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FROM EDITOR'S DESK

Dear Readers,

We are delighted to present to you the third issue of the IIG Journal. Your overwhelming support and appreciation have played a pivotal role in making this magazine a resounding success, and we are truly grateful for your encouragement and enthusiasm.

This issue is special as we have thoughtfully incorporated the valuable feedback shared by our readers. Here's what's new:

A larger journal format with a bigger font, ensuring a more comfortable and enjoyable reading experience.

A stronger focus on stunning visuals, as we bring greater emphasis to impactful and engaging images.

In addition to these updates, we are excited to share more user content in this issue, spotlighting the creativity and talent within our community. To celebrate our contributors, we are introducing special "IIG Journal" Pins for top contributors—a limited-edition keepsake that authors can truly cherish.

We are also proud to announce a new feature in this and upcoming editions: guest articles by acclaimed photography masters. Their exceptional work and insights are sure to inspire and captivate our readers.

As always, our goal is to bring you content that is both enjoyable and informative.

Thank you for being an integral part of the IIG Journal family, and we look forward to continuing this journey together with your valuable support.

Happy Reading !

Warm regards,

The Editorial Team, IIG Journal

IIG Distinctions awarded between 1st June 2024 to 21st March 2025

<i>Abhijeet Kumar Banerjee: IIG/p4</i>	<i>Jayendra Babubhai Kamdar: IIG/s2+p4</i>	<i>Rupak Das: IIG/s</i>
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<i>Cristian Paunescu: IIG/s2</i>	<i>Marcos Silva: IIG/s3+p3</i>	<i>Subhajit Mukherjee: IIG/s2</i>
<i>David Spinks: IIG/s</i>	<i>Mehmet Masum Suer: IIG/p</i>	<i>Subhasis Dutta: IIG/p</i>
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HOW TO MODIFY A PORTRAIT TO "PHOTOGENIC"

BY GUEST AUTHOR MR. GURDAS DUA

I'm sure you have heard the phrase that a person is photogenic or is not photogenic. I have photographed some very beautiful people in real life, yet their pictures don't do them any justice. I have also shot some not so attractive people in real life that look great in pictures. What makes a person "photogenic"?

The state of being photogenic may or may not necessarily be related to one's physical attractiveness in real life. Models are usually described as photogenic. The bone structure of their faces may represent something that is not generally pretty or may be even unattractive or frail looking, but when photographed; their features can turn into something that is physically attractive.

Another explanation for the fact that attractive people are not always photogenic is that part of their attractiveness may be due to the charisma they bear in real life due to the way they move, express, carry themselves. While this will positively influence the subjective appearance of that person in real life, a still photograph usually fails to reproduce these attributes, possibly rendering a picture of the person less attractive than the real-life perception and contributing to classify that person as less photogenic.

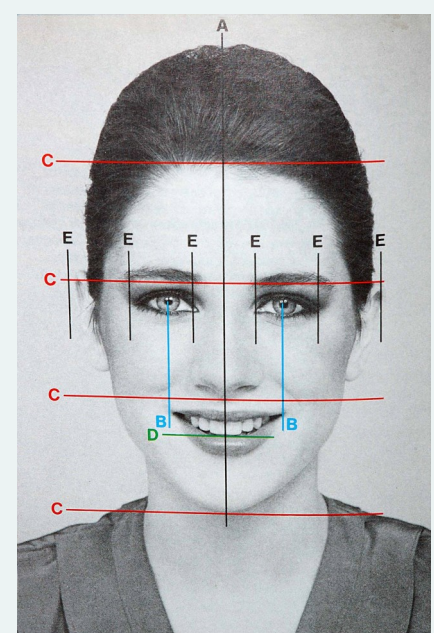
No matter the person is photogenic or not, the photographer's role is to make her or him beautiful / handsome or good looking in the pictures.

To achieve this task one has to understand very well "What is a photogenic face?"

If you will look randomly at public faces, you will hardly find a perfect face. All most every face has a few or more defects in it.

To know what could be the defects in any face, we will have to know what could be a perfect face.

Considering shapes and the proportions of the faces, dimensions of different features of the face, I have imagined a "Perfect Face" which looks like this:



"A portrait captures not just the face, but the untold stories woven into every shadow and light."

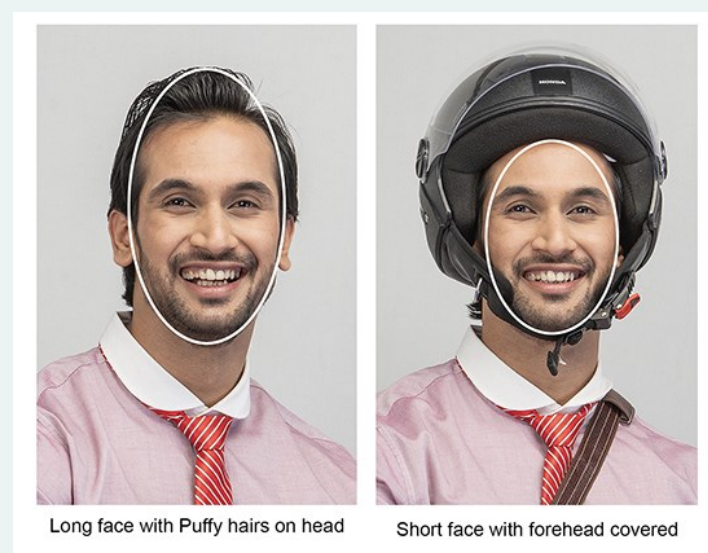
As per my **Face Study**: - There are many shapes of faces like: Square, Rectangular, Round, Conical, Oval etc. But an Oval (Egg shape) face is considered to be the best face which is one of the key features responsible for making a face photogenic.

If the shape of a face is Square, Rectangular, Round, Conical it may not be Photogenic. But such shapes of faces can be modified to an oval shape by shifting the face or camera angle, by direction of light on face, by makeup, by hair styling, by wearing accessories such as earrings, caps, scarf etc.

For example: Short light on face will make the face look slim and broad light on face will make the slim face look heavy.



Flat hairs on head will make the long face look short and puffy hairs on head will make the face look long.



Round face may look oval if long earrings are worn. On long faces only short earrings should be worn.

As per “The Perfect Face”:

1. Imagine line “A” on any face it will divide the face in two equal parts. You will notice, in most of the faces the two parts left and right are not the same. The difference could be a mole or scar on either side, dimple on either of the cheeks, difference in eye size, difference in nose shape, difference in lips curve, difference in shape of cheeks etc. So if left and right sides of the face are not same, either of the sides has to be better looking than other. So photographer then chooses the profile which looks better.
2. “B” Lines are dropped from eye pupil to lips level. B lines should touch the end of lips. If the lips are much wide, it will cross the line and if the size of the lips is very short it will not reach the B lines. In case of short lips, photographer should ask the person to smile a little so that the lips may touch the B lines. In case lips crosses the B lines, do not ask model to smile, but try to modify the lips to keep within the lines by way of makeup, lighting, positioning the face or squeezing the lips a little bit.



Small or Squeezed Lips
Lips do not reach the B lines

Lips with Smile
Lips reaches the B lines

Did you know that the oldest known portrait in history is believed to be over 27,000 years old? It's a carved ivory figurine called the "Venus of Brassempouy," found in France, depicting a human face with strikingly delicate details for its time. Portraits truly have ancient roots!

One of the most intriguing stories behind a famous portrait is that of "The Girl with a Pearl Earring" by Johannes Vermeer. Often referred to as the "Mona Lisa of the North," this 17th-century masterpiece remains shrouded in mystery. The identity of the girl in the painting is unknown, sparking endless speculation—some believe she may have been Vermeer's maid, daughter, or simply a figment of his imagination.

What's fascinating is how Vermeer used light and color to create an almost lifelike quality, making the girl's gaze feel intimate yet elusive. The way her pearl earring catches the light adds to the painting's allure, and it's been celebrated for its simplicity and emotional depth.

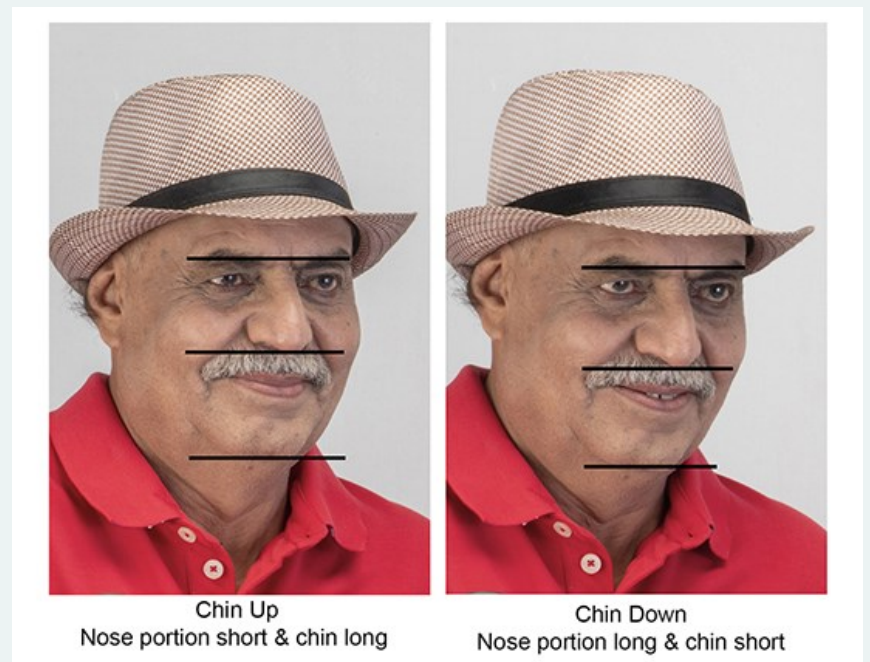
The painting's fame surged even more in modern times, inspiring novels, films, and countless interpretations. It's a testament to how a single portrait can captivate imaginations for centuries.

3. "C" lines divide the face horizontally into three equal portions.

- Forehead to Eyebrows,
- Eyebrows to Tip of the Nose
- Tip of the Nose to Bottom of Chin

In most of the cases you will observe that these portions are not equal. The face becomes non photogenic when these three portions are not equal in size. The correction in the face can be done to bring all three portion equal in size.

- a. Getting the Chin down will enhance the size of the nose portion and will shorten the size of the chin portion. Vice versa getting the chin little up will enhance the size of chin portion and will shorten the size of nose portion.

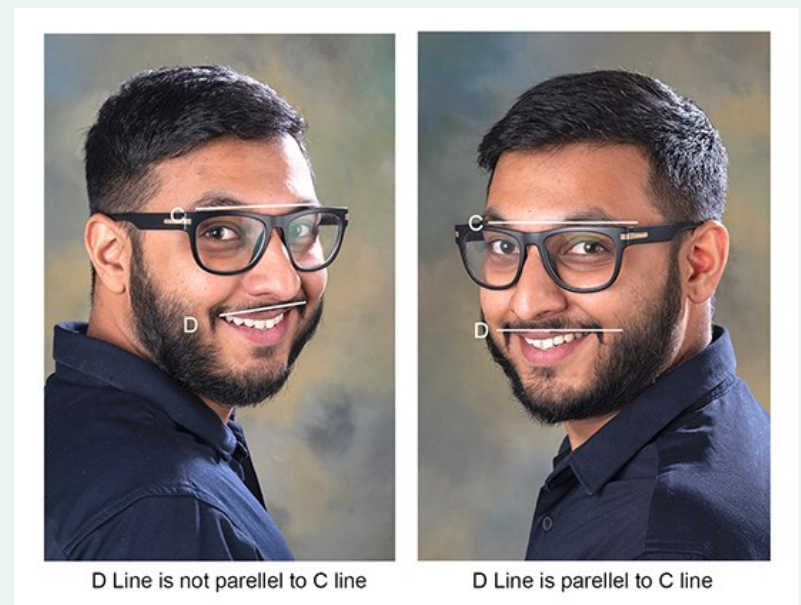


Chin Up
Nose portion short & chin long

Chin Down
Nose portion long & chin short

- b. If the forehead portion is too broad, it can be shortened by covering it with hairs, cap or scarf. In case of short forehead the hairs should not cover it at all.

4. "D" line is an imaginary line on lips which should remain parallel to "C" lines. In some faces where the lips are inclined on either of the sides, "D" line is not parallel. With help of little makeup and swinging or shifting the face little bit in right or left direction, can make C & D lines parallel.



D Line is not parellel to C line

D Line is parellel to C line

5. At eyes and ears level “E” lines divide the face horizontally in 5 portions. One portion in between the two eyes, two portions of two eyes and two portions of eye to end of each ear.

In a photogenic face, all these five portions should be equal.

One portion in between the two eyes is fixed and cannot be modified but other portions can be modified.

If eyes are big or small, the eye portions can be smaller or larger than the middle portion (Portion between two eyes).

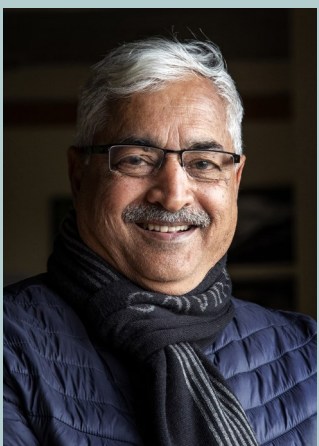
Smaller eyes can be made bigger and bigger eyes can be made smaller by doing little eye makeup with eyeliner.

If ears are wide and bigger in size, the portion between eye and end of ear is also not equal to other portions. Ear to eye portion can be shortened by covering ears with a scarf or hairs (If hairs are long enough) and can be made equal in size with other portions.

Especially on female faces the makeup plays a great role in making the face photogenic. Applying lipstick little outside of the lips can make it look broad lips and applying little inside the lips can make it look thin lips.

Now whenever you do a portrait shoot try modifying any shape of face to an Oval face and do corrections on face as per few above mentioned suggestions. You will find a positive change in your portrait and a non-photogenic face will turn into a photogenic face.. Best of clicking.

About the Author



GURDAS DUA, FIIPC, FBAF, AFIP, Hon. FPASP, Hon. GMSAP, Hon. ADCC, BVVWHO - Master, IIPC Platinum, PSG Gold

Andhra Pradesh Photography Academy - Life Time Achievement Award

Sony Alpha Brand Ambassador

He stands as an internationally acclaimed photographer who has graced the world of photography with his creative brilliance since 1989. His unwavering commitment to education, a long list of accolades, honours and an impressive portfolio of published works are testimony of invaluable contributions to the realm of photography which has garnered him recognition and praise from numerous renowned global, local and government organizations. His remarkable skills and contributions have garnered widespread acclaim, earning him distinguished honours and memberships in numerous photography organizations.

Beyond his affiliation with the Press Club of Indore, Gurdas Dua holds the prestigious role of Founder-Director at LENS MAESTRO GROUP. He has the honours of serving as a jury member for various international competitions including HIPA, Raw Photography Lab Italy, Dodho Magazine Spain, Oasis Photo Contest and more.

EDITING TIPS: WHEN TO CULL AND EDIT YOUR PHOTOGRAPHS

BY UDAYAN SANKAR PAL

Cull the dull:

I feel culling is the most difficult task in Digital Photography. We use continuous shutter modes often resulting in a cache of similar frames. Clicking the shutter is almost free in a digital camera unlike in film photography where each frame costed money. So we click many frames when we are on site postponing the decision to choose the right moment to the editing phase. Therefore, selecting the right frame among hundreds of frames where there are very minor differences between them is hard later.

Additionally, some of us make the mistake of using our heart instead of our brain to select the right frame.

If you start searching for the right frame, sorting and culling them immediately after the event, your memory of the event & the emotions you felt then are so fresh in your brain that it can misguide you easily. You can fail to see the frames objectively.

What does it mean to “objectively” see an image? Let me explain.

The memory of how difficult it was for you to click the frame clouds your judgement. Perhaps you faced a tremendous crowd, had to jostle for a better angle or had to endure a great amount of physical pain like climbing up stiff steps or walking a long distance in heat. Your brain will connect these memories of hardship to a sense of achievement that you overcame them making your perception of a frame contextual to the moments you faced as opposed to the moment a viewer will see it as.

Putting a distance between your memory of the moments and the frames you clicked is always a good idea. Your viewer will not have the same emotions & memory you have when they see your photograph. They will see only what your camera saw, not what you felt or endured as you clicked.

Therefore, editing and culling photos after a few days when your memory and emotions start fading away, allows you to see the frames without the filter of your own emotions and memory.

Nap before you scrap:

The next tip I will give is to take a nap!

The first rule of editing is to do it when you are not tired or between a busy schedule or are multitasking. A tired brain will tell you to finish fast. So it will force you to consider the quickest and shortest route to finalizing a frame, not the most effective one. At these times, our brains can easily make us overlook critical things for speed of completion.

So edit when you have time, when you are calm & composed.

The other important factor is our eyes. Our eyes, like our body and mind get fatigued when in use for considerable periods of time. Tired eyes see less colors and details. So, take a nap and rest your eyes and use comfortable ambient lighting to edit.

To summarize, do not select frames immediately after your shoot, edit when you have ample time in your hands and rest your eyes before you start to edit.



MEANDERING IN THE MUSTARD FIELDS BY PREMOMOY GHOSH

The rich fertility of agricultural land in the Lower Gangetic Plain in West Bengal enables cultivation of different crops, depending on varied climatic conditions in different seasons, offering unique and vibrant canvases to present rural panorama of this agriculture-based state. Mustard is a cool season crop which farmers start sowing in November, the beginning of winter. By mid-January, the mustard fields with bright and vivid yellow of blooming mustard flowers blended with tinge of green of leaves, sometimes in vast expanse, create amazing canvases. Here I present some frames, captured in rural Bengal against the stunning yellow mustard fields.



AFLOAT IN TRADITION :THE ENCHANTING FLOATING MARKET OF DAL LAKE

BY ABHISHEK BASAK

As dawn unfurls its golden hues over the serene expanse of Dal Lake, a spectacle unlike any other awakens—a floating vegetable and flower market, vibrant and ephemeral, drifting like a dream upon the water’s mirrored surface. This age-old tradition, woven into the fabric of Kashmiri life, is a testament to resilience and harmony with nature. Before the world stirs, shikaras—wooden boats gliding silently—gather in a delicate ballet, laden with fresh produce and blossoms, their colors mirrored in the still, glassy waters. Farmers, wrapped in warm pherans, navigate through the misty morning, their voices weaving through the crisp air in hushed negotiations. Hands calloused by toil yet tender with care sift through bundles of leafy greens, fragrant herbs, and bright marigolds, each a labour of love cultivated in floating gardens—rafts of woven reeds supporting patches of fertile earth. The market, transient yet timeless, thrives in these tranquil hours, untouched by modernity, where commerce flows as fluidly as the water beneath. Here, livelihood is not just about survival but an enduring symphony of culture, tradition, and an unspoken bond with nature. As the sun ascends and the mist dissolves, the shikaras disperse, carrying with them the scent of fresh lotus, the rustle of harvested greens, and the quiet dignity of a people who have, for generations, lived in rhythm with the lake’s gentle pulse.



RABINDRA SAROBAR – OUR VERY KNOWN PRACTICE GROUND

BY ANJAN DAS

Amidst the concrete jungle of South Kolkata, Rabindra Sarobar is just like an oasis. With a large span of water body, ample greeneries, walking track, children park, playing ground, swimming pool and rowing arena - this beautiful land is a refreshing zone for the city dwellers.

Rabindra Sarobar, earlier known as Dhakuria Lake, an artificial lake, refers to the area surrounding the lake. It is flanked by Southern Avenue to the north, Shyamaprasad Mukherjee Road to the west, Dhakuria to the east and the Kolkata Suburban Railway tracks to the south.

History

In the early 1920s, the Calcutta Improvement Trust (CIT), a body responsible for developmental work in the Kolkata metropolitan area, acquired about 192 acres (0.78 km²) of marshy jungles. Initially the intention was to develop the area for residential use – improving the roads, raising and levelling some of the adjacent land and building lakes and parks. Excavation work was undertaken with the plan of creating a huge lake. Originally known as Dhakuria Lake, in May 1958, CIT renamed the lake as Rabindra Sarobar, as a tribute to Bengali writer and Nobel Laureate, Rabindranath Tagore. The area around this excavated lake was later developed to build recreational complexes, which included children's parks, gardens and auditoria.

Today the lake and its surrounding areas are one of the most popular recreational areas in Kolkata. 73 acres (300,000 m²) are covered by water, while shrubs and trees, some of which are more than 100 years old, occupy the rest of the area. Around 366 species of terrestrial vascular plants and about 11,000 trees are present in this area. In the winter, one can spot some migratory birds around the lake, though the numbers are dwindling because of the rise in pollution level. The lake itself is home to many varieties of fish.

Landmarks

- **Dhakuria Lake Bridge:** In 1927 to commemorate the construction of the Dhakuria Lakes a plaque was installed on a small bridge called Dhakuria Lake Bridge, connecting the Sarat Bose Road to Lillipool, a park-cum-zoo on the Lake Gardens side of the bridge. Though, nowadays that zoo is not in existence.
- **Durga Museum:** In 2012 an abandoned water-house in the premises of lake turned into a museum housing several award winning Durga idols. It is run by Kolkata Improvement Trust and is officially known as the Maa Phire Elo, literally translate into return of the goddess. It is also known as the Durga Exhibition Museum. There are three exhibits displayed outside under pavilions. The inner and outer wall of the gallery is decorated with terracotta motifs. The gallery houses about 9 exhibits, which are replaced with new ones after the Durga puja every year.

- To the north is a football stadium, known as the Rabindra Sarobar Stadium, with a seating capacity of approximately 26,000 people. It was established in the 1950s and is today, the city's first stadium to be fully equipped with audio-visual training facilities.
- Also to the north is the open-air theatre, Mukta Mancha.
- Nazrul Mancha is situated on the northern flank near Golpark.
- The only Japanese Buddhist temple in Kolkata is located on the southern fringe of the Rabindra Sarobar. It was established in 1935 by Nichidatsu Fujii, founder of the worldwide Buddhist association, the Nipponzan Myohoji. Monks offer prayers in Japanese, to the sound of beating drums, in the early morning hours and at dusk. There are no restrictions on entry to the main temple even when prayers are in progress. Outside the main temple building there is a pillar, with a message of peace engraved in Japanese, and a pair of lions that symbolise the guardians of the faith. The Japanese refer to these figures as Komainu (lion-dog).
- There are some cannons lying on the lake's west bank that were found during the excavation in the early 1920s and retained by the CIT for beautification. It is believed that they were used by Nawab Siraj-ud-daulah, the last independent ruler of Bengal.
- A number of rowing and swimming clubs are situated within the Rabindra Sarobar complex. While the former are located to the north of this lake, the latter are located to its south. In 1858 the British founded the Calcutta Rowing Club (CRC), presently one of the oldest clubs in India, to promote rowing activities in Kolkata. In 1901, it got affiliated to the prestigious Amateur Rowing Association of the East (ARAE). The CRC has been the hub of competitive rowing in Kolkata for more than 150 years and has organised many intra- and inter-club competitions. Rowing facilities are available to members on a regular basis, from 6 am to 7:30 am and from 3:30 pm to 5 pm. The Bengal Rowing Club, Lake Club and Calcutta University Rowing Club are a few other rowing clubs located in the Rabindra Sarobar complex. One of the oldest swimming clubs in Kolkata, the Indian Life Saving Society has its office in the lake complex.

Degradation - a global problem

Like a majority of artificial lakes in the country, Rabindra Sarobar is suffering from environmental degradation. Water pollution is on the rise, owing to an increasing tourist flow and habitation around the lake. The Ministry of Environment and Forests has recently included this lake in the National Lake Conservation Plan in the hope that this will help preserve it. The local authorities have also begun an extensive tree plantation program. Dumping of garbage in the lake is the main problem of degradation of Rabindra Sarobar. However, very recently different action plans have been taken to stop these nuisances and protect the water bodies from pollution.

Transport

Rabindra Sarobar is 30 km away from Dum Dum airport and 12 km from the Howrah railway station. The area is served by the Rabindra Sarobar metro station of the Kolkata Metro and Lake Gardens and the Tollygunge station of the Kolkata suburban railway (Budge Budge section). The area of Rabindra Sarobar is also well-connected with a

bus route. Located in South Kolkata the area is properly connected and is counted as a tourist spot.

Bio-diversity

The lake and the surrounding green occupy 192 acres. The water body is 73 acres while the green cover is 119 acres and supports bio-diversity.

Fauna

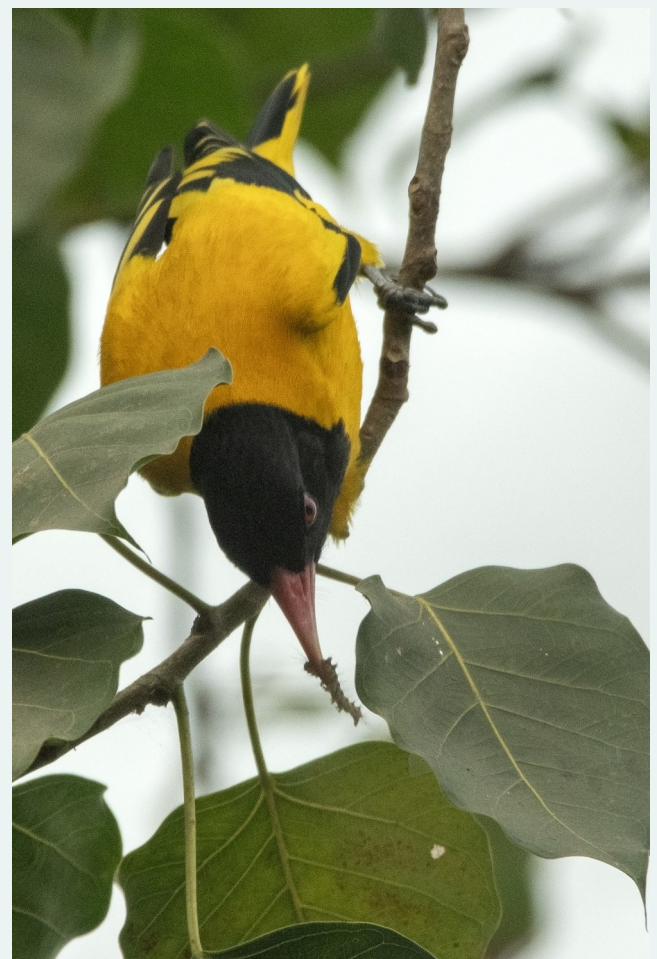
The region attracts a wide range of local and migratory birds. Around 118 bird species had been recorded at Rabindra Sarobar in 2024, which includes resident birds, local migrants and long distant migrants. In 2023 a total of 116 species of birds were recorded in Rabindra Sarobar. The area also has 13 species of dragonflies. Butterflies and squirrels are also found in numbers. A few varieties of snakes and Indian mongoose also have been recorded.

Flora

The green cover has 11,000 trees of which nearly 7,500 are over 75 years old. The trees include palash, African tulip (rudra palash), ashok, shimul which bloom during the spring. Rabindra Sarobar is also home to a wide variety of fungi which thrive during the monsoon season. They generally grow on the dead and decaying logs. The most common fungi of Rabindra Sarobar include dead man's figure, wine glass, bracket fungus, ink cap, split gill, puffball and many more.

Mainly due to the varieties of flora, fauna and types of people visit in this area, photographers from different genre also gather in the lake area throughout the year to capture the beautiful frame of different subjects related to nature, people, trees, flowers, environment and obviously birds. Safari park and more specifically laughing club area is a very popular spot for bird watching and photography.

For the local photographers Rabindra Sarobar is a nice practice ground.



AFFECTION

BY K V KRISHNAN

After my retirement in March 2017, I reignited my passion for Photography with great vigour. With the consent and of course cooperation of all my family members I embarked on photographic trips with my likeminded friends. One such adventure took us to the breathtaking Kanha National Park, a tiger reserve forest in Madhya Pradesh, in May 2018.

The forest's natural beauty left us awestruck. We scheduled morning and evening safaris, exploring the wilderness in open jeeps, equipped with our cameras. Four of us shared a jeep, eager to capture the elusive tigers.

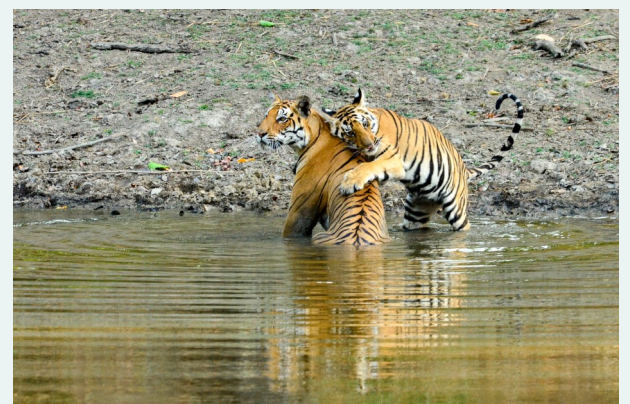
As we ventured deeper into the forest, our driver and guide guided us to a serene water body, approximately 10 feet wide. We waited patiently on one side, while the other side bordered the dense forest. The atmosphere was calm and peaceful, with another jeep joining us.

Suddenly, a rustling sound emerged from the forest. A majestic sight unfolded before us – a mother tiger, Dhawajanthi, aka T27, appeared with her four cubs. The playful cubs frolicked around, while their mother kept a watchful eye, ensuring none strayed.

As they approached the water's edge to quench their thirst, one curious cub remained seated, observing from a distance. The mother tiger, ever vigilant, scanned her surroundings, including our jeep. After drinking, the cubs resumed their playful antics.

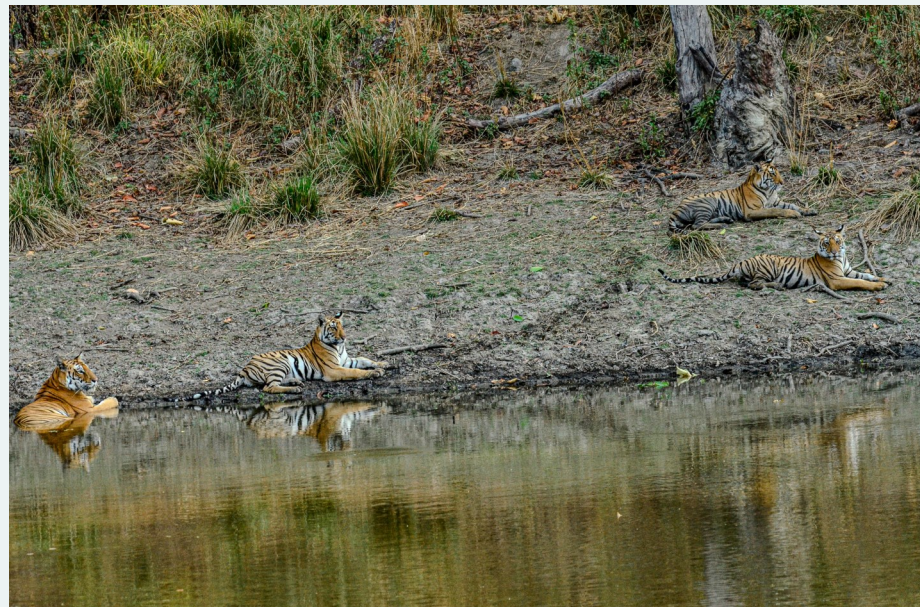
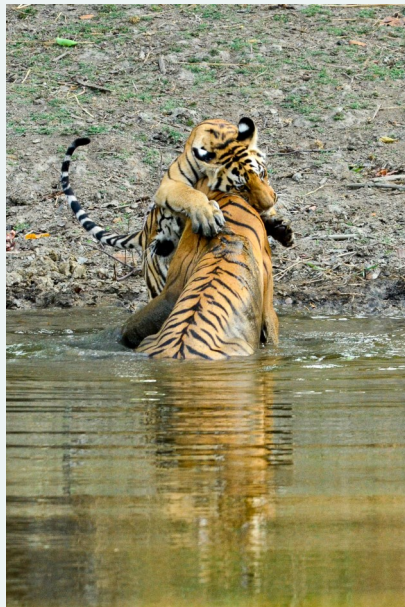
After drinking water, all the cubs were playfully moving around. One particularly adventurous cub caught our attention, frolicking around and showcasing its affection for its mother. The mother tiger, though very vigilant, patiently indulged her little one, mirroring the tender moments shared between human parents and children. This heart warming display offered valuable insights into tiger behaviour, highlighting the striking similarities with human family dynamics. Only we humans do not understand their language.

For 20 minutes, we clicked away, capturing the magic of this family bonding. Eventually, we lowered our cameras, mesmerized by the spectacle. The show continued for nearly an hour, leaving us spellbound.



"Wildlife photography is not merely about capturing an image; it's a testament to the passion for preserving moments that speak the language of nature's untamed beauty and profound wisdom."

The mother then decided that it was time for them to retreat. They were all instructed through sound language to get ready to go back. It was a spectacle to see the mother tiger gathering her cubs and then lead them back into the forest. We sat stupefied in stunned silence. It took us a while to regain our composure and continue our journey, forever cherishing the memory of this enchanting encounter.



KASHMIR GREAT LAKES TREK

BY DEBANJAN DAS

The Kashmir Great Lakes Trek is one of the most stunning and popular trekking routes in India. It takes you through the beautiful landscapes of the Kashmir Valley, showcasing alpine lakes, majestic mountains, lush meadows, and stunning views of the surrounding Himalayan ranges. The trek is famous for its pristine beauty and serene atmosphere, making it a must-do for adventure enthusiasts and nature lovers.

The highest point of the trek is Gadsar Pass with 13,750 feet (around 4,190 meters), providing panoramic views of the surrounding mountain ranges. The trek is famous for the Alpine Lakes of Kashmir, which are crystal clear and surrounded by lush greenery and snow-capped mountains. The lakes on the trek include:

1. Vishansar Lake
2. Kishansar Lake
3. Gadsar Lake
4. Satsar Lake
5. Gangbal Lake
6. Nundkol Lake

Along the trek, you can experience the culture of the local shepherds, also known as Bakarwals. You may encounter their traditional way of life, including their camps and herds of sheep and goats.



Blue Sheep

The trek is rich in flora and fauna. You might spot wildlife such as Himalayan blue sheep, Marmots, and a variety of birds. The meadows are full of vibrant wildflowers, especially during the summer.

The trek involves moderate to difficult terrain, with some steep climbs, high-altitude passes (such as Gadsar Pass at 4,190 meters), and rocky sections, making it a rewarding challenge for trekkers.

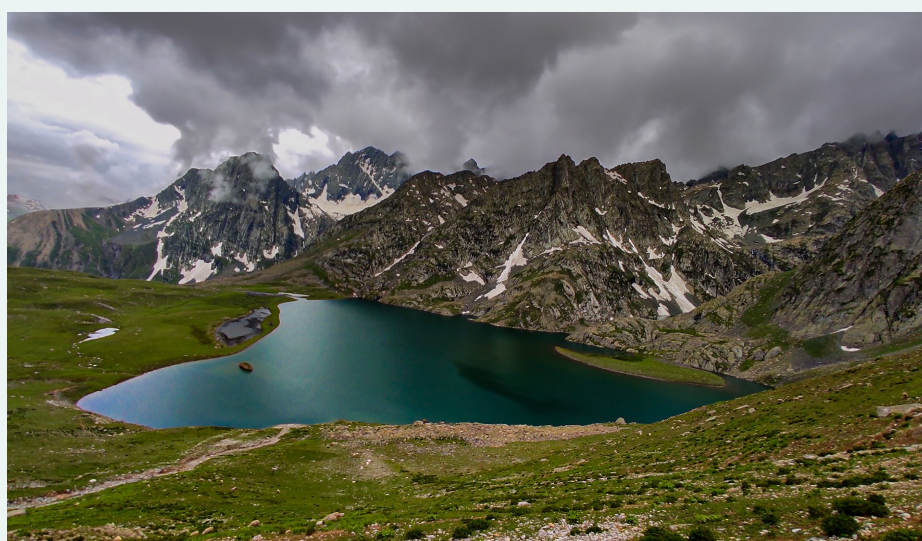
The Kashmir Great Lakes Trek is a unique and exhilarating way to explore the natural beauty and tranquility of the Kashmir region.



Gadsar Lake



Gadsar Pass



Kishansar Lake



Rainbow



Satsar Campsite



Twin Lakes From Gadsar



Shitkadi Base Camp

HIDDEN TREASURE OF AMBOLI

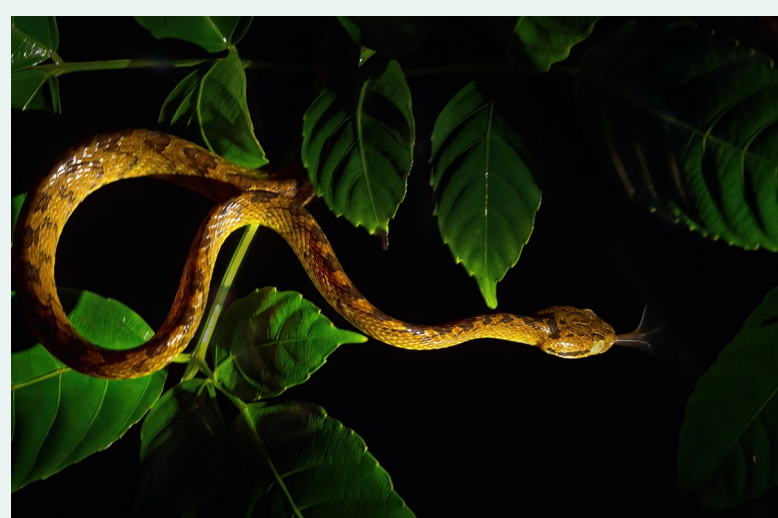
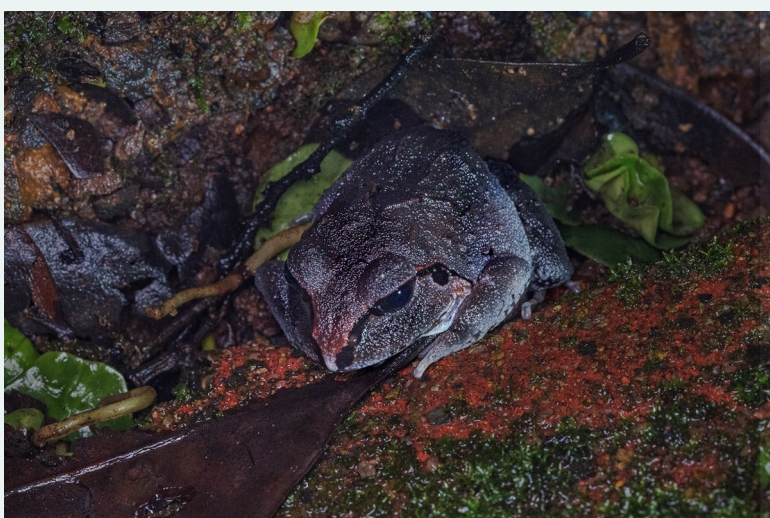
BY DR. ANIRBAN BANERJEE

Incredible!

The group of majestic long green trees, the tip-tap of heavy rain pours falling on these majestic trees, the sight of mist rose gently along the top, free flow of stream in between the cliffs and creases –possibly you are paying a visit to a touristy hill station in monsoon and visit to Amboli in that way is not different. Mighty green hills of western ghat, torrential rain, a few waterfalls all is there to put you in the lap of nature but what will catch up your mind is the forests, full of life- frogs, toads and snakes in bewitching colours in their habitat –this is Amboli in the Western Ghats, one of the wettest place of India and often called Cherrapunji of Maharashtra.

The man who introduced us with this creature is Mahadev (Kaka) Bhishe, president of the Malabar Nature Conservation Club, Amboli, who has nearly two decades of experience in this field but he promptly switches over the credit to Dr. Varad Giri, senior research fellow from Mumbai. He along with his team visited Amboli to study reptiles and amphibians of Amboli in early 2000 and his work inspired and generated interest among the local resident of Amboli including Mr. Mahadev.

Being a wild life enthusiast I do have some experience to visit jungle but I was hesitant and at the same time very apprehensive to figure out how to prepare myself for this tour. After all it would be different ball game. Walk down in a difficult terrain at night, incessant rain, protecting myself and my camera gear and let alone the possibility of encountering creepy-crawlies and freeze them in frame- Too much to ask for from an armature like me. With lot of hesitation finally I rang up Mr. Bhishe and instantly all my doubts had gone. He assured me to about the possibilities of sighting and at the same time about the safety which is the prime concern. Though he stopped going for the trail but he introduced with me with two young guides, Parth and Kaustubh. They were up to their task and I was up for a challenge, and I was certainly not disappointed.

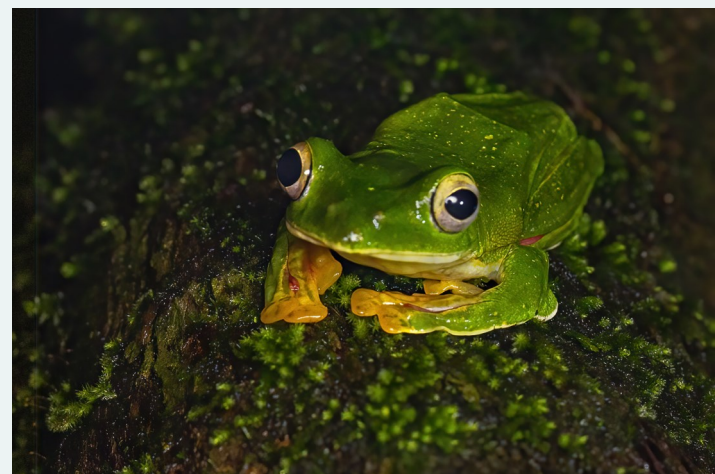


Soon I received a WhatsApp message from Parth and started accumulating few important gears and that is a must. They arranged long boots but flush, diffuser, rain cover for camera and head torch are must to spot and photograph the species at night. They also guided that the more it rains so more the possibility of sighting, so monsoon is the time to visit Amboli.

I choose to explore both the approach route to Amboli and both the drive route from Belgaum and Panaji in one word is scenic. Even in peak monsoon roads are in good condition and with a 2 hours' drive from Belgaum I reached my destination and torrential down pour welcome me.

'Welcome to Amboli and be ready for the trail' word came from the other side of phone. As I have no idea how to prepare I just waited for my guide, Parth to arrive. To my surprise as soon as Parth arrived the rain took a break. I feel bit comfortable as I thought I have some opportunity to get accustomed in trail. 'You can't predict Amboli rain so take all the protective gears and start walking' asked Parth. Without hesitation I prepared myself and started following him.

All the trails were exciting in different perspectives. The colourful creatures amidst the nature in their habit were a spine chilling experience. The narration about the species, their adaptivity, their movement is all together are few moment to cherish. Getting down in knees, sometime lying on the floor to get eye level shot in the break of rains, jump into a shallow stream in a pitch dark night was a different challenge. When Parth took me in front of Malabar pit viper, I was thrilled and, nervous at the same time and it was dream come true like a situation.



Few words on biodiversity:

Amboli is a haven of biodiversity and an incredible place to appreciate smaller creatures. It has over 35 species of mammals difficult to spot larger mammalian in dense forest), a growing list of over 200 species of birds, approximately 150 species of butterflies, and over 45 species of reptiles and amphibians, some endemic to Amboli and others to the larger Western Ghats.

Among the reptiles the Malabar pit viper and the ubiquitous green vine snake are the main attraction. Spotting different morphs (colour) of Malabar pit viper is a chance but green, brown and yellow one are relatively common. Though they are venomous but fairly calm and quiet, so approaching them with caution is a rule. They used to stay high in tree but during heavy rain they used to come down for the prey and can be spotted close to the surface. Beddome cat snake, Indian rat snake ornate flying snake and olive forest snake are the few difficult one to spot.

I was lucky to spot olive forest snake but as they are very fast in water stream just vanished in no time. Few different species of Gecko will definitely increase the list.

Malabar gliding frog 'is the 'amphibians' at Amboli. With its green shiny skin and yellow eyes, it will definitely soothe the viewer eye. Other endemic species of amphibians include the Amboli tiger toad, Cricket frog, Amboli bush frog, Wrinkled frog, Northern dancing frog (Foot flogging behaviour can be seen during August).

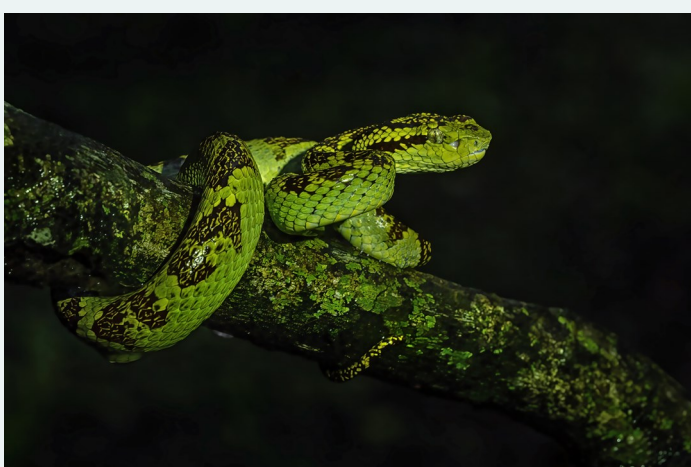
Ornate narrow mouthed frog, burrowing frog, Legless amphibians known as caecilians may also be spotted emerging from their subterranean homes. Fungoid frog, and Bombay bush frog are also encountered during the monsoon.

As the monsoon is the breeding season, spotting tadpoles is a bit extra. Spotting tad poles of wrinkled frog inside the water filled sac dangling from the leaves just above the flowing stream is a fascinating natural history to watch. This ensures when they mature they can safely land inside the water body to continue their adulthood.

Nature has its own rule and it's our responsibility to abide by those rules. The trails no doubt a bit risky but if you can control your nerve of excitement you can adapt with them very easily. Minimum movements, avoid making noise, give fellow photographers the chance, don't hurry, maintain safe distance are few rules to follow to make the trail memorable.

The pictures here were taken at Amboli forest park mostly at night. Parth guided me throughout the trail. In spite of heavy rains and other hindrances for taking perfect shot he searched tree hollows, ponds, leaves to spot the species. I remembered one event when Parth spotted one purple crab (endangered species) in tree hole (their habitat) by the side of a dark road on our way back. The way they spotted these species in total darkness, just kudos to them.

Finally, this trip will make you understand that these small creatures of nature are so beautiful. They are not at all dangerous in their habitat if you respect them, their existence.



Amboli can be reached easily from Karnataka, Goa and Maharashtra. The nearest rail heads are; Sawantwadi Road - 28 km, Kolhapur - 110 km, Sangli - 148 km, Belgaum - 70 km, and Miraj -140 km . The nearest airport to reach Amboli would be the Dabolim Airport, Goa at 57 km or Sambre Airport, Belgaum at 70 km. Bus and taxis are available which will drop you at Amboli. Roads are in good condition and very scenic indeed. For local guide contact Mr. Parth :7219337045 and Mr. Kaustubh :9146777980

SUSTAINING LIVELIHOODS: THE ART OF FISH DRYING IN BENGAL

BY HAPPY MUKHERJEE

The fish drying process in Bengal is an age-old practice deeply intertwined with the region's coastal and riverine economy. This labour-intensive process, carried out by both men and women, transforms freshly caught fish into preserved, long-lasting food, sustaining livelihoods and supporting the local fish trade. The drying yards, often located near the shores, present a striking visual of rows upon rows of fish meticulously arranged on bamboo racks under the open sky.



Men play a crucial role in the initial stages, engaging in the strenuous task of sorting, cleaning, and arranging the fish. At the break of dawn, they begin their work, spreading the fish uniformly across wooden frames to ensure even drying. Their weathered hands, accustomed to the rhythm of the trade, skillfully handle different fish varieties—ranging from Bombay duck to anchovies and ribbon fish. They meticulously flip and adjust them under the sun, maximizing exposure to air and light. The drying process can take several days, depending on the humidity and sunlight, demanding patience and precision.



Women, often the backbone of this industry, contribute significantly to every step of the process. They are responsible for washing the fish in saline water, a crucial step to prevent bacterial growth and enhance preservation. Many also take part in the actual drying process, carefully threading smaller fish onto bamboo skewers or laying them out on mats. Their keen eyes ensure that the drying fish are protected from insects and scavenger birds. In several communities, women also manage the sorting, packaging, and selling of dried fish in local markets, adding to their financial independence.

The purpose of fish drying in Bengal extends beyond economic sustenance. It holds immense cultural significance, particularly in coastal communities where dried fish is a staple ingredient in traditional cuisine. Households prepare delicacies like shutki maach (fermented dried fish), an intensely flavourful dish cooked with mustard, chilies, and garlic.



The dried fish industry also caters to domestic and international markets, fuelling exports to neighbouring countries and South Asian communities abroad.

More than just a trade, fish drying embodies resilience—the ability of coastal communities to harness nature’s resources and turn them into sustainable livelihoods.



"Photography is the silent poetry of light and shadow, where every frame is a canvas, and the lens becomes the brush that paints the soul of the moment."

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LATHMAR HOLI

BY SUBHRA BASU

Lathmar Holi is a vibrant Hindu festival celebrated in Barsana and Nandgaon, near the town of Vrindavan in Uttar Pradesh. This festival is deeply connected to the legendary love story of Goddess Radha and Lord Krishna. According to ancient belief, Lord Krishna belongs to the village of Nandgaon, while Goddess Radha hails from Barsana.

Lathmar Holi is a unique and playful variation of the traditional Holi festival. Women dress as Radha, while men take on the guise of Krishna. The men travel from Nandgaon to Barsana to take part in the celebrations. Once there, the festivities begin with dancing, singing, and playing with 'GULAL' (coloured powders). In a humorous and lively twist, the women playfully hit the men with sticks, while the men defend themselves using 'DHAL' (shields). This cheerful interplay continues as part of the merriment.

Lathmar Holi is celebrated in Vrindavan, India, over the course of a week. People from all around the world gather to experience the joy and uniqueness of this vibrant festival.



JALLIKATTU THROUGH MY LENS: CAPTURING THE EPIC BULL TAMING SPORT OF TAMIL NADU

BY MAHESWARAN KARTHIKEYAN

Jallikattu, the traditional bull-taming sport of Tamil Nadu, is more than just an event—it is an emotion, a symbol of Tamil pride, valour, and agrarian heritage. Every year, this centuries-old spectacle unfolds in villages across the state, with Madhakottai, near Tanjore, hosting one of the most anticipated events. The air resonates with excitement as bulls bred for strength charge out of the Vadivasal, challenging young men to hold on to their humps and tame the bull. It is a test of skill, endurance, and courage. While I had grown up hearing about Jallikattu and admiring it from afar through photos and television broadcasts, I had never witnessed it in person. This year, I resolved to change that.

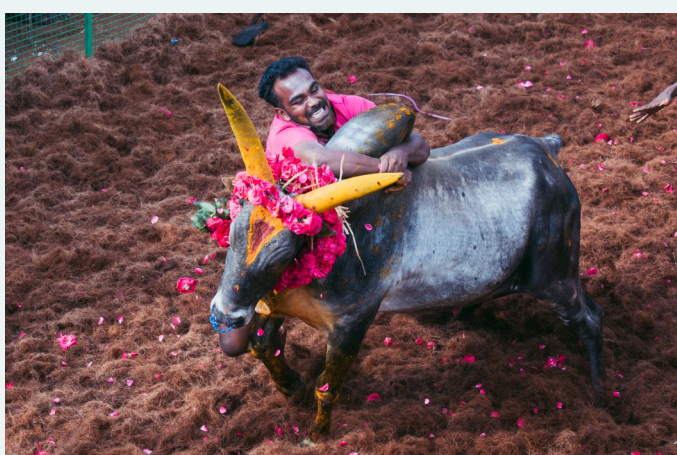
The Journey Begins: Chennai to Tanjore

As a hobbyist photographer, balancing my passion with family commitments is always a challenge. This time, I found a way to do both—by planning a family pilgrimage to Tanjore, blending temple visits with the much-awaited Jallikattu event at Madhakottai. It was a win-win situation: my family got to visit the historic temples of Tanjore while I fulfilled my long-standing dream of capturing Jallikattu through my lens.

We set off from Chennai in our car, the trunk packed with camera gear, energy bars, and water bottles. The eight-hour drive was a mix of excitement and eager anticipation. My mind was filled with thoughts of framing the perfect shots—freeze-framing the raw energy of the bulls, the intensity in the eyes of the tamers, the thrill of the audience. Meanwhile, my family looked forward to visiting the Brihadeeswarar Temple, a UNESCO World Heritage Site, and indulging in Tanjore's famed cuisine.

Upon reaching Tanjore, we checked into a modest hotel near the event venue. The fatigue from the long journey barely affected me; my mind was already racing ahead to the early morning adventure that awaited. Sleep was scarce that night. I tossed and turned, checking my camera gear, ensuring my batteries were charged, and mapping out the best angles to shoot from. The plan was to reach the venue by 4:30 AM to survey the area and find the perfect spot.

Along with the excitement of the trip, there was something that made this moment even more meaningful: just a day before my journey, I had received my IIG press photojournalist cards. As the president of AvTvISO, I felt an overwhelming sense of pride holding them, knowing I would be the first to wear them proudly.



The First Glimpse of the Arena

At the break of dawn, I made my way to Madhakottai, where the streets were already abuzz with activity. The air was thick with the scent of fresh earth, sweat, and anticipation. My friend Zinda, a fellow photographer, had reached earlier with a few others and had secured access to a nearby house's balcony. This was a golden opportunity—I would get an unobstructed view of the Vadivasal, the sacred gateway from where the bulls would be released.

The event area was tightly barricaded on both sides, with eager spectators already staking out their spots. The rising sun cast a golden hue over the village, adding a surreal beauty to the charged atmosphere. I settled into my vantage point, adjusted my camera settings, and braced myself for what was to come.



The Long Wait and the Roar of the Crowd

By 6:00 AM, the crowd had swelled to thousands. There was no room to move; stepping away meant losing our precious spots. The humidity was high, and standing for long hours with a camera strapped around my neck was no easy feat. But I was prepared—hydration and protein bars kept me going.

At 7:30 AM, a sudden hush fell over the crowd. The announcer's voice echoed through the speakers. The first batch of bulls was about to be released.

The Spectacle Unfolds

The gates of the Vadivasal opened, and the first bull stormed out. The tamers surged forward, attempting to grab onto its hump. Some succeeded momentarily before being flung off; others barely got close before the bull darted past them. The crowd erupted in cheers and whistles, revelling in the raw contest of man versus beast.

For a photographer, this was an adrenaline rush like no other. The challenge lay not just in capturing the perfect moment but in doing so under extreme conditions—continuous movement, rapidly changing light, and an unpredictable subject. I shot at burst mode with high shutter speeds, freezing moments of action as tamers were hurled into the air, bulls skidded across the dirt, and triumphant young men celebrated their victories.



Each bull had a distinct personality. Some charged out aggressively, refusing to be tamed. Others zipped through, uninterested in the contest. But the ones that stood their ground, circling warily and daring the tamers to approach, were the true showstoppers. Their defiant stance, the sharp glint in their eyes, and their muscular frames gleaming under the sun created images that would remain etched in my mind forever.

Some of the bulls were adorned with sacred ash or turmeric, creating a cloud of powder as they jumped out of the gates. It was a spectacular visual moment, one that made for stunning photographs. These vivid images captured the raw beauty and power of the bulls as they stormed out, leaving behind trails of dust and powder in their wake.

The Toll of the Event

Shooting Jallikattu was physically demanding. The heat, the constant need to stay alert, and the strain of holding up heavy camera equipment for hours pushed me to my limits. But the excitement of the event and the sheer visual spectacle unfolding before me made every moment worth it.

By midday, over half of the 750 bulls that are participating had stormed through the Vadivasal. The tamers, released in batches of forty, had given it their all. Some emerged victorious, clutching their prizes on the side—awarded either to the tamers or the bull owners, based on the outcome of their encounters. Others limped away, bruised but proud. And for every untamed bull that raced through the arena, the crowd's roar grew louder.

Wrapping Up

As the event drew to a close, sweat-soaked and exhausted, I knew the real task lay ahead—sorting through the sheer volume of shots and selecting the best ones for publication. The culling process would be long and tedious, but I already knew that some images were going to be among the finest I had ever taken.

Packing up my gear, I took a final glance at the Vadivasal. The dust was still settling, and the crowd continued to grow as the event carried on. My memory cards were full, and I had completed my shoot, feeling immensely satisfied with the pictures I had taken. For me, this trip had been far from just a photography assignment. It was a personal journey—a profound connection to my roots, where passion, tradition, and family seamlessly intertwined.

I continued with my family trip and explored the rich temple heritage of the region. We visited several historical temples in and around Tanjore, immersing ourselves in the tranquillity of sacred spaces, and making the most of this pilgrimage. The following day was spent soaking in the spiritual energy of Tanjore's ancient temples, before we finally made our way back in the evening.

The journey back was reflective. While my mind buzzed with plans to go through my images, I also felt a deep sense of fulfilment. The memories, both behind the camera and beyond it, would stay with me for years to come.

The Outcome

The pictures I captured turned out even better than I had imagined. Each shot, from the powerful rush of the bulls to the raw energy of the tamers, conveyed the intensity and spirit

of Jallikattu in ways I hadn't anticipated. The moments of triumph, and the beautiful chaos of it all were frozen in time through my lens. As I sifted through my shots, selecting the best ones, a wave of satisfaction washed over me. The adrenaline of the event was reflected in every frame, and I couldn't help but smile at how perfectly they had turned out. It was an experience I knew I would cherish forever, and I was thrilled to share these images with the world, capturing Tamil Nadu's most exhilarating tradition through my eyes.



SONAR KELLA – A LIVING FORT BY SOURA BRATA ROY

Jaisalmer Fort in Rajasthan is popular as Sonar Kella after Satyajit Ray's famous film of the same name.

Unlike any other Fort in India, it is a living Fort, home to common people and not just a tourist spot.

I intentionally shot at evening to capture the lives and different moods of the residents busy with their daily chores. Because during the day time their lives pivots around tourists.

My singular aim was to show the lives of common people inside the Jaisalmer Fort.



FALLING IN LOVE WITH THE FALLS OF MEGHALAYA (PART-1)

BY SANTANU MUKHERJEE

Meghalaya! meaning "The abode of clouds" is one of the seven sister states of Northeast India which is adorned with panoramic landscapes, picturesque valleys and magnificent waterfalls.

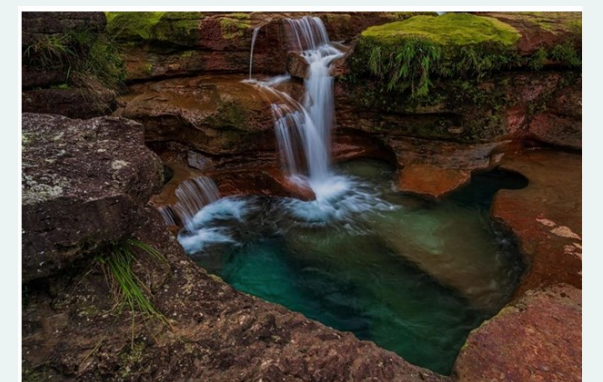
I felt a rush of adrenalin when we finalized our photo trip destination for Meghalaya to capture the breathtaking scenic beauty and its mesmerizing waterfalls. These adventurous trips require lots of preparations in advance. All the participants were called for an initial briefing about how to get ready for the trip. We were told that the trip required serious physical fitness to trek down to the bottom of few of the falls. The actual groundwork for the photo trip started six months before with early morning runs and strength training in the evenings. These six months went past with lightning speed and the day of departure was nearing. It was also time to get ready with the photographic gears. Landscape photography requires a good camera with a wide angle lens; preferably a 14-24 mm or a 16-35 mm, a sturdy tripod and a few filters like the ND8 & CPL. All the participants were part of a WhatsApp group where everyone was informing about their own preparation for the trip. Excitement was at its highest level. Finally, the day arrived when we were about to take on an exciting journey to witness nature's wonders. All of us gathered at the Kolkata Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose International Airport to take an early morning flight to Guwahati. We reached Guwahati around 7:30 am in the morning and started our journey for Sohra Valley in Cherapunji. On the way we stopped over for a sumptuous breakfast at a Highway Dhaba at Nongpoh.

By noon we reached Sohra and headed straight for the Kharmih Falls which is a private waterfall. A small walk took us to a serene fall where we all set up our tripods and started clicking. Few of us got knee deep into the water and explored shooting from various angles.

Then we packed up and headed for a magical Heart Shaped Fall. Nature has so much in abundance to offer. It was an awe-inspiring sight where the rock formation exactly resembled a "Heart". We shot to our hearts content, until it was getting dark. By now everyone was tired as we all had got up very early and did not get an opportunity to rest, yet our heart was filled with contentment with the day's shoot. We headed for our hotel "La Kupar Inn" at Sohra Valley in Cherapunji. All of us were dead tired by the time we reached our hotel. We freshened up and a hot delicious dinner was ready for us. We chatted over the dinner table and finally retired for the day.

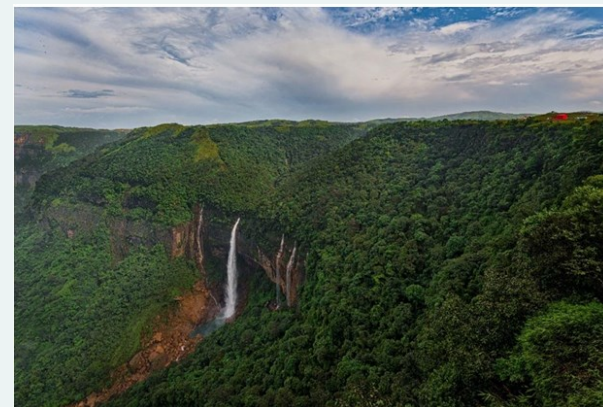


KHARMIH FALLS



HEART SHAPED FALLS

Next day we woke up to see a wonderful scenic beauty outside our hotel. It was a clear blue sky with the mountains in the background. After an elaborate breakfast we headed for the mighty Noh Kalikai Falls which is the tallest plunge waterfall in India with a massive 340 metres or 1115 feet height. The cloud and the fog painted a mesmerizing view of the entire place. Noh Kalikhai Fall's surrounding terrain is gifted with rich flora and fauna and arresting landscape ideal for some memorable treks.



NOH KALIKAI FALLS

We spent some time there and headed towards Lyngksiar Fall which is a nature's majestic cascade. Hidden in the beautiful landscape of Meghalaya, the Lyngksiar Waterfall is an absolute natural gem. Located in Mawkma Village in the East Khasi Hills district, this stunning waterfall wowed us with its amazing height and peaceful vibe. The blend of blue, green and yellow painted a picture which will be ever etched in our memory for a very long time. A little walk, a few steps of decent and hopping over few big boulders took us to this magnificent fall. We took our time in exploring the beauty of this wonderful place from various angles. Few of us were excited enough to remove our footwear and get into the cold water to manage a better angle of the fall.



LYNGKSIAR FALLS

A 30 mins drive from the Lyngksair Falls took us to our next destination the Janailar Falls. We entered the area by giving an entry fee and started walking along the sprawling valleys. We visited Meghalaya during end of August, when the monsoon was receding, and the entire area was adorned with lush green vegetation. A ten to fifteen mins walk took us to this wonderful fall. We captured the falls from a top location and headed back to our parking lot. By then we were feeling hungry. The local people here had put up small stalls where they were selling, pineapple, maggi, eggs etc. They earn their livelihood by running these small eateries in these remote places. Most of us gorged onto whatever was available there. In these remote places you don't get proper restaurants, hence it is always advisable to carry some dry food when you are visiting these places.



JANAILAR FALLS

After we filled our tummy and stretched our legs, we started for the Wei Sawdong Falls which is a three-tiered waterfall located in Cherapunji. The fall is situated some 60 km southwest of Shillong in East Khasi Hills district. Wei Sawdong is difficult to access, and the trek to the waterfall is along an out-and-back trail and challenging. This fall has two levels of view. The mid-level view is accessible with some trekking of moderate level of difficulty. But the best view of the fall is from the bottom level. Bottom level can be reached with a trek of high level of difficulty which involves moving across muddy trails, climbing down slippery bamboo ladders, manoeuvring moss-covered slippery boulders with water falling on the shoulders. Once you reach the bottom level you will forget the difficulty of the trek as you will stand below the wonderful view of the fall.

This fall is especially known for its bluish-green, crystal-clear water. Only a few of us could reach to the bottom of the Wei Sawdong Falls. We captured this mesmerizing fall both in our camera and our memory. Now it was time to climb back. After a 40 mins tiring trek we reached our bus, where our other friends were waiting to hear about our experience.

We were tired with our trek but contended with what we experienced. Our bus started and in a short time reached the Dainthelan falls. It was almost 4:30 pm and the sun had already started to go below the horizon. The sun usually sets a bit early in the mountains specially in the Northeast part of the country. We hurried our way and came across, a gushing waterfall that cuts through the hard rocks and the high plateau and then cascades down into lush forests. It was an amazing experience to negotiate the hard, rocky pot-holed riverbed leading to the falls. The thundering sound of the falls, the open landscape, the surrounding hillocks, and the capricious winds that constantly blow here with the sun setting in the horizon provided an apt ending of the days photo trip. It was time to go back to our La Kubar Inn, where we freshened up and after having a hot delicious dinner retired for the day.



WEI SAWDONG FALLS MID LEVEL VIEW WEI SAWDONG FALLS BOTTOM LEVEL VIEW



DAINTHELAN FALLS

To be continued in our next issue of IIG Journal.

Let's Go Together!

Dreaming of visiting a new destination but unsure about the budget, accommodation, transport, or must-see spots for photography? Looking to connect with like-minded photographers for a wildlife safari, road trip, mountain adventure, or a magical night under the Milky Way?

This WhatsApp subgroup of IIG is here to cater to all your travel needs! Collaborate, plan, and create unforgettable experiences with fellow enthusiasts.

Open to all members of IIG. Let's explore and capture the world together!

"Through the lens, we travel not just to see new places, but to feel them in a thousand captured moments."

MOI-CHHARA

BY SUBRATA NATH

The Cattle Race, also known as the Buffalo Race, is held during the pre-monsoon rains in rural Bengal. Locally referred to as "Moi-Chhara," this unique festival is predominantly celebrated in villages across Canning, West Bengal. The race is a vigorous display of physical strength, where men compete against the sheer power and force of bulls. The bulls, known for their restless and impatient nature, often challenge the guides, exhausting them both physically and mentally. Occasionally, the bulls and participants alike slide and get stuck in the muddy terrain, with men slipping as they strive to keep pace with the animals. Remarkably, this festival transcends the boundaries of religion, politics, colour, and jealousy, focusing solely on marking the beginning of the harvest season.



Let's Learn Together!

Got questions about photography? Facing technical difficulties? Eager to learn new editing skills or techniques? Looking for a review of your work or simply want to showcase it for feedback?

This WhatsApp subgroup is the perfect place for you! A collaborative hub for all IIG members, where learning, sharing, and growing together is the goal.

Join us and let's create something amazing together!

Here's a little-known tip for low-light photography that even seasoned photographers sometimes overlook: use a fast prime lens, but deliberately underexpose your shot by 1-2 stops.

Why? A fast prime lens (e.g., one with an aperture of f/1.8 or wider) gathers more light, but underexposing slightly reduces the chances of blown-out highlights, especially if there are light sources like candles, streetlights, or signs in the frame. The magic happens in post-processing: you can recover shadow details without adding too much noise, especially if you're shooting in RAW. It's a subtle trick that balances low-light artistry with technical finesse

THE TRAGEDY OF THE HUNT

BY BARATH KARTHI R K

During my trip to Kenya, one of the most fascinating animals that caught my attention was a family of cheetahs—a mother and her four cubs. The mother was training her young ones in the art of hunting. Her method was brutal yet necessary: she would half-kill the prey, leaving it alive but disabled, so her cubs could practice the final kill.



I observed them for three days. On the first morning, they attempted to hunt a Topi. However, the Topi was alert and managed to escape. The cubs, still inexperienced, missed their chance. As the afternoon sun blazed, they didn't try again.

The second day was harsh—an entire day without food left them hungry and weak. As desperation grew, the family set their sights on a herd of Thomson's gazelles. The mother successfully caught a young one, half-killing it before handing it over to her cubs. But the little gazelle, despite its injuries, kept running, while the cubs played with it rather than delivering the final blow. Eventually, they managed to kill it, but the meal was small and barely enough to satisfy their hunger.

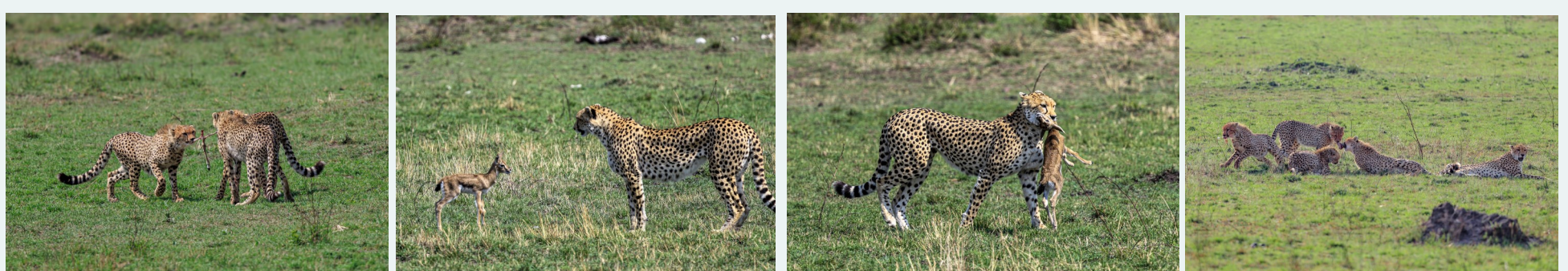


By the third day, the cubs were restless, their hunger sharpening their instincts. They targeted another herd of Thomson's gazelles. This time, the mother led the hunt with precision, catching two fawns. The fawns struggled desperately, fighting for their lives. One managed to break free and ran a short distance before stopping, disoriented and in pain.



Then, something heartbreaking happened. The frightened baby mistook the mother cheetah for its own mother and, seeking comfort, stumbled towards her—weak, desperate for love and care. But the laws of the savanna are unforgiving. The mother cheetah, bound by survival, ended the little one's struggle.

In the wild, only the strongest survive.



CHOOSING PHOTOGRAPHY SUBJECTS AND CREATIVE INSIGHTS

BY AHMED RUSSELL

A woman is walking with an empty pitcher under the scorching sun across cracked land. A farmer is heading to work with a Plow and yoke on his shoulder. A boat gently ripples through the still waters of a clear lake. A blood-red sun sinks into the sea like a plate. Those who capture such mesmerizing and picturesque scenes are often rewarded with medals. At the very least, these images find a place on calendars. Taking such pictures isn't particularly difficult.

Once, during a class, my teacher said, "You should not only take photos but also create them." I didn't quite resonate with that idea. Later, I learned it was a quote from a famous photographer. Of course, if you consider yourself an artist, you have the right to accept or reject others' opinions.

Imagine a village where there's no water crisis. Freshly planted green rice seedlings surround every field, except for one plot still barren, showing cracks from the past summer. A photographer requests a woman from the village to empty her water-filled pitcher and bring it to that cracked field. The photographer then climbs to a higher spot, carefully excluding the lush green fields, and uses a wide zoom to capture an image titled "Climate Change."

Many question whether art is eternally true or false. Regardless of whether the elements of art are artificial or organic, the artist must remain honest. I've heard of training sessions on how to find photographic subjects or how to win international awards in this medium. Some photographers even learn which subjects are more likely to win awards in different countries. As a result, by sending images of poverty or negative news from their own countries to international competitions, they sometimes damage their nation's reputation.

It's worth noting that the pioneers of photography in our country never took such pictures. Even though many contemporary photography critics disapprove of their work, they continue to be celebrated over time. It's true that times have changed, and people are more educated now. Yet, it's essential to remember that photography is a powerful medium, and one must be cautious in its use. You must define your own sense of caution.

In documentation, such as newspaper photos, the depiction of reality must be exact. Any editing that suggests artificiality is unacceptable. Conversely, photographic artists have the liberty to edit their images. For example, they might fill an empty sky with birds imported from another photo. This type of editing might pass artistic standards and appeal to certain audiences. However, many ordinary art enthusiasts do not appreciate this.

Their desire is not complicated. They don't want simple newspaper pictures, but they also dislike overly edited images. They want photographs to portray reality in a way that feels magical. Most classic photos around the world follow this principle. The ability to capture unique perspectives and moments is the hallmark of a true photographer. I understand that this too is subject to debate, and I welcome that. Why should everyone think like me?

Regarding subject selection—whether using models or choosing what to photograph—I believe it's entirely a matter of the photographer's personal preference or taste. It's better not to imitate previous photographers when selecting subjects. Personally, I find everything from the roots and leaves of a tree to cracked abandoned houses, solitary rivers without boats, or dew-covered fields to be my subjects. However, I strive to present them with my unique perspective.

When it comes to using models, my approach is like this: Suppose a brother and sister are riding a bicycle. I liked the scene and asked the boy to continue riding with his sister seated as she was. He gladly did, and I captured a photo just as I envisioned, with the help of my models. What I did not do was artificially stage the photo by placing someone else on the bicycle. I wanted the photo to represent the reality as it was.

This way, subject selection and model usage are purely my creations. A renowned portrait photographer once told me, "Never take anyone's advice or ideas for your photos. Your work should be original and distinctive, infused with your personal touch."

I'll conclude this discussion with the topic of photo editing. Generally, I favor minimal editing, such as adjusting light, contrast, color balance, cropping, or enhancing specific elements in the background or foreground for clarity. No one usually objects to such edits. However, I'm against merging cracked land from one year with a pitcher-carrying woman from another place to create a composite image.

That being said, some photos, inspired by painting styles and representing highly conceptual ideas, do bring diversity to visual art. While I'm not opposed to them, they're not my preference. I prefer to align myself with those ordinary viewers.

A dedicated photographer captures a great photo through tireless effort. In the digital age, there's the advantage of choosing the best shot from thousands of clicks. So, instead of sitting in front of a computer for excessive editing, go outdoors and sweat it out to capture a rare and beautiful moment. Only then will you be a successful photographer and a true artist.



THE NARRATORS OF NATUN GRAM

BY PRANTIK BISWAS

The village of Natungram in Purba Bardhaman is not on most people's travel lists. Yet, this little hamlet, where life moves unhurriedly, holds an ancient secret—the art of wooden doll making. I first heard of Natungram from a fellow photographer who praised its vibrant craft. Curious and intrigued, our weekend travel group of six decided to visit; camera in hand, to capture the essence of this age-old tradition.

It was early morning in mid-March. We were greeted by the earthy aroma of drying wood and the rhythmic thud of chisels against logs. The lanes were dotted with wooden dolls in various stages of completion—brightly painted owls, deities and human figures, each narrating its own story. I was drawn to a modest hut with a tiled roof, where an elderly man sat whittling away at a block of wood with practiced ease.



“Namaskar, Dada,” I greeted. The man looked up, a warm smile breaking through his weathered face.

“Namaskar,” he replied, setting aside his tools. “You must be from Kolkata. We don't see many visitors during this season.”

I introduced myself and expressed my interest in documenting their craft through my lens. Soon enough, I was welcomed inside the hut, where three generations of artisans were engrossed in their tasks. The old man introduced himself as Raghunath Sutradhar, the family patriarch, and a master craftsman with skills honed over five decades.

“My father taught me,” he said, pride gleaming in his eyes. “And his father taught him. This art has been in our family for generations.”

Beside him sat his son, Manik, carving an owl's face with remarkable precision. Manik's wife, Saraswati, was engrossed in painting a miniature Radha-Krishna pair. Their teenage daughter, Sreeja, was arranging finished pieces on a low wooden shelf, her nimble fingers giving each doll a gentle polish.

Raghunath called out to his wife, Sita, who emerged with a basket full of dolls and murmured, “Babu, our craft is fading. These hands that carve tales into wood are losing their strength.”

The Art of Doll Making

Curiosity sparked; I asked them to show me how the dolls were made. Raghunath led me to the back of the house, where rough logs were piled. He picked up a block of Gamhar wood and explained, “This is our preferred wood—light, durable, and perfect for carving. Sometimes, we use Mango or Shimul wood too.”

The process began with sketching the figure onto the block, and then the chiseling began. Manik expertly shaped the block, his hands moving in a fluid, rhythmic motion. “We do this part mostly by hand,” he said. “It gives each doll its unique touch.”

Once the shape was carved, Sita took over; coating the surface with a mixture of Khari mati (white clay), flour, and a natural adhesive. “This smoothens the wood and gives it a fine base for painting,” she explained. The dolls were then left to dry under the sun.

Saraswati joined us, holding a tray of painted dolls. “We use vibrant colors—bright reds, yellows, greens.

Natural dyes used to be common, but now we also use synthetic paints for durability,” she said. She picked up a fine-tipped brush and began painting the characteristic almond-shaped eyes. “These eyes must have life. If they don’t speak, the doll has no soul.”

Sreeja chimed in with a shy smile, “I paint the small motifs—dots and lines that make them look festive. Sometimes I help polish them too.”

The Legacy and Challenges

The family’s sense of pride was palpable, but there was a shadow of worry. “Our craft is old,” Raghunath said, sighing. “Earlier, the dolls had ritualistic importance. Now, they’re mostly bought as decorative pieces. During fairs and festivals, we sell quite a few. But the rest of the year is dry.”

Manik added, “Earlier, these dolls were in demand for household rituals and traditional ceremonies. The owl, for instance, symbolizes prosperity and is a must for the worship of Lakshmi, the Hindu Goddess of Wealth. But now, people prefer plastic and machine-made items.”

I remembered reading that the tradition of wooden doll making in Natungram dates back centuries, originally associated with the Sutradhars the community of narrators, or storytellers. Their craft was intricately linked with their social identity, and their skills passed down through generations. Historically, the craft had a ritualistic purpose and was commissioned by local temples and zamindars. However, as times changed and rituals faded over the late nineteenth century, the art adapted to become more commercial.

Economic Struggles

Despite the enduring charm of these dolls, financial challenges plague the artisans. The cost of good quality wood has gone up significantly, and the lack of organized marketing often



leaves them dependent on seasonal fairs. “We hardly make any profit,” Manik lamented. “A single doll takes days to make, and middlemen pay us peanuts. Sometimes, we don’t even recover our costs.”

Sita nodded, adding, “There are government schemes for artisans, but they barely reach us. Besides, digital marketing is beyond our understanding. We still rely on word of mouth and fairs to sell our dolls.”

The family’s concerns were echoed throughout the village. Most households here depend solely on doll making, and the lack of consistent demand leaves many struggling. Moreover, young artisans are increasingly drifting away, seeking stable jobs in cities.



Hope and Dreams

I asked Sreeja about her plans. She hesitated and replied, “I love painting these dolls, but I want to study too. Maybe one day, I can find a way to keep this craft alive and still make a living.”

Her words hung in the air, laden with hope and uncertainty. The family shared stories of artisans migrating to other trades, the village slowly losing its vibrant identity. Yet, their passion for the craft remained unwavering.

Before I left, Raghunath handed me a doll—a bright red owl with piercing eyes. I asked for the price, but he strongly refused. “Take this as a memory,” he said, his voice soft but proud. “Share our story. Maybe people will come to know of our struggles and keep our tradition alive.”

As I walked away from the village, the owl in my hand felt heavier than it should. It was not just a souvenir—it was a piece of their legacy, crafted with love and hope. I couldn’t help but wonder how long the storytellers of Natungram would be able to hold on to their craft, battling the tide of time and modernity.

It’s a story that deserves to be heard; of artisans who carve not just wood but the spirit of Bengal into timeless forms. Perhaps, in telling their tale, we can ensure that the rhythmic sound of chisels and the splash of colours never fade from Natungram.



Welcome to **IIG Connect!** Where Creativity Comes to Life!

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THE ART OF SILHOUETTE PHOTOGRAPHY

BY ABHIJEET KUMAR BANERJEE

Silhouette photography is a captivating art form that emphasizes contrast and mystery by showcasing subjects as dark shapes set against a brightly lit background. This technique relies heavily on lighting, composition, and creativity, making it both accessible to beginners and a rewarding challenge for seasoned photographers.

To create a silhouette, photographers often position their subject against a strong light source, such as a vibrant sunset, glowing cityscape, or dramatic artificial lighting. The subject itself appears as a striking, dark outline, devoid of details, allowing the background to take center stage. This interplay between light and shadow tells stories, evokes emotions, and invites viewers to interpret the scene in their own way.

Silhouette photography excels at conveying drama and simplicity. It strips away distractions, focusing on bold shapes and clean lines. Iconic subjects include people, trees, animals, and architectural structures, each becoming a recognizable yet enigmatic figure in the frame.

In essence, silhouette photography is more than a technique—it's a poetic dance of light and darkness that stirs imagination and emotion.



"Photography is the art of storytelling without a single word, where every frame is a canvas painted with light, emotion, and perspective—a timeless dance between the seen and the unseen, the fleeting and the eternal."

PORTFOLIO: LOW-KEY PORTRAIT

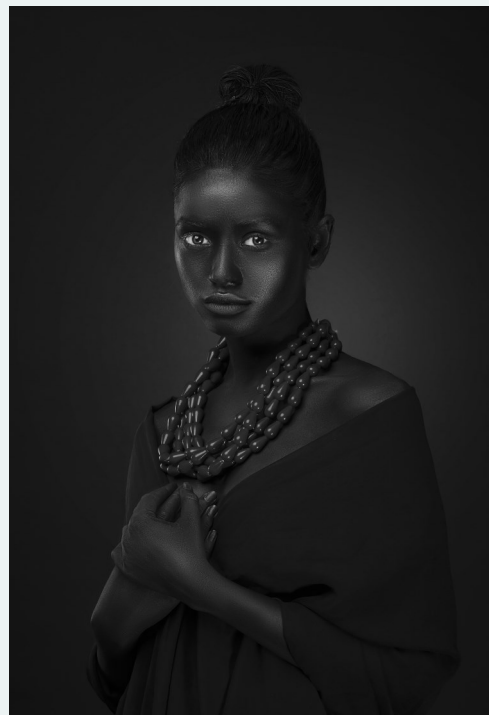
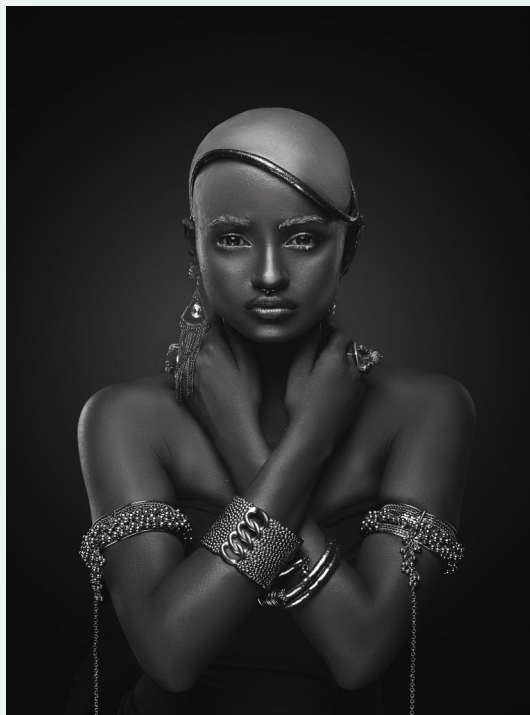
BY DR. ABIR GHOSH

As a photographer, my aim is to explore the subtle yet profound interplay between light and shadow, capturing the essence of human emotion and character through low-key portraiture. This portfolio is a curated collection of studio-lit images that embrace darkness as a canvas, allowing highlights to reveal striking contours, textures, and expressions.

Through controlled lighting, each portrait emphasizes mood over detail, inviting viewers to engage with the subject's inner world while leaving room for personal interpretation. The minimalistic approach serves to strip away distractions, focusing on the raw intimacy of connection between light, subject, and viewer.

These portraits are not merely photographs; they are visual narratives, evoking curiosity, emotion, and timeless elegance. By adopting the low-key technique, I celebrate the beauty of simplicity while challenging the conventional boundaries of portrait photography.

This collection is a tribute to the art of storytelling through shadows, a journey that showcases the dynamic relationship between light and the human soul.





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Life on earth is the sheer celebration of diversity! Hundreds of distinct life forms,- different species of plants, animals, fungi, algae, bacteria and many others, coexist with us in the surroundings. They live in tune with the variations of topographies, soils, waters, air and climates. Together, such diversity of living and non-living entities make the nature around us. Human minds have evolved for millions of years in the cradle of such diversity of nature and got imprinted with deep cravings for them. Thus, nature is the source of our joy, it can cure a stressed out soul. Nature is also the original source of learning.

Let us observe nature, let us observe biodiversity. Let us conserve them.

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- Ahmed Russell
- Anjan Das
- Happy Mukherjee
- Premomoy Ghosh
- Subrata Nath

All top contributors will be awarded with specially crafter, limited edition "IIG Journal" pin.



Cover Image: Yellow Blossom by Debanjan Das

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