, seeds or pods. One of the principal reasons for the rapid decline of this species is the expansion of farmlands into their habitats. Ever encroaching human settlements have also led to their fast decline. In a desperate attempt to revive their population an ambitious breeding programme has been undertaken by the authorities, in the neighbouring state of Rajasthan. As part of the programme freshly laid clutches of eggs are collected from the vast expanses of Desert National Park in Jaisalmer and are artificially hatched. The chicks are then cared for and are only released in their natural habitat once they attain full maturity and are capable of surviving in the wild. While there are instances of

**A productive monsoon fills up the marshes along the Banni plains and turn them into fresh water lakes which serve as winter retreats for countless of migratory birds. The resident flocks of flamingos also make the most of these water reservoirs.**



such programmes altering the course of a species, it is still early to be hopeful of the future unless the menaces of habitat loss and other factors such as the human intervention in the lives of these animals are addressed.

This arid eco-system with its unique nature, attracts some of the rather unique species found in India. One such species is the striped hyena. The striped hyena is yet another ancient species which has been dotting these scrublands for many centuries now. The striped hyena is a large carnivore weighing between 30-55 kilograms and mostly prefers to scavenge on the carcasses of a previously made kill although it is supremely efficient at bringing down its own prey. There is very little known about this animal which often leads to this creature being misunderstood or wrongly represented in folklores or popular narratives. A part of the enigma surrounding this creature can be attributed to its nocturnal nature. It hardly emerges from its hide out during the bright of the day. The most notable feature about this creature's appearance is the significantly shorter hind legs which render its back to slope downwards. A thick tuft of hair runs along their spine and extends all the way along the tail. The tuft becomes more pronounced during the winter months while during the scorching heat of the summer most of it moults. Like most animals in this environment the striped hyena too prefers to live in underground dens and spends most of the day in these



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refuges.

These arid plains are also home to a number of reptiles and bird species. The spiny tailed lizard is one of the notable species of reptiles which can be found here. The skies are regularly patrolled by giant birds of prey that are always on the lookout for a potential meal hiding among the scrubs. The eagles, the harriers, the buzzards are blessed with superior visions and razor sharp talons and beaks and are excellent fliers. These finest killing machines unleash terror on the ground dwelling creatures which even include mid-sized mammals. The owls and vultures too frequent the skies of the Rann. Some of the most common ground dwelling birds found in the Rann are painted sandgrouse and Indian courser. The painted sandgrouse is a short stocky bird with a colour pattern that allows it to blend in seamlessly with these surroundings, while the Indian courser with its lanky legs is superbly capable of covering long distances on ground while running. The barren plains of Kutch provide the perfect home for these birds since they prefer to forage in open areas where thick grass cover doesn't obstruct their view.

Along the southern peripheries of Rann of Kutch lies the Banni Grasslands Reserve in the district of Kutch, the largest natural grassland in the whole of India. Banni grassland is an arid grassland eco-system punctuated by several low lying marshes. The landscape of this region is heavily



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A painted sandgrouse is a stocky bird and despite its impressive colouration is ideally suited to blend seamlessly with the surroundings in these arid lands.



dominated by low –growing shrubs and bushes, which by virtue of being salt tolerant have flourished and thrived in this harsh and saline environment. Tree cover across the entire region is not dense and remains scattered across the entire region. These grasslands are favoured grazing grounds for some of India’s iconic herbivores, such as the nilgai, chinkara and blackbuck among others. The grass cover of Banni hides some of the rarest and elusive species of mammals found in India. The Banni grasslands still remain one of the last major strongholds of the threatened Indian wolves. The desert foxes too are at home in this environment. The

tall grasses of Banni act as the perfect cover for the golden jackal as well. Previously the last Indian wild ass population other than in Ladakh in Jammu and Kashmir was confined only to the nearby Little Rann of Kutch. With a view of preserving these beautiful animals certain measures were adopted as a result of which their population has been on a steady rise since 1976. The presence of these animals in the Great Rann of Kutch as well as the Banni grasslands is a testimony to their increasing numbers. Banni grasslands also have a rich diversity of avifauna, reptiles and invertebrates. Spells of heavy shower during a productive

A chestnut bellied sandgrouse in the dry plains of Kutch. They spend most of their time scurrying on the ground in search of food and water.



monsoon fill up the low lying marshes along the Banni plains and turn them into fresh water lakes which serve as winter retreats for countless of migratory birds such as the demoiselle crane. The resident flocks of flamingos also make the most of these water reservoirs during the rest of the year. This wild wonderland is as diverse in its appearance as it is in terms of the eco-systems and the species it is home to. Sparsely populated by human settlements the Rann and the Kutch district in Gujarat certainly do have the potential to carry this legacy into the future. However the pressure on these eco-systems is mounting

with every passing day. The increasing human settlements along the fringes of the Banni grasslands, the highways and motorable roads cutting across the arid plains certainly do not augur well for the hundreds of species for whom this region has been a safe haven for centuries. If such developments go unchecked the Rann certainly will be reduced to yet another collateral damage like countless of other eco-systems across the planet. Cattle grazing, tree cutting and vehicular traffic are the major threats to this ecoregion's habitat. The Rann is a significant producer of salt in India. A number of proposals have been put forward to expand





The short-eared owl gets its name from the small tufts of feather on its head which resemble mammalian ears. These tufts of feather are so small often they are not visible. These birds prefer to nest on the grounds which are concealed by low vegetation. The moderate grass cover on the semi arid plains of Kutch provides these owls with the perfect cover for their nests.

commercial salt extraction from the Rann. If not properly implemented such steps can easily upstage the delicate ecological balance of the region and may even obliterate a large number of species within a span of decades. Increasing human settlements along with their herds of grazing animals also puts this ecosystem which is scarce in natural resources under a lot of stress. Such unwanted competition for natural resources will only mean the survival of a few at the expense of the others. The Rann with its enviable biodiversity is a shining jewel of the natural world and we are truly blessed that it is a part of our nation. The onus lies with all of us to ensure as the full moon glistens on the white sands of the Rann, the desert comes to life with thousands of its subjects prancing, galloping and slithering across its surface for centuries to come.



Kutch Desert Wildlife Sanctuary is a major roosting place for the migratory demoiselle cranes. These birds migrate from the northern parts of China and Mongolia to various parts of the Indian subcontinent during winter. The demoiselle crane finds repeated mentions in Hindu mythologies as well as scriptures which make them a significant winter visitor to the wetlands of Kutch.







*(left)* The cinereous vulture is a large raptor with a wide range of habitat across Eurasia. These vultures are also known as black vultures courtesy the signature black plumage. These diurnal birds feed mostly on carrion like other vultures. Incredibly adaptable, these birds are equally at home in the arid plains of Kutch as well as the steppes of Mongolia. The cinerous vulture is perfectly equipped to rip apart thick hides of carcass and even break bones apart. By dint of its formidable size it is very much capable of warding off other vultures and predators such as foxes and stake their claims on carrions.

*(right)* The Indian courser with its lanky legs is superbly capable of covering long distances on ground while running. The barren plains of Kutch provide the perfect home for these birds since they prefer to forage in open areas where thick grass cover doesn't obstruct its view. These birds can be seen in small flocks and spend most of their time on the ground foraging. They feed primarily on a wide range of insects from beetles, crickets to grasshoppers. Once populous, these birds are on a decline, primarily due to the loss of their habitat to agricultural lands.



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## About the Photographer

Dilipsinh M. Chudasama is from Mundra in Gujarat and works as an IT administrator at a manufacturing company in Mundra. A passionate wildlife photographer he has multiple publications for wildlife magazines such as Saevus Wildlife India, Wild Soujourns Magazine, Indian Birds Magazine to his credit. He is also the winner of Grand Prize for his entry in the "For Love of Travel" photo contest organised by National Geographic Traveller India. He has also won the first place in the State Level Photography Award in 2016 and the second place in the "ICICI Live Your Passion Photography Contest" in 2017-18.

More of his work is available at the following links-

NatGeo Your Shot:

<http://yourshot.nationalgeographic.com/profile/646923/>

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/DCPhotography07>

Instagram: <https://www.instagram.com/dcphotography007/>

Flickr: <https://www.flickr.com/photos/82708551@N04/>



# Zuljinnah and the saga of Arbaeen

the valour of Zuljinnah - the revered white stallion, lives through the processions of Arbaeen. Feature by Syed Roshan Abbas Naqvi

Zuljinnah the iconic white stallion which carried Imam Hussain into the famed Battle of Karbala is nothing less than a revered entity for millions of Shia Muslims across the globe. Each year on the occasion of Arbaeen, a white stallion representing Zuljinnah, becomes the cynosure of the processions which commemorate the heroic deeds of Hussain.





Usually a young horse calf resembling the historical description of Zuljinnah is bought much before the occasion of Arbaeen. The calf is cared for and looked after by the entire community as it transforms into a fine adult stallion on the verge of the religious occasion. The locals and those responsible for looking after the horse are diligent and meticulous in their approach. The horse is well fed on a diet of grains, molasses, selective fruits and vegetables. The handlers make sure the horse receives massages every day in order to keep it fit and the muscles in prime condition leading up to the day of the procession. These processions are an integral part of Arbaeen in various towns and villages of Pakistan, Iran and even India. It is believed this practice of taking out processions to celebrate the courage and heroic deeds of Zuljinnah started out in the Indian subcontinent before spreading out to other parts of the world.



Each year the Iraqi city of Karbala stands witness to one of the most phenomenal occurrences on this planet. Millions, clad mostly in black converge upon the streets and lanes of this ancient holy city. Those thronging the streets of Karbala in such huge numbers are Shia Muslim pilgrims with the singular agenda of taking part in the Arbaeen religious commemoration, which witnesses the largest congregation of people anywhere across the planet.

The religious occasion of Arbaeen commemorates the death of the Shia Imam – Hussain Ibn Ali, who also happened to be the grandson of Prophet Muhammad. Hussain Ibn Ali laid down his life in the Battle of Karbala which took place in the year 680. Arbaeen commemorates the 40th day of Hussain Ibn Ali's martyrdom, the day on which his grave was visited by his sister and relatives once they were freed from their prison cells. Hussain's death could be seen as a watershed moment in the history of Islam. The day of his martyrdom is known as Ashura – the tenth day of Muharram and a day which is a day of mourning for Shia Muslims across the globe. Hussain's martyrdom flagged off a number of Shia movements in the 7th century and inspired his followers to stand in unison against injustice and oppression which was meted out to the Shia Muslims for centuries. To mark this historic occasion and celebrate the martyrdom of their Imam, millions of Shia Muslims embark upon this arduous



**The valour of Zuljinnah has earned it a prominent place in the heart of Shia Muslims across the planet.**

journey on foot to the holy city of Karbala. Walking in long columns some of them cover the imposing distance of nearly 72 km from Najaf to Karbala. During this exhausting walk they mostly put up in tents and eat at makeshift arrangements

along the road. All these arrangements are voluntarily set up by the followers of Hussain and fellow Shia Muslims for those who are taking part in this pilgrimage. This peaceful gathering not only holds a special place among millions for its

religious significance but also for the countless instances of solidarity and brotherhood which pan out along the way. A large number of Shia Muslims from the neighbouring country of Iran cross the border and make their way to the holy city





**On the day of the procession the horse is bathed, well fed and decorated and taken out for the procession. The entire community gathers around the horse and takes part in the procession.**

of Karbala and Najaf. During the dictatorial regime of Saddam Hussein in Iraq, the relationship between Iraq and Iran had plummeted severely which led to pilgrims from Iran not being a part of this historic occasion due to the escalating geo-political

situation between the two countries. However ever since Saddam's oppressive regime was toppled, the number of Shia Muslims from Iran taking part in this pilgrimage has been steadily increasing and could easily amount to millions

presently. However it is not uncommon for some to slip into Iraq under of garb of a pilgrim without valid documents. In such cases of misadventure, the security which is already beefed up keeping the gathering of people in mind, springs into action and

necessary actions are taken against such trespassers. While the religious significance and the sheer number of people taking part in this occasion deserve special mention, it probably is the sense of brotherhood, the sense of kinship, the warm and welcoming nature of the occasion, which stands out above everything else. The harmonious nature of this occasion where strangers are welcomed with open arms, served hot meals, provided places to stay and rest is palpable along every bend of the roads that lead to the holy city. This huge congregation metamorphoses into something more than a religious occasion, it turns into a celebration of humanity. Since this occasion is aimed at celebrating the martyrdom of Hussain who fought valiantly in the Battle of Karbala, it goes without saying some of the notable characters from that iconic battle will be at the centrefold of this event. And there could be none more prominent than the majestic horse called Zuljinnah whom Hussain rode during his quest to stand up against tyranny and oppression. Countless folklore centred on this majestic animal has elevated it to a legendary status. It is believed as Hussain fell to the ground severely injured, his faithful horse in spite of being injured itself, fought valiantly to keep the enemy at bay and protect an ailing Hussain. This beautiful white stallion grabbed eyeballs from an early age courtesy its signature high pitched neighing, which while being sweet never





The entire community gathers and takes part in preparing the horse representing Zuljinnah for the procession commemorating the heroic deed of Imam Hussain.





**The decked up horse (right) is the cynosure of the entire event. During the days leading up to the religious occasion it is taken out to busy street so that it gets used to the crowd.**

failed to establish the dominance of this animal over its surroundings. Historians believe this horse was Imam Hussain's favourite pet and the reason for this affection was the strong willed and steely character of this animal. There is no doubt in anyone's mind that Hussain rode into the Battle of Karbala accompanied by a worthy and most loyal comrade. The valour of Zuljinnah has earned it a prominent place in the heart of Shia Muslims across the planet and during the occasion of Arbaeen in many parts of the world Shia Muslims take out processions to celebrate the heroic deeds of Zuljinnah in the Battle of Karbala.

These processions are an integral part of

Arbaeen in various towns and villages of Pakistan, Iran and even India. It is believed this practice of taking out processions to celebrate the courage and heroic deeds of Zuljinnah started out in the Indian subcontinent before spreading out to other parts of the world. Usually a young horse calf resembling the historical description of Zuljinnah is bought much before the occasion of Arbaeen. The calf is cared for and looked after by the entire community as it transforms into a fine adult stallion on the verge of the religious occasion. The locals and those responsible for its upkeep are diligent and meticulous in their approach. The horse is well fed on a diet of grains, molasses, selective fruits



and vegetables. The handlers make sure the horse receives massages every day in order to keep it fit and the muscles in prime condition. Besides showering and grooming the horse once a week it is taken out on a daily basis for long walks, often through crowded streets in order to familiarise it with the presence of people so that it stays calm in the face of a large gathering on the day of the procession. On the day of the procession the horse is bathed, well fed and decorated and taken out for the procession. The entire community gathers around the horse and takes part in the procession. As the processions meander through the alleys and by lanes of the towns and villages,

with the heavily decorated horse being the cynosure of the proceedings, more and more people join forces with the air filled with chants and couplets dedicated to Zuljinnah and Imam Hussain. The white horse at the centre of the procession remains everyone's object of affection and curiosity. Among the largely black clad participants, the white horse stands out in stark contrast. The pace of the procession is dictated by the horse and many consider it to be a very real connecting dot between the present and the historic times of Imam Hussain, and it is this overwhelming feeling which often leads to followers breaking down in tears of joy and blessing the animal at the heart of the procession.

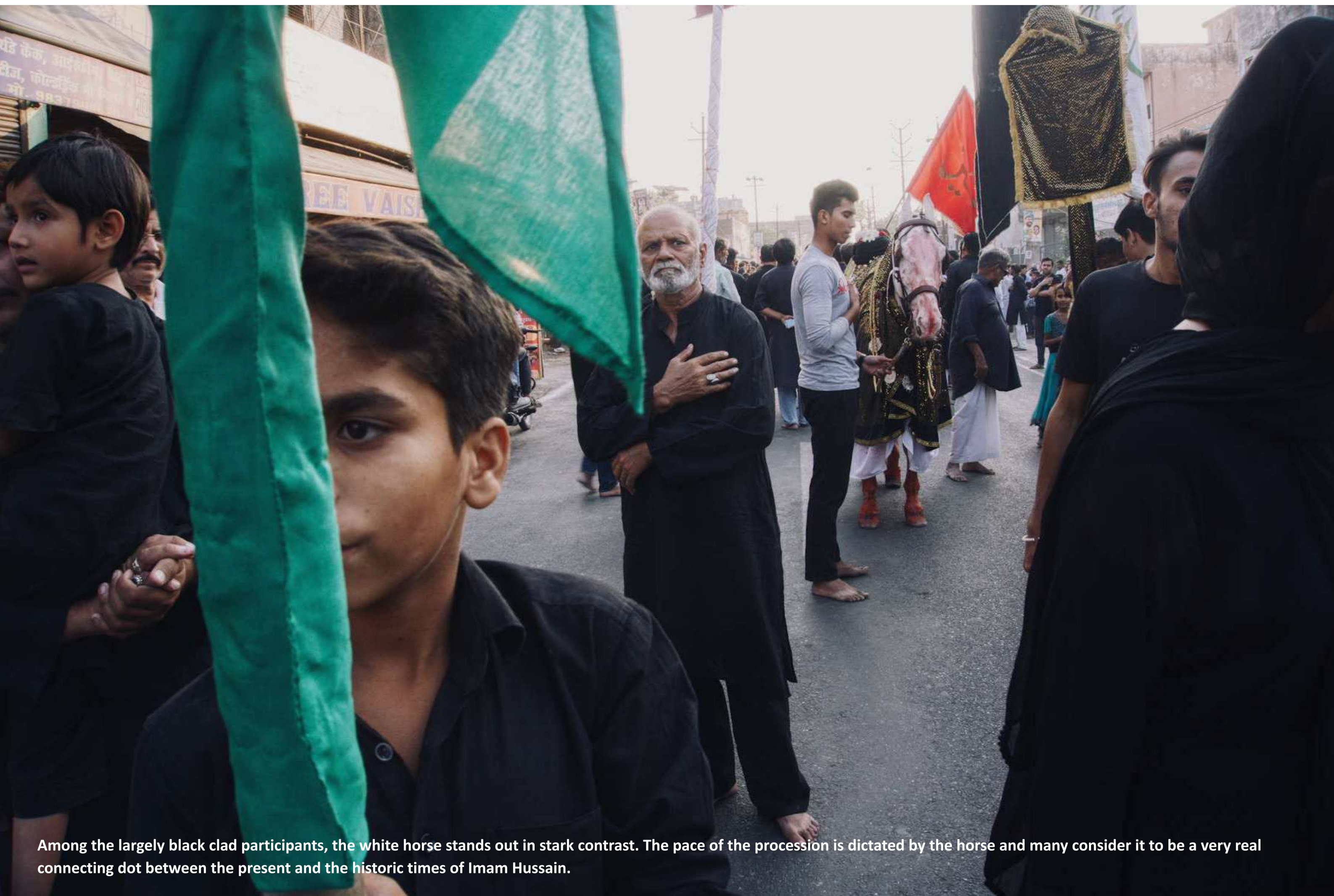




The religious occasion of Arbaeen commemorates the death of the Shia Imam – Hussain Ibn Ali, who also happened to be the grandson of Prophet Muhammad. Hussain Ibn Ali laid down his life in the Battle of Karbala which took place in the year 680. Arbaeen commemorates the 40th day of Hussain Ibn Ali’s martyrdom, the day on which his grave was visited by his sister and relatives once they were freed from their prison cells. Hussein’s death could be seen as a watershed moment in the history of Islam. The day of his martyrdom is known as Ashura – the tenth day of Muharram and a day which is a day of mourning for Shia Muslims across the globe. On this day Shia Muslims across the globe also commemorate the valour of Zuljinnah - the horse which carried Hussain on its back to the Battle of Karbala. One such procession led by a white stallion representing Zuljinnah along the streets of Bijnor in Uttar Pradesh, India.

For some reason the congregation of Arbaeen has forever remained in the shadows of Hajj Pilgrimage although being twice the size of Hajj Pilgrimage. For few days the holy city of Karbala turns into a melting pot for Shia Muslims from all over the globe. The spirit and sense of kinship which form the essence of Arbaeen do not remain confined within the streets of Karbala, instead spread far and wide as Arbaeen processions are taken out even in remote towns and villages. This iconic festival, which commemorates the valour of one man, standing tall against evil and oppression, infuses a sense of hope among the downtrodden, serves as a warning to those embracing the path of evil and above everything else celebrates those very fabrics of our existence which make us all too humane.





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## About the Photographer

Syed Roshan Abbas Naqvi is a photographer and a student based in western Uttar Pradesh. Yet to be a seasoned veteran in the photographic world, he works solely as a documentary and street photographer, while balancing typical senior school life at the St. Mary's senior secondary in Bijnor. The masterful work of Steve McCurry is the inspiration behind his photographs.

Social media links

**Instagram:** @Photographernextdoor\_

**Portfolio website:**

[www.photographernextdoor.online](http://www.photographernextdoor.online)



# Hokkaido

| a wild paradise  
sculpted from ice

| the story of how wildlife thrives braving the harsh and unforgiving winters in the northern island of Hokkaido in Japan by **Devendra DESHMUKH**



A Stellar's sea eagle and a white-tailed eagle squabble over the remains of Pacific cod along the icy shores of Hokkaido. During the bitterly cold winter months such scenes pan out on a regular basis in this frozen island along the northern reaches of Japan.





Winter marks the arrival of a very special winged visitor to the icy realms of Hokkaido. Primarily a resident of the Kamchatka Peninsula in Russia, this large bird of prey prefers to fly south with the onset of winter, with Hokkaido being one its favourite winter retreats. Every winter Hokkaido welcomes more than 2000 of these raptors.

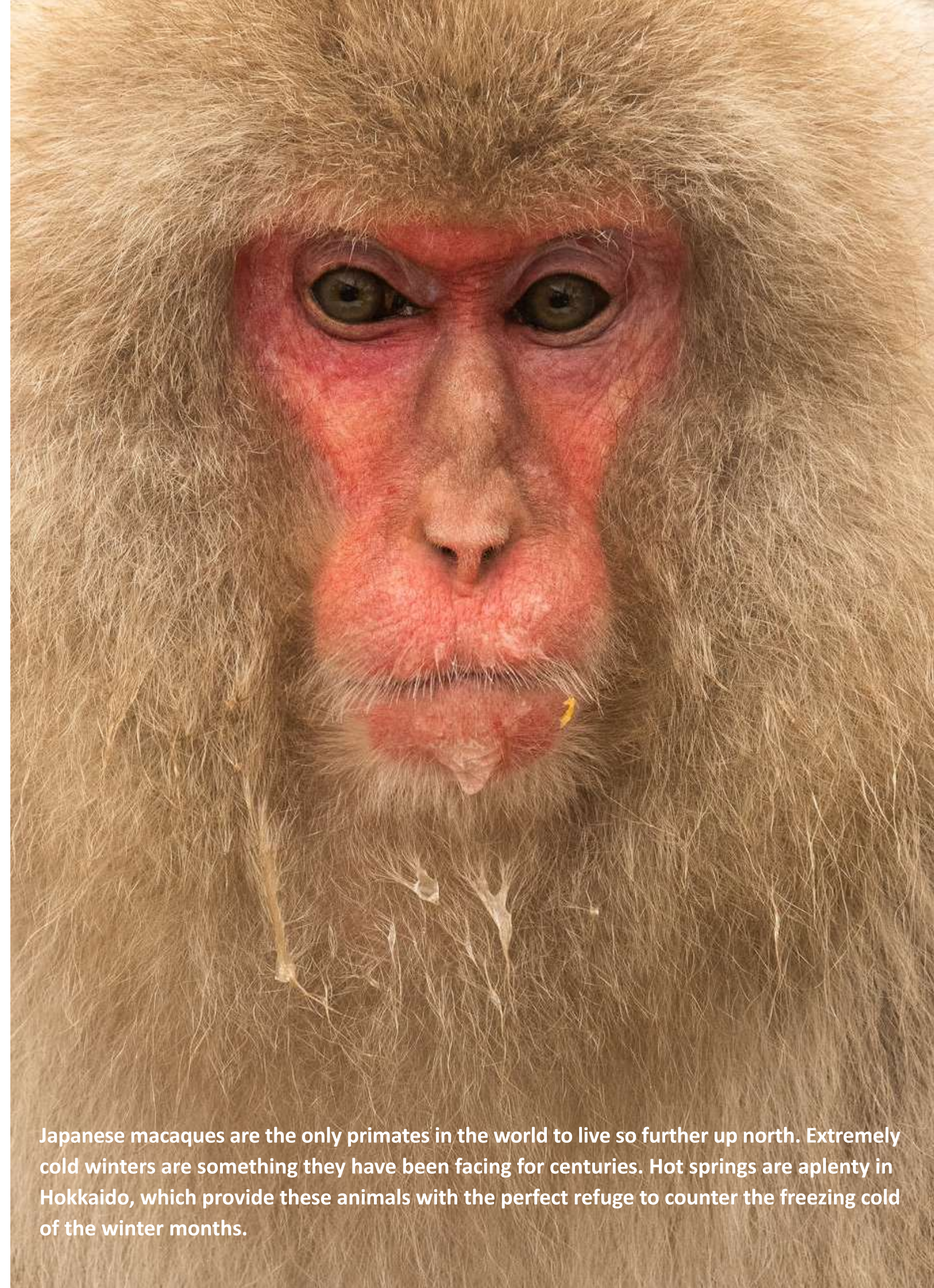


Japan - an ancient land of dynasties, empires, steeped in history, a land where ancient traditions still find relevance in the fast-paced ultra-modern way of life and the modern-day technological hub of the world. Ancient shrines and pagodas proudly stand amongst the cloud-piercing skyscrapers, lush green paddy fields where traditional methods of farming are still very much prevalent overlook the iconic Shinkansen flashing past them, in this paradoxical land tradition and modernity live in perfect harmony. Japan essentially is an island nation; the Japanese archipelago is comprised of a large number of large and small islands. Along the northern reaches of Japan lies Hokkaido – the second largest of the main islands of Japan. Sapporo, the largest city on the island as well as the capital of the island, bears the tell-tale signs of Japan's command over electronics and technology which has earned the nation a dignified place in the world map. Being the second largest island in Japan, Hokkaido is spread over a vast area and is blessed with an abundance of natural beauty ranging from volcanoes, national parks to hot springs. With its numerous ski resorts Hokkaido's reputation is fast growing as the upcoming skiing destination of the world. Being the northernmost island of Japan, Hokkaido is blessed with a cold weather and bitterly cold winters which receive a copious amount of snowfall each year. In a country which is known for its innovation, its excellence in the department of technology and

automation, its adherence to discipline the soaring vistas of Hokkaido, the ancient forests, the sprawling fields appear as a welcome change. To make things further special Hokkaido carefully hides up its sleeves an ace – its rich wildlife. Much of Hokkaido's landscape is protected under national parks and sanctuaries which have allowed the wildlife of Hokkaido to thrive which also has been facilitated by the relatively lesser population of Hokkaido. The island is home to a wide variety of wild animals, some of which are extremely rare and elusive, while some are battling for their existences having been reduced to paltry numbers.

In spite of the protection and relatively lesser intrusion they enjoy from the human beings, life in the wild domains of Hokkaido is not easy for its denizens. The winters are severe, punishing and unforgiving and exact the highest of tolls from even the most formidable creatures. Yet as it is with the ways of nature, even when faced with the toughest of ordeals, life – one of nature's greatest forces finds a meandering way past those obstacles. The wild animals that thrive in Hokkaido have adapted themselves and almost perfected the art of surviving the harsh winters.

Each animal has devised its own ways of dealing with the harsh demands of Hokkaido winter. The Japanese macaque for instance can be often seen soaking themselves in the waters of hot springs and cherish the experience ignoring the



Japanese macaques are the only primates in the world to live so far north. Extremely cold winters are something they have been facing for centuries. Hot springs are aplenty in Hokkaido, which provide these animals with the perfect refuge to counter the freezing cold of the winter months.





While lounging at the hot springs it is common among Japanese macaques to indulge in various grooming activities, which strengthen the family ties. In fact the leisurely attitude proves taking these hot baths is much more than a survival mechanism for this species.

fresh snow piling up all around them. Scientists always suspected they did so in order to keep themselves warm and newfound evidences have confirmed these claims. Japanese macaques are the only primates in the world to live so further up north. Extremely cold winters are something they have been facing for centuries. And it is only through such ingenious solutions they have been able to survive in the face of such harsh climate. Hot springs are aplenty in Hokkaido, which provide these animals with the perfect refuge to counter the freezing cold of the

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winter months. Being social animals Japanese macaques live in large groups. Females born into the colony spend the rest of their lives in the colony while it is common for males to move out and find their places in other colonies once they attain sexual maturity. While lounging at the hot springs it is common among these primates to indulge in various grooming activities, which strengthen the family ties. In fact the leisurely attitude of these animals in and around the hot springs conclusively proves taking these hot baths is much more than a survival mechanism for this species, they have not only found a way to beat the cold but designed their lives around it to make the most of their time.

The other notable species found in the

snowy realms of Hokkaido is the Blakiston's fish owl. This bird of prey immediately garners a lot of attention for being the largest species of owl and for its limited habitat range which make it incredibly rare and elusive. These supreme hunters are very much at home in the sub-zero temperatures and snow covered landscape of Hokkaido as well as Russia. During the freezing cold of the winter months these birds can be seen searching for prey along fast flowing streams of water with narrow openings along the superficial sheets of ice which cover them.

Being hunters of the highest order these owls make the most of such narrow openings as they rarely miss out on an opportunity to fish in these frigid waters. The Blakiston's fish owl feeds on a variety of aquatic prey. Topping their dietary chart are pikes, catfish, trout and salmons. Blessed with a large built (some individuals might exceed 4.5 kg) and razor sharp talons and beaks these birds are not averse to the idea of hauling catches which are much larger than their size. During summer or spring when the sheets of ice over fast flowing streams and river disappear these owls make the most of such seasons of plenty and feast upon crabs as well as frogs and toads. However for major part of the year fish exclusively comprises the larger proportion of their



**A Japanese macaque forages in the snow clad wilderness of Hokkaido.**



diet. This formidable bird holds a special place among the people of Hokkaido too. The indigenous Ainu community of Hokkaido revered the fish owl as Kamui – a guardian angel or spirit looking after them. In traditional paintings or wood carvings Blakiston's fish owl finds a prominent place as a revered deity, a god that protected the villages of the Ainu community. The close association between the Ainu people and the fish owl further developed due to the same kind of habitat they shared. The Ainu people too largely depended upon the rivers and streams for their livelihoods and survival. It comes as no surprise the lives of Ainu people and Blakiston's fish owl became intertwined and found a permanent place in Japan's ancient history.

Beautiful cranes in their signature black and white coloration engaged in elaborate and surreal courtship displays is a common sight in the snow covered wilderness of Hokkaido. Hokkaido remains the last remaining stronghold for these beautiful birds – the red crowned crane or the Japanese crane also known as Tancho in Japan. The signature red patch on the crown of these birds gives them their names. The elegant red-crowned crane has long been a beloved bird in Japan. The Japanese crane has been an endearing character in Japanese folklores, mythologies and culture. The bird is largely associated with positivity and good fortune and a symbol of peace. The red crowned crane is widely known for its elaborate

dance ritual during the mating season. The male and the female take part in a duet which is beautifully synchronised and orchestrated. It probably is this very human like celebration of love and partnership which has made the red crowned crane such an endearing figure in the whole of Japan and earned it such a prominent place in the Japanese culture. Half of the world's red-crowned crane population now lives in East Hokkaido, where they can be seen year-around. Due to excessive habitat loss and poaching it was thought at one point of time these magnificent creatures had gone extinct. However a small population was rediscovered in Hokkaido. Since then through meticulous and intense conservation measures the species has been able to stage a remarkable comeback and although their numbers are far from what it used to be even a few decades ago the conservation efforts certainly seem to be paying off. The snow covered backdrop of Hokkaido's wilderness serves the perfect canvass on which the elegance of these beautiful creatures stand out and their dance rituals turn into nothing short of a visual delight of the highest order. Winter marks the arrival of a very special winged visitor to the icy realms of Hokkaido. Primarily a resident of the Kamchatka Peninsula in Russia this large bird of prey prefers to fly south with the onset of winter, with Hokkaido being one its favourite winter retreats. Every winter Hokkaido welcomes more than 2000 of these raptors. The Steller's sea eagle is an



imposing bird both in terms of its dimensions as well as its temperament. These eagles are giants of the raptor world; in fact they are on average the heaviest raptor in the world weighing up to 10 kg and reaching 3 feet in height. The bright yellow coloured bill stands out by dint of its size and sharpness and also in contrast to the blackish brown plumage of these birds. These birds sport a hint of white on their forehead and on their tails and thighs. These huge birds swoop in from nowhere and those fiercely sharp talons hook any unsuspecting fish along the surface of the water. Steller's sea eagle mainly feeds on fish and spends most of its time along the icy edge of the sea. While fishing along the banks of the rivers during summer or spring they feast on rich supplies of salmon and trout in Kamchatka. However during the winter months in Hokkaido, Steller's sea eagles along with white-tailed sea eagles hunt for abundant Pacific cod amid the pack ice which drifts down from the Sea of Okhotsk into the Nemuro Straits. Japan too is extremely proud of its winter visitors to Hokkaido as these birds enjoy the special privilege of being classified as a National Treasure of Japan and are revered by the people of Japan. This probably explains why more than half of the entire population migrate from their breeding grounds further north to Hokkaido every winter. The skies of Hokkaido are almost never devoid of activities, even during the harshest winter. The clear blue skies are

**Hokkaido remains the last remaining stronghold for the red crowned crane or the Japanese crane known as Tancho in Japan.**



often dotted with whooper swans flying in formations. Like the Steller's sea eagle whooper swans too are winter migrant. These swans fly great lengths and navigate their ways from their northern breeding grounds in Russia and arrive in Hokkaido at the onset of winter. They spend the winter in Hokkaido, very much at home in the freezing waters of the lakes and rivers and the sub-zero ambient temperature before making their way to their northern retreats at the onset of spring. It is estimated every year more than 300 whooper swans swoop in to Hokkaido, their favourite destination being Kussharo Lake. These large graceful birds dressed in all white paint an extremely beautiful spectacle along the edge and in the water of the lake. Hokkaido is also known for being the home of the ezo red fox – a subspecies of red fox which is widely distributed in and around the islands of Hokkaido. Similar in appearance to a red fox the ezo red fox is slightly bigger in dimensions in comparison to Japanese red foxes. These animals are plentiful in the island of Hokkaido and are almost synonymous with the way of life here. They freely roam about and venture into towns and villages and co-exist peacefully alongside the human settlements. However such close association with human beings doesn't augur well for a wild species. It is bound to alter their behaviour as it has been observed among some population centred around Sapporo where these foxes feel





The elegant red-crowned crane has long been a beloved bird in Japan. The Japanese crane has been an endearing character in Japanese folklores, mythologies and culture. The bird is largely associated with positivity and good fortune and a symbol of peace.



very much at home in the midst of a busy city life. In addition to this the fear of contracting diseases or parasites too looms large. These resourceful animals are extremely capable of making the most out of their environments and as a result of which they can be found across a wide range of habitat ranging from grasslands to alpine belts in the island of Hokkaido. Not being picky when it comes to food too has helped their cause. These animals would feast on anything they can lay their hands on from small mammals, birds, insects to fruits, nuts and seeds. With more and more of them venturing closer to the cities and towns these foxes have been observed scavenging on the garbage disposed by the human settlements. Along with these Hokkaido is home to several other species. What seemed like the biggest deterrent for life to blossom in these northern reaches of Japan, the freezing cold actually has facilitated the explosion of life in this island. The Japanese crane which was staring at extinction a few decades ago has staged a resounding comeback. The Steller's sea eagles are visiting the shores of Hokkaido in growing numbers each winter. Blakiston's fish owl perched along the narrow opening along the fast flowing streams and rivers during the winter months in search of fish is slowly yet steadily turning into a regular occurrence. A lot of factors have contributed towards making Hokkaido the wildlife haven that it is today for so many species. The island

is relatively thinly populated in comparison to other islands in Japan while being the second largest in area. This has led to ample space for the wildlife to thrive, far removed from the prying eyes of their human counterparts. This lack of intrusion from human beings and a wide range of habitat have played the most crucial roles in turning Hokkaido into such a safe place for its wildlife. In addition to this the revered places many of these creatures such as the Blakiston's fish owl, the Japanese crane, the Steller's sea eagle hold in Japanese culture and tradition have further facilitated this cause. For the human population in this island including the indigenous community, these animals are more than mere creatures. In ancient times these creatures were revered as deities or guardian angels by the indigenous people. Such practices might be a thing of past now, yet the affection remains, the ties these animals once had with the people of Japan still remains, which comes as a huge boost for the survival and the future of these species. This island along the northern fringes of Japan is taking all the steps in the right direction to ensure this beautiful legacy thrives on its snowy palate for many more centuries to come.

**Hokkaido is also known for being the home of the ezo red fox – a subspecies of red fox which is widely distributed in and around the islands of Hokkaido. Similar in appearance to a red fox the ezo red fox is slightly bigger in dimensions in comparison to Japanese red foxes. These animals are plentiful in the island of Hokkaido and are almost synonymous with the way of life here.**







Stellar's sea eagles and white tailed eagles populate the icy shores of Hokkaido during the winter months. During winter these raptors hunt for abundant Pacific cod amid the pack ice which drifts down from the Sea of Okhotsk into the Nemuro Straits.



Whooper swans are winter migrants to Hokkaido. These swans fly great lengths from their northern breeding grounds in Russia and arrive in Hokkaido at the onset of winter. They spend the winter in Hokkaido, very much at home in the freezing waters of the lakes and rivers and the sub-zero ambient temperature before making their way to their northern retreats at the onset of spring.





The snowy realm of Hokkaido is home to Blakiston's fish owl. This bird of prey immediately garners a lot of attention for being the largest species of owl and for its limited habitat range which make it incredibly rare and elusive. These supreme hunters are very much at home in the sub-zero temperatures and snow covered landscape of Hokkaido as well as Russia. During the freezing cold of the winter months these birds can be seen searching for prey along fast flowing streams of water with narrow openings along the superficial sheets of ice which cover them.







*(Top left)* A Stellar's sea eagle spreads its wings along the shores of Hokkaido. These birds are winter migrants to Hokkaido and are classified as a National Treasure of Japan.

*(Top right)* A Yezo sika deer in the wilderness of Hokkaido. The Hokkaido sika deer is one of the largest subspecies of Sika deer and is indigenous to the island of Hokkaido.



*(Left)* During winter the skies of Hokkaido are often dotted with formations of whooper swans who migrate from their northern breeding grounds to spend the winter months in the lakes of Hokkaido.



In spite of the freezing winters life blossomed in the island of Hokkaido. The island today is a refuge for hundreds of species notably the endangered Japanese crane, Blackston's fish owl and Stellar's sea eagle. The island is relatively thinly populated in comparison to other islands in Japan while being the second largest in area. This has led to ample space for the wildlife to thrive, far removed from the prying eyes of their human counterparts. This lack of intrusion from human beings and a wide range of habitat have played the most crucial roles in turning Hokkaido into such a safe place for its wildlife.



## About the Photographer

Devendra Deshmukh is an IT entrepreneur based in Pune, India. He is the CEO and founder of global IT services company e-Zest Solutions Ltd. ([www.e-zest.com](http://www.e-zest.com)). Since Devendra's native place Amravati was close to jungles, from his early childhood, he spent ample amount of time with nature & wilderness. Also during his college days, he was an active conservation volunteer with a local NGO - Nature Conservation Society of Amravati. From last 4 years, Devendra is pursuing wildlife photography as a means to document wildlife, highlight importance and the efforts required for its conservation. In addition to regular Indian wildlife photography hotspots, he has travelled to global locations like Ecuador, Botswana, Japan, Kenya & South Africa. In Devendra's words "Conservation is my purpose and photography is my passion. Due to destruction of the natural world at the hands of humans, there is no longer enough space for animals to survive, which worries me a lot."



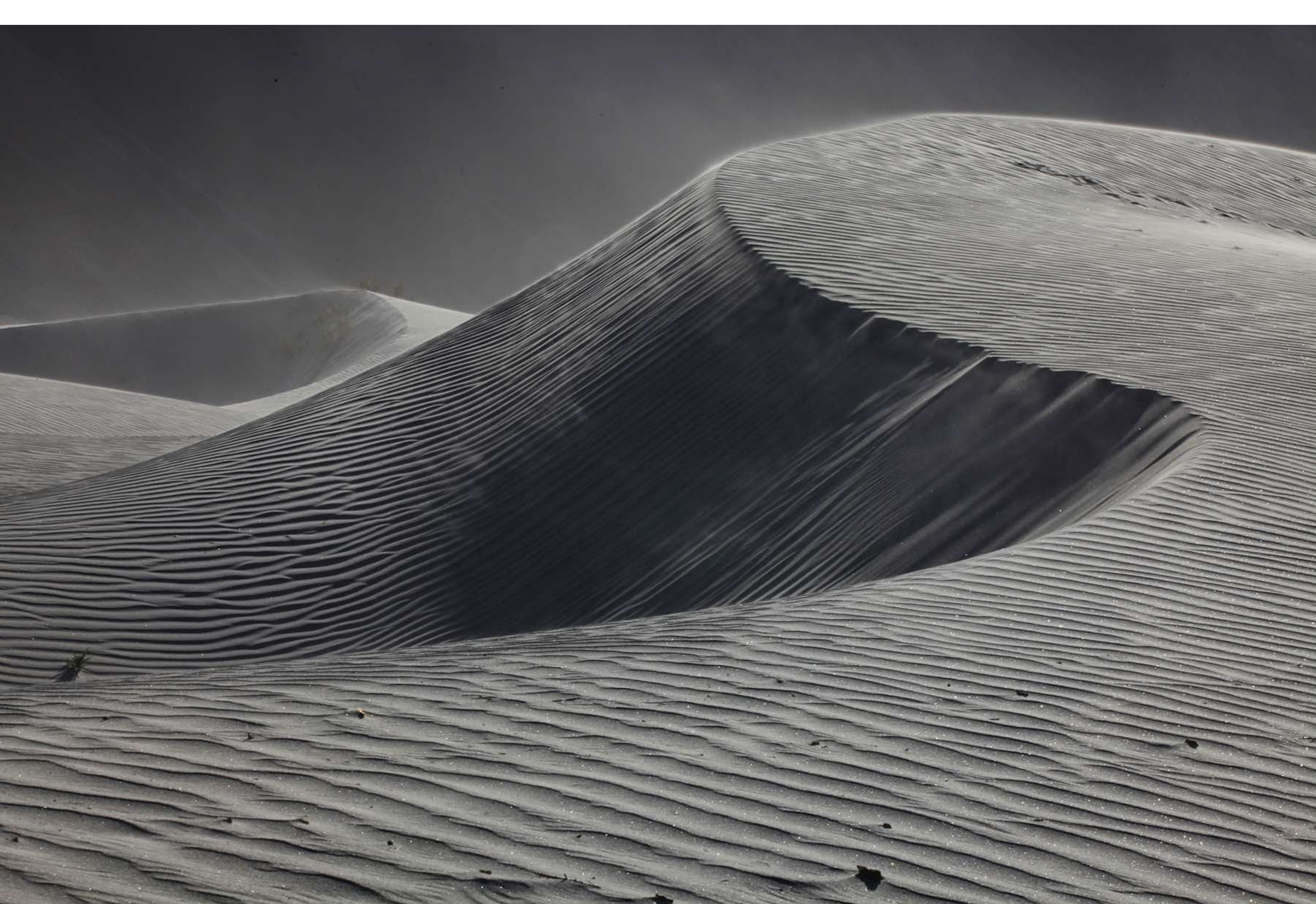
A young child with a red hat and striped shirt is sitting against a blue wooden door. The child is looking towards the camera with a slight smile. The background is a textured wall. The text 'from Dizzying Heights to Unfathomable Depths' is overlaid on the right side of the image.

Photo Album

# from Dizzying Heights to Unfathomable Depths

From the mountains of Ladakh to the depths of oceans, **Surajit HARI**'s journey with his camera to satiate his passion for documenting the beauty of this planet comes to life in this photo album.









The barren mountains of Ladakh which nestle in their valleys tiny hamlets, where the blue of sky paints an ethereal picture against the myriad hues along the mountain slopes to the depths of our seas and oceans where life ebbs and flows in millions of different forms, where vast swathes of coral colonies

sparkle the vast deep blue canvass – the contrast could not have been greater and starker. Quite remarkably this huge spectrum is acclaimed photographer Surajit Hari's domain. Life and scenes from the mountains of Ladakh to colourful coral gardens and giant shoals of fish hiding in the watery realms of our oceans come to

life in his photographs.

His love affair with the mountains of Ladakh commenced in the year 2005. Since then he has made multiple trips to Ladakh, enamoured by the magnetic charm of the surreal beauty of this region. This overwhelming sense of belonging fuelled his insatiable lust to devour everything

beautiful about the region and in the process freeze those moments, those scenes forever through his photographs. Courtesy his Bachelor's degree in Visual Arts, his trained eyes unearthed the beauty that hid itself even in the most inconspicuous setting. The by-product of this passionate love affair has been a wide array of beautiful photographs which speaks volumes of the scenic beauty, the culture, the heritage of Ladakh and culminated in the publishing of his coffee table book titled – Surajit Hari's Ladakh, The Muse of the Mountains.

While the artist in him was enchanted by the beauty of the mountains in Ladakh, the adventurer in him went seeking for the thrills that lie hidden in the cold watery depths of our seas and oceans. The underwater realms of our seas and oceans are home to millions of fish, ranging from the microscopic planktons to the ginormous blue whale. It is a world which is almost alien to us, one in which we will never be at home. It is possibly this thrill of exploring the unknown, taming the untamed which draws millions to these watery folds. Surajit took up diving to explore this watery world and in doing so developed an affinity for the charm of the seas and oceans on this planet. As the depths revealed more and more of their treasures to him, the artist in him too came to life and during his countless diving expeditions he captured these beautiful scenes and the richness in terms of life that our oceans are blessed with.













In this photo album we have highlighted some of his works from the mountains of Ladakh to the freezing depths of our oceans which again highlight his diverse acumen as a photographer. These photographs are a celebration of the beauty that this planet is blessed with and how that beauty graces the sharp cloud piercing mountain peaks as well as the cold dark beds of our oceans. It also celebrates how life broke through all barriers, spread its wings and established itself as the most dominant force of nature in the rocky domain of our mountains thousands of feet above our seas to the cold watery depths thousands of feet below in our seas. It is quite befitting that Surajit's photographs are as diverse as life itself.













## About the Photographer

A tryst with a village lost in the meandering green of the countryside or a sky animated with a flurry of clouds, Surajit contained his wanderlust within the frames of his paintings. A gift of an SLR FM-10 camera instilled an interest in photography. After graduating in Commerce, Surajit obtained the Bachelor of Visual Arts degree from Rabindra Bharati University, as self-assertion not to compromise the artist in him.

Photography was only a change in the medium of expression of his creative talents. Today, photography allows him to explore his artistic domain despite a busy schedule with his business.

Surajit has traveled wide, capturing moments that appealed to his artistic sensibility, holding them still in time and space within the frames of his photographs. He has exhibited his folio in Kolkata, Mumbai, Chandigarh, Hyderabad and London.

His first visit to Ladakh in 2005 opened up a treasure trove for the obsessed photographer. He traveled to Ladakh every year for next eight years, during different seasons, enamoured by the magnificence of the land and its people and the need to translate the experience with his photographer's eye. In 2013 he published a coffee table book titled Surajit Hari's Ladakh, The Muse of The Mountains, with his precious collection of the frozen frontier.

As a watersport enthusiast Surajit had developed an interest with the underwater world which resulted in him having completed his training in Scubadiving and obtained the professional degree of a Divemaster with PADI and presently honing his skills in freezing some underwater moments.



Photo Album

# When our Walls Speak

**Pritam DUTTA**'s photographs lend a voice to the walls of Kolkata which proudly advocate for the talented artists the city is brimming with.







GOPAL NAGAR BRAZIL FANS CLUB (ALIPORE)



FOOTBALL  
WORLD CUP  
2014

THE GAN





Stoic, obstinate, balky - are some of the adjectives which get readily associated with a wall. The wall is such a structure which is almost never viewed upon kindly, maybe since the wall

often represents a divisive force or a divisive attempt. The annals of history is ripe with instances of walls dividing communities, breaking nations apart even creating rifts when there should have been

none. On the other hand the wall in the history of humankind has developed the reputation of a shield too. The mighty wall of Troy, the Great Wall of China assured millions that the oppressive forces would

be kept at bay. However none of these does justice to the true purpose of a wall. In a parallel universe, where humankind is able to rise above its petty bickering, needless squabbles there can be no bigger





canvass than a wall itself to highlight the finer senses that make us humane. Ancient cave paintings on the rocky surfaces of primitive caves, dating back to thousands of years bear testimony to this claim. In a violent and volatile world dating back

to prehistoric times, when life was mostly about mere survival the giant cave walls flamed the artist which was dormant among the early humans and elevated them to a life which turned into something more than a never ending quest for hunting

and gathering. The wall has always been the most widely used medium for communication dating back to the prehistoric times. What started out as documenting the surroundings or depicting an episode of hunting on the walls of the

prehistoric caves has undergone a plethora of changes in nature and appearances and manifests itself in much more complex forms on the walls along the streets and alleys of our cities and towns across the globe. Cave paintings paved the pathway for modern day graffiti. The act of scribbling, scratching or spraying anything illicitly upon a wall or any other visible public place is the dictionary meaning of graffiti. Graffiti in different forms from across the world have been helpful in providing valuable insights into the earlier societies because the walls have a story to tell. Street art today allows people to connect with art and expression on a daily basis; the colourful and beautiful murals painted on walls reach out to the public every day, the powerful depictions, thoughts, often stir our collective conscience and make bold statements, the various art forms and graffiti on our walls delight us, inspire us, even serve as tools of resistance during tumultuous times. In India cities like New Delhi and Mumbai have been encouraging wall graffiti in a bid to beautify the dull and often shabby appearing walls of the city. Though Kolkata is not quite known for street graffiti but over the years things have been changing in the city. It has undergone immense changes in colour, content, display. But what makes this age-old tradition remarkable is its multi-layered existence. The concept of wall graffiti is not new to Kolkata. Political graffiti dominated the city-walls for the last few









forms such as murals. Before Durga Puja the upsurge in graffiti is a regular phenomenon in North Kolkata. The purpose of wall art is to get the message across, to provide a platform for the aspiring artists, to save the walls from the grime and the dirt of the city-life and, most importantly, to create an artistic experience that will be relished and cultivated beyond the borders. Capitalism influenced laws made commercial advertisements legal and converted graffiti into an underground activity. Defacing a public wall or space is still illegal under the West Bengal Act, which began in Kolkata to ban political graffiti. We live in a city where walls are usually covered by eye soaring political writings and advertisements, the walls of this city certainly need a face lift. This photo album offers glimpses into the city's spirit, lifelines, hopes, despairs, and last but not the least, the people at large through the colourful graffiti which adorn the walls of Kolkata. Let the walls whisper, shout and sing. It is a long journey and still needs a lot of encouragement, appreciation and respect as an art form. But there is growing passion, talent and space — all the ingredients for a very bright future!

decades. Even in this age of digitization, it has not lost its charm among the urbanites, but the domain has spread its umbrella. As a result of which it is not uncommon to come across street walls adorned with colourful graffiti across

different parts of Kolkata. Those who roam around the city quite a lot on a regular basis would testify there is a marked difference in the nature of these art specimens in the northern and southern sections of Kolkata. In South Kolkata (the

areas namely Golf Green, Mominpur, Sadar Street), graffiti are mainly 3D wall arts, colourful quotes or some sarcastic image. On the other hand the wall-art of North Kolkata revolves around iconic personalities or some contemporary art

















Let the walls whisper, shout and sing. It is a long journey and still needs a lot of encouragement, appreciation and respect as an art form. But there is growing passion, talent and space — all the ingredients for a very bright future!



## About the Photographer

Pritam Dutta is an independent photographer who currently lives in Kolkata, India. His professional career started as a software engineer, but in 2015 he decided to make a change to pursue his true passion for photography. But the curiosity and hunger for learning that had motivated his engineering career did not vanish. Pritam now uses photography as vehicle to understand and help depict issues that puzzle him, and satisfy his passion for learning. Among his most prominent themes are culture, religion and people. His images have now been shown in showcased at exhibitions and have won numerous awards.



# Mount Bromo

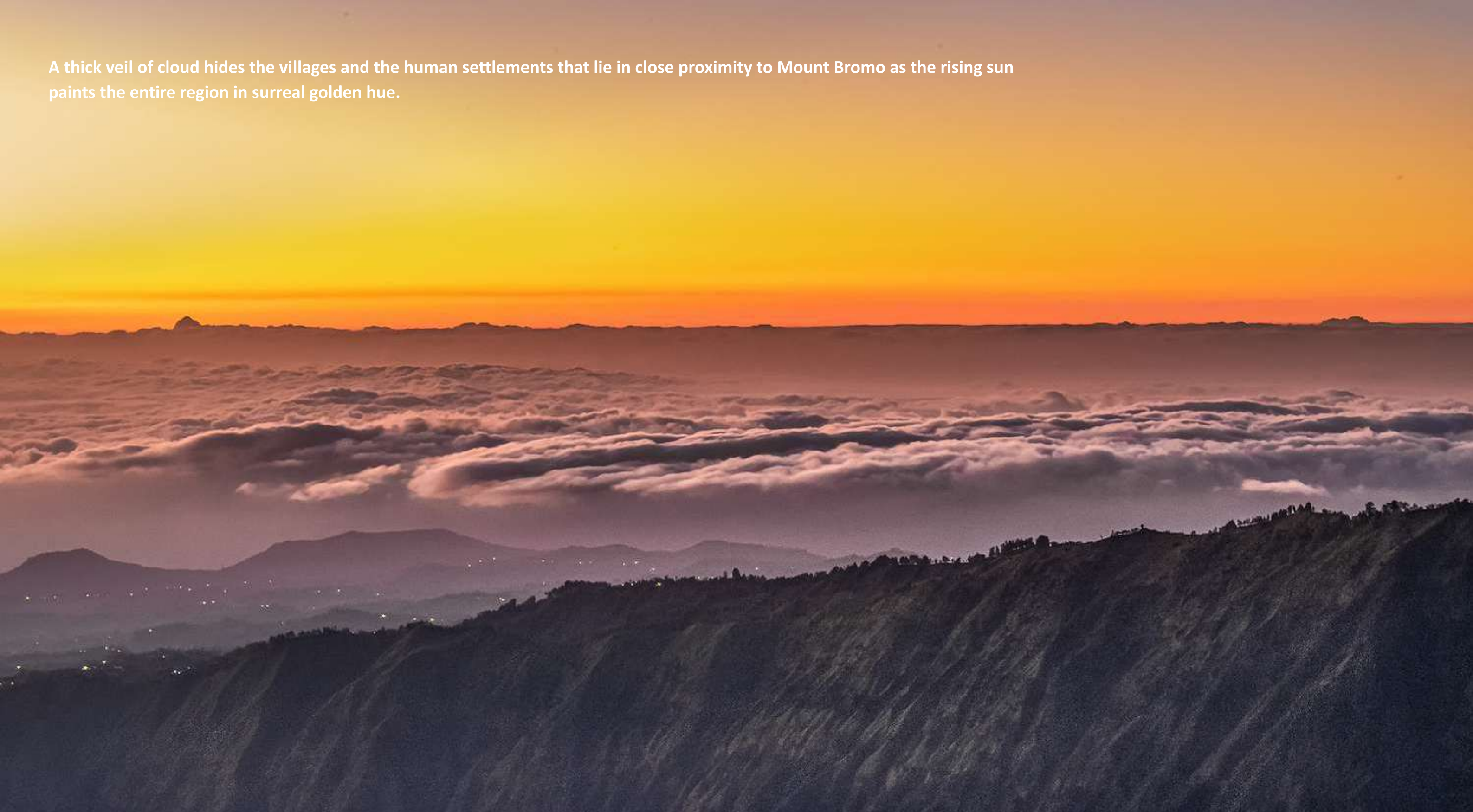
- where the earth's core serenades and threatens...

The locals revere it, tourists love it and above everything else nature flaunts it with a sense of pride and serves a reminder to the rest of us – trying to tame nature eventually is an exercise in futility. A journey to Mount Bromo through the lenses of **Debarshi DAS**.

The beautiful vistas around Mount Bromo - the most popular tourist destination in East Java, Indonesia.



A thick veil of cloud hides the villages and the human settlements that lie in close proximity to Mount Bromo as the rising sun paints the entire region in surreal golden hue.



The natural world with its countless subjects – the mountain ranges, meandering rivers, lush green wilderness, deep dark caves has a way of awakening the dormant romantic in almost all of us. For centuries now we have altered several facades of the natural world from altering

the courses of rivers by setting up dams to clearing up vast stretches of forest patches and in doing so we have time and again left the indelible marks of our technological advances, superior architectural accomplishments and our zeal to establish our identity as the most

superior species on this planet. Some of these architectural and technological marvels have elevated our lives and communities to dizzying heights, while others have come at the expense of unsettling the delicate balance of nature. These advancements accomplished by us

in terms of technology, architecture, harnessing the resources of the natural world and the rapid pace at which we have been able to achieve them is truly awe inspiring. The Great Wall of China – a massive fortified structure which sits atop the lush green mountains or the iconic





The sandy plain which encircles Mount Bromo and is referred to as the “sea of sand” can be approached via foot, on a horseback or by vehicles.

**M**ount Bromo owes much of its fame to the *Tenger massif* – a large volcanic complex which mostly remains veiled by a thick curtain of black smoke and ashes.

Great Pyramid of Giza which stands tall and comfortably holds its own instead of being dwarfed by the vast expanses of the mighty Sahara are a few examples of how the human will and might have often embarked upon audacious attempts to tame nature and even mock it. In this ongoing saga of establishing the dominance, we human beings as a species may have had our brief moments of triumphs and maybe in the future will enjoy a few more, but there can be absolutely no doubt nature always was and forever will remain the most dominant force on this planet. In spite of our repeated probing and prodding, much of the natural world remains unknown and untraceable to us. We have tried to conquer the highest peak of the world and many have successfully done so, we have probed into the deepest point on the earth’s surface and in days to come quite possibly we will venture further into previously uncharted territories. Yet such endeavours will forever reek of our desperation to go one up with the natural world. Such attempts are certain to reveal a clearer understanding of the planet, the fruits of which most certainly will benefit countless disciplines of science and technology and the human race in general, however from the natural world’s perspective these would be yet another attempts from the pesky humans to further stroke their misplaced sense of egos. The

mighty peaks of the world, the vast oceans, the thick carpets of lush green rainforests, the fire breathing volcanoes, the giant sand dunes with their fickle nature silently observe such follies and when they have had enough they mock us by unleashing their not so tolerant alter egos. It is probably these reminders which in spite of our pride and arrogance still make us revere the natural world and its elements. Millions among us throng beautiful beaches or climb up mountain slopes braving the freeze – not in some foolish attempt to challenge nature but to pay our homage, to soak in every ounce of beauty that unfolds in every corner of the natural world. One such subject of the natural world which has been drawing millions across the globe each year to its folds is Mount Bromo – an active volcano in East Java, Indonesia. However it would be wrong to attribute the entire credit for this fame to Mount Bromo alone, more so since Indonesia is no stranger to volcanoes and Mount Bromo at 2329 isn’t the highest peak of Indonesia. Mount Bromo owes much of its fame to the *Tenger massif* – a large volcanic complex which mostly remains veiled by a thick curtain of black smoke and ashes. This surreal setting inspires awe and fear in almost the same proportion, while the terrain is plain and known as “lautan pasir” in Indonesian, meaning “sea of sand” it is fiercely guarded



by a ring of five volcanoes of which Mount Bromo happens to be the youngest and by virtue of this, the most restless. Mount Bromo derives its name from the Javanese pronunciation of Brahma – the creator of the universe according to Hindu scriptures. All this is a part of the Bromo Tengger Semeru National Park.

What led to the meteoric rise of Mount Bromo in the global tourism map is the opportunity for people to experience an active volcano from close quarters, that too while having the option of exploring the surroundings by foot open to them. The sandy plain which encircles Mount Bromo and is referred to as the “sea of sand” can be approached via foot, on a horseback or by vehicles and has rapidly developed into one of the most coveted things to do in Indonesia for anyone visiting the country. A closer look at these volcanoes reveals a primitive and raw version of the nature. One can’t help but feel the bubble we have built around ourselves in the form of our cities, our carefully manicured commercial complexes which has diligently shielded us from the natural world all around us and when nature reveals itself in such primal form in front of us, that bubble collapses, leaving us threadbare facing the might of nature. The entire region is replete with a subdued roar, a result of the activities taking place within the volcanoes, planet Earth’s way of letting its inner voice heard! For those with a literary bend of mind this could easily be a setting from Dante’s Inferno! Catching a glimpse of the sun rising over

Mount Bromo draws most tourists out of their beds braving the cold as they make their way to Mount Penanjakan. The significance of Mount Bromo among the locals becomes evident from the large number of local tourists who make a beeline to catch a glimpse of the volcano painted in the soft golden hue of the rising sun. As it is with the curious ways of nature, it often likes to play a tease. The cloud formation in and around can be unpredictable and often even on a clear morning the cloud cover may completely hide Mount Bromo, flushing out any hopes of catching the sun rising above it. Maybe this is nature’s way of shielding one of its favourite subjects from the prying eyes and only to reveal it to those who would go the extra yard to catch a glimpse of it.

While Mount Bromo is undoubtedly the biggest draw, there are other magnificent natural attractions in Bromo Tengger Semeru National Park. Not too far from Mount Bromo, the surroundings change dramatically as one comes face to face with the secluded almost hidden Madakaripura Waterfall. The locals believe those who walk underneath the waterfall will be blessed with a never ending stream of fortune flowing their way. The towering waterfall is always gushing with huge volumes of water which led to the local people fondly dubbing it as the “eternal waterfall”. The waterfall’s secluded reputation originates from its location. It lies hidden at the end of a deep valley in the foothills of the Tengger mountain range.



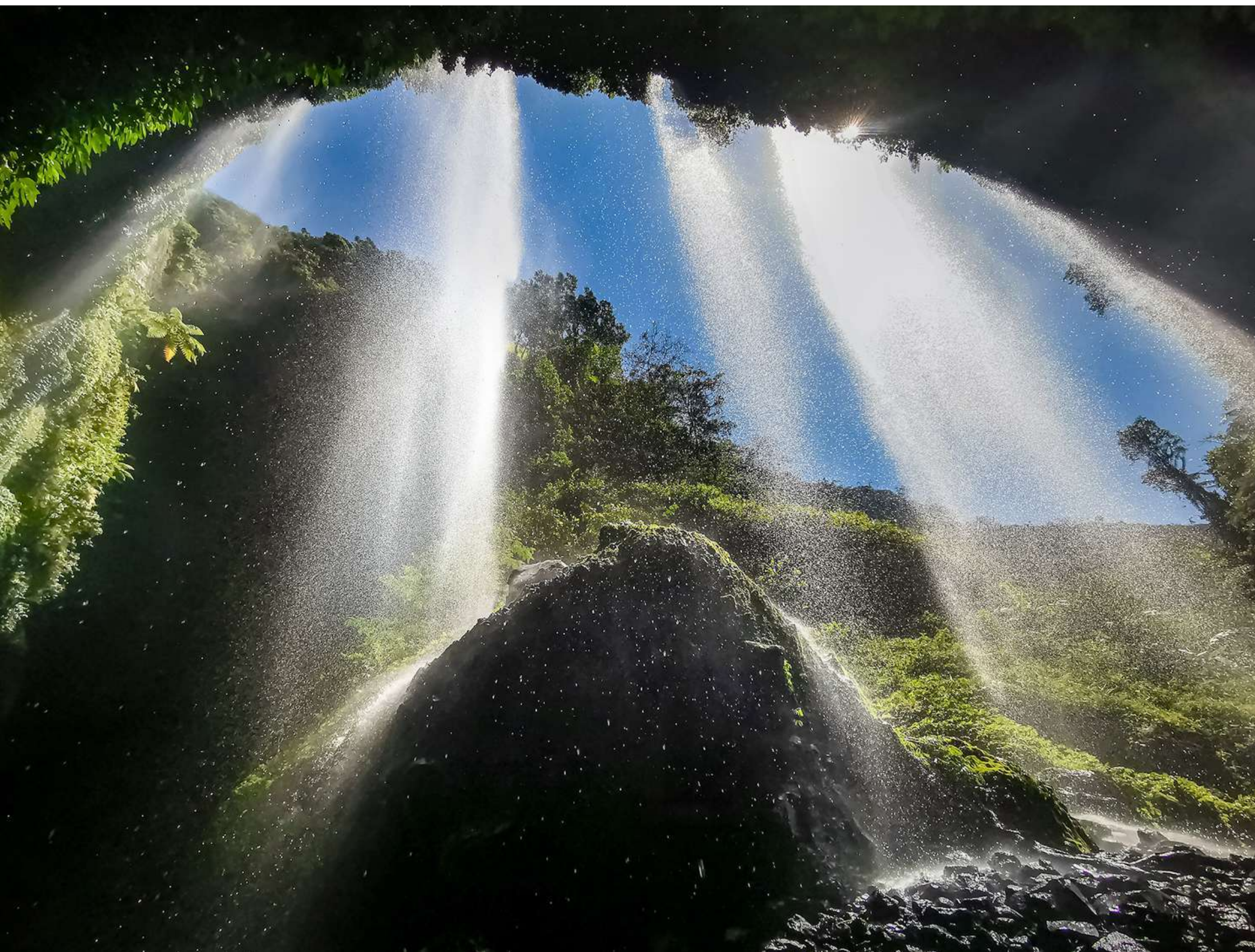
**Vast stretches of volcanic ash covers the fields leading all the way up to Mount Bromo. Of the five volcanoes present in this region, Mount Bromo is the youngest.**



Mount Bromo derives its name from the Javanese pronunciation of Brahma – the creator of the universe according to Hindu scriptures and is located in the Bromo Tengger Semeru National Park.



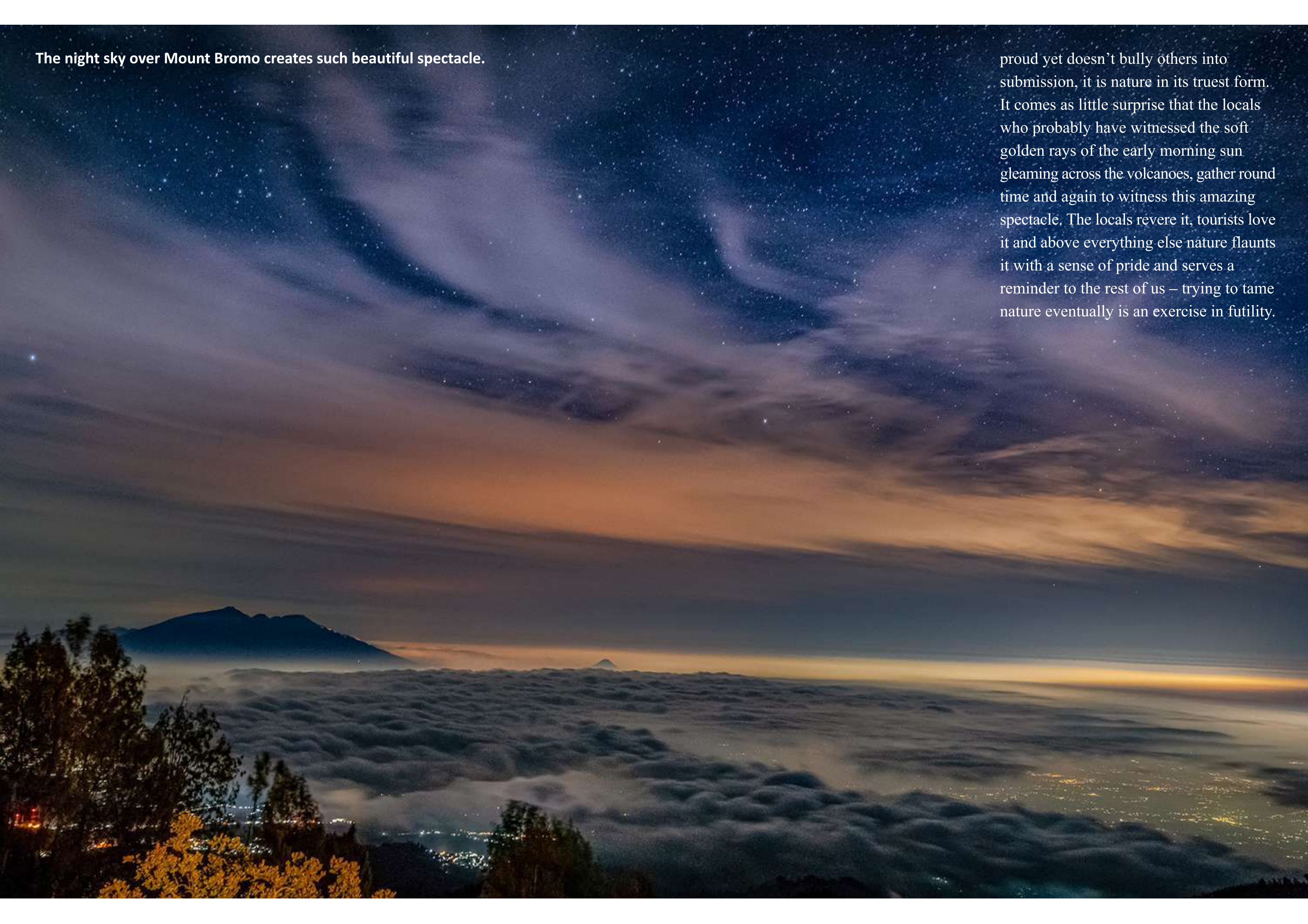




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The dry, smokey and misty aura surrounding Mount Bromo is in sharp contrast to this wet, green setting. This contrast possibly encapsulates the magnetic charm of the natural world, where on one hand it growls and rumbles from within its depth on the other hand nature carefully, almost in a motherly embrace garlands everything around her with rich bounties as the streams of water replenishes and rejuvenates evrything around them. The other major tourist attraction in Indonesia is Nusa Penida – an island located towards the southeast of Bali. Separated from Bali by the Badung Strait, Nusa Penida is well connected to Bali by regular maritime transport services in the forms of ferries, speedboats and other maritime vessels. Nusa Penida is a popular destination among diving enthusiasts and the island offers a number of locations which are favourable for diving. The marine life surrounding the island is rich in diversity and numbers, which also plays a big role in attracting diving and wildlife enthusiasts. Mount Bromo and its surroundings seem right out of some chapter of old fairy tale. The mystique setting, the presence of nature in its most primal form and to be in such close proximity with one of nature’s most formidable forces which holds the potential to obliterate everything in its wake within a matter of minutes can be an unnerving yet beautiful experience at the same time. Mount Bromo encapsulates everything about the natural world, it is fierce yet gentle, it is lethal yet beautiful, it stands





**The night sky over Mount Bromo creates such beautiful spectacle.**

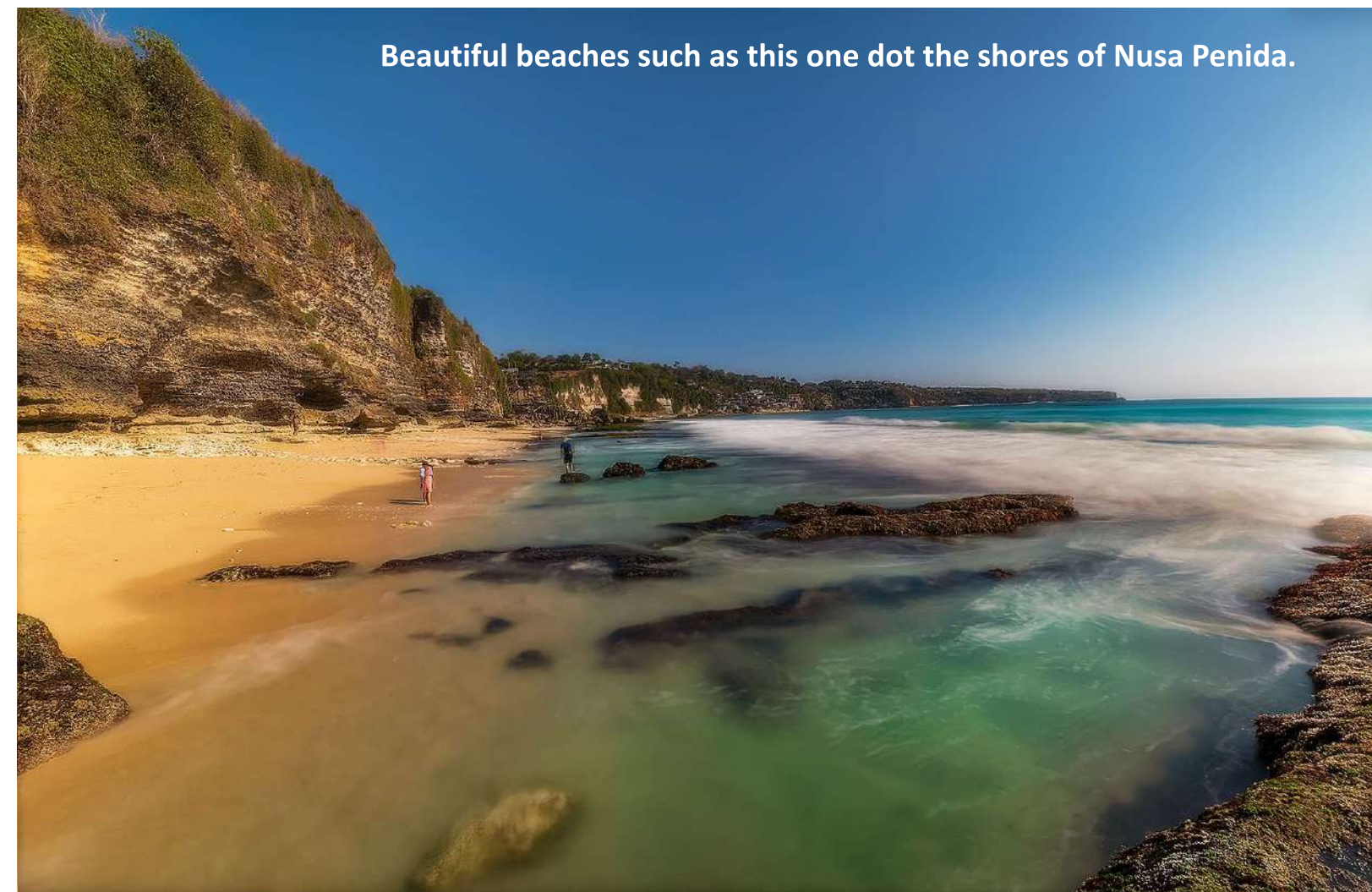
proud yet doesn't bully others into submission, it is nature in its truest form. It comes as little surprise that the locals who probably have witnessed the soft golden rays of the early morning sun gleaming across the volcanoes, gather round time and again to witness this amazing spectacle. The locals revere it, tourists love it and above everything else nature flaunts it with a sense of pride and serves a reminder to the rest of us – trying to tame nature eventually is an exercise in futility.



The other major tourist attraction in Indonesia is Nusa Penida – an island located towards the southeast of Bali. It is a popular destination among diving enthusiasts and offers a number of locations which are favourable for diving.



The Borobudur Temple in Indonesia is another most famous tourist attraction in Indonesia and is widely known for its architecture across the planet.



Beautiful beaches such as this one dot the shores of Nusa Penida.





Catching a glimpse of the sun rising over Mount Bromo draws most tourists out of their beds braving the cold as they make their way to Mount Penanjakan. The significance of Mount Bromo among the locals becomes evident from the large number of local tourists who make a beeline to catch a glimpse of the volcano painted in the soft golden hue of the rising sun. A closer look at these volcanoes reveals a primitive and raw version of the nature. The entire region is replete with a subdued roar, a result of the activities taking place within the volcanoes, planet Earth's way of letting its inner voice heard! For those with a literary bend of mind this could easily be a setting from Dante's Inferno!



## About the Photographer

Born in a small and beautiful town of Siliguri in the north of West Bengal, **Debarshi Das** grew up in various parts of West Bengal. He started his career in the IT industry in 2010. Currently he is working as a Senior Business Consultant for one of the largest Japanese MNCs, NTT Data Inc and is based in Bengaluru. Over the last 8 years his insatiable lust for travel has taken him across 15 states in India and 13 countries in Europe. Deeply inspired by the works of Paul Nicklen and Keith Ladzinski he decided to travel to Norway, Iceland and Greenland. He was overwhelmed by the rapid rate of climate change and the vanishing icebergs.

He wishes to visit Falkland, Ushuaia, Baffin, Yellowknife, Rovaniemi, Fairbanks, Patagonia, and Svalbard in the coming years and lend his voice to the indigenous communities such as Inuinnaït, Naukan, Yupik, Sami threatened by climate change through his documentaries. He feels these communities have been neglected since they are neither substantial vote banks nor are noteworthy consumers of fossil fuel and health insurance.





Photo Album

# Abode of the Divine

**Debrani DAS's** photographs capture the synchrony that exists between the daily life and the art form of Kumortuli - a hub of artisans in North Kolkata churning out thousands of idols each year.





Throughout the year the artisans in Kumortuli remain busy meeting the demands from various puja committees with the demands surging for Durga Puja - the biggest festival in West Bengal and Kali Puja which coincides with the festival of Diwali.



Narrow lanes dotted with shanties on either side dominate this neighbourhood in the northern part of the city of Kolkata. At one casual glance there is not much to suggest that this locality could be any different from other parts of Kolkata. The same chaotic presence of life, the century old buildings, the congested roads, everything which is quintessentially North Kolkatan, finds itself firmly rooted in the alleys and by-lanes here. Yet there is something incredibly unique about this neighbourhood, one which has quite literally sculpted a distinctive identity for this region. The people responsible for this distinction are the hundreds of artisans who throughout the year are engaged in sculpting idols of gods and goddesses from clay. Kumortuli, in the northern part of Kolkata, has now for centuries been the traditional home for the famed potters and clay artisans of Kolkata. The region is one of many Kolkata neighbourhoods along the Hooghly River. Clay from the bed and the banks of the river is abundant and the expert hands shaping the excavated clay into brilliantly sculpted idols of gods and goddesses are aplenty.

The shanties which flank the narrow lanes which crisscross the region are the numerous workshops of the hundreds of artisans of “karigars” living in this region. Some of the workshops are more imposing in their dimensions with few reaching up to few storeys in height. Almost all these workshops bear the same look. The insides

are cramped with rows of idols, sculptures and other structures in the making, some of which are in their initial stages while others receiving the final few touches from the expert hands before they are rolled out for their respective destinations. The entire place buzzes with such activities throughout the year. The skill required to transform moulds of clay into magnificent structures are passed on from one generation to the next. The apprentices are usually entrusted with the rather simpler responsibilities which become evident from observing the newbies taking care of the rather crude aspects such as mixing the clay with water and other materials to deem it suitable for sculpting or carrying out a number of manual labours. It is during such rigours they pick up the finer skills required for idol making by observing and assisting their elders – the highly skilled artisans.

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



The months leading up to Durga Puja are the busiest in the calendar of Kumortuli. Preparations reach fever pitch on the week of the puja as the finished idols such as these ones are rolled out of the workshops and head off to their respective destinations.





**Life ebbs and flows along these narrow lanes of Kumortuli against the backdrop of the idols of various Gods and Goddesses.**

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 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. The working conditions are far from ideal, the demands are increasing each year, the spells of rain are getting longer and becoming unpredictable, yet the Goddess courtesy these able hands always finds a way to reach her home on time, all decked up for the festivities lined up for the next few days. As the city takes giant strides towards metamorphosing into a modern day metropolis in sync with the ever growing aspirations of modern India, in this quaint neighbourhood of North Kolkata an age old tradition lives on through the toils of these artisans. Acclaimed street photographer Debrani Das first visited Kumortuli with a FujiX100F camera in tow. It was love at



During the peak season when the demand skyrockets, often work continues till late in the night.

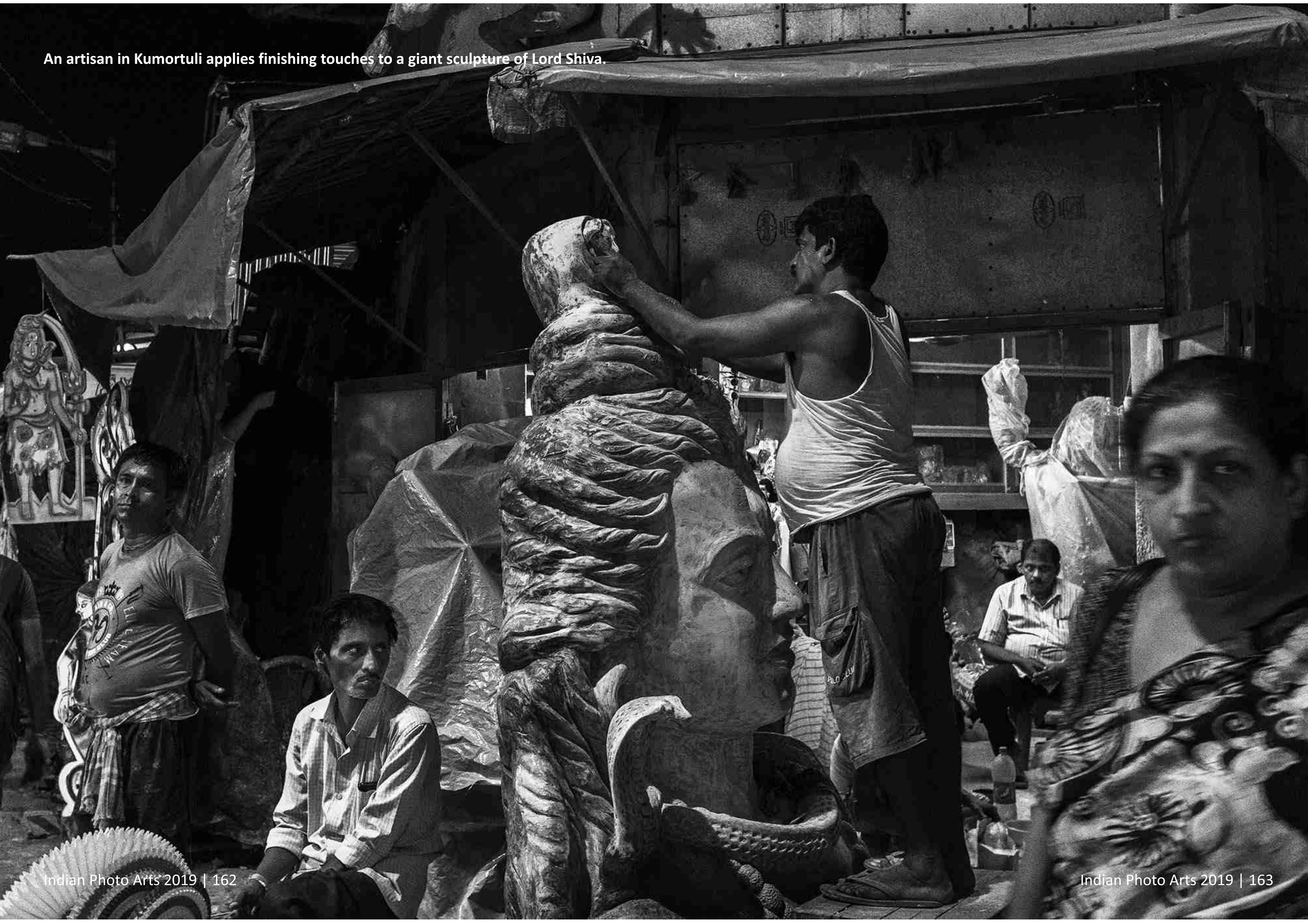
first sight for her as she kept coming back to this place. Narrow lanes of Kumortuli where the ambient light plays a game of cat and mouse with the shadows made this artisans' colony appear otherworldly in her eyes. The smell of fresh clay, paint,

the rich colours of the plastic covers used to cover up the idols to protect them from rain make this place even more vibrant. Every breath of life in Kumortuli smells of art, even the regular domestic life here flows in sync with the rich artistic heritage

of this place and nothing highlights this better than her photographs which are a result of her multiple visits to Kumortuli.



An artisan in Kumortuli applies finishing touches to a giant sculpture of Lord Shiva.



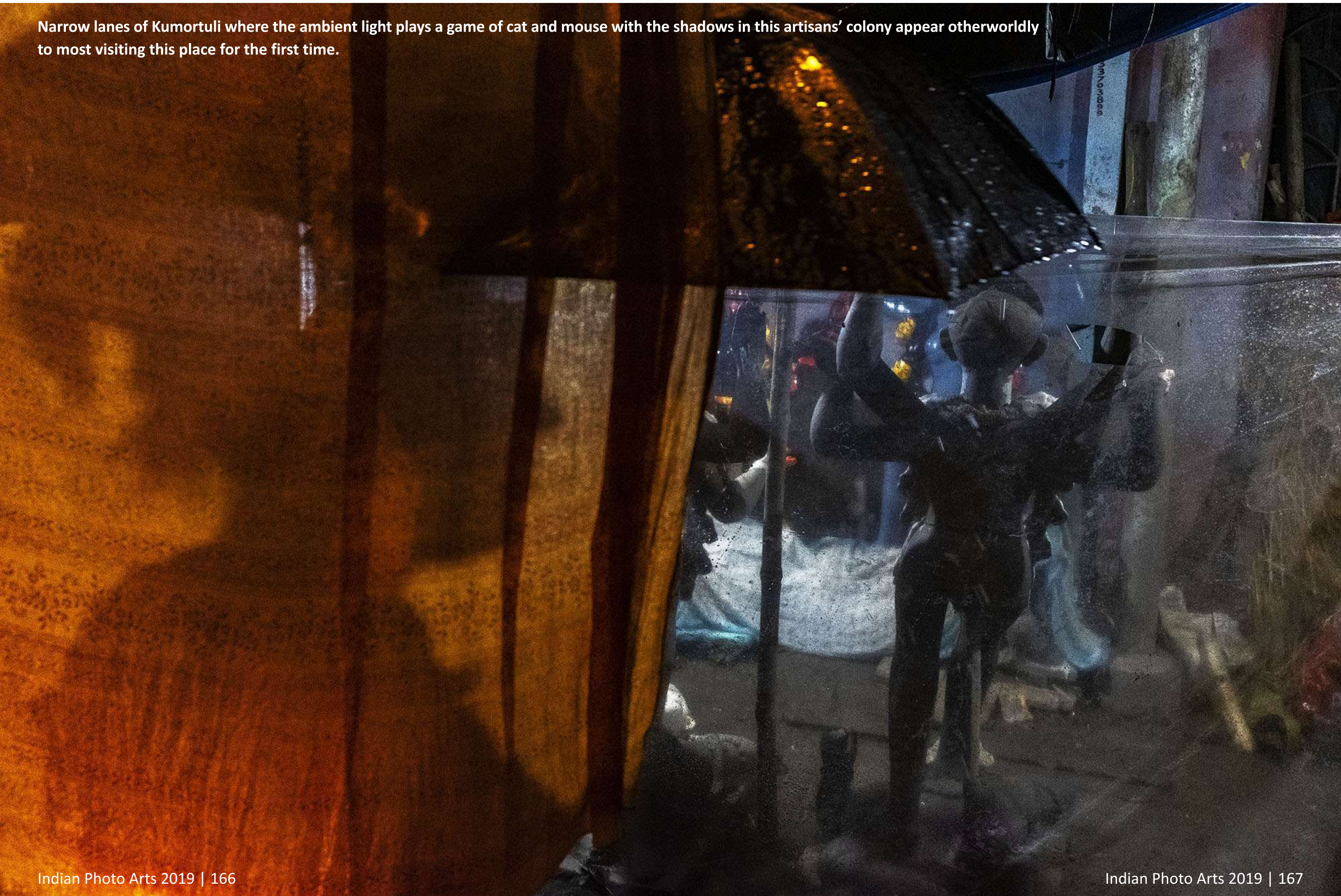




Such sculptures, some finished, some in the making, others discarded can be found strewn across the lanes of Kumortuli.



Narrow lanes of Kumortuli where the ambient light plays a game of cat and mouse with the shadows in this artisans' colony appear otherworldly to most visiting this place for the first time.





Even a mundane day in the life of Kumortuli is replete with magnificent illustrations of superior craftsmanship.







Every lane of Kumortuli screams of the superlative skills of the artisans here. There is art to be found everywhere in this neighbourhood, even the average piece of junk here could be one of the finest specimens of craftsmanship.



## About the Photographer

Debrani Das is a street photographer based out of Kolkata, India. She holds a B.Tech degree in Electrical Engineering. Photography not only opens up new avenues to explore but it also helps her to reinstate herself. She loves being on the street and capturing those unseen and magical moments which are unpredictable and candid. Every second consists of thousand unnoticed moments and she believes that through practice one can develop the sense of when to click and what to click. Being on the street and taking candid photographs

help her to know the place in a better way.

Debrani Das is one of the curators of Facebook group World Photographic Forum and curator of Insta page of #worldphotographicforum. She is the member of StreetEye Collective. She was the guest curator of womeninstreet facebook group for thematic contest. Her works have been published in Eyeshot magazine, Chiiz Magazine, National Geographic etc. Her works were chosen as one of the winners of #womenstreetphotographers and was exhibited in NewYork City and Kuala Lumpur . She was also one of the finalists of StreetFotoSanfrancisco festival in single image category.

Her social media links are mentioned below.

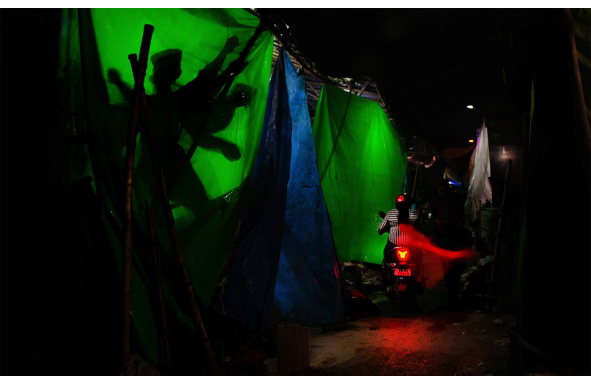
**Facebook:**

<https://www.facebook.com/das.debrani>

**Instagram:**

<https://www.instagram.com/debranidas>





# Pre-puja Photowalk



On September 29th 2019 a Pre-Puja photo walk was mentored by [Suprotim Nandi](#) widely known as shutter\_bong to his fans with the support of Profoto, Manfrotto and Indian Photo Arts magazine. Over 200 enthusiastic photographers turned up for the occasion. This feature highlights the top 10 photographs from more than 500 entries from the photowalk.

**D**urga Puja in Kolkata is not merely a religious festival. It is a grand celebration, an exultation of spirit. From households to residential complexes to the neighbourhoods, everyone gets ready to welcome Maa Durga in their own way. The home coming of maa durga is referred to as Agomoni and the theme for the photowalk revolved around that sentiment. She prevails to bring the good and destroy the evil in our soul. For millions of Bengalis this is the time to purify the souls and enlighten themselves in the true spirit

of celebrations. This is the time for her home coming. For these few days Kolkata basks in the glory of the festivities, past differences are forgotten, divides are bridged, the whole of Kolkata comes together to celebrate the homecoming of her very own Uma. On September 29th 2019 a Pre-Puja photo walk was mentored by Suprotim Nandi widely known as shutter\_bong to his fans with the support of Profoto, Manfrotto and Indian Photo Arts magazine. Over 200 enthusiastic photographers turned up for

the walk to be a part of this celebration, freeze these precious moments, revel in the prevalent sense of kinship, brotherhood and soak in the nostalgia of Kolkata during Puja. A theme based photography contest was held keeping the theme as "Agomoni". The sole purpose of this photowalk was to bring the instagram and photography community of Kolkata together. More than 500 entries were submitted and this feature contains the best 10, including the top 3 selected from those entries.

Meanwhile a wide range of products was displayed and explained by experts from Profoto & Manfrotto. The participants also got an opportunity to try their hands on the new profoto C1 plus which is a beast in the world of photography. Winners were rewarded an assortment of prizes worth 30,000 rupees.





**Rank: 1st**

Photograph by Moinak Bhattacharjee

Instagram account: @streetphotographybymoinak





**Rank: 2nd**

Photograph by Rohit Bose

Instagram account: @ig\_shutterbug





**Rank: 3rd**

*Photograph by Ayantima Roy*

*Instagram account: @ayantimaroy*





Photograph by Pranay Pariyar  
Instagram account: @trigerha\_pp





Photograph by Sambit Khan  
Instagram account: @samheartbits





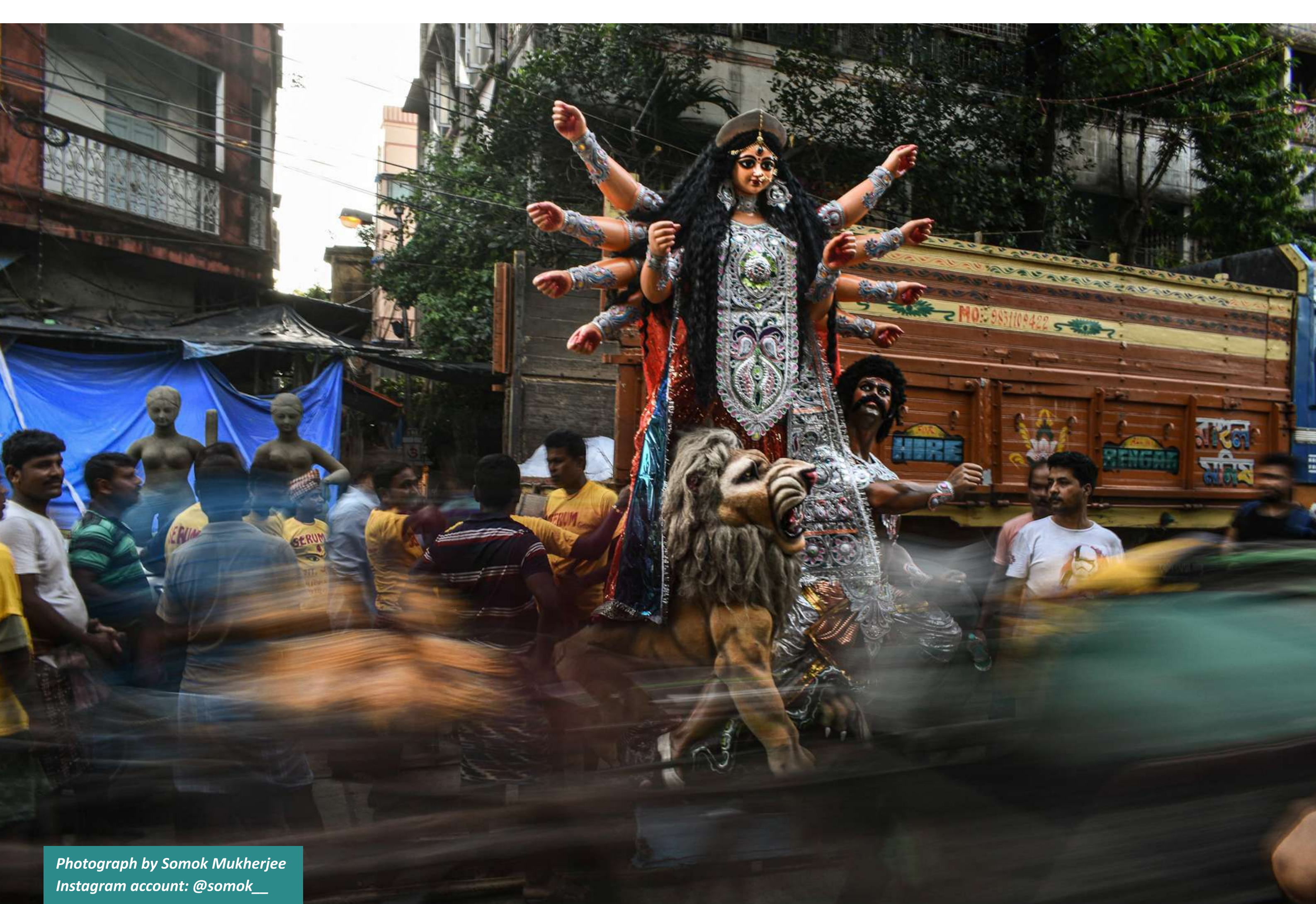
Photograph by Avik Roychowdhury  
Instagram account: @aviktheboss





Photograph by Sinchan Bhattacharya  
Instagram account: @the\_reincarnated\_soul





Photograph by Somok Mukherjee  
Instagram account: @somok\_\_





Photograph by Sourojeet Paul  
Instagram account: @souponai





Photograph by Sudipta Mandal  
Instagram account: @shutter\_humor





# About the Mentor

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**Suprotim Nandi** is a passionate street photographer who has been featured on multiple Instagram channels and magazines because of his interesting work on the Streets of Calcutta. His feed is a mixed bag of "emotions" that revolves around various themes of photography with "Calcutta" being the backbone. Featuring as one of the shortlists of the esteemed Nikon Photo Contest, 2019, Suprotim is also the youngest youth speaker who has represented Calcutta at Talking Across Generations(TAGe) 2018 in association with UNESCO at the age of 23 in New Delhi. He has also been curated as top 20 photographers of India by none other than celebrity and fashion photographer Dabboo Ratnani. His works are present in the coffee table book solely curated by Dabboo Ratnani himself. Instagram being his forte, he has a feed that you can't get over once you come across. He has worked with several national and international brands and has also started conducting his workshops all across Calcutta.

**Instagram:** [https://www.instagram.com/shutter\\_bong/](https://www.instagram.com/shutter_bong/)

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



Social

# from the fields to the bowls... the story of rice farmers of Kolhapur

## the journey of Rice

by **Prajwal CHOUGULE**

India is one of the world's largest producers of rice. Rice forms the staple diet of millions of Indians particularly in the eastern and southern parts of the country. Almost one fourth of the total cultivable land in India accounts for rice production.



At the onset of monsoon, rice farmers in Kolhapur start preparing their fields for the season's harvest. Fields are ploughed and strong and powerful oxen are the preferred choices for dragging the heavy ploughs across the fields.





In the last two decades, Indian economy has taken giant strides. The country has earned the reputation of becoming one of the fastest growing economies in the world which prompted the present government at the centre to chalk out the very ambitious plan of becoming a 5 trillion dollar economy by the end of 2025. A huge population has always meant India is a lucrative market for investment and that has played a huge role in bolstering the economy. A number of other factors have significantly contributed towards the growth of Indian economy. The increase in exports, foreign investments, income tax collections all have complimented the growth of the economy. However India's economy firmly rests and is largely governed by three major sectors – agriculture, industrial and the service sectors. Primarily these sectors are the key players when it comes to Indian economy. The industrial sector which includes factory outputs, the mining sector, electrical and gas sector contributes significantly towards the GDP of the country. The agricultural sector is not far behind and employs a huge chunk of India's population. It is estimated more than half the workforce of the country is engaged in the agricultural and allied sector. It comes as little surprise that agriculture plays such a crucial role in contributing towards the economy of the nation. For centuries the huge landmass of India has been blessed with an intricate network of rivers and fertile plains which

naturally facilitated the cultivation of an array of agricultural products. The iconic Indo-Gangetic Plain, the Western Coastal Plain and the Eastern Coastal Plain together dominate much of India's landmass and have blessed the country with the ideal topography which would favour various agricultural activities. This blend of industrial output and agricultural produces has come a long way in establishing India as one of the emerging economic powerhouses on the planet and there are very few places in India which have successfully combined both these sectors as well as a certain Kolhapur has done.

Kolhapur is the southernmost district in the state of Maharashtra and one of the very few regions in India which deserves a special mention for the industrial and the agricultural development which have taken place at par with each other. The entire region is blessed with rich supplies of minerals and abundant in natural vegetation, animal wealth and agricultural land. Apart from the agricultural produces and the number of agricultural activities which act as the mainstay for a large number of people in this district, over the decades a large number of agro based industries have sprung up in Kolhapur. In addition to this the climate of Kolhapur is conducive for farming activities. The region's proximity to the Western Ghats meant it was blessed with a rather cooler climate and generous supply of rainwater. The nature of the soil varies sharply

The intense manual labour associated with rice cultivation hardly seems to perturb the farmers.





In Kolhapur as is the case in many other parts of India, the farmers still use traditional method of ploughing their fields. Traditional ploughs are used and these ploughs are drawn by oxen. The plough is mounted on the shoulders of the animals that drag it across the field assisted by the farmers.





A rice farmer tends to his field in Kolhapur as dark monsoon clouds loom large over the horizon.



throughout the district. Laterite soil and fertile black soil which are predominant in the terrain of this region are ideally suited for an assortment of crops. India is one of the world's largest producers of rice. Rice forms the staple diet of millions of Indians particularly in the eastern and southern parts of the country. Almost one fourth of the total cultivable land in India accounts for rice production. Parts of the country which receive moderate to generous rainfall throughout the year and blessed with a temperature which averages between 20 to 30 degree

method of ploughing their fields. Traditional ploughs are used and these ploughs are drawn by oxen. The plough is mounted on the shoulders of the animals that drag it across the field assisted by the farmers. This method still finds a large number of takers among the farming community of India primarily due to its cost effective nature. Once the fields are ploughed the seeds are sown and the fields are flooded and remain submerged. This is precisely the reason why flat plains are imperative for the cultivation of rice. In order to keep the fields submerged, small

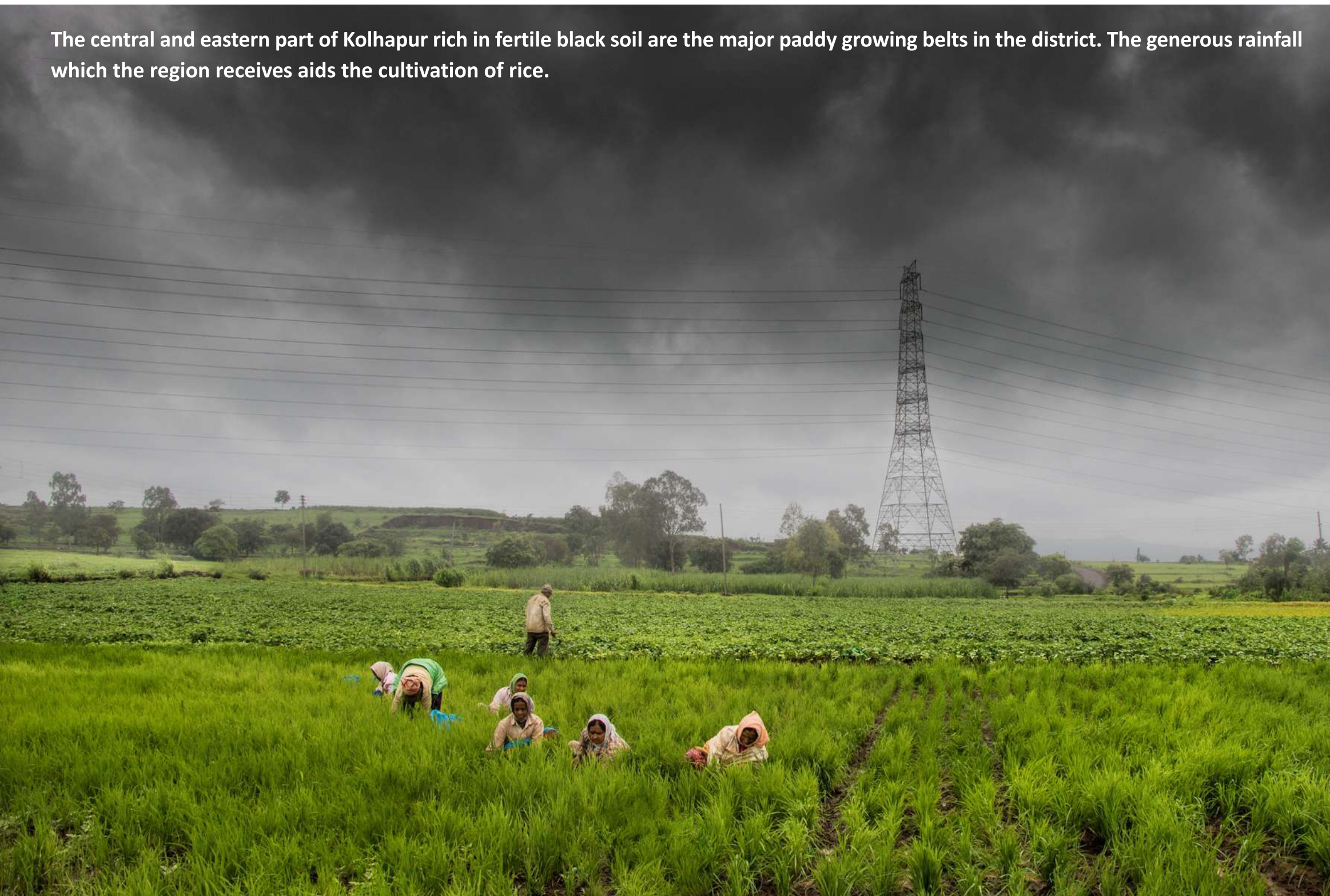
It is estimated more than half the workforce of the country is engaged in the agricultural sector. It comes as little surprise that agriculture plays such a crucial role in contributing towards the economy...

Celsius are ideally suited for rice cultivation. Kolhapur fits the bill and rice is one of the most significant agricultural produces in the district. The central and eastern part of Kolhapur rich in fertile black soil are the major paddy growing belts in the district. Like most other rice growing regions in the country, the traditional methods of rice cultivation are still very much in vogue in Kolhapur. Prior to the monsoon the farmers take great pains in clearing up their fields and free them of weeds or any other undergrowth. Fertilisers are then added to the soil in order to increase the fertility. The fields are ploughed using traditional methods before the seeds are sown. In Kolhapur as is the case in many other parts of India, the farmers still use traditional

mud banks are constructed manually along the length and breadth of the fields. These mud banks trap the water and prevent them from flowing out thereby ensuring the fields remain inundated. The farmers procure paddy seedlings from nearby nurseries. The seedlings, when they are about 40-45 days old are bought from the nurseries and transplanted on the submerged paddy fields. While in some part of the country farmers prefer to sow seeds instead of transplanting seedlings, the method of transplanting seedlings is a widely accepted and popular one. This is also due to the higher yield that transplanted seedlings generate compared to seeds sown directly. For the next 2-3 months the farmers keep an eagle eye on the proceedings. They spend considerable



The central and eastern part of Kolhapur rich in fertile black soil are the major paddy growing belts in the district. The generous rainfall which the region receives aids the cultivation of rice.



amount of time every day in maintaining and tending their fields. It is not an easy task. They are constantly engaged in clearing out the weeds or any unwanted growth, maintaining the level of water and ensuring the spacing between individual plants is maintained in order to have a healthy yield.

As the harvesting season approaches, which usually coincides with the onset of winter, the farmers engage themselves in draining their fields before harvesting their crops. The main rice harvesting season in the country is November-December, hence it is also known as winter rice or “Kharif” crop. Kolhapur largely adheres to this

pattern of rice cultivation. The harvesting of rice which is still carried out manually is a back breaking work. The farmers equipped with a sickle cut the matured plants from their root. Covering the entire area of the field manually is an incredibly tough ordeal, something which these hardworking farmers have been doing for

many decades now. Once the crop is harvested now comes the next part of separating the edible part of the grain from the plant. That is when the process of threshing comes to the fore. In Kolhapur as is the case in most parts of India, threshing of rice is carried out manually. The process largely involves beating the crop against some object or trampling it with feet so that the repeated blows loosen the edible grain from the chaff to which it is attached. This again is a tedious method and involves a great deal of manual labour. During this process a significant proportion of the chaff or other parts of the plant get mixed with the grain. In order to separate the grain from these inedible parts of the plant threshing is followed by winnowing during which the collected grains are passed through a sieve which separates the grain from the mixed particles. Once the harvest is winnowed the yield is sent to the rice mills where the crop is milled. During milling, usually by the use of machines, the white grain of rice is separated from the husk which covers the grain in the form of a pod. And thus after months of labour, hardwork and sweat the region produces tonnes of rice which cater to the needs of millions across the state.

The hardships involved with the cultivation of rice are a part of every farmer’s daily life. They hardly seem to be perturbed by the prospect of backbreaking labour. It is the unpredictable and fickle nature of climate which often leaves them with



sleepless nights. Any delay in the arrival of monsoon, or a prolonged monsoon which often manifests in natural disasters such as drought or flood can rob the farmers of an entire season's yield. In the

absence of proper compensation schemes (those present are often ill managed and not properly implemented) the farmers are left to fend for themselves. In the wake of such trying circumstances scores of

farmers often resort to the unthinkable and take their own lives no longer able to carry the burden of huge debts. In 2019, in the entire state of Maharashtra agitation by farmers for better schemes and policies to

safeguard them from such natural disasters and ensuring healthy returns for their crops has been a burning issue. Various governments during their subsequent regimes have opted for waiving the farm



The farmers procure paddy seedlings from nearby nurseries. The seedlings, when they are about 40-45 days old are bought from the nurseries and transplanted on the submerged paddy fields. While in some part of the country farmers prefer to sow seeds instead of transplanting seedlings, the method of transplanting seedlings is a widely accepted one.



The farmers keep an eagle eye on the proceedings. They spend considerable amount of time every day in maintaining and tending their fields. They are constantly engaged in clearing out the weeds or any unwanted growth, maintaining the level of water and ensuring the spacing between individual plants is maintained in order to have a healthy yield.





loans to provide momentary relief to farmers although it must be said little has been done to address their grievances on a permanent basis. As a result of which the one mainstay of our economy is under tremendous threat. Farmers across India are facing the same plights as faced by

the hardworking men and women tending their fields in Kolhapur. It is absolutely imperative to immediately set into motion agricultural reforms, improve the infrastructure of the agricultural sector across the country and address the long pending grievances of the agricultural

community. Distribution of seeds at a subsidised rate, ensuring MSP (Minimum Support Price) for their yields, setting up of storage facilities to prevent crops from rotting, eliminating the middle men who often sabotage the interests of the farmers providing irrigation facilities to every crop

yielding part of India are some of the glaring issues which need addressing at war footing. For long these hardworking people who toil relentlessly under the scorching sun or in heavy rain and fill our plates have been slowly but steadily been pushed into obscurity. Their backs are



The main rice harvesting season in the country is November-December, hence it is also known as winter rice or “Kharif” crop. Kolhapur largely adheres to this pattern of rice cultivation. Once the crop is harvested now comes the next part of separating the edible part of the grain from the plant. That is when the process of threshing comes to the fore.

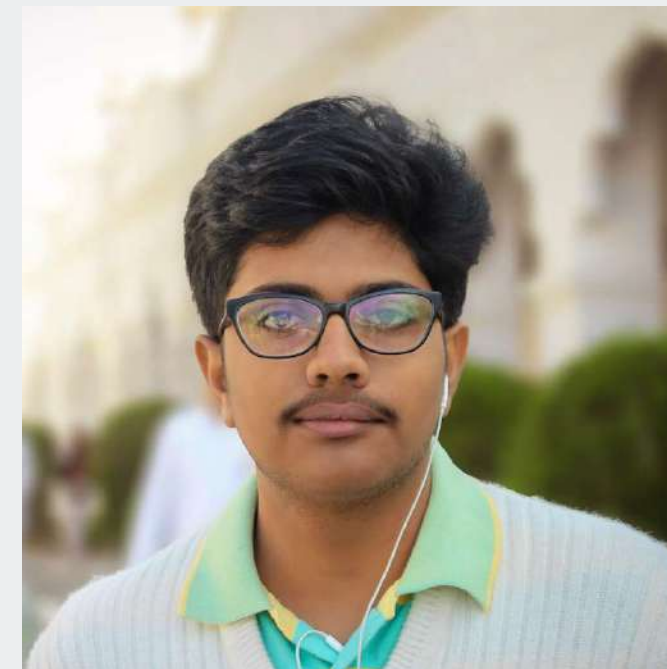


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News of farmer suicides, farmer agitations almost on a daily basis dominate the headlines in our print and electronic media. Yet there seems to be a gross disconnect between the farmers and the rest of us. An entire community, with the strength of more than half the workforce of the nation has to struggle relentlessly in order to provide their families with the bare minimums as we enjoy the fruits of their labour seated comfortably in our cosy homes.



## About the Photographer

**Prajwal Chougule** is a Mechanical Engineer and hobbyist photographer from Kolhapur, Maharashtra. His body of work spans street, travel and culture. In his photographs, he likes to keep things simple yet self explanatory. His stories take the viewers on a visual journey through the tiny moments of life which reveal greater truths.

against the wall. News of farmer suicides, farmer agitations almost on a daily basis dominate the headlines in our print and electronic media. Yet there seems to be a gross disconnect between the farmers and us – who are sitting far removed from the plights the farmers have to endure on a daily basis. An entire community, with the strength of more than half the workforce

of the nation has to struggle relentlessly in order to provide their families with the bare minimums as we enjoy the fruits of their labour seated comfortably in our cosy homes. In trying times like these many farmers are shifting to the cultivation of various cash crops such as soya bean, maize and sugarcane. Many farmers feel these crops are safer bets and ensure better

returns than farming rice, bajra or other food grain.

The alarm bells are ringing and they are ringing loud and clear. It becomes the collective responsibility of everyone in the civil society to wake up and take note of the plight of the farmers. We cannot let the concerned authorities turn a blind eye to the raging issues of the farmers as more

and more of them fade into oblivion burdened by loans and other plights. There would be no bigger injustice and no graver sin than to forget the sincere, hardworking human beings who invest their blood and sweat in the soil of this nation to ensure our appetite remains satiated.



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

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 Indian Photo ARTS

# Reader's Section

Featuring the best entries by our readers

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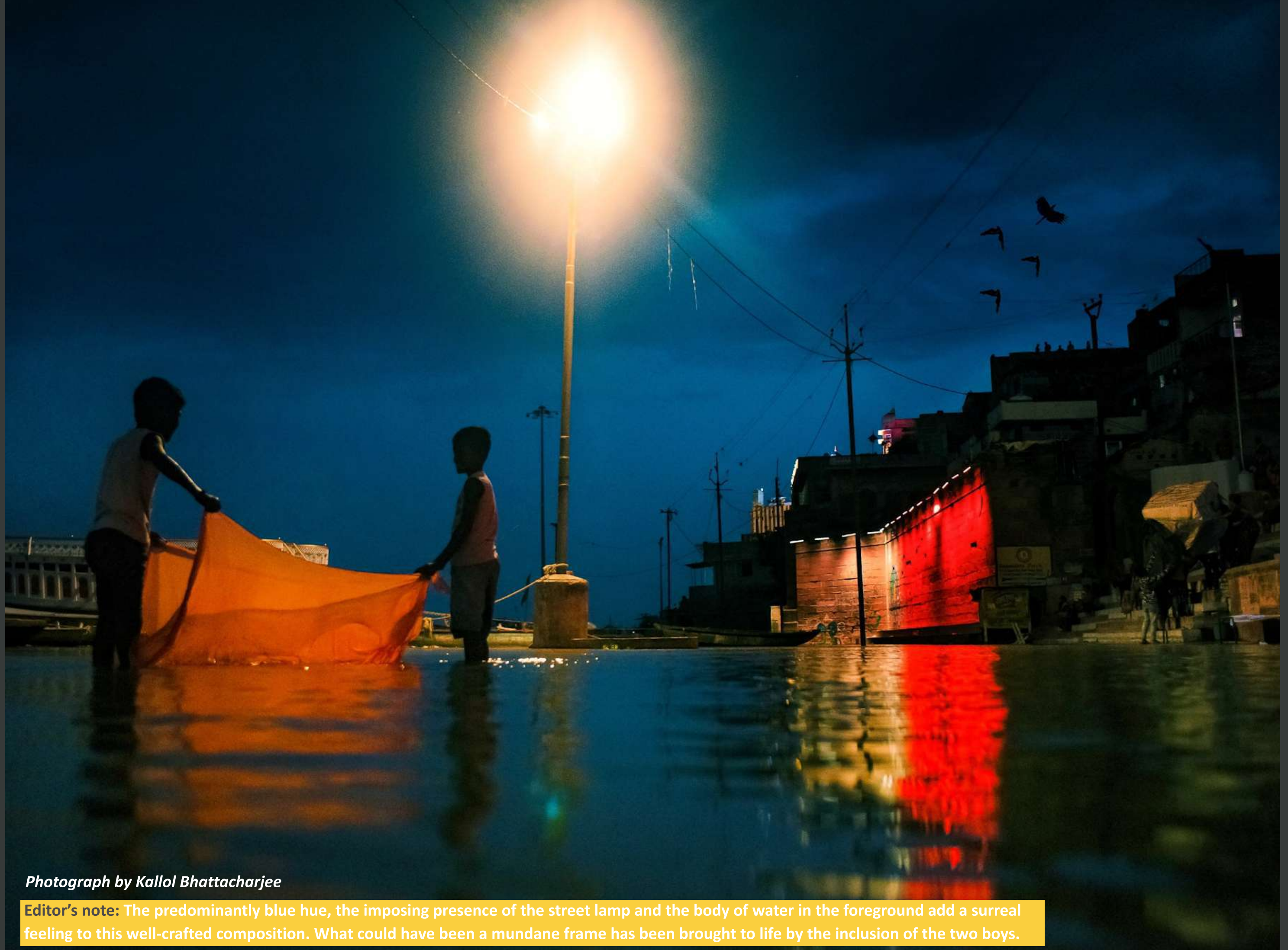




*Photograph by Vaibhav Mupadi*

**Editor's note:** The photographer does a tremendous job in highlighting the minute details on this beautiful bamboo pit viper.





*Photograph by Kallol Bhattacharjee*

**Editor's note:** The predominantly blue hue, the imposing presence of the street lamp and the body of water in the foreground add a surreal feeling to this well-crafted composition. What could have been a mundane frame has been brought to life by the inclusion of the two boys.



This frame is all about the perfect moment and the soothing colours of monsoon, the rather uncluttered horizon in the background also works perfectly for this frame.



*Photograph by Sovik Chowdhury*

**Editor's note:** The vibrant colours on the wall are in perfect sync with the mood of this photograph which freezes the carefree, fun filled moment from the childhood of these three young boys. A wonderful composition complimented by perfect timing.





*Photograph by Anmol Guru*

**Editor's note:** An incredibly beautiful landscape photograph which speaks volumes of the photographer's acumen as a landscape photographer which is evident from how he waited for the perfect moment for the overhead clouds to create the dramatic pattern in the background.





*Photograph by Zubair Irshad*

**Editor's note:** This image stands out for the beautiful symmetry in the composition and the placement of the subjects. While the foreground is lit up by the smiling faces of these young monks the narrow alley leads the eyes to the background adding depth to the image.





**Editor's note:** An incredibly beautiful and creative portrait. The beautiful use of the ambient light and the masterful way in which the photographer has highlighted only one eye of the woman together have made this portrait a stunning one.

*Photograph by  
Govind Kiran Kumar Reddy*



# The Honour Board



**Kallol Bhattacharjee**



**Vaibhav Mupadi**



**Anmol Guru**



**Sovik Chowdhury**



**Zubair Irshad**

Our heartiest congratulations to everyone who got featured in the Reader's Section and we will be hoping for more contributions from our readers in the future issues as well.



**Govind Kiran Kumar Reddy**

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