WALLMAG

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PHOTOGRAPHY · MUSIC · WILDLIFE · DANCE



Patience & Pulse

— **The Voice of the Nation** — Ommy Khan
— **The Eleventh Attempt** — Kiran Dey
— **The Veena Chose Me** — Dr. Chatti Ramakrishna
— **Stories Without Words** — Manish Kumar Rai

ON THE COVER / OMMY KHAN

$9

EDITORIAL SUMMARY · IN THIS ISSUE

Patience & Pulse

Some of the creators in this volume wait. Kiran Dey needed three seasons and eleven attempts for one tiger in Kanha; Swaroop Panchangam chose the pond over the bush in Panna, and waited. Others keep time. A banker came back to the drum kit after twenty years away, an eye surgeon divides his week between the operating theatre and a veena he is certain chose him, and a rapper from Worli wrote a track that became his name. Fifty-two creators sat down with us this month — photographers, musicians, dancers, a drone pilot, a travelogue writer — and they describe one discipline at two tempos: the patience to wait for the frame, and the pulse that keeps you there until it arrives.

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CREATORS	PAGES	PHOTOGRAPHS	AWARD FINALISTS

TWELVE TO BEGIN WITH

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An architect who learned to wait — on backlight and the unrepeatable moment, from an elephant family in the morning dust.

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An eye surgeon by profession, he divides his week between the operating theatre and a carved Thanjavur veena.

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IN CONVERSATION · MUSIC PRODUCER

Ashes In My Mouth

KOWSHIK SAHA · PRODUCER & COMPOSER

The producer behind "Ashes In My Mouth" and the upcoming "Say It Again" on building a darker, cinematic world — where the emotion always comes first and the genre only follows.



KOWSHIK SAHA

Q How did music first begin for you — what pulled you toward writing and producing your own songs rather than just listening?

Music started for me from a place of curiosity. I was always drawn to music, but at some point I became more interested in understanding what was happening behind the songs I loved — how a melody could create an emotion, how production could completely change the atmosphere of a track, and how different sounds could come together to tell a story. I was also a trained vocalist since childhood, which helped me understand music better. That curiosity gradually pushed me from simply listening to actually experimenting. I started writing melodies and lyrics, learning production, and figuring things out largely by trial and error. The more I learned, the more I realised that producing my own music gave me complete freedom to translate what I was hearing in my head into something real. Over the years, songwriting and production have become equally important to me — writing gives me the emotional idea, while production allows me to build the world around it.

ON RECORD

Ashes In My Mouth	ORIGINAL · DARK, INTROSPECTIVE
Beggin' (Flip)	TRAP / EDM REINTERPRETATION
Say It Again	RELEASING OCT 30 · WITH VIDEO
Direction	DARKER · CINEMATIC · INTERNATIONAL

THE CRAFT

Q Is there an early moment you still remember — the first time a track you made actually sounded the way you'd heard it in your head?

Yes, definitely. I remember the first time I made a track where the idea in my head finally translated into the speakers almost exactly as I imagined it. It was a small moment, but it changed how I looked at music. Until then, production was mostly experimentation — trying sounds, changing things, and learning by making mistakes. But when I heard that track come together, I suddenly understood that I could actually create a sound that was uniquely mine. That feeling of hearing an idea that had only existed in your head become real was incredibly addictive. I think that was the moment I stopped seeing music as just something I enjoyed and started seeing it as something I genuinely wanted to build my life around.



ASHES IN MY MOUTH

THE ORIGINAL The artwork for "Ashes In My Mouth" — desire, regret and a city burning behind it.

Q "Ashes In My Mouth" is one of your own originals — where did that song come from, and what were you trying to say with it?

"Ashes In My Mouth" is a dark, introspective track about desire, regret and holding onto something even when you know it's falling apart. I wanted the production to feel as atmospheric and emotionally conflicted as the story itself.

Q You move across electronic pop, EDM, trap, bass house and R&B — how do you decide which of those a new song wants to become?

I don't really choose the genre first — I let the song tell me what it wants to be. I usually start with an emotion, melody, or sound, and then build the production around it. I'll experiment with different drums, bass, textures and vocal treatments until the sound feels right. That might take me toward electronic pop, EDM, trap, bass house or R&B. I don't want to force a song into a genre just because it's familiar to me. For me, the emotion comes first and the genre follows.

> *I don't really choose the genre first — I let the song tell me what it wants to be.*



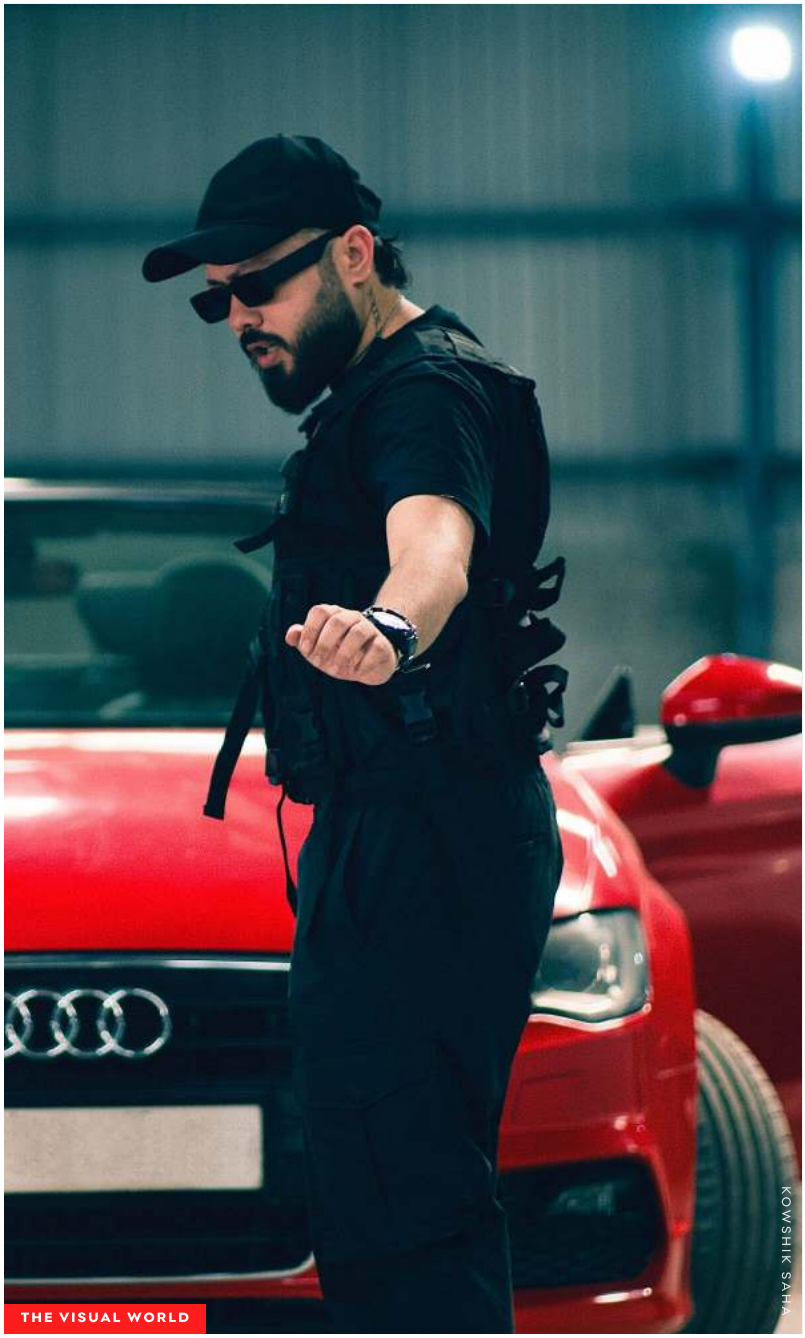
THE DESK

FIRST REACH The room where the tracks get built — keys, pads and the interface within arm's reach.

Q Walk us through this space — which piece of gear or software do you reach for first when a track starts coming together?

FL Studio for mixing and mastering. Adobe Audition for vocal recording.

THE VISION



THE VISUAL WORLD

AN EXTENSION OF THE MUSIC Darker, cinematic, internationally focused — a look built to be as recognisable as the sound.

AT A GLANCE

DISCIPLINE	Songwriter, producer & composer — trained vocalist since childhood
GENRES	Electronic pop, EDM, trap, bass house, R&B
TOOLS	FL Studio · Adobe Audition

Q You've said you're expanding the sound and visual identity of your project — what direction is it taking?

I'm moving toward a darker, more cinematic and internationally focused sound, with visuals that feel like an extension of the music. I want the Kowshik Saha identity to become instantly recognisable, both sonically and visually. The next step is to build that world consistently through my upcoming releases, starting with "SAY IT AGAIN" and its full-scale video.

Q Whose music or which sounds shaped the electronic, genre-blending style you make today?

Bruno Mars, Michael Jackson, Diplo, Skrillex, and Drake have all shaped the electronic, genre-blending style I make today.

Q Why does this one stay close to you — what happened while you were making it?

It's about us not seeing the wrong temptations in front of us until it's too late — but somehow we get lucky and barely get out of the situation.



TAKE MY SOUL

MAKE ME YOURS The cover for "Take My Soul" — the temptation he writes about, barely escaped.

IN MOTION · SCAN TO WATCH

Q What made you want to reinterpret "Beggin'" as a high-energy trap/EDM version, and what did you change most from the original?

"Beggin'" already had an iconic melody, so I wanted to completely flip its energy and bring it into my world. I kept the emotional core but rebuilt it with heavy 808s, punchy drums, darker textures and an EDM-driven drop. The goal wasn't to recreate the original, but to make it feel like a Kowshik Saha record — darker, heavier and more high-energy.

Q "SAY IT AGAIN" releases on Oct 30 with a full-scale video — what's the story or feeling you built this one around?

"SAY IT AGAIN" is about obsession, attraction and the desire to hear someone come back for more. I wanted to capture that addictive feeling in a dark, sensual and cinematic way. The video takes that emotion further, turning the song into a visual world rather than just a performance.



SAY IT AGAIN · OCT 30

NEXT RELEASE "Say It Again" — the single and its full-scale video, out October 30.

SCAN TO WATCH

The "Beggin'" flip — his high-energy trap/EDM reinterpretation.

SCAN TO WATCH

"Say It Again" — the full-scale video, releasing Oct 30.

SCAN TO WATCH

"Say It Again" — from the release's visual world.

SCAN TO WATCH

"Say It Again" — another clip from the Oct 30 release.

"I want them to feel something they can't quite shake. If they finish a Kowshik Saha track and feel like they want to hear it again, I've done my job."

KOWSHIK SAHA · PRODUCER & COMPOSER

CONNECT WITH KOWSHIK SAHA

INSTAGRAM @kowshikrsaha FACEBOOK kowshiksahaofficial YOUTUBE @kowshiksaha TIKTOK @kowshikrsaha

WEBSITE kowshiksaha.komi.io



CREATOR CONVERSATIONS · WILDLIFE

Dust & Light

SUBHASH SARAFF · FINE-ART WILDLIFE PHOTOGRAPHER

An architect who learned to wait. On patience, backlight, and the quiet, unrepeatable moments — from an elephant family in the morning dust to a lone shadow on a market door.

PHOTOGRAPH · "DUST & LIGHT" · DHIKALA ZONE, JIM CORBETT NATIONAL PARK

WHY THE WILD

Q Let's begin with the cover frame — tell us about "Dust & Light," that elephant family in a morning dust bath.

Dust & Light was photographed in the Dhikala zone of Jim Corbett on a cold winter morning. We came across an elephant family in a dry riverbed as they paused for a dust bath. The low morning sun behind them illuminated the dust, creating a beautiful glow and atmosphere.

What drew me to the scene was the calf standing safely between the adults, giving the image a strong sense of family and protection. I chose to include the entire group rather than focus on a single elephant, allowing the light, dust, and relationships within the herd to tell the story.

The moment lasted only a few seconds, but everything came together perfectly—behaviour, light, composition, and mood. For me, the photograph is less about elephants and more about family, connection, and the quiet beauty of life in the wild.

Q Can you take us back to the moment wildlife first took hold of you?

My journey into photography actually began with nature and landscape photography. I was always fascinated by light, scenery, and the outdoors. The turning point came just after the COVID restrictions were easing. I travelled to Kabini with my family, and during my morning walks around the property, I found myself surrounded by an incredible variety of birds. I started observing them more closely—their behaviour, colours, movements, and personalities—and felt naturally drawn to them.

Wildlife photography combines everything I love about photography—patience, observation, storytelling, and the unpredictability of nature. Once I experienced that, I was hooked.

Q When did a photograph of yours first cross from record-keeping into something that made a viewer feel?

One of the first times I truly sensed this was when viewers responded emotionally to photographs that weren't necessarily about a rare species or dramatic action. Images such as an elephant family enveloped in dust and light, a lone bird framed in a minimalist composition, or an animal emerging from darkness seemed to resonate with people on a deeper level. They would talk about the feeling the image conveyed—the sense of calm, mystery, family, or resilience—rather than the technical aspects of the photograph.

That was when I realized that a successful wildlife photograph, at least for me, is not just a record of what was seen, but an invitation for the viewer to experience what I felt in that moment. When someone pauses in front of an image and feels something, I know the photograph has achieved its purpose.



THE LAST BITE A crocodile erupting from the water with its catch at Bheemeshwari — chaos and precision in the same instant.

Q Share a moment of behaviour you feel lucky to have witnessed — what stays with you about it?

The Last Bite was photographed at Bheemeshwari and remains one of the most intense wildlife moments I have witnessed. We had been watching the crocodile for some time when it suddenly exploded out of the water with its catch. The entire sequence lasted only a few seconds, but the power and raw energy of the moment were unforgettable.

When I reviewed the image, I knew I had captured more than just an action shot. It told a complete story—the drama, the power, and the harsh reality of life in the wild.

LIGHT OVER SUBJECT

Q You arrived at the idea that light, composition and story matter as much as the subject. Where did that come from?

I think this philosophy comes from my background in landscape photography and architecture. Before wildlife photography became my primary focus, I spent years studying light, form, balance, and composition. As an architect, I was trained to look at relationships between elements within a space, and that way of seeing naturally carried over into my photography.

When I began photographing wildlife, I realized that a compelling image is rarely about the animal alone. A tiger is always a tiger, and a bird is always a bird, but what makes a photograph memorable is the way light interacts with the subject, the environment around it, and the story unfolding in that moment.

Q So much of your work is about quiet, unrepeatable moments. What keeps you coming back to them?

What draws me back is the privilege of witnessing something that may never happen in exactly the same way again. Wildlife is wonderfully unpredictable, and some of the most meaningful moments are not the dramatic hunts or confrontations, but the quieter interactions that reveal character, relationships, and emotion.

It could be an elephant family caring for a calf, a bird tending its nest, or a brief glance exchanged between two animals. These moments often last only a few seconds, yet they tell us something profound about the lives of creatures that share our planet.

> *"Patience has become far more important than speed."*
>
> SUBHASH SARAFF



FLIGHT THROUGH LIGHT Asian Paradise Flycatcher lifting off a pond in Odisha, backlit, its tail streamers lit like fire among sparkling droplets.

Q "Flight Through Light" catches the flycatcher suspended among droplets. What went through you the instant you knew you'd caught it?

Flight Through Light was photographed in Odisha on a trip I had undertaken specifically to photograph the Asian Paradise Flycatcher. I spent hours observing the bird around a pond, watching it repeatedly swoop down to the water and take off again in pursuit of insects.

What made the image special was the backlight. As the flycatcher lifted off from the pond, its chestnut-orange plumage and long tail streamers lit up like fire, while the water droplets around it sparkled like a field of stars. For a brief moment, it felt almost surreal.

INTO THE CITY

Q You're now carrying that wildlife instinct into people, cultures and everyday life. How did it guide this frame?

This image was made in KR Market, Bengaluru, and for me it perfectly illustrates how my approach remains the same whether I'm photographing wildlife or people. I was immediately drawn to the striking light and the shadow cast on the door. Before I noticed the person, I noticed the shadow—it almost seemed to have a character and story of its own.

In wildlife photography, I'm often looking for moments where light, form, and behaviour come together to create something beyond documentation. Here, instead of animal behaviour, it was human presence and gesture. The instinct was exactly the same: recognize the light, simplify the composition, and wait for the elements to align.

Q Where do you hope this new chapter takes your work?

Right now, I'm actively exploring street and documentary photography while continuing my wildlife work. What excites me is the opportunity to tell stories in very different environments—whether it's an elephant herd in a forest, a flower vendor in a market, or a fleeting interaction on a city street.

As I move forward, I hope to create a body of work that goes beyond genres. Whether the subject is wildlife or people, my goal remains the same—to create images that tell stories, evoke emotion, and encourage viewers to look more closely at the world around them.



KR MARKET, BENGALURU The shadow seen before the person — the wildlife instinct carried into the city.

AT A GLANCE

GENRE	**Fine-art wildlife; now moving into street & documentary**
BACKGROUND	**Architect; began in landscape & nature photography**
THE SPARK	**Kabini, post-COVID — birds on his morning walks**
SIGNATURE FRAMES	**"Dust & Light" · "Flight Through Light" · "The Last Bite"**
IN THE FIELD	**Jim Corbett · Odisha · Bheemeshwari · KR Market, Bengaluru**
CREED	**Light, composition & story over the subject itself**

"More than anything, I want them to pause. If someone spends a little longer with one of my photographs and feels a sense of wonder, curiosity, or connection, then I feel the image has succeeded."

SUBHASH SARAFF

CONNECT

INSTAGRAM @photographybysubhash

IN CONVERSATION · GUITAR

A Mark On the Soul

GIDEL JACOB · GUITARIST

The guitarist on the Hotel California solo that gave him chills, the headless Kiesel they keep mistaking for a violin, and the hours that simply disappear when he plays.



GIDEL JACOB

Q Take us back to the very beginning — how did the guitar first find its way into your life?

My father was the one who introduced me to music. I was around four years old, and I used to spend a lot of time listening to his CDs and cassettes. I was fascinated by what I was hearing, even though I obviously didn't understand much about music at that age. His collection had artists like Michael Jackson, the Eagles, Carlos Santana, The Beatles and Pink Floyd, and I think those early influences stayed with me. I actually started with the piano and had my first stage performance when I was four. But as I grew up, I became more and more drawn to the guitar. I still remember hearing the Hotel California solo and getting chills. I would just sit there and listen to it and think, "I want to play like that." Around the age of ten, I started learning guitar properly. By then, the interest had already been there for years — the guitar was a natural progression from growing up around all that music.

Q What's the first moment you remember when playing music truly clicked for you?

For me, it's when I realize I've been sitting for hours learning or composing something, and I completely lose track of time. I get so focused that everything else just fades away. There's something about that feeling that just makes me genuinely happy and reminds me how much music means to me.

Q Is there a teacher or musician who shaped the way you play — someone whose influence stuck with you?

My father laid the foundation for my musical journey. I took my initial lessons from him, and his influence has always been there throughout — even today, I continue to learn from him. I've also had the opportunity to learn from the incredible Brazilian guitarist Icaro Paiva. His lessons taught me many of the essential techniques and helped me build a strong foundation as a guitarist.

THE INSTRUMENT

Q What is this guitar, and what makes it the one you keep coming back to?

This is the Vader V7X by Kiesel. It's special to me because it was my first proper guitar. I honestly believe having an incredible guitar can really inspire you to play, practice and write more, and it definitely did that for me. Everything just felt so easy with this guitar, from getting the tones I wanted to the intonation. I can pick it up and play it anywhere without thinking twice. And the best part is that it's headless — people sometimes think I'm carrying a violin! It's also so easy to travel with, especially when flying.



THE VADER V7X His headless Kiesel — the first proper guitar he ever owned, and the one he says he can pick up and play anywhere.

Q You've stepped into solo contests set by guitarists like Plini and Sarah Longfield — whose playing has shaped your own sound the most?

I'd say Plini has been a huge inspiration for my guitar playing. I discovered him accidentally on YouTube, and the moment I heard his music, I remember thinking, "Guitar instrumental music can be this way?" The sound and the way he played were so appealing to me. That's what got me deeper into the progressive world, and it really opened up a whole new side of music for me.

> *Guitar instrumental music can be this way? That's what got me deeper into the progressive world.*

Q Your music moves across instruments — from your piano EP "Sunrise" to your guitar work. How does switching between the two shape what you write?

I don't necessarily switch between the instruments when I write. Both piano and guitar are equally important to me when it comes to composing. In fact, I rely more on the piano for certain types of songs and projects because it helps me explore ideas in a different way. For me, it's really about using whichever instrument feels right for the music I'm trying to create.

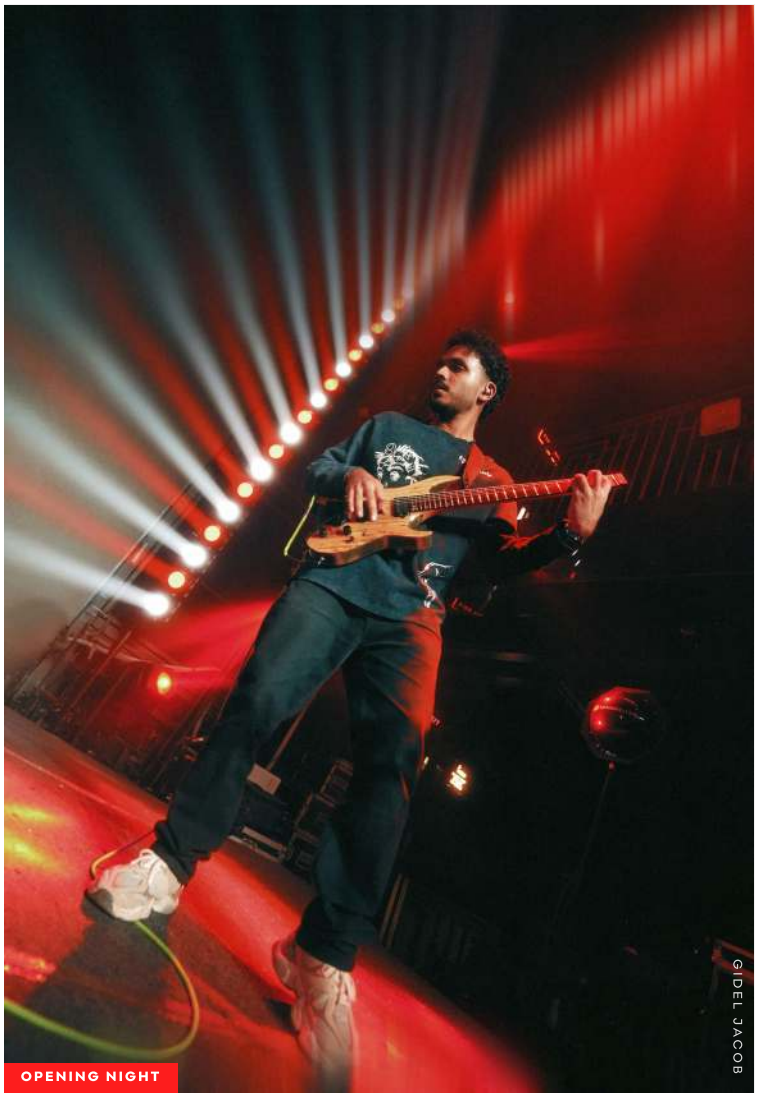
AT A GLANCE

INSTRUMENT	Kiesel Vader V7X (headless)
BEGAN	Piano at 4 · guitar at 10
MENTORS	His father · Icaro Paiva
SOUND	Progressive instrumental
ALSO	Piano EP "Sunrise"

ON STAGE

Q Where was this, and what do you remember most about that day?

That gig was really special for me because I got the opportunity to open for one of my favourite guitarists, Jakub Zytecki. I've been a fan of his playing for a long time, so being able to share the stage with him was something I'll always remember. What I remember most is the feeling of playing my own music in front of an audience, and knowing that one of the artists who inspired me was there. It was a really exciting and surreal experience for me.



OPENING NIGHT



AFTER THE SHOW

SHARING THE STAGE Opening for Jakub Zytecki (centre, right frame) — one of the guitarists who first inspired him — and the set that always stays with him.

Q Your circle of collaborators has shaped you as much as any stage — who have you made music with, and what did they bring out in your playing?

I've had the chance to collaborate with a lot of people, and those collaborations have played a big part in shaping me as a musician. On "Sora," I worked with my good friend Anandu Gopal. In some of our other videos we did a version of "Cosmic Sans" by Cory Wong, with tabla by my friend Amar Ghokale and keys by my brother Joel Antony. I'm really lucky to have a peaceful circle of friends to make music with. These collaborations have taught me to make more mature musical decisions, take feedback, and keep growing as a musician.



IN THE LIGHTS Playing his own music live — the feeling he says always stays with him.

IN MOTION · SCAN TO WATCH

Q What's the story behind this winning piece — what were you going for when you played it?

"Impressions" started when I was checking out the Cali plugin by Neural DSP. I came up with the first lick and then slowly built the whole track around it. The djenty riff with the synth wobbles was just me experimenting with different feels, and I was also listening to a lot of David Maxim Micic around that time. The whole idea was to finish the track within a week, and I had a lot of fun writing it. The song is about a memory that leaves a mark on your soul — those mesmerizing moments when you see something come to life because of something you did.

Q Walk us through this solo — which moment in it are you proudest of?

The song is called "Weightless," composed by Sai Sanjith. Sai approached me for a guitar session and sent me the demo. I was instantly hooked the moment I heard it, and it got me really excited to start working on the track. We started sharing ideas, and everything worked out perfectly. To be honest, I'm proud of every single second of that solo. I'd say "Weightless" is definitely one of my best works so far.

Q Which track did you choose, and why does this one stay with you?

"Elysium" is an instrumental track I wrote with Anandu Gopal. The whole idea came to us while we were jamming at my home, and we slowly developed it from there — trying out new ideas and seeing where the music would take us. We added a violin solo section, beautifully performed by Avinash Muraleedhar; it was mixed by Le Charles Blue and mastered by Rex Vijayan. It stays with me because of how naturally it came together — it started as just a jam between two friends.

SCAN TO WATCH

"Impressions" — his winning piece, built in a week around a single lick.

SCAN TO WATCH

"Weightless" — the guitar solo on Sai Sanjith's track.

SCAN TO WATCH

"Elysium" — the jam-turned-track with Anandu Gopal.

"If they hear my music and it makes them feel something, even for a moment, that would mean a lot to me. I just want the music to connect with them in some way."

GIDEL JACOB · GUITARIST

CONNECT WITH GIDEL JACOB

INSTAGRAM @gideljacob YOUTUBE Gidel Jacob FACEBOOK Gidel Jacob WEBSITE gideljacob.framer.website

IN CONVERSATION · NATURE & LANDSCAPE

My Will *to Click*

AYUSMAN PRADHAN · NATURE & LANDSCAPE PHOTOGRAPHER

Everything here was made on an Android phone. Ayusman Pradhan started clicking for fun on a vacation in Visakhapatnam, kept coming back to those first frames, and built a way of seeing around one belief — that it is the eye, not the equipment, that makes the photograph.



ARAKU VALLEY · SHOT ON PHONE

AYUSMAN PRADHAN

? What first pulled you toward photography?

What first pulled me toward photography was the idea of capturing moments that would otherwise disappear with time. I started photography just for fun, without really knowing where it would take me. But as time passed, my interest kept growing, and I started enjoying the process of capturing different moments, perspectives, and stories. Now, I want to explore this field more, keep improving my skills, and hopefully achieve something meaningful through photography.

? The landscape frame you're proudest of — where was it taken?

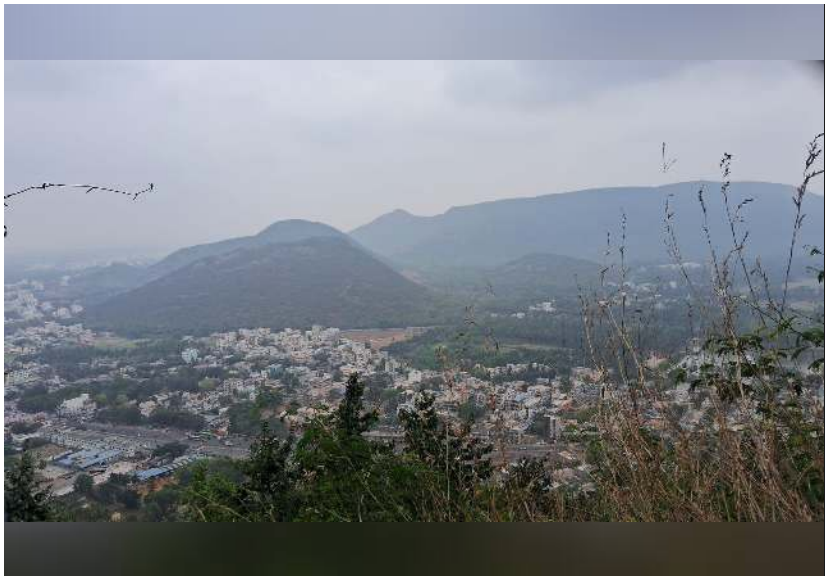
This photo was taken at a resort in Araku Valley, near Visakhapatnam. I was drawn to the scene because of the way the setting sun was framed perfectly between the tall trees. The warm sunset light, dark silhouettes, and the peaceful surroundings created a really beautiful atmosphere. I didn't want to just capture a sunset—I wanted to capture the feeling of that moment.

> *"My phone and my will to click — that's the gear I never leave behind."*
>
> AYUSMAN PRADHAN

AT A GLANCE

GEAR	One Android phone — nothing else
SHOOTS	Landscapes, skies & fleeting street moments
THESE FRAMES	Visakhapatnam & Araku Valley
LIVES BY	Sam Abell — "masters of all we do use"
FIND HIM	Instagram @ayusman.pradhan.018

WHERE IT BEGAN · VISAKHAPATNAM





THE FIRST FRAMES A top view of the city and an evening sky — two of the pictures he keeps coming back to.



BORRA CAVES Light pouring in from above — the shot that first made him look twice.

? Was there one moment when you knew this was the thing to chase?

One fine day during my vacation in Visakhapatnam (Vizag), I started casually clicking pictures of the places I visited. The Borra Caves and the top view of the city especially caught my attention. I was just clicking for fun, but when I looked back at those pictures, I realised how differently a camera could capture the beauty of a place. That experience made me more curious about photography. Soon after, I created a dedicated account to share my photographs, and that's when photography slowly started becoming more than just a hobby for me.

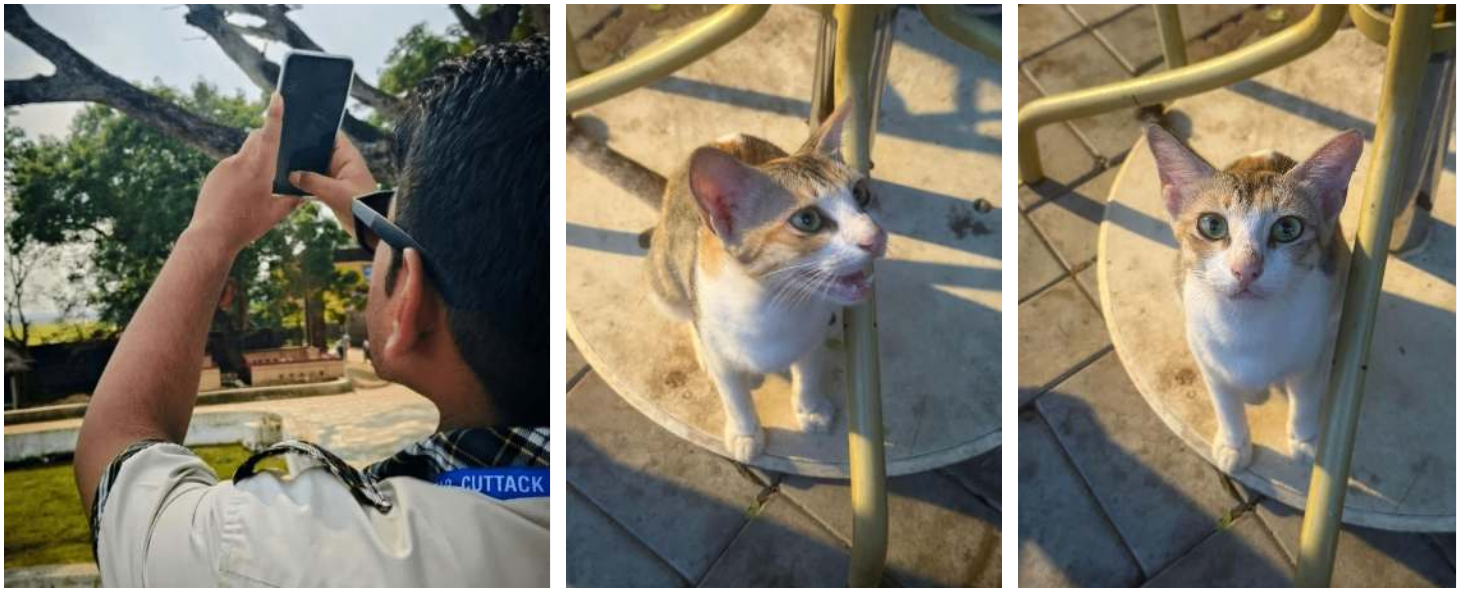
? Which frames would you call your signature shots?

I keep coming back to these photos because they take me back to the moment when I was just beginning to discover photography. I remember capturing them during my vacation in Visakhapatnam, without overthinking the shots. Every time I look at them, I can still feel the atmosphere of that place and the excitement I had while exploring it with my camera. More than just being good photographs, they remind me of where my journey in photography started.

? Is there a photographer or a place that shaped how you see?

What began as just fun slowly made me more curious about photography and different perspectives. I also came across a quote by photographer Sam Abell that really stayed with me: 'It matters little how much equipment we use; it matters much that we be masters of all we do use.' It made me realise that photography is not just about the gear, but about the skill, creativity, and vision behind the camera. Since then, I've been trying to learn, experiment, and develop my own way of seeing through the lens.

THE PHONE, THE STRAYS & THE FEELING



THE WHOLE KIT, AND THE WAIT Left: a phone raised to a tree — no bag of lenses, no tripod. Right: the same stray, two frames apart — the wait, and the expression that almost got away.

? The one piece of gear you can't head out without?

The one piece of gear I can't head out without is my phone—an Android phone, in fact. I don't believe you always need expensive or professional gear to capture a great photograph. Of course, good equipment can be useful, but it's not everything. For me, what matters most is my willingness to look for beauty, notice the little things, and capture them.

? A shot that tested your patience?

I waited for a few minutes, trying to stay patient and capture the right moment. I was honestly quite excited because I never knew how the final shot would turn out. When I finally got the moment I was looking for, it felt really satisfying. Little did I know that moments like these would later encourage me to take photography more seriously and keep improving.

? And one that almost didn't happen?

It was really a matter of timing and luck. I noticed the cat unexpectedly and only had a moment to pull out my phone and capture it. If I had been even a few seconds late, I would have missed that expression completely.

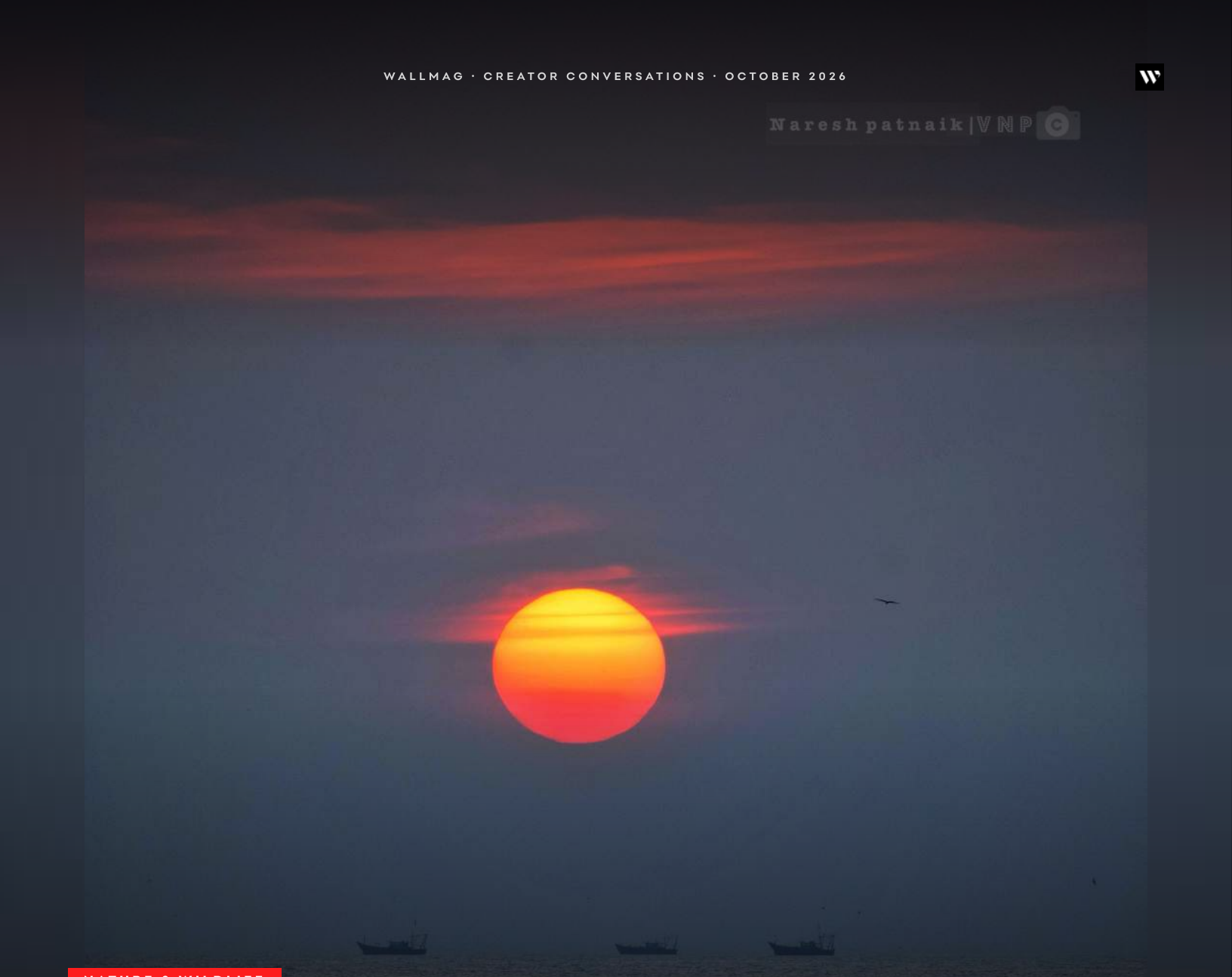


STILL LOOKING Another evening sky over Visakhapatnam — the kind of moment he says keeps him going back.

> *"When everything finally comes together in the frame and I capture what caught my eye, it feels incredibly satisfying — that feeling keeps me looking around, exploring, and waiting for the next moment worth capturing."*
>
> AYUSMAN PRADHAN · ON WHY HE KEEPS GOING BACK

CONNECT

INSTAGRAM @ayusman.pradhan.018 **INSTAGRAM** @pickledump.ap



NATURE & WILDLIFE

Observe first, shoot second.

NARESH PATNAIK VNP

NATURE & WILDLIFE PHOTOGRAPHER · SOFTWARE PROFESSIONAL

Technology is the profession; photography is the passion. On the birds that teach you to wait, a temple built like a peacock's feather, and what the viewfinder gives him that a career never could.

SUNSET OVER THE SEA · NARESH PATNAIK VNP

CODE BY DAY

AT A GLANCE

BY PROFESSION
Software — client engagement

STUDIED
B.E. and M.Tech

ALSO
A Western dancer

SHOOTS
Birds, wildlife, landscapes

GO-TO LENS
Nikon DSLR + telephoto

KEEPS RETURNING TO
Mandaragiri Guru Mandir, Tumakuru

Q You describe yourself as a software professional and a nature & wildlife photographer in the same breath — how did the camera find its way into your life alongside your tech career?

My journey with photography grew alongside my professional journey. After completing my B.E. and M.Tech, I built my career in the software industry, where I work in client engagement. Outside my professional life, I have always been drawn to creative pursuits. I am also a Western dancer, which has taught me to appreciate movement, rhythm, and expression.

My fascination with nature and wildlife gradually brought me to photography, which became a serious passion. What started as an interest grew into a way of capturing natural moments, light, wildlife, and the beauty that often goes unnoticed.

Today, technology is my profession, while photography is my major hobby and passion, giving me a different way to observe, experience, and express the world around me.

Q Take us back to the very first time nature made you stop and reach for your camera. What were you looking at, and what did it stir in you?

The first time nature truly made me reach for my camera was during a quiet moment outdoors, when I noticed how beautifully light, colors, and natural surroundings came together. It was a simple scene, but it made me pause and look at nature differently. I wanted to preserve that moment, and when I saw the photograph on my camera, I realized how powerful photography could be in capturing emotions that words sometimes cannot express. That moment sparked my deeper passion for nature photography.

Q What's the story behind this frame — where were you, and what made this shot special enough to be your signature?

Rather than one single frame, these five photographs together represent my journey and the way I see nature through my camera. From flowers and butterflies to birds, wildlife, and the beauty of a sunset over the sea, each frame captures a different moment that made me pause and observe. What connects them all is my fascination with the details, colours, behaviour, and emotions found in nature. I don't simply look for a photograph; I look for a moment that feels worth preserving. Together, these frames reflect my passion for discovering and documenting the beauty of the natural world.

Q Bird photography rewards patience — how long did you wait for this one, and what's the trick you've learned to getting close to birds without spooking them?

Bird photography has taught me that patience matters more than rushing for the perfect frame. I usually spend time quietly observing the birds and their behaviour before even raising the camera. The biggest trick I've learned is to move slowly, keep a comfortable distance, avoid sudden movements, and let the bird get accustomed to my presence. Once the bird feels undisturbed, natural moments begin to happen. For me, the best photographs come from observing first and shooting second.









FOUR OF THE FIVE Flowers, a butterfly, a langur and the bulbuls he waited out — the fifth, the sunset over the sea, opens this feature.

THE PEACOCK-FEATHER TEMPLE

Q Has anyone — a fellow photographer, a friend, a birding companion, or even a favourite creator you follow — shaped the way you see and shoot nature?

Yes, definitely. Rathika Ramasamy and Sudhir Sivaram have been strong inspirations for me, particularly in the way they observe wildlife and capture natural behaviour with patience and purpose. Internationally, I also admire Marsel van Oosten and Ami Vitale for their distinctive visual storytelling and ability to create a deeper connection between the viewer and the natural world.

Their work has taught me that nature photography is not just about getting a technically good photograph. It is about patience, timing, understanding the subject, and capturing a genuine moment. Their approach has encouraged me to slow down, observe more carefully, and develop my own way of telling stories through nature and wildlife photography.

Q Where is this, and what is it about this place that keeps calling you back with your camera?

One place that keeps calling me back with my camera is Mandaragiri Guru Mandir near Tumakuru, Karnataka. The moment I saw its striking peacock-feather-inspired architecture, I was drawn to its colours, patterns, symmetry, and the way it stands against the open sky. Every visit gives me a different perspective depending on the light, clouds, and surroundings. For me, it is more than just a beautiful place to photograph; it is a reminder of how art, architecture, and nature can come together to create something truly captivating.

Q When you head out to shoot, what pulls you most — the patience of waiting for a bird, the stillness of a landscape, or something else entirely?

What pulls me most is the unpredictability of nature and the patience it demands. I enjoy waiting for a bird to reveal a natural behaviour, a perfect moment of light, or a fleeting interaction that may last only a few seconds. Sometimes it is the stillness of a landscape; other times, it is the anticipation of what might happen next.

For me, the real excitement is not just taking the photograph, but being present in that moment and capturing something that may never happen the same way again.

Q Walk us through your kit — what's your go-to setup for birds versus landscapes, and is there one piece of gear you can't shoot without?

My kit is fairly versatile, and I choose my setup depending on what I am shooting. For birds and wildlife, I rely on my Nikon DSLR with a telephoto lens, which gives me the reach to capture natural behaviour while maintaining a respectful distance. For landscapes and nature scenes, I use a wider lens, while my 50mm f/1.8 prime lens is one of my favourites for portraits, details, and creative compositions. I also use a drone to explore landscapes from a different perspective and capture a sense of scale that isn't possible from the ground. For travel and everyday visual storytelling, I carry my DJI Osmo Pocket 3, which is compact and allows me to capture smooth, spontaneous videos without carrying a large setup.

If I had to choose one essential piece of gear, it would still be my telephoto lens, especially for wildlife photography. But each piece of equipment has its own role, and I enjoy switching between them depending on the story I want to capture.



MANDARAGIRI





THE KIT

TUMAKURU, AND WHAT GOES IN THE BAG The temple he keeps returning to — "colours, patterns, symmetry, and the way it stands against the open sky" — and the Nikon, the telephoto, the drone and the Osmo Pocket that go out with him.

TWO KINDS OF KEEPER

Q What was happening the moment you pressed the shutter here, and what makes it a keeper for you?

These two frames are special to me for very different reasons. The first is a portrait of my daughter, captured in a quiet, natural moment when her innocent expression caught my attention. I wanted to preserve that genuine smile rather than create a posed photograph, making it a precious memory of her childhood.

The second captures an iguana resting naturally on a branch. I was drawn to its striking colours, textures, and distinctive features, and waited for the right moment to frame it against the surroundings. It became a keeper because it reminded me that nature is full of fascinating subjects when we slow down and observe them closely. Together, these photographs represent two sides of what photography means to me: preserving personal memories and discovering the beauty of the natural world.

Q For someone visiting this spot with a camera, what's your tip on the best light or time of day to capture it the way you did?

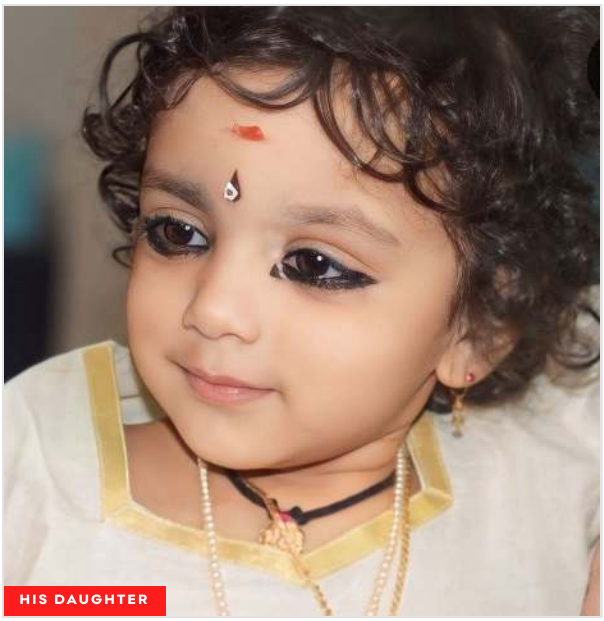
For Mysore Palace, I would recommend visiting in the early morning or late afternoon, when the light is softer and more flattering. For this photograph, the slightly cloudy sky worked beautifully because it created soft, even light across the palace and brought out the details, colours, and red domes without harsh shadows. I would also suggest taking a little time to find a clean, balanced viewpoint that captures the palace along with the surrounding gardens. The combination of soft light, dramatic clouds, and the palace's intricate architecture is what made this frame stand out for me.

Q Balancing a demanding tech career with your love for photography isn't easy — what does picking up the camera give you that nothing else does?

Picking up the camera gives me something my professional life cannot: the freedom to slow down, observe, and simply be present. My work in technology and client engagement keeps me focused on people, business, and constant deadlines, while photography takes me outdoors and reconnects me with nature.

When I look through the viewfinder, I stop thinking about everything else and focus on one moment, one subject, and one frame. It gives me a sense of calm, creativity, and discovery. For me, photography is not just a hobby; it is my way of stepping away from the routine and seeing the world with a fresh perspective.

> *Photography is not just a hobby; it is my way of stepping away from the routine and seeing the world with a fresh perspective.*



A GENUINE SMILE "Rather than create a posed photograph."



SLOW DOWN AND OBSERVE "Its striking colours, textures, and distinctive features."



SOFT LIGHT, DRAMATIC CLOUDS Early morning or late afternoon, and the red domes without harsh shadows.

CONNECT WITH NARESH PATNAIK VNP

INSTAGRAM @naresh_patnaik_vnp

DRUMS · PERCUSSION

ON STAGE AT TWELVE.

SPARSH SANGAM

DRUMMER & PERCUSSIONIST

His mother danced Bihu; his father has played ethnic strokes for twenty-five years. He took a stage beside his dad in Delhi at around twelve, and has been chasing the freedom of rhythm ever since.

AT A GLANCE

INSTRUMENT
Drums and percussion

MOTHER
An Assamese Bihu dancer

FATHER
Ethnic stroke player, musician and producer — 25+ years

FIRST GIG
Delhi, around twelve, beside his dad

WORKS AS
Performer, creator, collaborator

PLAYS ACROSS
Rock, progressive metal, funk, Latin, drum and bass, Indian fusion



ON STAGE "This one's from one of the most mad gig I did few years back with 'Yo Yo Honey Singh' in Abu Dhabi."

Q Take us back to the very beginning, Sparsh — what first pulled you toward the drums, and do you remember the moment you knew this was going to be your life?

My journey with drums began at a very young age, growing up in an environment where music was always a part of life. My mother was an Assamese Bihu dancer in her younger days, and my father is a renowned ethnic stroke player, musician, and music producer who has been working in the industry for over 25 years. Being surrounded by music and different forms of artistic expression naturally influenced me, but the drums were something I felt particularly drawn to. There was something about the energy, the rhythm, and the freedom of expression behind the instrument that fascinated me.

What started as curiosity gradually turned into a passion, and eventually, that passion became a serious commitment. The more I learned, the more I realised that drumming was not just about playing an instrument — it was about expressing myself, connecting with people, and being a part of something bigger through music.

I don't think there was one single moment when I knew this was going to be my life. It was a gradual realisation that came through years of practice, performing, learning, and pushing myself to become a better musician. Every opportunity I got to perform on stage reinforced that feeling. Over time, what I loved doing became what I wanted to dedicate my life to.

Looking back, I'm grateful that something that began as a natural attraction to music has grown into a career that allows me to perform, create, collaborate with incredible artists, and keep discovering new possibilities behind the drums. For me, it's still a journey of learning, and that's what keeps the passion alive.

FIRST GIG, AND THE NIGHTS AFTER

Q Can you recall one of your earliest memorable moments behind the kit — a performance, a jam, or even a practice session that stayed with you? Tell us what made it so vivid.

One of my earliest and most memorable musical experiences was playing my very first gig as a percussionist alongside my dad in Delhi. I was around 12 years old at the time, and it was a special experience for me because I was sharing the stage with someone I had grown up looking up to, both as a musician and as a father.

Being on stage at that age was a completely different feeling. It gave me an early glimpse into the world of live performance and what it meant to be a part of a musical experience beyond just practising an instrument. Looking back, that performance holds a special place in my heart because it was one of my first steps into the professional world of music.

I may not have understood the full magnitude of what that moment meant for my future back then, but it was the beginning of a journey that has taken me to some incredible stages and given me opportunities I could only have dreamed of as a child. In many ways, that first gig with my dad will always remain one of the most meaningful milestones in my musical journey.

Q What do you remember most about that night on stage — the energy, the crowd, the people you were playing with?

What made that moment special for me was the fact that the intro music was something I had designed and worked on over months, with the vision of creating a grand, almost cinematic entrance for Yo Yo Honey Singh every time he stepped on stage. So, seeing that idea come to life in front of thousands of people was an incredible feeling.

There's a different kind of adrenaline when you're performing something you've created yourself. You're not just playing your instrument; you're watching an idea that started in your head translate into a live experience, with the entire crowd waiting for that moment. The energy in the arena, the anticipation before the entrance, and the collective reaction of the audience made it incredibly powerful.

Sharing that moment with the entire band and the team made it even more rewarding. It takes a lot of preparation, trust, and coordination to make something of that scale work live, and seeing all those elements come together on stage was something I'll always remember.

For me, it was a proud moment as both a drummer and a musician — a reminder that our role goes beyond performing on stage. We also get to create moments that people experience and remember.

Q You've spoken about developing your own identity behind the drums. How would you describe that identity in your own words — what makes a groove unmistakably yours?

I would describe my identity behind the drums as a blend of power, precision, groove, and versatility. I love exploring complex rhythmic ideas and pushing technical boundaries, but at the same time, I believe that a drummer should always serve the music and understand when to play less and let the song breathe.

Having grown up listening to and learning from drummers across different genres, I've always tried to absorb their musical philosophies without losing my own individuality. I enjoy bringing the energy and aggression of rock and progressive metal together with the pocket of funk, the rhythmic freedom of Latin music, and the depth of Indian rhythms.

For me, what makes a groove unmistakably mine isn't necessarily a particular fill or technique. It's the way I approach a piece of music, how I interpret its dynamics, how I build energy, and how I respond to the musicians around me. I want my playing to have both intensity and sensitivity — to be able to drive a high-energy performance one moment and create something subtle and deeply musical the next.

Ultimately, I'm still discovering and developing my identity every day. I don't want to be known only for how fast or technically challenging I can play, but for how I make people feel through my playing. If someone can recognise my musical personality through the way I approach a groove, regardless of the genre, then I feel I'm moving in the right direction.

SCAN TO WATCH

Performance clip

Filmed from the floor, mid-set.

SCAN TO WATCH

Behind the kit

A second clip, as submitted.

Q What has playing drums alongside Yo Yo Honey Singh over these years taught you, and is there a favourite memory from that journey you'd love to share?

Playing drums alongside Yo Yo Honey Singh over the years has taught me so much about discipline, consistency, adaptability, and what it takes to perform at the highest level. When you're part of a production of that scale, it's not just about being a good musician; it's about understanding the artist's vision, being prepared, working as a team, and delivering every single time, regardless of the circumstances.

One of the biggest things I've learned is how to channel the energy of live music. Performing in front of thousands of people, reading the crowd, and making sure the music has the right impact every night is an experience that teaches you things you simply can't learn in a practice room. It's also pushed me to grow beyond being just a drummer and explore my creative side through arranging, designing musical transitions, and contributing to the overall live experience.

One of my most memorable experiences with Yo Yo has been performing at the Coca-Cola Arena in Dubai. Playing in a venue of that scale, with the energy of the crowd and the entire production coming together, was a truly special experience. Moments like these remind me why I fell in love with performing in the first place and how rewarding it is to be part of something that connects with so many people through music.

I'm genuinely grateful for the journey and the trust I've been given over the years. It's taught me that no matter how far you go in your career, you have to keep learning, stay hungry, and never lose the passion that made you pick up the instrument in the first place.

Q Recording drums for Asha Bhosle ji's final song is a milestone few musicians will ever know. Whenever you feel ready, we'd be honoured if you'd share what that experience meant to you.

Recording drums for Asha Bhosle ji's final song is something I will always hold very close to my heart. Honestly, it's difficult to put into words what an honour that is. She was an iconic voice whose music has been a part of generations of listeners, and to have my own contribution be a part of her final musical journey is something I consider one of the biggest milestones of my life.

Interestingly, this opportunity came to me through my dad. He told me that Asha ji's music producer, Mr. Rajiv Tyagi, was looking for a drummer who could bring the right groove and feel to a track with an old-school, classic sound. Rajiv ji had seen some of my playing and expressed an interest in having me on board for the project. Getting this opportunity through my dad made it even more special for me.

As a drummer, I really enjoyed approaching the track with the sensitivity and musicality it required. Sometimes, the challenge isn't about playing something technically complex; it's about understanding the character of a song and finding the right groove that complements it.

What made the experience even more meaningful was receiving a Certificate of Appreciation from the All India Cine Artists Workers Association for my contribution to the track. It was a beautiful moment of recognition, and something I'll always cherish.

I'm incredibly grateful to my dad for connecting me to this opportunity, and to Mr. Rajiv Tyagi and the team for trusting me with such a meaningful project. Being part of a recording connected to Asha Bhosle ji's extraordinary legacy is an honour I will carry with me throughout my life. It's a reminder of how music can create moments that go far beyond a career milestone and become a part of your personal history.

Q Your playing moves across rock, progressive metal, funk, Latin, drum and bass, and Indian fusion — how did your style come to span such a wide world of sound, and what ties it all together for you?

I've always believed that music has no boundaries, and as a drummer, I've never wanted to limit myself to one particular genre. Growing up in a musical environment exposed me to different sounds and influences, and over time, I developed a curiosity to explore everything from rock and progressive metal to funk, Latin, drum and bass, and Indian fusion.

A big part of that journey has been listening to and learning from drummers who have inspired me since the beginning of my career. Mike Portnoy, Chris Coleman, Jojo Mayer, Benny Greb, and Steve Smith have influenced my understanding of technique, creativity, groove, and musicality. On the Indian side, legends and pioneers like Ustad Zakir Hussain, Ranjit Barot, Trilok Gurtu, and Gino Banks have deeply inspired me with their approach to rhythm, improvisation, and the fusion of Indian and contemporary musical styles. Each of them has a distinct voice on the instrument, and studying their work has encouraged me to keep pushing my own boundaries.

Every genre offers something different. Progressive music challenges me technically and pushes me to think outside the box, funk and Latin music teach me about groove and feel, while Indian music brings a completely different rhythmic vocabulary and a deeper understanding of rhythm and phrasing. I enjoy taking something from each of these worlds and finding ways to incorporate it into my own playing.

For me, the key is not just learning to play different styles, but understanding the musical language behind them. I want to be able to adapt to the music, serve the song, and still bring my own identity to the instrument.

Ultimately, what ties everything together is rhythm, feel, and expression. No matter how complex or simple the music is, I believe the drums should always contribute to the emotion and energy of the composition. My goal is to remain versatile, keep experimenting, and never stop learning, because I feel that the more musical languages you understand, the more freely you can express yourself as an artist.

FEELING THE MUSIC

Q Walk us through what we're seeing there — what does a day of studio recording or building an arrangement look like through your eyes?

What you're seeing is the setup I used to record drums for Asha Bhosle ji's song, so this particular setup holds a very special place in my heart.

For me, a studio recording session begins long before I sit behind the kit. I like to understand the composition, the mood of the song, and what the music requires from the drums. Especially when working on a track with a classic sound, the goal isn't to overpower the arrangement but to find the right groove, dynamics, and textures that complement the song.

Once I'm behind the kit, I spend time getting the sounds right and making sure every element serves the music. The choice of cymbals, tuning, playing dynamics, and even the way I approach a particular groove can make a huge difference to the final recording. I used my Meinl cymbals for this session, and I always enjoy experimenting with different sounds to find what best fits the musical context.

When I'm building an arrangement, I also think about the bigger picture — how the drums interact with the other instruments, where the energy should build, where the music needs space, and how each section should flow into the next. Sometimes, the most effective thing you can play is something very simple, provided it has the right feel.

Ultimately, my approach in the studio is to be as creative as possible while remaining sensitive to the song's identity. Every session is an opportunity to learn something new, and with a project as special as this one, that process becomes even more meaningful.

Q When you imagine the musician you're still becoming, how do you hope people feel the moment you sit down behind the drums?

I hope people feel something genuine when they hear me play. Whether it's the energy of a powerful rock performance, the intricacy of a progressive arrangement, or the subtlety of a simple groove, I want my playing to connect with people on an emotional level.

As a musician, I'm constantly trying to evolve, not just technically, but also in how I understand and express music. I want to reach a point where my playing speaks for itself, where I don't necessarily have to prove anything through speed or complexity, but can create an impact simply through the way I feel and interpret the music.

I also hope to inspire other musicians, especially young drummers who are still finding their own voices. I've spent years learning from the artists and drummers who inspired me, and I believe that journey of learning never really ends. If my music can encourage someone to pick up an instrument, explore different styles, or believe in their own potential, that would mean a lot to me.

Ultimately, I want people to walk away feeling the music rather than just remembering the drummer. For me, that's the real goal — to play with honesty, make every performance count, and leave a little something behind through the music I create. I'm still becoming the musician I want to be, and I hope that sense of curiosity and hunger to grow stays with me for the rest of my life.


ON THE ROAD


THE KIT


IN THE STUDIO


EARLY DAYS

PERFORM, CREATE, COLLABORATE Between shows, behind the kit, and in the room where the parts get cut — the three things Sparsh names when asked what he does with his days.

CONNECT WITH SPARSH SANGAM

INSTAGRAM @sparsh_sangam **YOUTUBE** @sparshsangam8005



IN CONVERSATION · WILDLIFE

The Eleventh Attempt

KIRAN DEY · @WILDFRAMEVOYAGER · WILDLIFE PHOTOGRAPHER

Two safaris in Ranthambore in 2024 were all it took. What began with a phone and a glimpse of a tigress became a three-season pursuit of Kanha's legendary male, Neela Naala — captured, at last, on the eleventh attempt.

ON THE COVER · GOLDEN HOUR, BANDHAVGARH — A SUB-ADULT OF THE RA TIGRESS

THE BEGINNING · 2024



IN THE FIELD Kiran Dey, camera in hand, between sightings.

Q Take us back to the very beginning — when did wildlife photography stop being just a hobby and become the thing that pulls you back into the forest again and again?

The love for wildlife has been there since my childhood, but the knack for wildlife photography started in 2024. The first time I visited a forest and did a safari was in February 2024. My wife and I planned a trip to Ranthambore, hoping to catch a glimpse of the national animal. I didn't have a camera back then, just a mobile to take photos. We were lucky enough to sight tigers in two of our safaris. But it wasn't just that — the purity of nature, the chirping of birds, the alarm calls, and everything else captivated me. I started nurturing the idea of capturing the wild through a camera lens just as I see it.

Q Do you remember your first proper sighting through the lens? Where were you, and which animal made your heart race that day?

It was in Ranthambore in February 2024. We sighted Riddhi in zone 2 for the entirety of the afternoon safari. But I didn't have a camera; I captured photos through my phone. The feeling was absolutely surreal — nothing I could have ever imagined. The first time I had a camera and photographed a tiger was in Pench, Madhya Pradesh. It was a big dominant male named Bajirao. He was the first dominant male I ever witnessed and captured through my camera lens.

Q Was there a mentor, a fellow photographer, or a safari guide who shaped the way you see the wild — or did you largely find your own way?

I watched videos available on the internet to learn the basics of photography. After that, I enrolled in an online course for wildlife photography. Since then, it's been practice in the field through safaris and experiments that has helped me come this far.

Q A tiger you'll never forget — tell us about this particular tiger and the day your paths crossed.

This photograph is of a male sub-adult tiger. I captured it in Bandhavgarh in June 2026. It's a sub-adult cub of the famous Ra tigress. I captured it during an evening safari in golden light falling on the tiger's face. The tiger was resting and, for once, looked towards us as if to check who had come to his home.

ON THE COVER That golden-hour sub-adult of the Ra tigress, Bandhavgarh — the frame that opens this story.

FIELD NOTEBOOK · AT A GLANCE

BEGAN	2024 — a lifelong love of the wild, picked up through a lens
FIRST SAFARI	Ranthambore, February 2024 — with his wife, hoping for the national animal
FIRST TIGER	Riddhi, Ranthambore Zone 2 — a whole afternoon, shot on a phone
FIRST ON CAMERA	Bajirao, the dominant male — Pench, Madhya Pradesh
SELF-TAUGHT	Internet basics, then an online wildlife course — the rest, field practice
ALSO SHOOTS	Birds — kingfishers, bee-eaters, white-breasted water hens & more
HAUNTS	Kanha · Bandhavgarh · Pench — mammals & birds alike
ON THE WISHLIST	A tigress with her young cubs, only a few months old

THE ELEVENTH ATTEMPT

Q Which one wildlife frame are you most proud of, and what's the story behind it?

This photo was taken in Kanha National Park. I've been attracted to large dominant males ever since I sighted one. It became a mission to capture a photograph of the famous male tiger named Neela Naala in Kanha. As luck would have it, I failed on multiple attempts, barely missing his sighting by a few minutes at times. Finally, on my 11th attempt, I was able to capture Neela Nala in frame. It was an afternoon safari in June 2026. We checked a waterhole and couldn't find any animals nearby. On our way back, we caught this giant walking straight on the safari road — a perfect head-on sighting. Soon after, he sat and rested for a while before vanishing into the thick woods. It's been one of my most memorable tiger sightings.



NEELA NAALA The famed Kanha male, at rest after a head-on sighting on the safari road — landed on the eleventh attempt, an afternoon safari in June 2026.

Q What happened out in the field on that safari day you still talk about?

This was at Pench, Maharashtra, in Khursapar. It was a morning safari. We had already sighted three sub-adult cubs in the morning and were satisfied. We tried to explore a few other areas that weren't crowded. Unexpectedly, and to our astonishment, we found the tigress Bindu working towards us from a distance — a perfect head-on sighting. She was looking for her mate. The male tiger called from deep within the forest, and slowly the call got louder. Bindu looked eager to reach her mate. She crossed our gypsy and went inside the thick woods. An unexpected and fantastic sighting.

THE KIT

BODIES	Sony A1M2 · Sony A7M5
LONG REACH	Sony 200–600mm G, f5.6–6.3 — birds & distant mammals
LOW LIGHT	Sony 70–200mm G Master f2.8 — dawn, dusk & habitat



TWO BODIES, TWO LENSES The safari kit — built to catch any action without trading away depth or clarity.

WINGS, WATER & SILENCE

Q Which bird photograph is your favorite, and what made that sighting so special?

This is a male Asian Paradise Flycatcher, the rufous morph. It was a dream to capture a good shot of a Paradise Flycatcher. I captured this in Bandhavgarh, from my stay. The safari lodge where I was staying had a small river named Charan Ganga flowing beside it. Birds frequented the place to cool themselves — kingfishers, flycatchers, white-breasted water hens, bee-eaters, and a lot more. I was able to capture this photo when the flycatcher was flying off to its perch after taking a dip in the water.



PARADISE FOUND A male Asian Paradise Flycatcher, the rufous morph, returning to its perch over the Charan Ganga at Bandhavgarh.



KNOB-BILLED DUCKS A candid moment at the waterhole — sunlight on the birds.

Q What's this recent shot you haven't shared much yet, and what's next on your photography wishlist?

This frame captures knob-billed ducks near a waterhole. The sunlight and the candid shot of the birds make it special in my eyes. My next target is to capture a tigress with her young ones that are no older than a few months. I want to capture and videograph the intimate moments of a tigress and her cubs. It's next on my wishlist.

> *"The silence till I press the shutter is a feeling mixed with anticipation, excitement, and self-realization. It has made me realize how tiny we are compared to nature, but still, we can make a meaningful impact if we contribute to the conservation of our nature and wildlife responsibly."*
>
> KIRAN DEY



THE PHOTOGRAPHER
Kiran Dey · Wildlife Photographer

INSTAGRAM @wildframevoyager

WALLMAG RAP AWARDS 2026 · WINNER

The Voice of the Nation


HAQ · AYN ORIGINALS

OMMY KHAN
RAPPER · WORLI, MUMBAI

"Desh Ki Awaaz" means the voice of the nation — and after the track grew, completely organically, past 200 million views, it is what people now call him. The Worli rapper on his first bars, the lines that touched a nerve, and building his own studio again.

Q Do you remember the very first time you rapped out loud in front of anyone — where you were and what pushed the words out?

I still remember the first time I rapped in public. I was in 8th Standard at Dr. Antonio Da Silva High School in Dadar, Mumbai. It was an amazing experience, and I surprised a lot of my school friends because they had never seen that side of me before. After that day, something changed. My friends started recognizing me as the "Rapper" of the school. It was a special feeling to express myself through music and see people react to something I was passionate about. That moment gave me a different identity in school and became a memorable milestone in my journey as a rapper.

Q Was there one song or artist that first made you feel Hindi rap could carry real truth, not just a beat?

At that time, many of Emiway Bantai's songs were on loop for me — they had a vibe that I couldn't get enough of. Alongside that, Naezy and Divine were dropping some crazy storytelling rap songs that showed me how Hindi rap could go beyond just beats and flow. It could tell real stories and reflect what people were actually living through. But one song that really hit my mind was "GAWAR" by Farhan Khan. He was a fresh face in hip-hop back then, and the way that song connected with me left a lasting impression. It made me realize that rap could carry a deeper meaning, speak the truth, and make people think while still keeping the vibe alive.

DESH KI AWAAZ

Q Who was the first person who truly believed in your music before anyone else was listening?

ARSALAN was the first person who truly believed in my music. He supported me in my initial days and introduced me to artists like NF, Tech N9ne, and Token, which opened up a whole new world of rap for me. He played a big role in shaping my craft and helping me understand the art of rapping beyond just writing bars. What makes it even more special is that we're still in touch, still making music, and still working together as a team. I'm genuinely glad we've come this far together. Having someone believe in you before the world starts listening is priceless, and for me, ARSALAN will always be that person.

> **"Na Hindu Khatre Mei / Na Musalman Khatre Mei / Aankh Khol Meri Jaan / Hindustan Khatre Mei."**
>
> OMMY KHAN · DESH KI AWAAZ

Q What's the story behind 'Desh Ki Awaaz' — the track that grew into a 200M+ view movement completely organically? When you were writing it, what was the one thing you needed people to hear?

When I was writing Desh Ki Awaaz, I honestly wasn't even sure whether I should release it officially. I had my doubts about how people would perceive the song because I knew it could go in a very negative direction. But deep down, I also had a strong feeling that this song was going to go viral. The one thing I wanted people to understand was that this wasn't just my voice, it was the voice of an entire nation. That's what Desh Ki Awaaz means: The Voice of the Nation. I wanted to create something bigger than myself, something that people could connect with and see their own thoughts and emotions reflected in. Fortunately, the song resonated with people in a way I had hoped for, and the response turned out to be incredible. Seeing it grow organically into a movement with over 200 million views is surreal. It proved to me that when a song speaks to something people genuinely feel, it can become much bigger than the artist who created it.



WHERE THE BARS LAND Desh Ki Awaaz, written out in full.

Q Looking at those lines, how does a verse usually begin for you — a phrase, a feeling, or something you saw that you couldn't ignore?

For me, a verse can begin with a thought that I feel people need to hear. With Desh Ki Awaaz, these lines came from a feeling I knew a lot of people would relate to: "Na Hindu Khatre Mei / Na Musalman Khatre Mei / Aankh Khol Meri Jaan / Hindustan Khatre Mei." I had a strong feeling these lines would go viral because they touched on something deeply relatable. But I also knew people might take them very personally, because the subject is so close to their identities and emotions. I wanted people to pause for a moment and look at the bigger picture. For me, it was about putting the nation above religious divisions and making people think beyond what separates us. The fact that these lines resonated with so many people showed me how powerful a few honest words can be when they touch a nerve in society.

AT A GLANCE

BASED	Worli, Mumbai
BREAKOUT	"Desh Ki Awaaz" — 200M+ views
BUILDING	AYN Studio
NEXT EP	"Voyage Se Ayn" — five tracks
ANTHEM	"HAQ"

VOYAGE SE AYN



AYN STUDIO

THE CORNER WHERE HE RECORDS The room he is building as AYN Studio.

Q You're building AYN Studio — what made you want your own space to record in?

I used to have my own studio called Voyage Studio in Worli, Mumbai, but an incident happened there that turned my life upside down. Since then, I've always had the dream of building my own studio again. I've realized that I love creating in my own space, in my own zone, where I can work freely and express myself without limitations. For me, a studio is more than just a place to record music; it's a space where I can truly be myself and bring my ideas to life. That's what inspired me to build AYN Studio. There's also a lot more to my story that I haven't shared yet. I'll be opening up about myself and my journey through my upcoming five-track EP, "Voyage Se Ayn." It's a very personal project, and I'm looking forward to letting the music tell the parts of my story that people haven't heard before.



Q Tell us about 'HAQ' — the anthem about standing up and refusing to stay silent. What real thing around you lit the spark for it?

HAQ came from a place of frustration. I had a lot of feelings inside me that I wanted to put forward, and I wanted to demand what was rightfully mine. I wanted to make a statement that if something is wrong, whether it's the system or anything else, you should have the courage to question it and fight back. For me, HAQ is an anthem about standing up for your rights and refusing to stay silent when injustice happens. It's about knowing your worth, raising your voice, and not being afraid to challenge what's wrong. The message is simple: I want my HAQ, my rights, and I'm not going to stay silent about it.

WORD FOR WORD

Q What's it like performing your music for a crowd? Share a clip or photo from one of those moments.

Q What does the room feel like in the moment the audience knows your words and shouts them back at you?

It's a feeling that's hard to put into words. I feel incredibly happy and proud when I hear the audience shouting my lyrics back at me, word for word. It's a different kind of satisfaction to know that something I wrote has become a part of so many people. But at the same time, I feel a sense of responsibility. People have started calling me "Desh Ki Awaaz," and now I know that every word I say is noticed and carries weight. That makes me more conscious of what I write and the message I put out into the world. For me, it's not just about people knowing my lyrics; it's about them connecting with the meaning behind those words. Seeing thousands of people remember and sing them back to me is a proud moment, and it reminds me why I started making music in the first place.

Q What are you working on right now? Give us a sneak peek — an unreleased snippet, a rough take, or a work in progress.

Q What is this next one about, and what are you trying to say with it that you haven't said before?

I'm currently working on my upcoming five-track EP, "Voyage Se Ayn." Through this project, I want people to get to know the person behind the music — my journey, my struggles, my experiences, and my story. Until now, I haven't shared much about myself with my listeners, but I feel it's time they got to know the real me. This EP is going to be personal, and I want the music to speak about the chapters of my life that I've kept to myself until now. Alongside that, I'm also working on an international collaboration with American rapper MPR RICHIE RICH. Our song, "This Is How We Roll," is coming very, very soon, and I'm excited for everyone to hear it. With these two projects, I'm exploring different sides of myself as an artist. Voyage Se Ayn is about my story and where I come from, while This Is How We Roll is about taking my music beyond borders and connecting with artists internationally.

SCAN TO WATCH · FIVE CLIPS

SCAN TO WATCH

Desh Ki Awaaz
Official music video

SCAN TO WATCH

On stage
Desh Ki Awaaz, performed live

SCAN TO WATCH

Griffin Awards
Honoured to receive the award

SCAN TO WATCH

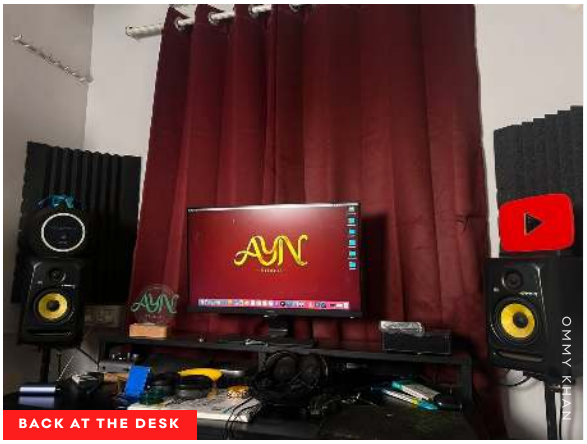
Sneak peek I
Work in progress

SCAN TO WATCH

Sneak peek II
Work in progress

Q What does it feel like to know your voice is genuinely moving people to stand up for themselves?

It feels amazing to know that my music is genuinely motivating people to stand up for themselves. As an artist, you always hope your words will connect with people, but when they actually inspire someone to raise their voice for their rights and fight against something that's wrong, it becomes much bigger than music. For me, that's the real power of songs like HAQ. I've expressed my own frustration and feelings through the music, and knowing that people can relate to those emotions makes me feel proud and responsible at the same time. If my voice can give someone the courage to stand up for their own voice, then I feel my music has served its purpose. #ABOS - Coming Soon



BACK AT THE DESK

CONNECT WITH OMMY KHAN

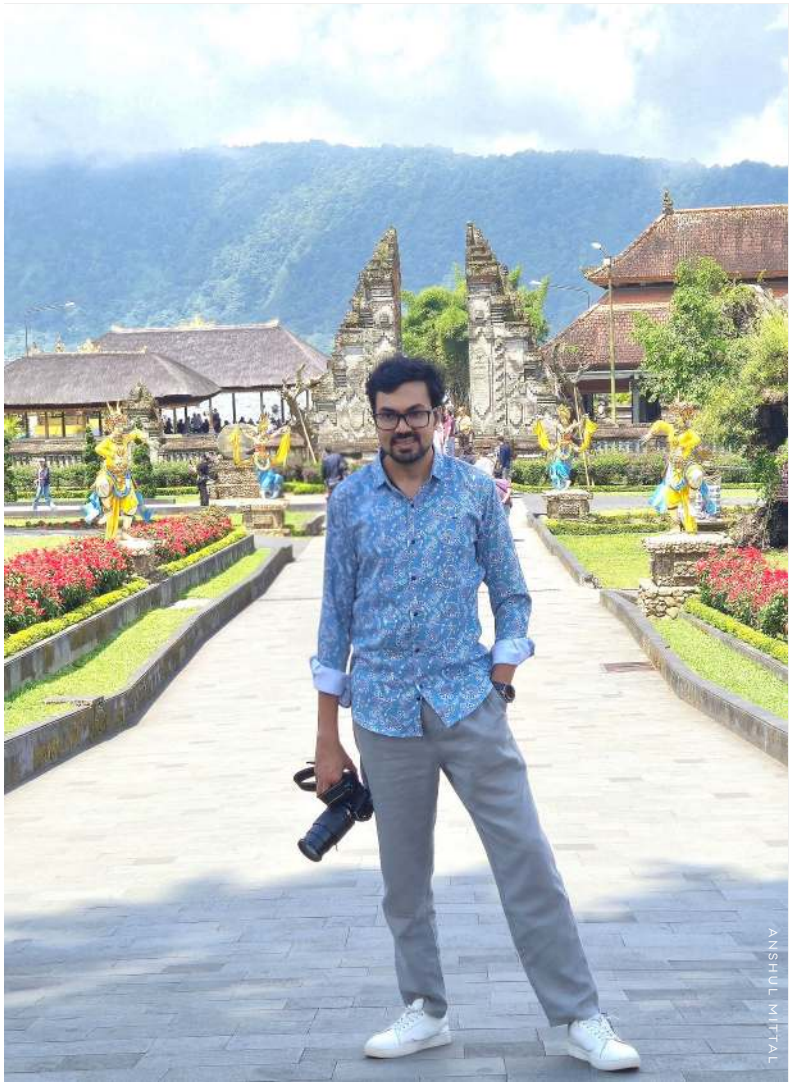
INSTAGRAM @ommy_khan FACEBOOK ommykhann YOUTUBE @ommykhan SPOTIFY Ommy Khan

IN CONVERSATION · STREETS & LANDSCAPES

His Father's Yashica

ANSHUL MITTAL · STREET & LANDSCAPE PHOTOGRAPHER

Born in Udaipur the year his father carried a Yashica home from Germany, Anshul Mittal spent his early years in front of the lens before stepping behind it — from the lakes of the Aravalis to the morning streets of Charminar and Chandni Chowk, chasing the quiet soul of a single frame.



AT A GLANCE

HOMETOWN	Udaipur — the City of Lakes
FIRST CAMERA	A Canon, gifted by his aunt
FIRST DSLR	Nikon D5600, Hyderabad
SHOOTS ON	Nikon Z5 II, a gift from his wife

Q How did your journey into photography begin?

I was born and brought up in Udaipur, the beautiful "City of Lakes." My connection to photography traces back to the very year I was born, 1993, when my father brought home our family's first camera—a Yashica—while returning from an official trip to Germany. For the longest time, I mostly remained in front of the lens. Growing up, my family spent countless hours sitting beside the lakes or admiring the vast landscapes of the Aravali range, which naturally instilled in me a deep appreciation for the visual world. The shift to behind the camera happened during my late school days, when my aunt gifted our family a Canon camera, marking the first time I held a camera of my own to explore the craft.

My formal introduction to the depth of the medium happened during my early engineering years. I crossed paths with a few local bird photographers and conservationists; interacting with them sparked a profound interest in photography, particularly in capturing nature. Seeing my growing passion, my father lent me his office Sony point-and-shoot camera for a few days, giving me the perfect head start to experiment. Later, when I moved to Ahmedabad to pursue my MBA, I joined the campus photography club. Interacting with fellow students, participating in workshops, and shooting around campus allowed me to truly understand and master the fundamental technicalities of the craft.

The real turning point came when I moved to Hyderabad for work. That was when I finally bought my first professional DSLR, a Nikon D5600. Eager to grow, I joined a local photography club, which opened my eyes to the vibrant world of street photography. There was no turning back after that. Recently, my journey received the ultimate boost when my wife gifted me a Nikon Z5 II.

FINDING THE FRAME

Q What was the first moment you knew you wanted to pursue street and travel photography?

The wonderful moments on the streets of Hyderabad. I used to visit Charminar and the surrounding areas early in the morning for photowalks led by Mr. Naveen. His teachings about street photography helped me learn and take up this genre.

Q How has your photography style evolved over the years?

Being born and brought up in Udaipur introduced me to nature, and hence to nature photography. Later I was introduced to the streets of Hyderabad and took up street photography, which helped me get to the very core of photography — framing, composition and the exposure triangle. Recently I have joined two Delhi-based photography clubs, one into wildlife and the other into street. So it is a mix of nature, travel and — the most important one for me — street photography.

Q What or who has been your biggest inspiration?

Mr. Vineet Vohra is truly an inspiration. His street photography has taught me a lot — the perspective, the moment, the framing. Juxtaposition is not an easy thing, but his pictures make it appear so simple. A lot to learn from him. I also follow Mr. Manohar Jha for the streets; he leads several photowalks in Delhi, which I join to learn.

Q Which photo best captures your style as a street photographer?

It was a beautiful morning in Chandni Chowk and the street had begun to stir. People were gathering near this handpump to wash their faces and drink water. It gave me the perfect moment — and the story behind it.



CHANDNI CHOWK, DELHI

SIGNATURE The frame Anshul returns to when asked what his street work is really about — a quiet morning near a Chandni Chowk handpump.

Q What photo from your favourite travel destination would you like to share?

As the sun dipped below the horizon in the Thar desert, the fading light offered the perfect canvas to tell a story. The brilliant sunset, the distinct outline of a camel, and the figures of the local people — all coming together as striking silhouettes in a single frame.



THAR DESERT, NEAR JAISALMER

CRAFT & THE EDIT

Q What photo was technically challenging to capture?



Panning shots aren't that easy. First, you have to shut off the camera's auto-focus so you can manually focus on the subject's motion the way you want. Full-frame cameras also have in-built image stabilisation, which needs to be switched off so the camera doesn't compensate for the blur. Next, the shutter speed is decided based on the moving object's speed. After that, getting the subject to move into the frame at exactly the required position, and then hitting the shutter without missing that moment — that is not easy at all.

PANNING Manual focus, stabilisation off, shutter timed to the rider — one clean sweep across Old Delhi.

Q Can you show us a before-and-after edit of one of your photos?

I don't believe in excess editing — just the basics. What do I want my audience to see? What's the story behind it? So: first, the frame — crop to hold the focus on the subject and the environment it needs. Second, colour versus black and white — monochrome is good when colour is a distraction; if the picture has enough texture but not the perfect colours, that is where I turn to black and white. Third, contrast, highlights, saturation, shadow and exposure — play around these to show exactly what you want.





MINIMAL, NOT HEAVY The same Chandni Chowk handpump frame — stripped of distracting colour, down to texture and light.

THE CANDID

Q **What candid shot did you take without planning?**

I was just standing in the Lodhi Art District with a few fellow photographers. Suddenly I noticed that two of them had moved into the frame, in front of a painted wall — and for a moment the whole street seemed to arrange itself.



ANSHUL MITTAL

LODHI ART DISTRICT, DELHI

UNPLANNED Two fellow photographers step into the frame — and the painted wall behind them finds its voice.

> *"It appeared as if the wall itself was speaking.*
>
> ANSHUL MITTAL

MENTORS & BEAT

LEARNED STREETS WITH	Mr. Naveen — Charminar photowalks
INSPIRED BY	Vineet Vohra · Manohar Jha
SHOOTS	Street · Landscape · Travel · Wildlife

CONNECT WITH ANSHUL

INSTAGRAM @anshulmittal232

ALSO IN THIS ISSUE More creator conversations on the morning streets, the open road and the frames that hold both.

VEENA MAESTRO

THE VEENA CHOSE ME



IN THE EYE CLINIC, SRIKAKULAM

PHOTO · COURTESY DR. CHATTI RAMAKRISHNA

DR. CHATTI RAMAKRISHNA — SARASWATI VEENA · CARNATIC CLASSICAL

An eye surgeon by profession and a Carnatic veena player by passion, Dr. Chatti Ramakrishna divides his week between the operating theatre and the strings of a carved Thanjavur veena that, he is certain, chose him.

Q How did the Saraswati veena first come into your life?

My mother initiated me into learning the Saraswati Veena. My grandmother was a good Saraswati Veena player, but my mother couldn't learn it herself, so she wanted me to learn the instrument. That's how the veena first became a part of my life.

AT A GLANCE

INSTRUMENT	Saraswati Veena (Thanjavur)
ACQUIRED	Chennai, 2010
GURU	Sri D Srinivas, Hyderabad
PROFESSION	Ophthalmologist · Asst. Professor
BASED	Srikakulam, Andhra Pradesh

Q You are an ophthalmologist by profession and a veena player by passion — how do the two worlds sit together in an ordinary week?

It's a very difficult and challenging task to manage two highly skilled and demanding full-time professions side by side. I made it a habit from my school days to divide specific time slots for my education as well as the veena. I was a gold medalist in both my MBBS and my MS Ophthalmology, and also a university topper. I am currently working as Assistant Professor of Ophthalmology at Government Medical College, Srikakulam, Andhra Pradesh. I divide the week into two halves: three days concentrating on eye surgeries and academics, and three days on music during the evenings after my official duty hours are finished. I prefer to spend time with my family on Sundays.

THE INSTRUMENT

Q What is your earliest memory of sitting with the veena?

In my childhood, at the age of 7, I was sent to a music class for the first time in our hometown. I saw five veenas in the classroom and was fascinated by their beautiful shape and ornamentation. When I took the instrument into my hands for the first time and plucked a string, I was deeply engrossed by its sound. That was the moment I decided this instrument was for me.

Q Carnatic music passes from guru to shishya — tell us about your teacher, Sri D Srinivas.

Initially, I was trained in Saraswati Veena and Carnatic vocals by many teachers. The most crucial part of my veena training was done by Sri D Srinivas Sir of Hyderabad, popularly known as 'Veena Srinivas' Sir. He is an All India Radio 'A' Top Graded artist and a staff artist of AIR Hyderabad Station. I started my training with him during my MBBS days, and I am still learning from him. He is the recipient of the prestigious Sangeet Natak Akademi Award by the President of India for the year 2025. He taught me the exact gist of Carnatic music — the 'Anuswaras' — and the basics of swarakalpana. These foundations helped me improvise various patterns of music on my own. My veena playing completely transformed to a professional level after taking classes from Sri D Srinivas Sir.



THE THANJAVUR VEENA, CHOSEN IN CHENNAI, 2010

HIS COMPANION The brown, carved Thanjavur veena — one of nearly a hundred he played through before this one, he says, chose him.

Q Tell us the story of this particular veena, and how long it has been your companion.

This brown-coloured, carved veena has been with me since 2010. I bought it from a musical instrument store in Chennai. It is a Thanjavur veena. There were nearly 100 veenas in the store, and I took around three hours to play each one by plucking the strings. I was enchanted by the sound of this particular veena and brought it home. It is said that the instrument selects the player, not the other way around, so I am blessed that this veena has chosen me, and I am forever grateful to it. In my initial days, I had a yellow-coloured Bobbili veena, which was my first veena and is still in good condition.

ON STAGE

Q What makes this particular performance special to you?

This concert was a National Music Festival conducted in Rourkela City, Odisha. I forgot to bring the scarf of my kurta pyjama set on the day of the concert. One of my co-musicians reminded me just before the concert, but it was already late and the concert was about to begin, so I performed without it. You can see in the video, at exactly 4 minutes and 29 seconds, one of the organisers who was impressed by the performance brought a scarf and wrapped it around my neck and shoulders as a token of appreciation. I consider it God-sent. It was a very special moment, as I finally finished the concert with a scarf on my dress, though I had forgotten it at home, almost 500 km away.

Q Which raga is this, and what draws you to it?

This is in Ragam Kalyani. The krithi is 'Nidhi Chaala Sukhama', composed by the great saint Thyagaraja and set to Misra Chaapu Talam. Kalyani is an amazing raga with a happy mood and is usually played on happy occasions, giving a pleasant feeling to the mind, which draws me to this beautiful ragam. In this rendition, I presented the entire krithi with Ragalapana (0 to 3:15), Taanam — a speciality of the veena — (3:19 to 6:30), the krithi (6:33 to 10:15) with Neravu (10:15 to 11:03), and swarakalpana (11:03 to 14:06) in two speeds, ending with a grand finale known as Mukthayi (13:43 to 14:06). This is the main item in a Carnatic music concert, and this is the pattern in which a main item is presented.

Q You have reimagined film songs like 'Aradhya' and 'Chakori' on the veena — what makes a film melody feel right for the instrument?

The film songs that are serene and have an emotion or bhaavam linked to them are the ones most suited for the veena. The veena evokes a deep sense of emotion, whether it be happiness or pathos.

SCAN TO WATCH · FOUR PERFORMANCES

SCAN TO WATCH

Nidhi Chaala Sukhama

Ragam Kalyani · on the veena

SCAN TO WATCH

The scarf, god-sent

National Festival, Rourkela

SCAN TO WATCH

The Thanjavur veena

Playing his 2010 companion

SCAN TO WATCH

On the temple stage

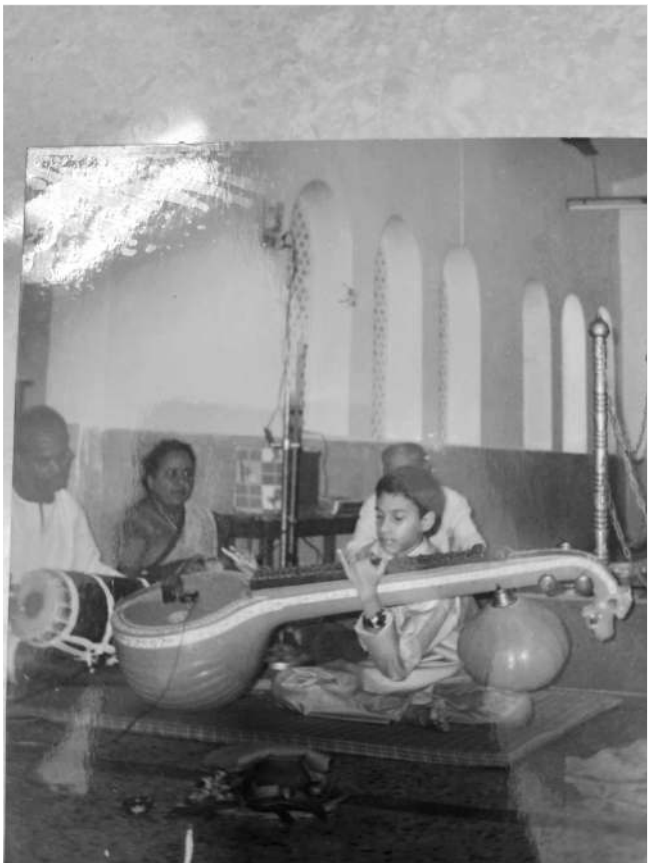
Bhubaneswar, Odisha

HER NAME WAS SARASWATI

> *"She put in a lot of effort when I was a small child, taking me to veena classes and carrying the instrument during concerts when I was too small to handle it on my own."*
>
> ON HIS MOTHER, SARASWATI

Q What do you remember most about the evening this photograph was taken?

This picture was taken at a concert at Raghavendra Swamy Temple in Bhubaneswar, Odisha, when I was 10 years old. My mother was the main person who motivated me to learn the veena, and my main support system for learning and performing. Her name was Saraswati, and she was a pharmacist by profession. We travelled to many cities across India for veena concerts. She passed away this year, on July 6th, 2026. This concert is the only place where they allowed my mother to sit along with me on the stage. I used to perform there every year, and she used to accompany me. Hence, this is the most memorable concert for me.



AGED TEN At the Raghavendra Swamy Temple, Bhubaneswar — his mother, Saraswati, seated with him on the stage.

Q Tell us what you are working on with AI, and why it excites you.

AI has made many tasks easier. A musician has many artistic visuals in his mind while performing music. AI has now armoured the musician to express the creative visuals in his or her mind by generating videos from the prompts given by the musician. I believe the prompts are the emotions and feelings of a person expressed in words. It excites me to work with AI and bring out these artistic memories in my mind and club them with my music, to create a visual as well as an auditory feast for my audience.

Q What feeling do you most want your music to leave with people?

I want my music to bring back the various memorable events in the lives of my audience and make them come alive. We often relate the music we are hearing to some happy, sad, or mixed incident of our life. Music evokes a sense of peace and emotion that makes the audience and the performer get addicted to it. There is a flow of intense emotions while performing or listening to music, which elevates our subconscious mind to higher levels and gives a sensation of fulfilment to our soul. I want to make my music impress that feeling of contentment on my audience.

MILESTONES

ACADEMICS	Gold medallist, MBBS & MS Ophthalmology; university topper	GURU'S HONOUR	Sri D Srinivas — Sangeet Natak Akademi Award, 2025
FIRST VEENA	A yellow Bobbili veena, still in good condition	SIGNATURE KRITHI	'Nidhi Chaala Sukhama', in Ragam Kalyani

CONNECT

INSTAGRAM @rama.krishna.3382 **YOUTUBE** @rama93krishna

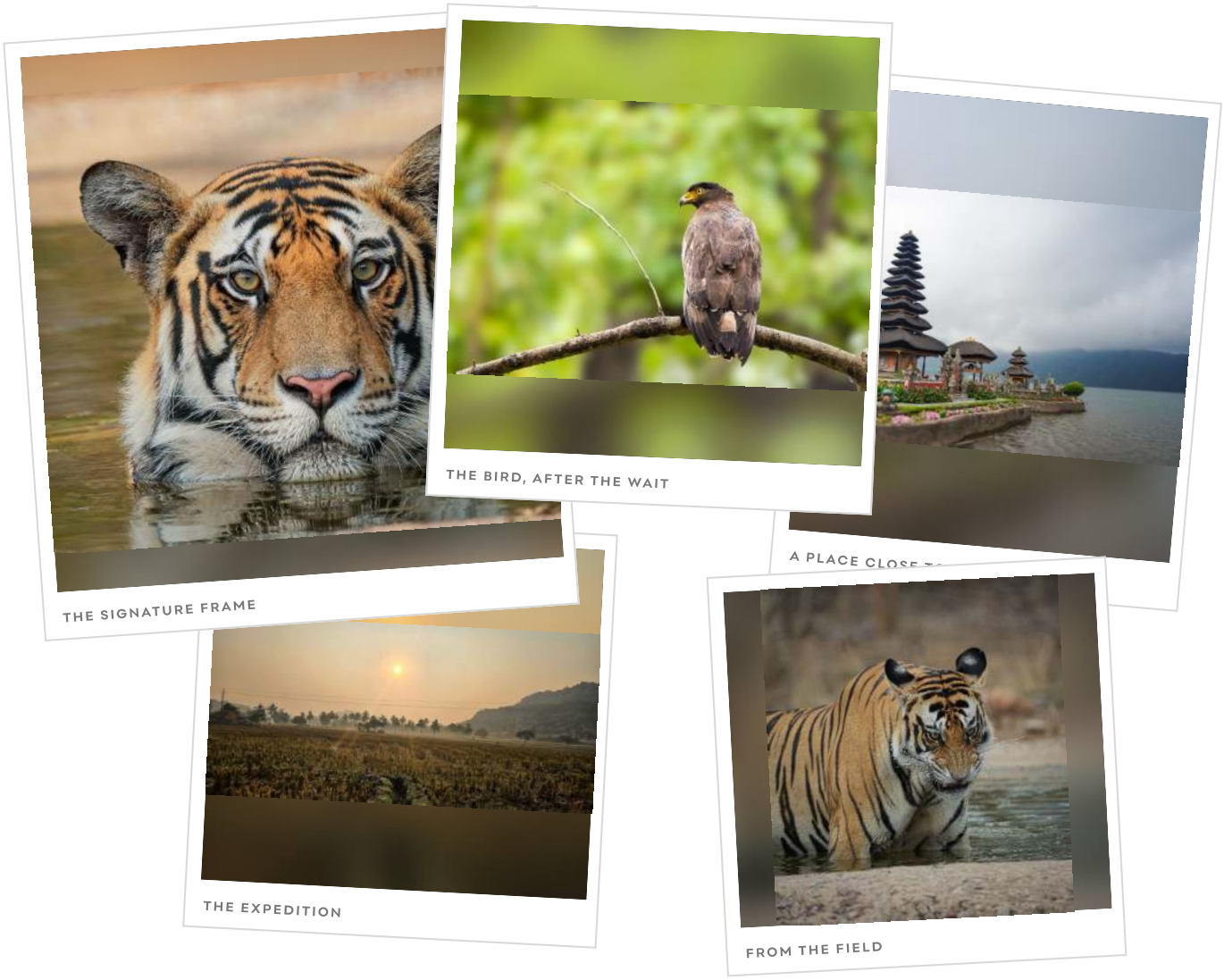
IN CONVERSATION · WILDLIFE

FIELD NOTES

The Tiger at the Pond

SWAROOP PANCHANGAM · WILDLIFE PHOTOGRAPHER

In Panna, the driver offered a choice: the tiger in the bush, or the walk to the water. He chose the pond — and waited. A conversation about patience, light, and the frames that reward it.



THE SIGNATURE FRAME

THE BIRD, AFTER THE WAIT

A PLACE CLOSE

THE EXPEDITION

FROM THE FIELD

Q **Every wildlife photographer has an origin story. What first pulled you out into the wild with a camera?**

Every creature carries a story that's happening whether or not anyone is watching. A camera is just the excuse to pay attention. And once you start paying attention, you never really stop. Similar thing happened with me, just take the camera and click images of birds and landscapes.

SIGNATURE FRAMES

Q What are some of your signature wildlife frames?

We were in Panna Tiger Reserve waiting for the tiger to come near the pond as Tiger was sleeping inside the bush, every Jeep was waiting near the bush; but our driver gave us an option, sir do you need frame where tiger comes from the bush or walking to the pond and relaxing in water. We choose the second option and stopped in front of the pond. We witnessed a wonderful moment where the tiger walks, drinks water and then relaxing in the pond. It was a dream come true image as took countless pictures of every actions done by the tiger. Rest the images only speak on what was seen through my eyes.



THE DREAM COME TRUE The tiger walks, drinks, and settles in the pond — the frame the whole wait was for.





BIRDS & LIGHT



THE PROUD ONE The bird photograph he is especially proud of — patience and silence, learnt over years.

Q What bird photograph are you especially proud of?

Every bird which has been shared here is taken in different places over the years. Location is Bhadra tiger reserve, Bandipur tiger reserve, Nagarahole national park. The much needed thing is patience and silence to capture the birds and I have learnt in this photography journey.

Q What landscape image captures a place close to your heart?

The pictures were taken in Bali, Indonesia (Ulun Danu Beratan Temple). When I pressed shutter, the air gets that warm, heavy stillness and sky starts its slow burn. The sky looks like a painting in colors that feel too saturated to be real. Mist hovered at the base of the mountains, catching the last light and turning it into a thin, luminous veil, the temple looked almost like it was floating.

> *Be there to witness the stillness and silence of the moment.*





ULUN DANU, BALI

IN THE FIELD

Q Walk us through how you actually work in the field — what's your rhythm on a shoot?

I have a checklist kind of a thing prepared before getting in the field. 1. Arrive as early as possible at the field so that you will have sometime to setup things and no rush. 2. Carry all the equipment and accessories so that you don't miss the shots which are not repeatable in nature. 3. Check for a comfortable place (especially when you want to capture birds), setup the equipment and accessories without noise as birds and animals make a quick move when they here sounds. 4. Test the settings through which you are prepared to capture, it may be modes, aperture rate, ISO etc. 5.



THE CHECKLIST IN ACTION Early arrival, full kit, silence.



THE EXPEDITION Frames from the location that never left him.

Q What photo from a location or expedition has stayed with you?

It was a planned visit to Mantralaya, a temple visit. But it turned out to be a memorable one as we had time and planned to explore Hampi, one of the precious heritage of Karnataka. We reached by evening and took rest.

Q Is there a species, a sanctuary, or a landscape you're still dreaming of photographing?

Yes there are many in my list. All kind of species, from mighty tiger to macro frog or snake. I have visited few places but the desire to explore will be there and look for new species is more.

> *"Walk away with a frame that carries not just what was seen, but that rare feeling — a quiet connection between two beings who shared a moment without needing anything from each other."*
>
> SWAROOP PANCHANGAM

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CLASSICAL DANCE

STORIES WITHOUT WORDS.

MANISH KUMAR RAI

KATHAK · BHARATANATYAM · ODISSI

He was seven when a film song on Chitrahaar stopped him mid-room. Three classical forms and three decades later, he teaches from an online courtyard he calls Nrityaangan.



ON STAGE, MID-POSE

AT A GLANCE

FORMS
Kathak · Bharatanatyam · Odissi

THE SPARK
"Chane Ke Khet Mein", on Chitrahaar, 1994

FIRST GURU
Nayana Banerjee

ALSO LEARNED FROM
Padma Vibhushan Pandit Birju Maharaj ji

BHARATANATYAM GURU
Ajay Chakrapani

ACADEMY
Nrityaangan Dancefloor

Q How did dance first find you — was there a moment you knew this was going to be your life?

I was seven years old in 1994. Like most Indian households then, ours gathered around the television for Chitrahaar, the weekly window into the world of film songs. One evening, "Chane Ke Khet Mein" came on, featuring Madhuri Dixit, and something in me shifted. It wasn't just the dancing that held me. It was her expressions: the way her eyes, her smile, and even the smallest tilt of her head could tell a whole story without a single word. I sat completely still, mesmerised, not fully understanding what I was watching, only knowing that I didn't want it to end. My eldest sister, seeing how spellbound I was, told me, "That's Madhuri Dixit. She's a trained Kathak dancer." That one sentence stayed with me. In my seven-year-old mind, the logic was beautifully simple: if Kathak was what gave her that magic, then if I learned Kathak, I too could dance like her and express like her. I don't think I could have put it into words then, but that evening a seed was planted. It wasn't a career decision or a grand realisation. It was pure wonder. Yet that wonder never left me. It grew into a lifelong love for dance, and eventually into years of training in Kathak, Bharatanatyam and Odissi. Looking back, that song on a small television screen was the moment dance found me, long before I knew I would spend my life following it.

RIVERS OF ONE OCEAN

Q Tell us about the guru or teacher who shaped the dancer you are today.

My journey has been shaped not by one guru, but by several teachers and luminaries, each of whom opened a new door for me. It began in school with my music teacher, Nayana Banerjee, who gave me my first lessons in Kathak. She was the one who took that childhood wonder I felt watching Madhuri Dixit and gave it shape, teaching me the basics of footwork, rhythm and discipline. Without her patience in those early years, the spark might have stayed just a dream. As I grew, I had the immense privilege of learning from the late Padma Vibhushan Pandit Birju Maharaj ji. Being in the presence of such a towering master was humbling. From him, I learned that Kathak is not just technique but storytelling, that every glance, every gesture and every beat carries emotion. His grace and his joy in the art left a mark on me that I carry to this day. Alongside Kathak, another love was quietly taking root. When I watched Hema Malini's Durga ballet, I was captivated by the power and devotion of Bharatanatyam. Soon after, I began learning the form in my locality under my guru, Ajay Chakrapani. He introduced me to the precision of its geometry, the strength of its stances, and the deep spiritual roots of the form, which also nourished my love for mythology. Years later, I saw Dr. Sonal Mansingh perform Odissi, and once again I found myself completely spellbound by its fluidity, its sculptural poses and its lyrical grace. That performance inspired me to begin my Odissi journey at Urvashi Kalashrishti Dance Academy in Pune. Each of these gurus gave me something different: Kathak taught me expression, Bharatanatyam gave me strength and structure, and Odissi gave me grace. The dancer I am today is a blend of all three, and of every teacher who believed in me along the way.

Q What drew you to blend classical forms together rather than stay inside one tradition?

My decision to blend these forms came from experience, years of learning Kathak, Bharatanatyam and Odissi side by side and slowly noticing how distinct each one is, yet how deeply they are connected underneath. The more I studied the Natyashastra of Bharata Muni and Nandikeshvara's Abhinaya Darpana, along with many other texts, the clearer it became to me that all three forms grow from the same root. They are different branches of one tree. All three classical forms draw on the same foundations laid down in these texts: the hastas (single-hand and combined-hand gestures), the navarasas or nine emotional states, and the four modes of abhinaya: angika (body), vachika (word and song), aharya (costume and adornment) and sattvika (inner emotion). Each form also moves between nritta (pure rhythmic dance), nritya (expressive dance) and natya (dramatic storytelling). Because this vocabulary is common, a pataka or alapadma hasta, or the expression of shringara or veera rasa, can travel naturally from one form to another without losing its meaning. Kathak gives me an upright torso, rapid tatkar footwork, dazzling chakkars (spins), playful rhythmic dialogue with the tabla, and the mathematical delight of tihais. Its abhinaya is subtle and conversational. Bharatanatyam gives me geometry and strength: the deep araimandi half-sitting stance, crisp adavus, clean linear extensions of the arms and legs, and powerful jathis set to Carnatic rhythm. Odissi gives me fluidity and sculpture: the square, grounded chauka stance and the tribhanga, where the head, torso and hips bend in three opposing directions, like the temple sculptures of Konark and Puri. Its torso moves independently of the hips, giving it a soft, flowing, lyrical quality. The fusion works best at the points where the forms naturally meet: stance transitions, rhythm and tala, movement dynamics, and abhinaya. For me, blending does not mean diluting. I hold each form's grammar with respect, and I fuse them only where their logic allows it, never forcing one form to behave like another. My aim is to let each tradition speak in its own voice while showing the audience how beautifully these voices harmonise. That, to me, is the essence of what the Natyashastra teaches: that dance is one ocean, and each classical form is a river flowing into it.



ON STAGE



HERITAGE DANCE FESTIVAL

THE COURTYARD, FILLED Students of Kathak, Bharatanatyam and Odissi on stage and after it — the aangan he describes, with people in it.

THE COURTYARD OF DANCE

Q Your world carries the name "Nrityaangan" — what does that name mean to you, and what is the space or troupe behind it?

Nrityaangan Dancefloor is the name of my online dance academy, and the name carries a lot of meaning for me. It comes from two words: Nritya, meaning dance, and Aangan, meaning courtyard. In the Indian home, the aangan is the heart of the house. It is the open, sacred space where the family gathers, where festivals are celebrated, where rangoli is drawn and where children first learn to play. So Nrityaangan literally means "the courtyard of dance," or simply, a dancefloor. But to me it is much more than a floor. It is a home for dance. For any dancer, the dancefloor is Swargaloka, heaven itself. In our mythology, Swargaloka is the realm of Indra, where the celestial apsaras such as Urvashi, Rambha and Menaka danced in his divine court. Dance there was not mere entertainment; it was an offering, a form of worship. Every time a dancer steps onto the floor, they enter that same space, a place where the everyday world falls away and only rhythm, expression and devotion remain. At Nrityaangan, I teach Indian classical dance forms, Kathak, Bharatanatyam and Odissi, rooted in their traditional grammar of footwork, hastas and abhinaya. Alongside the classical, I also teach Bollywood dance, because film songs are where my own journey began and they remain a joyful, accessible doorway into dance for so many people. And closest to my heart is the work of blending the classical forms with one another: exploring how the grounded geometry of Bharatanatyam, the sculptural grace of Odissi and the rhythmic brilliance of Kathak can flow together into one expressive language. Whether a student wants the discipline of a pure classical form, the energy of Bollywood or the creative freedom of fusion, there is a place for them here. That is the spirit I wanted Nrityaangan to carry. Even though the academy is online, I believe the aangan is not defined by walls but by the feeling it creates. Wherever my students roll out a mat in their living rooms and begin to dance, that corner becomes their own aangan, their own little Swargaloka. Through Nrityaangan, I hope to bring the beauty of Indian dance to anyone, anywhere, who feels its call, just as I once did as a seven-year-old watching a song on television.

Q What does that moment usually feel like, right before you step on stage?

Even after more than 30 years of dancing, I still feel butterflies in my stomach before I step on stage. And honestly, I hope that feeling never goes away. In those last few moments in the wings, everything becomes very still and very loud at the same time. I can hear the murmur of the audience, the musicians tuning, and my own heartbeat, which suddenly feels like a tabla playing in my chest. My mind races through the choreography one last time, the tihais, the transitions, the moment a chakkar must land exactly on the sam. There is always that small voice asking, "Am I ready?" But over the years, I have learned that those butterflies are not fear. They are respect. They remind me that the stage is sacred, that the audience has given me their time and attention, and that the art I am carrying is far bigger than me. The day I stop feeling nervous would be the day I start taking the stage for granted. So in those moments, I close my eyes, take a deep breath, and offer a silent prayer to my gurus and to Lord Nataraja. As I touch the floor in bhumi pranam, asking forgiveness of Mother Earth for stamping on her, something shifts. The nervousness slowly turns into energy, and the butterflies start to dance with me. And then the music begins, the first step falls, and all the anxiety simply melts away. In that instant, I am no longer the person who was nervous in the wings. I am just a dancer on his dancefloor, his Swargaloka, exactly where he belongs.

SCAN TO WATCH

Performance clip

From the stage — a filmed excerpt.

SCAN TO WATCH

Vilay Nritya — Lord Hanuman Vandana

Kathak aur Bharatanatyam, woven together.

SCAN TO WATCH

Semi-Classical Dance Recital

Version one, as recorded.

BUTTERFLIES, AND THE LAMP

Q What's a performance you're especially proud of, and where was it?

It was in Chikaballapur at Kanada Bhavan and it was a Shuddha Kathak performance. Shuddha means pure, so a Shuddha Kathak performance is Kathak presented in its traditional, classical form, without fusion or film influence. It is the dance as it has been preserved through the gharanas, especially the Lucknow gharana of Pandit Birju Maharaj ji, from whom I had the privilege of learning. It is a conversation between the dancer, the tabla, the melody and the audience, built on rhythm, mathematics and storytelling. Most Shuddha Kathak performances are set to teentaal, a 16-beat cycle, and they unfold gradually across three tempos: vilambit (slow), madhya (medium) and drut (fast). The journey from slow to fast is what gives the performance its build-up and its thrill. For me, Shuddha Kathak is where discipline meets freedom. The structure of the tala is strict, but within it there is endless room for improvisation, emotion and play. Every performance is different, because the conversation with the musicians is alive in that moment. It is also the form where my journey began, so performing Shuddha Kathak always feels like returning home.

> *If my dance can light a lamp in someone else, then the music never truly fades. It simply keeps dancing in them.*

Q When a performance ends and the music fades, what do you hope people carry home with them?

I hope people carry the different concept they have witnessed rather than just a regular performance and forget about it. When the last beat falls and the music fades, there is always a moment of silence before the applause. For me, that silence is the most precious part of the performance, because it tells me the audience is still inside the story with me. What I hope people carry home is not the memory of a perfect chakkar or a complex tihai. Those are only the vehicles. I hope they carry home a feeling. Whether the performance spoke of devotion, love, valour, sorrow or joy, I hope that emotion stays with them, and that someone recognises a piece of their own life in it. That is the true purpose of rasa as the Natyashastra describes it: the emotion doesn't remain on stage; it is meant to be tasted and experienced by the rasika, the viewer. I also hope they carry home a sense of pride and curiosity about our heritage. Our classical dances hold thousands of years of stories, philosophy and devotion. If even one person goes home and reads about the story they just watched, explores our mythology, or decides to learn a classical dance form themselves, then the performance has done something far greater than entertain. And perhaps most of all, I hope someone in the audience feels the way I felt at seven years old, watching a dancer on a small television screen: that spark of wonder, that quiet thought of, "I want to do that too." Somebody once lit that lamp in me without even knowing it. If my dance can light a lamp in someone else, then the music never truly fades. It simply keeps dancing in them.



FELICITATION


AFTER THE SHOWCASE


HIS STUDENTS

HIS STUDENTS "They are my students from different disciplines of dance styles, from Kathak to Bharatanatyam to Odissi."

CONNECT WITH MANISH KUMAR RAI

YOUTUBE @dancefloornrityaangan

IN CONVERSATION · STREET PHOTOGRAPHY



QUIET FRICTION

NIKITA MALLA · STREET PHOTOGRAPHER · ANDHRA PRADESH

At dawn in small-town Andhra, she turns a Pixel 7 on a world still half-asleep — translating the quiet friction of the waking street into black and white, where every stranger is lost in a noise of their own.

Q Your bio says you document your own chaos in monochrome. When did street photography first become the way you make sense of it?

Street photography was never something I set out to pursue. For the longest time, I was only interested in photographing what felt safe — landscapes and loved ones. But when I began taking early morning walks, I couldn't look away from the quiet friction of the city starting its day. It started as an impulse to freeze moments I didn't want to forget, and quickly became an indispensable ritual. Translating those street scenes into black and white gave structure to the internal rush — it turned everyday movement into a quiet language where my own chaos could finally breathe.

Q Do you remember the first candid frame that made you think "this one's mine"?

An early morning, still half-asleep streets, and a young boy running down an alley with pure, uncalculated momentum. I didn't overthink it — I just raised my phone, hit the shutter and immediately felt the spark. That was the moment casual observation turned into an obsession with the street. That single frame set the tone for everything I shoot today: a constant search for the quiet poetry, unexpected motion, and raw fragments of life that unfold right before our eyes.

AT A GLANCE

BASED	**Peddapuram & beyond, Andhra Pradesh**
SHOOTS	**Monochrome street, on foot at dawn**
CAMERA	**Google Pixel 7**
NEXT	**Big-city metros & transit**



PEDDAPURAM Three years of quiet morning routes — where the whole visual journey began.

BLACK & WHITE

Q What shaped your eye for black and white — what made you want to strip the colour out?

Street life, for me, has always felt wonderfully out of time. Colour anchors an image firmly in the present, but stripping it down to black and white unlocks a classic, vintage soul that raw street moments deserve. It isolates the light, the grit, and the unvarnished mood. Because that experience is multi-sensory for me, I treat music as an extension of the monochrome frame — attaching a track to my posts captures the cadence of the street and translates the exact retro frequency I was feeling when I hit the shutter.

Q Peddapuram shows up in your captions. What keeps pulling you back to shoot your own streets in Andhra?

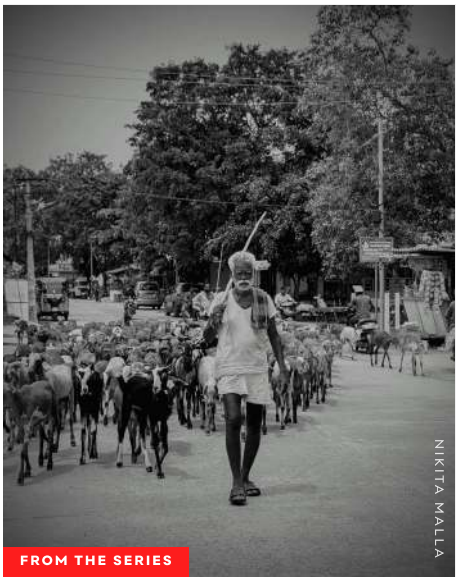
There's a distinct honesty to a place you've lived and worked in every single day. I spent three years in Peddapuram with my family, and it was along those quiet morning routes that my entire visual journey kicked off. What began as daily walks quickly evolved into a dedicated street photography ritual after that first spark of a frame. Shooting my own streets keeps pulling me back because familiarity reveals what a quick visitor misses — the quiet textures, the unscripted warmth, and the timeless simplicity of life waking up to a small town in Andhra.

Q Which monochrome street frame feels most like your signature?

Each of these stayed with me because they hold lived experiences rather than staged moments. As I turned my lens closer to home, I began noticing the quiet rhythms that define everyday life: an elderly couple seated on their verandah, sharing a silence so complete it became an anchor of calm for me; the town's working mornings, a man balancing cargo through silent storefronts, an essential routine you only understand when you watch a place wake up day after day. Contrasting that stillness is the raw, electric energy of my mother caught mid-dance during our Ganesh Chaturthi celebrations, completely lost in the rhythm. Even the tense moments have an indelible memory attached — like stepping squarely into the path of an elderly herder and his flock, gripping the camera while the goats surged right past me.









SIGNATURE FRAMES The verandah, the celebration, the herder, the working morning — all shot on a Google Pixel 7.

Q Which candid shot had the timing come together perfectly?

Pure instinct. I was actually on my way to work when I spotted them sitting scattered in the back of the cart. For a second, I hesitated — but right as I decided to take the shot, they all settled into the exact same posture, looking straight ahead in unintentional symmetry. A split-second alignment where the street simply fell into rhythm before my eyes — proof that you should never hesitate when your gut tells you to click.



UNINTENTIONAL SYMMETRY They all settled into the exact same posture, looking straight ahead.

THE CRAFT

Q What do you love about working the streets with just your Pixel 7?

Simplicity is at the core of my work — everything is shot on my Google Pixel 7 on my daily walks. I own a Nikon DSLR, but bulky gear can feel intrusive on the street. With a phone, I'm not a photographer disrupting a space, I'm just another person passing through. That complete lack of friction lets me move fast, stay discreet, and capture authentic, split-second moments without gear getting between my eyes and the frame.

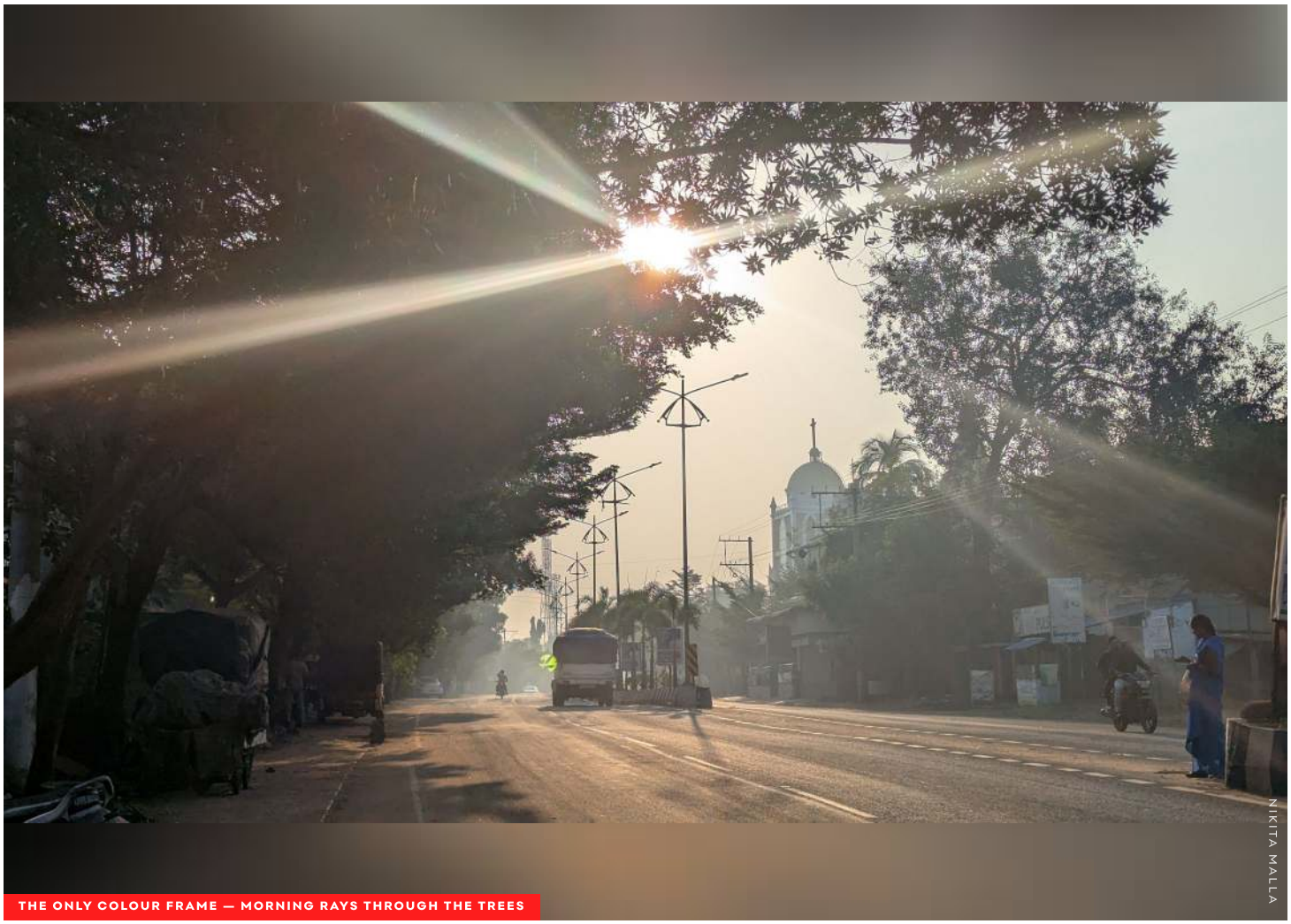
Q And a frame you're really proud of?

Initially I was even surprised that I actually captured this frame. I loved how I could capture the blinding rays bursting through the trees, bathing the morning mist and street silhouettes in brilliant golden light — probably the only non-monochrome click of my entire series.

THE KIT

CAMERA	Google Pixel 7
ALSO OWNS	A Nikon DSLR — left at home
METHOD	Daily early-morning walks

> *Street photography isn't about observing from a distance — it's about sharing the pulse of that exact second.*



THE ONLY COLOUR FRAME — MORNING RAYS THROUGH THE TREES

NIKITA MALLA

EVADI GOLA VADIDI

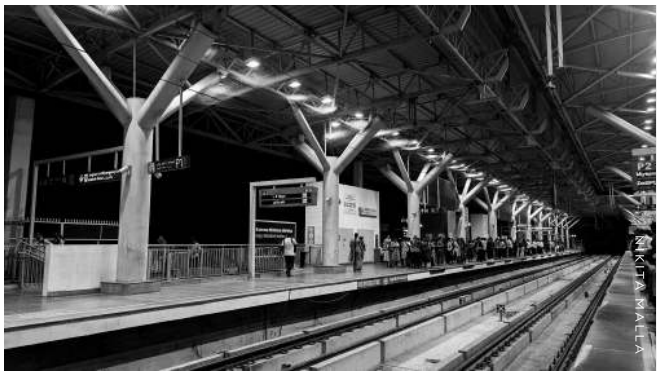
Q Where did you find your "gola"?

To me, the 'gola' isn't about noise — it's about absorption. *Evadi gola vadidi* captures the idea that everyone is wrapped up in their own reality. In this frame it unfolds naturally: people waiting for their morning tiffin, others already mid-bite, schoolchildren heading out for the day. No one is performing for a camera; everyone is simply anchored in their morning routine. That authentic, unposed human texture is the soul of my page.



EVERYONE IN THEIR OWN WORLD

NIKITA MALLA



NIKITA MALLA

WHAT'S NEXT Trading quiet streets for the crowded energy of urban transit.

Q What are you hoping to shoot next?

The move to a big city has shifted my gaze toward urban transit and metro stations — far more crowded and unpredictable than the quiet streets I started on, which makes reading the scene a lot harder. But that's what makes it exciting. I love throwing myself into spaces that force me to learn on my feet.

Q When someone really looks at one of your frames, what do you hope they feel?

A sense of slowing down. Today's world is overwhelmingly loud and fast-moving, but these frames are rooted in quiet rhythms.

"I hope they remind people of a time when stillness felt natural — a nostalgia for simple mornings, empty afternoons, and that deep, unbothered peace we so often forget to make room for."

NIKITA MALLA

CONNECT WITH NIKITA MALLA

INSTAGRAM @evadi.gola_vadidi

PORTRAITURE · SHOT ON IPHONE

MY HEART STOPPED

PENUMAKA BINDU
PORTRAIT PHOTOGRAPHER · MUMBAI

A point-and-shoot, gifted when her first son was born, turned looking into a practice. Everything she makes now is shot on a phone — soft natural light, nobody posed, and the conversation always before the camera.

AT A GLANCE

BASED	**Mumbai**
BEGAN	**With the birth of her first son**
CAMERA	**iPhone 17 Pro Max**
SETUP	**Telephoto · Portrait Mode · f/3.2**
PRINTS	**Hopes for public gallery shows**
HANDLE	**@penumakabindu06**

Q Take us back to the beginning — what first pulled you toward photography, and how did portraits become the thing you kept coming back to?

My journey into photography began with the birth of my first son. My husband gifted me a simple point-and-shoot camera, and I found myself captivated by the art of capturing moments. As I started clicking photos, I discovered a growing passion for photography, and the positive feedback I received only fueled my enthusiasm further.

There was something profoundly intimate about capturing a moment that reflected their emotions and stories. This fascination ultimately led me to focus on portraits, where I could delve deeper into the essence of each individual, telling their story through the lens.



THE SHOT Her son and her pet conure. "They were best friends."

Q Which subject or session meant the most to you, and what made it so memorable?

The boy with the parrot — he's my son and my pet conure bird. They were best friends. That day they were playing together, and suddenly I captured their eyes while my son was talking with me. My heart stopped to take that shot. I loved that shot.



FROM THE SERIES Portraits made on an iPhone 17 Pro Max — soft, directional light, nobody posed.

THE SIGNATURE FRAME

Q What portrait do you consider your signature work, and what makes it stand out?

I focused on her beauty which is inside of her and her polished attire, prioritizing realness over perfection. She is a friend who offered me the chance to click her pictures.







SIGNATURE & THE SERIES Left: "a friend who offered me the chance to click her pictures." Centre and right: further frames from Penumaka Bindu's portrait work.

Q Do you remember the first portrait that made you think 'this is what I want to do'? Tell us about that moment and who was in front of your lens.

The first photograph I took was in Mumbai. I captured two people with the reflection of the sun on the ocean. The beach next to our home is one of the attractions where the sea during low tide allows visitors to walk on the sea bed. In some places, the trail of seawater and the reflection of the setting sun prompted me to take that photo.

> *"I focused on her beauty which is inside of her... prioritizing realness over perfection.*



FROM THE SERIES Unposed, in available light.



FROM THE SERIES Soft, natural light; nothing posed.

TRUST & THE EVERYDAY

Q What's happening in this behind-the-scenes moment, and what does a typical shoot day look like for you?

That moment I was preparing for Diwali celebrations. Actually, I don't have shoot days. But whenever I roam on roads with friends or family, when I see something unique, I picture it in my mind, then I'll take a picture. Even if it takes a lot of time, the final picture will be perfectly beautiful.

Q How do you help someone relax and feel like themselves in front of your camera?

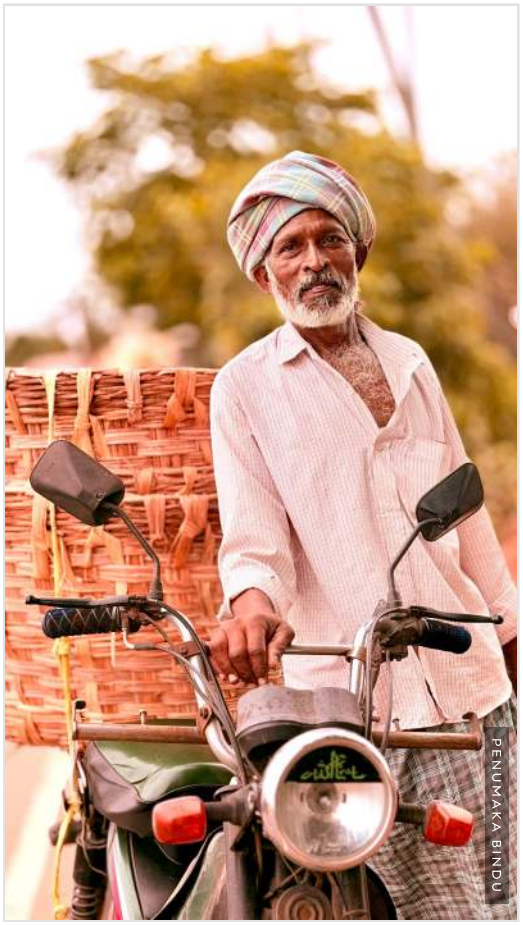
I never start with the camera. We talk first — jokes, what makes them nervous. I tell them, "You don't need to know how to pose, just be here." I shoot through the awkward and keep talking, so they stop performing and start being themselves. That trust — when someone feels safe enough to forget the camera — is what I chase in every image.

Q How would you describe your style of portraiture in your own words?

I prefer soft and natural light that allows a subject's personality to shine through. I strive to capture moments that feel authentic and unposed, giving viewers a sense of connection.

Q Was there a mentor, photographer, or even a single image that shaped how you see and shoot people?

While I didn't have a mentor or a specific photographer who influenced my journey, I found inspiration through the process of capturing images that truly bring people to life. The ability to convey emotion and tell a story through a single photograph is what drives my motivation.



ON THE ROAD "Whenever I roam on roads... when I see something unique, I picture it in my mind, then I'll take a picture."





BEHIND THE SCENES Left: preparing for Diwali celebrations. Right: dusk over the city — another frame from the series.

THE SETUP & WHAT'S NEXT



THE ONLY CAMERA SHE USES An iPhone 17 Pro Max — telephoto lens, Portrait Mode, a virtual aperture around f/3.2.

Q Tell us about your go-to setup — what camera, lens, or lighting do you rely on most for your portraits?

I use an iPhone 17 Pro Max for my photography. The ideal setup relies on using the Telephoto lens, leveraging Portrait Mode, and using soft, directional lighting. The iPhone uses computational depth mapping to separate the subject from the background. Keeping the virtual aperture around f/3.2 creates a realistic blur (bokeh) that looks like a high-end DSLR camera.

Q Looking at your earliest portrait compared to a recent one, what has changed the most — and what has stayed exactly the same?

Yes, changed a lot. I got to learn new angles, new styles, new portraits, and different exposures. What remained the same is my thoughts of taking pictures — where to take the shot and how to promote my picture into unique art remains the same.

Q What excites you about your next direction, and where do you hope your portrait work takes you from here?

I am excited to shoot this picture very soon. Mostly, I like to click pictures in monochrome. I hope my pictures will make printing high-detail portraits for public gallery shows and community spaces.

THE VIRTUAL APERTURE

f/3.2

Held on the iPhone's Telephoto lens in Portrait Mode — "a realistic blur (bokeh) that looks like a high-end DSLR camera."







THEN, NOW, NEXT Right: "Mostly, I like to click pictures in monochrome... I hope my pictures will make printing high-detail portraits for public gallery shows and community spaces."

CONNECT WITH PENUMAKA BINDU

INSTAGRAM @penumakabindu06

STREET & DOCUMENTARY

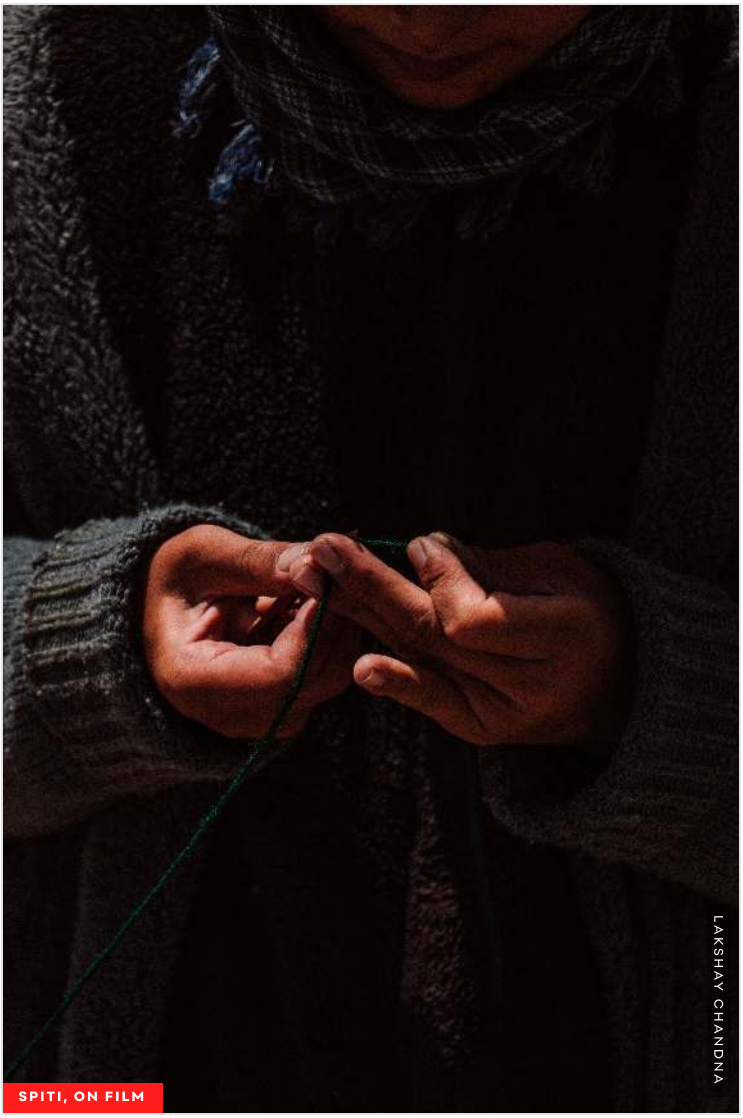
TASVEEREIN AUR KAHANIYAAN

MY DADU'S MINOLTA

LAKSHAY CHANDNA

PHOTOGRAPHER · STREET, DOCUMENTARY, SPORTS, TRAVEL

He joined photography college because he didn't want to study. Then came a boatman on the Yamuna, a bull and a shower of sparks in Susgaon, and a roll of film shot through his late grandfather's camera in Spiti.



THE ROLL From the Spiti series he carried his Dadu's Minolta 7s for — bought, shot and developed himself.

AT A GLANCE

BIO	**Tasveerein aur Kahaniyaan**
FIRST FRAME	**A boatman at Yamuna Ghat**
CAMERA	**Lumix S5II · 24–105mm f/4**
ON FILM	**His Dadu's Minolta 7s**
SECOND HOME	**Shimla, where his Dadi was born**
DREAM FRAME	**Chelsea lifting a trophy at Stamford Bridge**

Q **Take us back to the very beginning — what was the first frame you shot that made you think, 'this is what I want to do'?**

I think the first frame that really made me stop and think, "woah, this is what a camera can do," was a photograph I took with my first camera at the Yamuna Ghat. It was a picture of a person riding a boat, and I still remember the feeling I had when I saw the image. There was nothing extraordinary about the moment itself, but somehow, seeing it captured through my camera amazed me. I remember looking at the photograph and being genuinely surprised that I had made something like that. I don't even know exactly what it was about that frame, but it made photography feel different to me. For the first time, I wasn't just taking a picture—I was actually excited about what I could create with a camera.



YAMUNA GHAT The first frame — a person riding a boat, and the one that made photography feel different to him.

SPARKS & THE PITCH

Q You move between documenting protests, covering cricket matches, and chasing star trails in the Himalayas. How do you describe yourself as a photographer when someone asks?

I've always been interested in a lot of different kinds of photography—sports, travel, documentary, automobiles, architecture, interiors and more. But lately, I feel like I'm slowly narrowing it down to sports and travel.

Sports feels natural to me because football and cricket have been such a big part of my life. I've grown up watching and playing them, so photographing them feels like experiencing something I already love from a different perspective. I love the unpredictability of it and trying to anticipate that one moment.

Travel is a little different. I just love the freedom of it—roaming around without always having a fixed plan, meeting new people, listening to their stories and finding things I wouldn't have found otherwise. And I've always had a thing for mountains, so being out there with a camera just feels right.

I'm still figuring out where photography will take me, but right now, sports and travel are the two things I feel most connected to. There's just a different feeling when I'm shooting them.

Q What's the one photograph from your documentary work that means the most to you, and what was happening in that moment?

The photograph I submitted was taken during Bail pola, a festival we celebrate in Maharashtra. I was photographing it in Susgaon, Pune, and honestly, I was quite nervous while shooting. There were huge bulls with horns and fireworks going off around me, and I was constantly worried that I might get hurt. I also didn't speak Marathi, and most of the people there were very traditional, so I was conscious of the fact that I couldn't always communicate with them properly.

The photograph itself is quite intense. There are sparks from fireworks in the foreground, while a bull is being pulled back by the person handling the bull as everything is happening around them. I remember looking at the frame afterwards and thinking, "I've never really photographed something like this before."

Until then, I think I had a very different idea of documentary photography. I thought it was mostly about documenting people, finding interesting faces and making portraits. That photograph changed that for me. It made me realise that documentary photography can also be about discomfort, chaos, culture and moments that aren't necessarily beautiful or easy to look at. It made me want to observe situations more closely instead of always looking for the obvious picture.

> *"Documentary photography can also be about discomfort, chaos, culture and moments that aren't necessarily beautiful or easy to look at.*

Q You've covered live cricket like the Maharashtra vs Goa Ranji clash in Pune — shooting live sport gives you no second chances. Walk us through what goes through your mind in the split second before you press the shutter.

Honestly, whenever I'm shooting cricket, I feel like I'm going back in time. I played a lot of cricket growing up, for my school team and even at a higher level, so being on the other side of the boundary with a camera brings back a lot of those memories. Sometimes, while I'm photographing a bowler, I can almost imagine myself standing there, bowling to a batsman.

At the same time, I'm always a little conscious before pressing the shutter because I really want the photograph to come out right. There's no second chance, and that pressure is something I genuinely enjoy.

I think that's what makes sports photography so special to me. It feels nostalgic, but it also feels like I've found a new way to be part of a sport that I've always loved. And honestly, when I'm shooting sports, I get this feeling of, "Yeah, this is what I want to do." I'd love to build my future around photographing sports.







PROTESTS, MATCHES, STAR TRAILS Susgaon at Bail Pola; Maharashtra vs Goa in Pune; and the Spiti night sky he taught himself to shoot off YouTube.

PHOTOS AND STORIES

Q Your Instagram bio simply reads 'Tasveerein aur Kahaniyaan' — photos and stories. When did photography stop being just pictures for you and start becoming a way to tell stories?

Honestly, photography wasn't something I was passionate about when I started. I joined a photography college simply because I didn't like studying and didn't really want to follow the usual academic route. But somewhere along the way, photography just grew on me. I started loving the feeling of looking through the viewfinder and noticing things I might have otherwise walked past.

I especially enjoy photographing people on the street. There's something about approaching a stranger, making their portrait, and then seeing the smile on their face when you show them the photograph that really stayed with me. Slowly, I became less interested in just making a good-looking picture and more interested in the person and the moment behind it. I think that's when photography became a way of telling stories for me. The photograph became more than just an image — it became a small piece of someone's story. That's probably where "Tasveerein aur Kahaniyaan" comes from.

Q Was there a person, a mentor, or even a photographer you admired from afar who shaped how you see the world through a lens?

I think my professors in college have played a big part in shaping the way I see photography. They've taught me to slow down and observe before I actually lift the camera. A lot of my learning has also come simply from observing people, spaces and little moments around me.

More recently, I've found myself getting increasingly interested in sports photography, especially football. I've been following a lot of European photographers who cover the sport, and I really admire the way they photograph more than just the game. The atmosphere, the fans, the emotions, the quiet moments before a match—all of it becomes part of the story. I think that has started influencing the way I look through my own viewfinder. I'm still figuring out my visual language, but I like that it keeps changing as I discover new photographers and new ways of seeing.

Q You shot your Spiti series on a Minolta 7s film camera. What made you reach for film there, and how did it change the way you saw the valley?

The Minolta 7s was actually my Dadu's camera. He passed away on the 2nd of February, and I think that's probably the biggest reason I picked it up for my Spiti trip.

My Dadu was never a professional photographer. He didn't really know photography in the way we learn it today. When he was younger, he learned little things from his friends and slowly started photographing. He told me he had photographed my father travelling with my Dadi, he photographed when I was born, and a lot of my early childhood. So this camera has already been a part of so many memories in my family.

I knew how to shoot film because we were taught it in college. I knew how to load a roll, shoot it and develop it. So I don't know, I just felt like maybe I should take his camera to Spiti and experience what he experienced. Maybe I wanted to see the world through the same camera that he had used to document all of us.

I bought a roll of film, took it to Spiti, shot the whole roll and developed it myself. The photograph I submitted as the cover is actually from that roll. The people in the photographs were my friends, and it was our second trip to Spiti, so it became a really special trip for me.

I don't know if I did justice to what my Dadu did. Probably I didn't. He had a completely different way of seeing things, and he was doing all of this without really knowing photography. But maybe, just for a little bit, I felt like I came closer to him. Like I was experiencing something he had experienced years ago.

And I think that's why I'll probably keep that camera with me wherever I go. It's not just a camera for me anymore.







STRANGERS, SPORT, MOUNTAINS "Approaching a stranger, making their portrait, and then seeing the smile on their face"; the quiet moments he admires in sport; first light over the valley.

NOBODY STOPS

Q One of your most personal series was set at a cremation ground, with writing about endings and everyday life. What did you want people to feel or understand through it?

This series came out of a study tour to Banaras. We were there making a documentary about the people who work around the burning ghats, and at the same time, we had to make a photo story. While I was roaming around Manikarnika Ghat, I started noticing something that really stayed with me.

No one stops.

There are people carrying bodies, pyres burning, animals moving around, boats passing by, people walking, and life continuing around all of it. Even when someone is dying, everything else just keeps moving. Nobody really stops for death.

The photograph I submitted was taken in one of those moments. You can see a body being carried through the frame, with the cremation happening around it, and what struck me was that everything else was still moving. When I looked at the photograph, I felt like it captured what I was seeing in Banaras.

For me, the series wasn't really about death. It was about how death and life exist together there, without one stopping the other. I wanted people to see Banaras the way I experienced it—not as a place that is only about death and cremation, but as a place where everything keeps moving. People, animals, boats, life, death —nothing stops.

Q Is there a photograph that lives only in your head for now — a dream frame you haven't managed to shoot yet?

If there's one photograph that lives in my head, it's probably one I haven't even had the opportunity to take yet. I've been supporting Chelsea Football Club for around eight years now, and that club has become very close to me. Maybe it sounds a little stupid, but there have been times when it felt like the club was there when nobody else was. I've grown up watching them, celebrating with them, getting frustrated with them, everything.

So my biggest dream as a sports photographer is to one day be the official photographer of Chelsea. I want to be on that pitch with my camera when they win something huge. Maybe it's the Premier League, maybe the Champions League, maybe the Club World Cup. I want to photograph that moment—the players celebrating, the fans going crazy, the trophy coming up, and knowing that I'm not just watching it anymore, I'm actually there documenting it.

What's stopping me right now is not really fear. I'm just at the beginning of my journey in sports photography. I need to build my portfolio, make connections and prove myself before I can reach a place like that. I'm young, and I know there's a lot I need to learn and a long way to go.

But I don't think that's a bad thing. It just means I have something to work towards. And hopefully, someday, I'll be standing on the touchline at Stamford Bridge with my camera, photographing Chelsea lifting a trophy. That's the frame I'm waiting for.





NOTHING STOPS Left: Manikarnika Ghat, Banaras — "everything else was still moving." Right: from the travel work, in the mountains he keeps going back to.

CONNECT WITH LAKSHAY CHANDNA

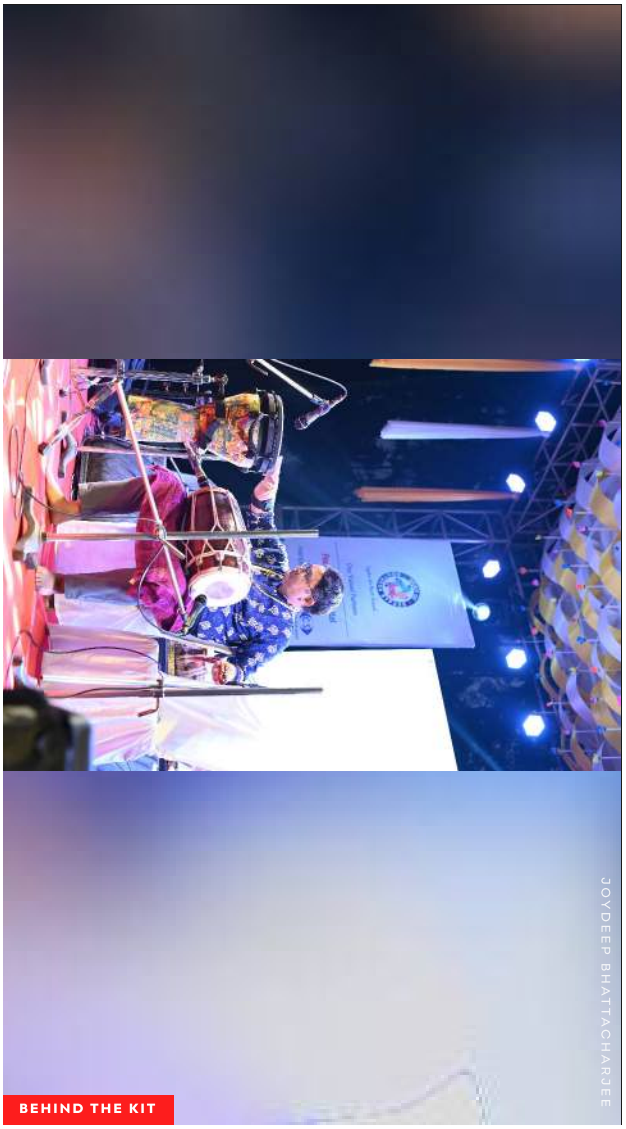
INSTAGRAM @throughlakshay **BEHANCE** lakshaychandna4

IN CONVERSATION · PERCUSSION

THE BANKER'S Riyaz

JOYDEEP BHATTACHARJEE · PERCUSSIONIST

By profession a banker; by passion and purpose, a percussionist. Twenty years away from music, then back behind the kit — on gurus, grooves, and holding a whole room on one downbeat.



Q How did percussion first find you — what's your earliest memory of being pulled toward rhythm?

It started as pure domestic mischief. Knuckles on the dining table, fingers tapping against car windows, upside-down sweet tins on the kitchen floor. I was obsessed with the fact that striking the middle of a tin gave you a dull bass thump, but clipping the rolled edge gave you a crisp snare crack. The real lightning strike, though, was standing next to a dhaak at a festival. That sound doesn't register in your ears; it hits you right in the sternum. It was the first time I realized rhythm could be an overwhelming physical presence. From there, I needed a way to tame that power, which led me to the tabla. Classical tabla training gives you a complete rhythmic vocabulary—the microtonal slides of the bass skin, the mathematical precision of the strokes. Once your hands possess that kind of discipline, you start hearing possibilities everywhere. That curiosity gradually turned into passion and percussion became my way of expressing creativity and connection through music.

AT A GLANCE

INSTRUMENT	Drums & percussion
RETURNED	After twenty years away from music
HANDLE	@jburbancruiser

THE INSTRUMENT

Q What's the instrument you play most, and what makes it feel like yours?



THE SETUP Kalamandir, Kolkata — the dholak that has been by his side for two years.

To understand my relationship with my instruments, you have to understand the two halves of my life: by profession, I'm a banker; by passion and purpose, I'm a percussionist. People are always surprised by that contrast. They see a banker as someone bound to suits, spreadsheets, and cold figures. But music is mathematics, too—just set on fire. The discipline and relentless focus I need in the corporate world are the exact same tools that fuel my riyaz. The drums are where the quiet order of my day turns into pure kinetic energy. My dholak has been by my side for over two years now. It has survived moves, late-night jams, festival marathons, and endless hours of sweat. It feels like mine because an old drum eventually memorizes its player. The rim has softened under my knuckles, the tuning ropes know the exact tension I like before a note blooms, and the bass skin has a warmth that only comes from years of hands sinking into it.

Q What was happening in that moment, and where were you playing?

That was at Kalamandir in Kolkata, during an annual cultural concert. For anyone who grows up around Bengal's performing arts scene, playing on that stage is always a special milestone. I love this picture because it tells my whole story without a single word. I'm dressed in the clean, formal attire of my daytime world as a banker, but sitting behind the instrument that has had my heart since childhood. In that particular moment, the ensemble was deep into a composition "mere haathon me nau nai chudiyan" song from Movie Chandni composed by musical Maestro Shiv-Hari. I had the dholak balanced across my knees, cradled over a cloth to keep it steady, with both heads mic'd up for maximum acoustic punch. That slight smile on my face isn't posed—it's that quiet moment of satisfaction when the tempo settles into the groove, and you realize the entire hall is breathing at the exact same tempo. It's the ultimate decompression.

Q Who shaped you as a player — a guru, a teacher, or someone whose playing you kept coming back to?

A teacher gives you the grammar, but the world teaches you how to speak. My foundation came from strict, traditional instruction—the grueling hours of riyaz, learning hand placement, and training my fingers not to fight the skin. But beyond the classroom, I shaped my sound by being a relentless student of live performance. I made it my business to see eminent musicians across every tier—local, national, and international. Locally, I learned from the unsung players—the folk percussionists at community gatherings and festival drummers who possessed an earthy, instinctive pocket you simply cannot learn from a book. They had this relentless, driving pulse that commanded an entire crowd. Nationally, watching the titans of Indian percussion was a masterclass in precision and artistry. They elevated the drum from a time-keeping tool to a lead voice, showing me how dynamics, speed, and complex time cycles can tell an emotional story. Internationally, seeing global percussionists tore open my imagination. It showed me how a West African rhythm can sit inside a Latin groove, or how acoustic hand drumming translates into modern contemporary arrangements. My voice on the drums isn't just one lineage; it's an ongoing conversation with every great player I've ever had the privilege to watch.

Q What's one thing about your technique that you've worked hardest on?

Unlearning twenty years of inertia, and then teaching a finger-style player how to hold a stick. I took a full twenty-year hiatus from serious playing while building my career in the banking sector. Stepping back into music two years ago was like an explosion of creative hunger—within those two years, I expanded my setup to include the cajon, the djembe, and the duff. But the biggest technical hurdle of my life was adapting to the duff with a stick. I am, through and through, a bare-hand player. My natural vocabulary is rooted in the subtle, tactile contact of finger pads and palms—the touch of a tabla or dholak where your skin feels every nuance of the head. When you pick up a stick to play the daf, that intimate connection vanishes.

TECHNIQUE & THE ROOM



THE HYBRID RIG

ESSENTIAL Daf, tabla dayan and djembe at once — the custom rig from a live rendition of A.R. Rahman's 'Ae Ajnabi'.

Q Walk us through what we're seeing — what's essential to how you play?

This was during a live rendition of A.R. Rahman Sir's iconic 'Ae Ajnabi'—a track that is sacred to any percussionist who loves dynamic nuance. Rather than sticking to a single traditional drum, I designed a custom hybrid rig to play the daf, the tabla dayan, and the djembe all at once. The challenge with a Rahman composition is that you can never overplay; every stroke has to mean something. I used the djembe for the round, cavernous bottom end, the daf for its wide, sweeping rhythmic drive, and the tabla dayan for crisp, pitched articulation on top. Running that kind of multi-drum setup live demands immense mental coordination—your hands are essentially operating in three different percussion dialects at the exact same moment. It was demanding, but bringing those acoustic textures together for such a timeless song was an absolute thrill.

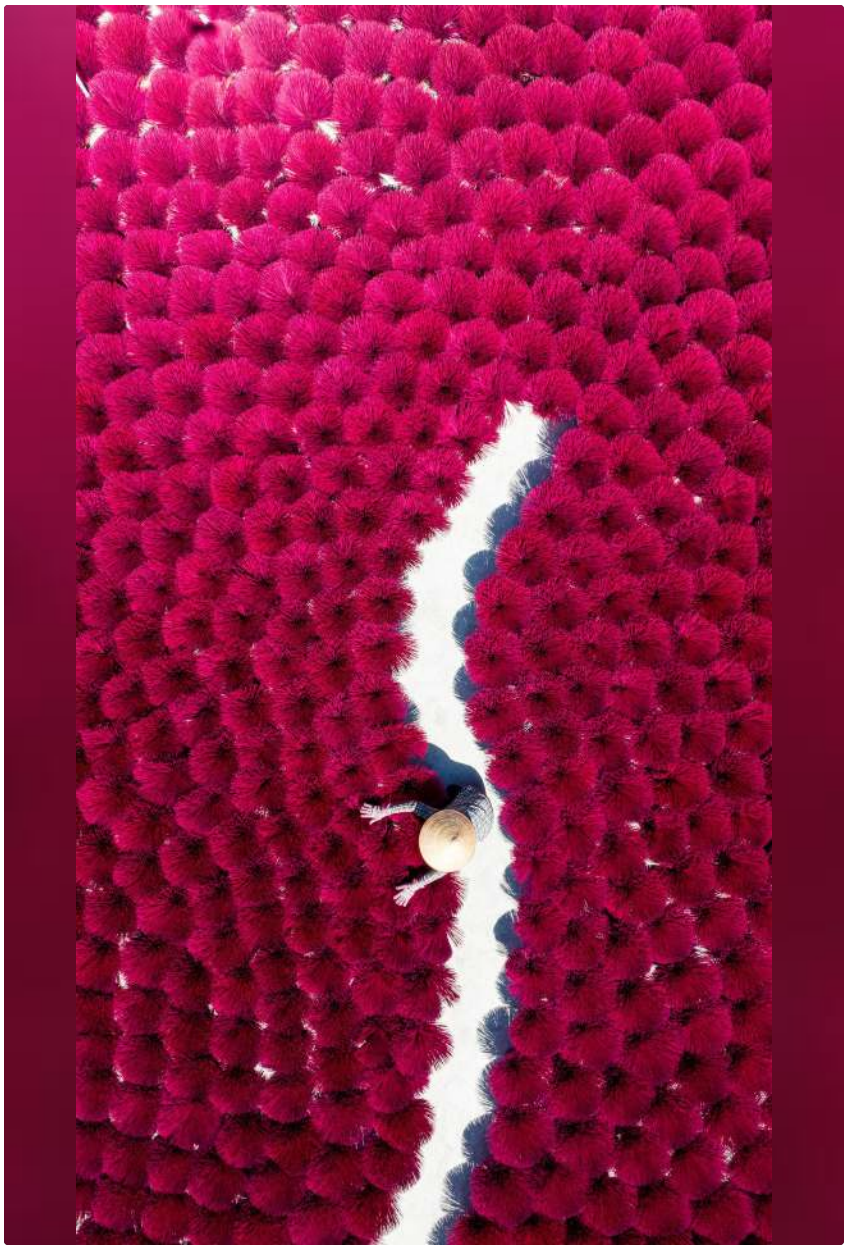
Q When a performance is really working, what does that feel like for you?

The biggest telltale sign for me is the audience. When a groove really locks in, the entire room begins to breathe on the same downbeat. You look out and see someone's shoulder moving, or an older listener nodding in sync with the bass, and you realize you're holding the emotional steering wheel of that entire hall. Coming back to music after twenty years away, those moments feel like an out-of-body experience.

> *"When a groove really locks in, the entire room begins to breathe on the same downbeat... you realize you're holding the emotional steering wheel of that entire hall."*
>
> JOYDEEP BHATTACHARJEE

CONNECT WITH JOYDEEP BHATTACHARJEE

INSTAGRAM @jburbancruiser



FROM ABOVE, AN ABSTRACT PAINTING. Quang Phu Cau incense village, near Hanoi — magenta bundles, a white path, one worker for scale.

AERIAL · DRONE

ROADS BECAME PATTERNS.

AKSHAY PRAKASH KANADE

DRONE PHOTOGRAPHER · DJI MAVIC 3

He finds his compositions on satellite imagery before he ever unfolds the drone. On the narrow river that splits two Mumbais, an incense village that turns into an abstract painting from above, and third place at the WallMag Drone Photography Awards.

AT A GLANCE

AWARD
3rd place, WallMag Drone Photography Awards 2026

SIGNATURE FRAME
"A River of Contrasts" — Chembur, Mumbai

DRONE
DJI Mavic 3 · 4/3 CMOS Hasselblad

PROCESS
Scouts compositions on Google Maps and satellite imagery

LOOKS FOR
Rivers, coastlines, settlements, patterns

ALSO FLOWN
Quang Phu Cau Incense Village, Vietnam

Q Take us right back to the start — what first pulled you toward seeing the world from the air?

I think it started with curiosity — the desire to see familiar places from a completely different perspective. I had always been fascinated by photography and travel, but when I discovered drones, I realized I could tell stories in a way that wasn't possible from the ground. The first time I saw a landscape from above, I was amazed by how ordinary things could suddenly look completely different — roads became patterns, rivers became lines, and the relationship between people, nature and the landscape became much more visible.

Q Do you remember the very first time you sent a drone up and brought back a frame that made you fall for this craft?

Yes, I remember that feeling. The first time I sent a drone up, I was honestly more excited about seeing the world from that height than about getting the "perfect" photograph. When I brought it back and looked at the footage, something just clicked. Places that I had seen countless times from the ground suddenly had completely different shapes, patterns and stories from above. Roads, buildings, rivers and even everyday life started looking like compositions. I remember thinking, "There's so much more to photograph when you change your perspective."

A RIVER OF CONTRASTS

Q How did you learn to read a landscape from above — through a mentor, a community, a lot of trial and error, or something else?

It has been a combination of trial and error, observation, and a lot of preparation. I never really had a single mentor who taught me how to read a landscape from above. A lot of it came from spending years flying, making mistakes, and slowly understanding what works and what doesn't. One thing that has become a big part of my process is Google Maps and satellite imagery. Before visiting a location, I often explore it from above virtually — looking at the shape of rivers, roads, coastlines, settlements, bridges, fields and interesting patterns. Sometimes I'll spot a composition on the map that I would never notice from the ground.

Q What's the story behind your award-winning aerial frame, 'A River of Contrasts'?

What caught my eye was the contrast. From the ground, the area feels like a dense urban landscape, but from above, I suddenly saw this narrow river cutting through the settlement and separating two very different worlds. On one side was the dense cluster of homes, tightly packed together, while on the other side there was a surprising patch of green and open land. The river became this natural line between them — almost like a boundary, but one that nature never really intended to create. I was drawn to the way the river curved through the frame and how the houses, water and greenery created such a strong geometric composition. The more I looked at it, the more I felt that the photograph wasn't just about the landscape; it was about the contrast between nature and urban life, and how closely the two exist together in Mumbai. That was the moment I knew I had the frame I was looking for, so I held the drone steady and pressed the shutter.



CHEMBUR, MUMBAI "The river became this natural line between them — almost like a boundary, but one that nature never really intended to create."

> *"There's so much more to photograph when you change your perspective.*

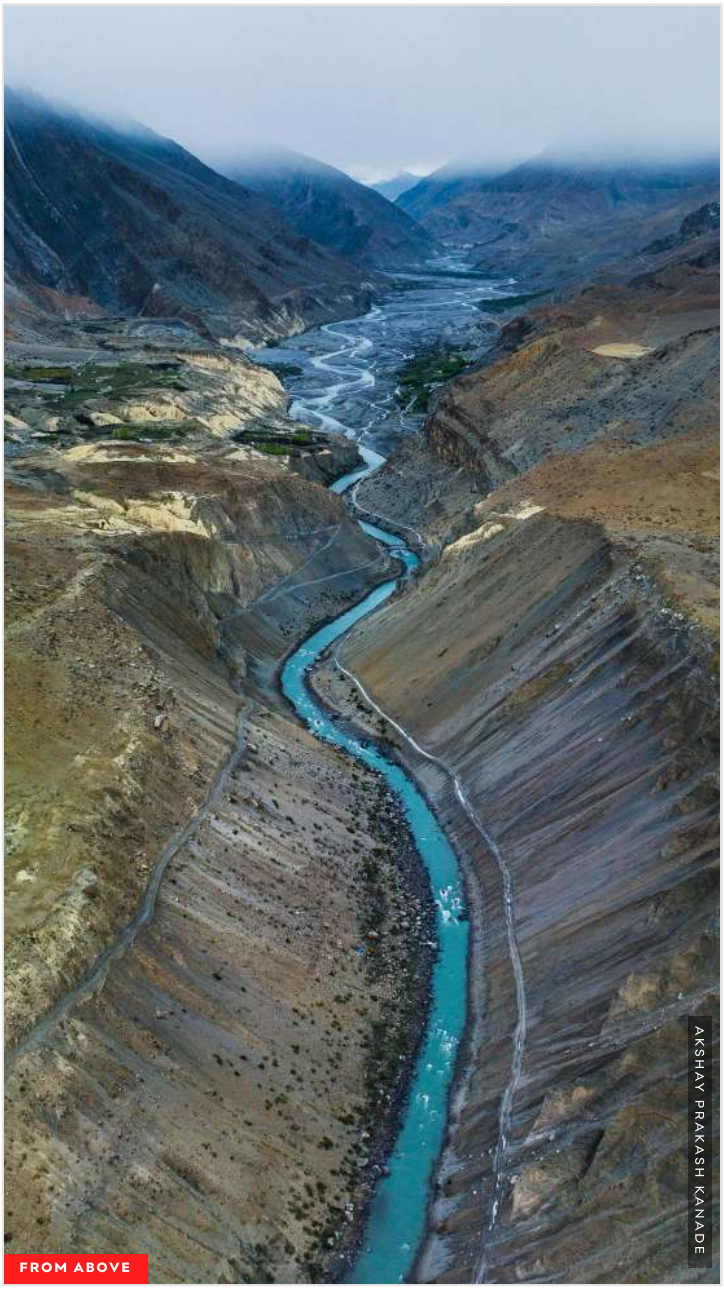
FROM ABOVE, AN ABSTRACT PAINTING

Q Which drone do you reach for most often, and what does it let you capture that nothing else could?

The drone I reach for most often is the DJI Mavic 3, and it has become an essential part of my aerial photography journey. Technically, what I really appreciate is its large 4/3 CMOS Hasselblad camera sensor, which gives me excellent image quality, dynamic range and detail. That becomes especially important when I'm shooting landscapes with strong contrasts between highlights and shadows, or when I'm working during sunrise and sunset. Its long flight time and reliable battery performance also make a big difference. When I'm travelling or working in a remote location, I can spend more time exploring a composition and waiting for the right light instead of constantly worrying about landing and changing batteries. But beyond the specifications, what the Mavic 3 really gives me is freedom. I can travel with a relatively compact setup and still capture incredible scale, patterns, textures and perspectives that simply aren't possible from the ground. A winding river, a highway interchange, a coastline or a dense urban neighbourhood can completely transform when viewed from above. The Mavic 3 isn't just the camera I use — it has become a tool that has changed the way I see and photograph the world.

Q Where was this frame taken, and why has that particular flight stayed with you?

This was taken at Quang Phu Cau Incense Village, near Hanoi, Vietnam, a place known for its traditional incense-making craft. What stayed with me about this flight was the transformation that happened when I looked at the village from above. On the ground, you see people making incense and bundles of bamboo sticks, but from the air, those everyday materials became a completely different visual language — almost like a giant abstract painting. The intense pink and red incense sticks created this incredible texture across the frame, while the narrow white pathway cutting through the middle gave the composition a strong sense of direction. Adding the person into the frame gave the image a sense of scale and reminded me that behind this beautiful pattern is a real traditional craft and a community of people. I think this flight stayed with me because it captured exactly what I love about aerial photography: taking something ordinary and revealing an extraordinary perspective that you simply cannot see from the ground.



A RIVER READ FROM THE AIR From the ground it is just water; from above, a turquoise line drawn through a steep mountain valley.

WHAT CAN I SEE THAT I HAVEN'T SEEN BEFORE?

Q What direction is your work heading next, and what's exciting you about it right now?

Right now, what excites me most is the idea of going beyond simply photographing beautiful places and discovering stories that people might otherwise overlook. I want to keep exploring new landscapes, but I'm also becoming more interested in human stories, changing environments and the relationship between people and the places they live in. Sometimes that could be a remote landscape, sometimes a busy city, a coastline, a highway or even an everyday place that looks completely different from the air. I'm also experimenting with seeing how I can fly differently — not always looking for the obvious wide aerial shot, but searching for patterns, minimal compositions, textures, scale and unexpected perspectives. After years of flying, I think the challenge now is not simply "Where can I fly next?" but "What can I see that I haven't seen before?" That curiosity is what keeps me excited. There are still so many stories on the ground waiting to be discovered from the sky.

Q You've been ranked among India's top drone photographers this year. What does that recognition mean to you?

Honestly, this recognition means a lot to me because drone photography has never felt like just a profession or a way of creating images. It has become a way for me to explore, observe and tell stories from a perspective that people don't usually get to see. Being recognised among India's top drone photographers is incredibly humbling, especially because there are so many talented photographers creating exceptional work across the country. It tells me that the time I've spent travelling, experimenting, learning and sometimes simply waiting for the right light is starting to connect with people. At the same time, I see it less as an achievement to stop at and more as motivation to push myself further. I want to keep finding new perspectives, new stories and new ways of using the drone as a creative tool. And winning 3rd place at the WallMag Drone Photography Awards 2026 makes this recognition even more special. I'm genuinely grateful to everyone who has supported my work and been part of the journey.


THE MAVIC 3


THE PHOTOGRAPHER

KIT, AND THE MAN FLYING The Mavic 3 at sunset, and Akshay Prakash Kanade, who scouts every composition on satellite imagery before he takes off.

CONNECT WITH AKSHAY PRAKASH KANADE

INSTAGRAM @the_candyology

IN CONVERSATION · PLAYBACK SINGER

Jheel Si Aankhein

PUSHPINDER SINGH · PLAYBACK SINGER

From Mumbai's Priya Studio to Kolkata's Studio World — sixteen years of chasing the exact expression a song asks for, a lifelong devotee of Kishore da, and one lake-eyed melody he keeps returning to.



PUSHPINDER SINGH

Q Do you remember the very first song you ever sang out loud, and where you were when it happened?

My first video song is "Ye hawa chali chali," recorded at Priya Studio, Mumbai. That was the moment I first sang out loud on camera, and it holds a special place in my heart as the starting point of my journey.

Q When was the first moment you heard your own voice and thought, "this is something I can really do"?

When I was 17 years old, studying in class 11th science, I first sang a few lines from the film Ashqie and realized that I could really do singing. Today, a total of ten years have been spent in Bollywood doing singing, and overall I have 16 years of experience in singing. I am a great fan of Kishore da.

Q Is there a guru, teacher, or singer whose voice shaped yours — someone you'd want to name and thank here?

Yes, my voice texture goes between Kishore Kumar ji and Kumar Sanu ji. Obviously, my Guru is Kishore Kumar ji, and I listen to his songs daily and sing them as well. A lot of thanks to Guru ji Kishore Kumar ji.

Q How did your path lead you toward playback singing in Mumbai — what was the door that first opened for you?

Music director S.P. Sen ji at Priya Studio, Mumbai gave me the first chance to do playback singing for his Hindi film. The duet song is "Tip tip gire varish to jal utha ye man," and the song was composed by S.P. Sen ji. That opportunity opened the door for me in Mumbai.

HOME
Priya Studio, Mumbai · Studio World, Kolkata

GURU
Kishore Kumar

EXPERIENCE
16 yrs singing · 10 in Bollywood

HONOURED BY
Govt. of India — "Bhartiya Sena"

IN THE STUDIO · BEHIND THE MIC

Q What's the story behind this recording — what is the song, and why does it mean the most to you?

The music composition of this song is given by Rudrashish Dutta ji, the song is written by Azeem Shirazi, and it is sung by me, Singer Pushpinder Singh, at Studio World, Kolkata. The lyrics of the song are "Jheel se tere aankho me..." The composition touches the heart of the public and friends as it's about appreciation for the features of a beautiful girl. The instrumental music is superb and very well copes with the composition. Its video is flashing on YouTube and liked by maximum people.

Q What were you recording that day, and what do you remember most about your hours behind the mic?

Among various best recordings in Mumbai and Kolkata, every time inside the studio and behind the mic, I first memorize the composition through written lyrics and plan mainly to put the best song expressions as per the situation of the song. The flow of voice and singing must be accurate so the song will be complete with a practical sense of its situations. Singing through the heart is itself self-explanatory when my eyes are partially closed and I am feeling deep in the step-by-step composition, its expressions, lyrical words, and finally enjoying every song recording. Among all recordings, the recording of "Jheel se aankho me tere..." is my best recording at Studio World, Kolkata.

> *"Singing through the heart is itself self-explanatory — my eyes partially closed, feeling deep in the step-by-step composition.*

SELECTED WORKS

SIGNATURE	"Jheel se tere aankho me" — Studio World, Kolkata
FIRST PLAYBACK	"Tip tip gire varish" — comp. S.P. Sen
NATIONAL SONG	"Bhartiya Sena" — Priya Studio, Mumbai
WRITING	"Anokha Pyar-Ek Sacchi Dosti" — film story



AT THE MIC Memorising the composition from written lyrics before a take — the method behind every recording in Mumbai and Kolkata.



IN FULL VOICE On the studio floor — a take in progress, headphones on, the song building line by line.

THE LAKE-EYED SONG · SCAN TO WATCH

Q What was happening in this moment, and how did the room feel that night?

It was my wife's sister's marriage, and there I sang the Kishore da song "Aao mere paas aur aao, na ghabrao, na sharmao." It was a musical night and I fully enjoyed it.



STUDIO WORLD, KOLKATA

IN THE BOOTH Where "Jheel se tere aankho me" was cut — the recording he calls his best.



CONTROL ROOM

AMONG THE MONITORS Sixteen years of studio hours, Mumbai to Kolkata.

Q What is it about this track that keeps pulling you back to it?

The song "Jheel se aankho me tere" is composed by Rudrashish Dutta ji, who believes in R.D. Burman style, and this song is similar to the same style, whose wording and composition touch the heart of everyone. The song was liked by maximum people and mainly appreciated by Bollywood. One more recording of mine, the national song "Bhartiya Sena," is appreciated by the Ministry, Government of India. It's about our Bhartiya Sena, and I sang it at Studio Priya, Mumbai, under composition by S.P. Sen ji. So the best compositions and lyrics definitely touch us and are liked by all.

SCAN TO WATCH

"Jheel se tere aankho me" — the Rudrashish Dutta composition in R.D. Burman style, live on YouTube.

SCAN TO WATCH

A musical night — singing Kishore da's "Aao mere paas aur aao" at a family wedding.

THE EXPRESSION · & WHAT'S NEXT



WITH THE COMPOSER

THE HARMONIUM A session at the keys — working a melody through before the voice goes down.



BETWEEN TAKES

IN GOOD COMPANY With a fellow musician over the written lyrics — a lighter moment between sessions.

Q What's the story behind this moment for you?

Music is my hobby, and I daily listen to Kishore Kumar songs, which actually satisfy me in learning, grasping tips, and expressions. When I am in studios behind the mic, I always try to put expressions as per the situation of the songs. My Guru Kishore da was a master of expressions. I just love expressive songs. So here Guru's formula is more working. Definitely sargam is very important and sharp singing, but without expressive original nature and its positivity, no one becomes a good singer or especially a playback singer in life. Expressions are not a learning process, but anybody gains them through responsibilities, sincerity, working ability, good behaviour, real friendship based on nature of help, care, respect, and good advice. Hence, the more the positivity, the more the real expressive music comes out during singing.

Q What are you building toward with this, and when do we get to hear it?

Actually, I am a writer also and trying to write stories and essays for different topics. A Hindi film story, "Anokha Pyar-Ek Sacchi Dosti," written by me is under discussion with a producer of Bollywood. There are maximum six songs in this film, and hopefully its recordings will be soon after the decision of the producer. So all is still under suspense and planning, but hopefully recordings will go soon or depend on the producer's decision.

Q If there's one song, one stage, or one moment you're still dreaming of singing, what does it look like?

Music is my hobby, so definitely chances to sing anywhere are the best options to me, and I will either sing my songs or Kishore Kumar ji songs. When we work professionally on a desired hobby, it gives us happiness, satisfaction, and one more step towards success. It looks like my love towards singing.

> *"Chances to sing anywhere are the best to me — and I will either sing my own songs or Kishore Kumar ji's. It looks like my love towards singing."*
>
> PUSHPINDER SINGH · PLAYBACK SINGER

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IN CONVERSATION · STREET & DOCUMENTARY

NOTHING EXTRAORDINARY

KRISHNACHURA DAS · STREET & DOCUMENTARY · KOLKATA

Krishnachura Das works the unremarkable hours of Kolkata — a woman under an umbrella, a man beside a bundle, the slow traffic of her own verandah — convinced that the moments most of us walk past are the ones worth keeping.



KOLKATA A woman shelters under her umbrella while two dogs sleep on, untroubled by the heat — a face hidden, a moment left anonymous.

AT A GLANCE

BASED IN	Kolkata, India
GENRE	Street & documentary
CAMERA	Canon PowerShot SX60
EDITS IN	Adobe Lightroom
PICKED IT UP	During the COVID lockdown
FIRST GUIDE	Her Chotomashi — maternal aunt
ONGOING	The verandah series, across seasons

1 When did your eye for the everyday begin?

People have always been the most interesting subject to me — how they behave, what leads to that behaviour, and the little nuances that reveal something about them. In a bustling city like Kolkata, there is always so much happening that it can be easy to miss these smaller moments. Photography helps me slow down and notice them — whether it's a fish seller at work, a girl going home from school, or a dog taking shelter from the rain. If a photograph can make someone pause and notice something they might otherwise have walked past, I feel like it has done its job.

2 What was happening in this photograph?

It was a hot summer day, and I saw this woman taking shelter from the heat under her umbrella while the two dogs were sleeping in bliss. What caught my attention was the contrast between them — the woman hurrying somewhere while the dogs were completely at ease. I liked that her face was hidden by the umbrella; it made the photograph feel less like a portrait of one person and more like a small, anonymous moment from everyday life. Nothing was posed or planned, and I like that it feels honest without trying too hard to be beautiful.

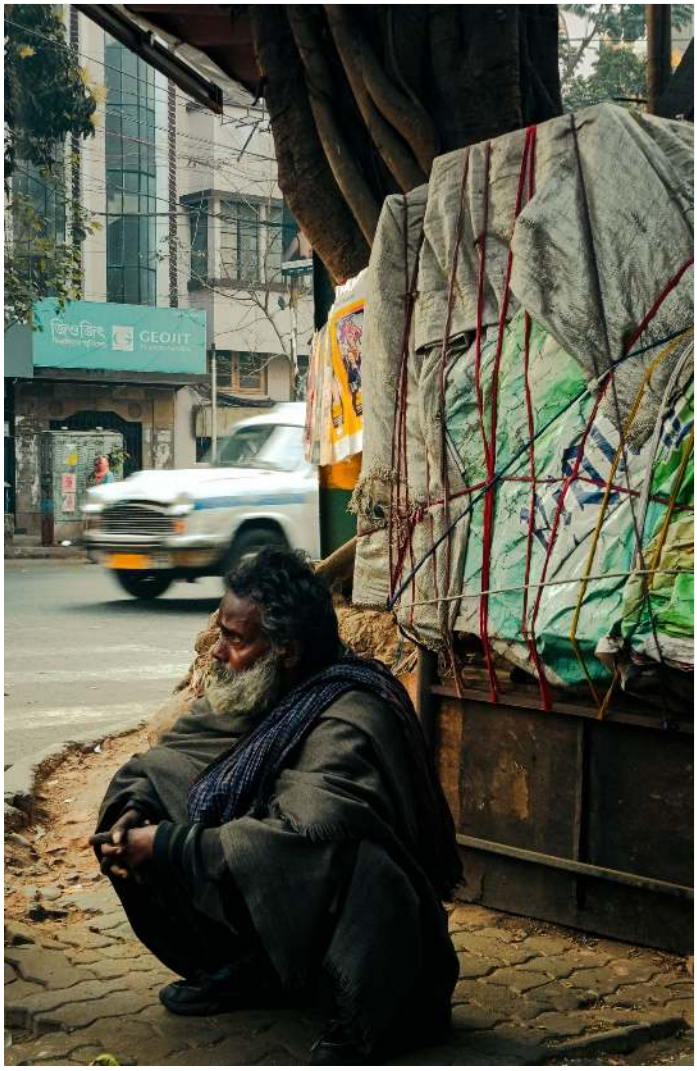
LEARNING TO LOOK

3 Was there a moment you knew you wanted to photograph people?

I don't really have a grand "this is when I knew" moment — it happened quite naturally. A few years ago, I went with my father to photograph Mahalaya Tarpan at the Ganga ghat at around 5 in the morning. The whole atmosphere felt very emotional to me; the dawn almost felt like a goodbye and a welcoming of Ma Durga at the same time. I started photographing and gradually found myself drawn to all the people around me: the bustling ghat, pandits advising people, men and women guiding each other through the rituals, boatmen waiting for passengers. I came home that day with so many photographs and realised that what stayed with me most wasn't just the ritual, but the range of people and emotions within it. I think that's when I started noticing how much I enjoyed photographing people.

4 What first caught your eye here — and how fast did you move?

I was on my way to school when I noticed this scene. It wasn't conventionally pretty, but there was something raw and interesting about it — the man beside the huge, roughly bundled load, the old pavement, the traffic passing behind him. I didn't have much time to compose, because the traffic was moving, so I had to react quickly. That's partly what I liked about it: I wasn't looking for a perfect scene; I just noticed something in an ordinary, slightly messy one that made me stop.



ON THE STREET A man rests beside a roughly bundled load — the old pavement, the passing traffic, "very real and very Kolkata."

5 Who shaped the way you see?

Honestly, my Chotomashi — my maternal aunt — is probably the person who shaped my photography the most, because I actually started because of her. During COVID, when there wasn't much to do, I remember scrolling through her Instagram and being mesmerised: an ice formation captured with such precision, a monastery covered in snow, or something as simple as a flower in macro. What stayed with me most was how she could photograph such mundane details with so much beauty and rawness. She was the first person who made me realise that you don't need an extraordinary subject to make an interesting photograph — sometimes it's just about how you look at it. When I met her next, I couldn't stop talking about photography, and she introduced me to Lightroom, which I've been learning ever since. Even now, if I've taken a photograph I'm happy with, she's still the first person I go to.

6 What pulls you toward the candid and unposed?

I prefer photographing people when they're unaware of the camera, because it feels much more raw. The person might not be stereotypically pretty or glamorous, but honestly that's kind of the point. Photography has never really meant beauty to me — it's always been more about portraying reality, truthfully and wholeheartedly. Setting something up can also interrupt the momentum of a moment: once someone knows they're being photographed, they start behaving in a way they think fits what I want, and some of that authenticity gets lost. At the same time, ethics matter — especially on social media. Just because a moment is candid doesn't mean it's automatically appropriate to photograph or share.

THE VIEW FROM HERE



THE VERANDAH The same stretch of street, watched across days and seasons — a project in staying put.

7 Why stay in one place and watch it change?

As a school student, I don't always get to go out and explore places specifically for photography, so my verandah became a way of keeping that creativity alive without having to go anywhere. It's a comfortable, familiar place, but when you actually sit and observe it, there are so many different lives passing through: a crow perched somewhere, dogs rushing for a biscuit, students going to and coming back from school, people going about their routines.

I've also started noticing how differently the same surroundings can feel depending on the day — someone might behave completely differently on a rainy afternoon than on a sunny morning. That's really what I want to explore: staying in the same place long enough that I start photographing the same people again, but in completely different circumstances.

8 What's in the kit, and why does it suit you?

My main camera is a Canon PowerShot SX60, which is what I usually reach for when I'm out photographing. I like having something straightforward that I can carry around without making the equipment the focus of what I'm doing. Most of the time I'm reacting to something I've noticed rather than setting up a shot in advance, so I value being able to simply look, compose and take the photograph when a moment presents itself — I'm much more interested in observing what's happening around me than in the equipment itself.

9 How do you stay unnoticed enough to catch a moment?

I don't necessarily try to make myself completely invisible. For me it's more about being part of the surroundings than making my presence disruptive — and ethics matter too, so it depends on what I'm photographing. If it's a public ritual or a larger scene, I might get quite close, or use the zoom when I need to keep some distance, because I want to preserve the rawness without interrupting it. If it's one particular person, I photograph from closer by, where they have some idea they're being photographed but not enough for their behaviour to become completely different. I just don't want the camera to become the most important thing in the scene — the moment should still belong to the people in it.



THE KIT A Canon PowerShot SX60 — "something straightforward I can carry around."

LOOKING, SLOWLY

10 What's the story behind this one?

I've always been quite intrigued by photographs of eyes, so I wanted to photograph an eye purely for what it was. There's something interesting about how, as someone who loves photography and equipment, we tend to give the camera almost all the importance — when the eye itself is what actually sees. While taking this photograph, I noticed that the lens was visible in the reflection of my eye, and it came through much more clearly than I expected. I hadn't really planned for that to happen, but I ended up loving it. There was something almost ironic about photographing the eye and finding the camera reflected back in it — that's probably why the photograph has stayed with me. It turned into something more than what I had originally intended to capture.



REFLECTION An eye, photographed for its own sake — the camera lens caught, unplanned, in the reflection of it.

11 What do you hope your photographs help people notice?

More than anything, I hope my photographs make people stop for a moment. We're all so busy with our mundane routines that we often move through things without really looking at them. If someone stops because they find a photograph visually pleasing, that's already a good start — but if they stop and actually think or observe for a moment, then I feel like I've achieved what I wanted to.

I want my photographs to slow things down a little — to make people look at ordinary life as it is, rather than constantly searching for something extraordinary. The smaller moments I photograph may seem ordinary, but they are fleeting. Photography, for me, is a way of holding onto that sense of reality — and reminding people to actually look. To slow down, observe, and maybe notice something they would normally have walked past.

> *"A sunset might be beautiful — but that particular sunset will never happen again, and neither will the exact people who stood there watching it."*
>
> KRISHNACHURA DAS

CONNECT & FOLLOW

INSTAGRAM @kkolkata_lens

IN CONVERSATION · PORTRAITURE

"The real work often happens **before I press the shutter.**"

VANDANA PANCHAL · PORTRAIT PHOTOGRAPHER & EDUCATOR · AHMEDABAD

Q **You come from a background in IT. How did you find your way into photography?**

My journey into photography was not a very planned one. I studied IT, but I always found myself drawn towards observing things, people and everyday life. I was naturally curious about how people behave, how light falls and how a moment changes. Photography initially became a way of documenting what I was seeing. Slowly, I realised that I wasn't just interested in taking photographs—I was interested in understanding why an image works, what it communicates and why some photographs stay with us. That curiosity eventually became a profession.

VANDANA · AT A GLANCE

BASED	Ahmedabad, Gujarat
CAME FROM	A background in IT
TRAINING	Diploma in Photography, CEPT — under Parmanand Dalwadi
THEN	Sadhna Institute of Design — under Ravi Mistry
WORKS ACROSS	Commercial, fashion, documentary, heritage & portraiture
TEACHES	Children, beginners & design students
NEXT	People & identities — women across different stages of life



PORTRAITURE

PHOTOGRAPH · VANDANA PANCHAL

ACROSS GENRES

Q Was there a moment when photography started to feel like a profession rather than something you enjoyed?

Yes. One moment that I still remember was seeing one of my fashion photographs on a large outdoor hoarding. It had started with me standing behind a camera, making decisions about the light, composition and styling. Suddenly, that photograph was occupying a huge space in the city. I remember looking at it and thinking, I made this. That was a very different feeling from simply taking a photograph that I liked. It made me realise that photography could become something much larger—it could communicate with an audience beyond the people who were present when the photograph was made.

Q Your work has moved across several genres. What attracts you to working across such different forms?

I think the variety in my work comes from my curiosity. I have never wanted to restrict myself to one genre because every kind of photography has taught me to see differently. On the other hand, my documentary project with the Patola weavers of Surendranagar, Gujarat, took me in the completely opposite direction. It was quiet, intimate and deeply personal. Spending time with the weavers and observing their craft, patience and way of life gave me a very different perspective towards life itself. One taught me about impact and visual communication; the other taught me about observation, patience and perspective. I think photography has the ability to do both—to speak loudly when it needs to, and to make you quietly look closer when it matters.



COMMERCIAL & FASHION A styled frame built to communicate at scale — the kind of image that once became a city hoarding.



DOCUMENTARY · PATOLA WEAVERS Surendranagar, Gujarat — the generations of knowledge behind what we often see simply as a beautiful textile.

THE PORTRAIT

Q You have created portraits for creative events over the years. What has that experience taught you?

Some of the portraits you see come from events like Anubhav and Process, curated by Jaimil Joshi, which I have been associated with for many years. These have been some of the most challenging and rewarding assignments for me. The environment is extremely hectic, with nearly 30 participants, each bringing a completely different theme, personality and creative expression. Within that limited time, I have to understand the person, respond to the environment and create a portrait that makes them feel and look connected to what they are presenting. It taught me to work quickly without becoming careless, to trust my instincts and, most importantly, to find my own visual language even when everything around me is moving very fast.

Q Is there a particular influence that changed the way you approach portraiture?

Watching a documentary on Platon's work had a strong impact on me. What stayed with me was his ability to connect with his subjects before making the photograph. I started consciously spending more time connecting with people, making them comfortable and understanding something about them before I photograph them. I realised that when a subject feels genuinely connected to the photographer, something more honest comes through in the portrait. That shift—from simply photographing someone to actually connecting with them—has made a big difference to the way I work.



SOMETHING MORE HONEST A portrait made after the connection — not before it.





CONCEPTUAL PORTRAITS Two frames from the Anubhav & Process events — a theme and a person understood in very little time.

LEARNING TO SEE



THE LIGHT

SEE IT FIRST Before changing a light or moving a subject, read what the existing light is already doing.

Q What role does lighting play in your work?

Light is one of the reasons I continue to find photography fascinating. It is everywhere, but we don't always notice it. The same person standing in the same place can look completely different depending on the direction, quality and intensity of light. I often tell my students: learn to see the light before you learn to control it. Before changing a light, moving a subject or reaching for equipment, look at what the existing light is already doing.

Q You have become an educator alongside being a photographer. Why did teaching become important to you?

Teaching happened quite naturally. I had learnt from people who approached photography through technique, equipment and process, and I realised that while those things are essential, there was another part of photography that I wanted to share—the ability to see. Photography is a language. It gives us another way of expressing what we notice, experience and feel. I want them to start asking: What am I trying to say? What do I want someone to notice? Why have I made this frame?

Q What is the most rewarding part of being a photography educator?

Watching someone become independent. In the beginning, students often ask, "What should I do?" The most satisfying moment is when that question changes into, "This is what I want to create." When a student can conceptualise something, make decisions about light and composition, work with a subject, plan a shoot and finally present a visual story—that transformation is far more rewarding to me than teaching a technical setting.

Q What are you looking forward to exploring next in your photographic journey?

I don't feel like I have reached a point where I want to settle into one definition of myself. I want to continue exploring people and their identities, particularly women and the different identities we carry through different stages of life. At the same time, I want to continue working with stories around culture, craft and people, and keep developing my educational work. I see photography and teaching as two sides of the same journey. As a photographer, I am constantly learning to see better. As an educator, I am trying to help someone else learn to see. And I think both journeys can continue for a very long time.



PEOPLE & IDENTITIES Women, and the selves we carry through different stages of life — where her work is headed next.



THE PHOTOGRAPHER
Vandana Panchal · Ahmedabad

INSTAGRAM @thevandana

IN CONVERSATION · MUSIC

"I felt like a failure, **but it's probably one of the best things to have happened to me.**"

ANJALI MANOHARAN · SINGER-SONGWRITER

ON THE MAKING OF 'PIECES'

A singer-songwriter who found her feet at Bangalore open mics and now writes from Chennai, Anjali Manoharan turned a season of loss into 'Pieces' — and a four-song debut EP arriving at the close of 2026.



Q Take us back to the beginning — what's your earliest memory of music feeling like something you had to make, not just listen to?

The first few songs I remember listening to were "Boulevard of Broken Dreams" and "TikTok." I was so drawn to the music that I could sing each song note to note without ever seeing the lyrics. "Hannah Montana" was a huge inspiration that fueled my dreams even more. I still remember the lyrics to some songs from the show, even though I don't really listen to them anymore. That feeling of being in awe and wonderstruck is something I still experience today, now mixed with a touch of nostalgia.

Q Tell us about the first time you sang one of your own songs to a room of people — what do you remember most about that night?

I started performing my originals at open mics in Bangalore. I remember being extremely nervous and excited to start a new journey. I gained my confidence by doing a lot of open mics. The room was full of young artists, and everyone was so supportive of each other. That sense of community and encouragement made the experience unforgettable.

Q Your sound blends alternative and indie-pop with a jazz undercurrent — whose music shaped that palette for you?

Artists like Lianne La Havas, Alice Phoebe Lou, Phoebe Bridgers, Ariana Grande, Paramore, Mitski, Yebba Smith, and Rina Sawayama have all inspired me. Some are recent inspirations, while others have been with me since I was a kid. Their lyrics are beautifully personal, paired with such intricate melodies — something I always want to include in my own music.

THE ROOM & THE RECORD

Q Tell us about the space where you write and make your music — what makes it the place your songs come to life?

In that space, I was working with my band, but mostly I wrote alone and worked on the song with my guitar and just a notebook or even the notes app on my phone to spew all my ideas into. For me, a quiet, comfortable space that I can call my own, where I can write the most vulnerable feelings onto a page, is what makes it important. If I'm in a space that's not at home, I try to find places surrounded by trees and nature. The beach really helps — it's my go-to place — or even travelling through cities, crossing the small cities surrounded by hills. It makes me feel more grounded and safe to open up.

Q You grew up around Bangalore and now write from Chennai — how have those two cities shaped the songs you make?

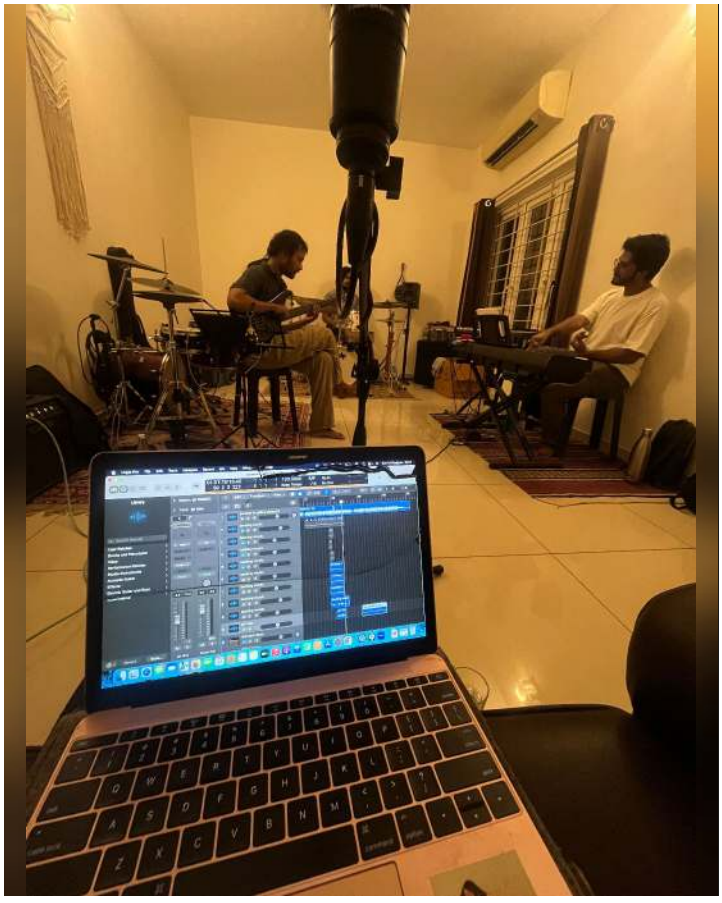
It's been quite a journey of learning to live independently and trying to make a living out of music. The people I've met and the experiences I've gone through are all so unique, and I'm really grateful for that. As someone who travels quite often, I love discovering and experiencing new cultures and traditions. I've found my own community here in Chennai and in Bangalore.

Q How does a song usually begin for you — with a melody, a single line, a feeling?

Sometimes it's all about that voice or intuition that you feel strongly, and you just go with it. As a singer-songwriter, most of the time I'm writing the lyrics whenever and wherever I get the inspiration, and the melody comes second. Then I start working on the composition and arrangement of the song. There have been times when the melody came first to me. It really depends on what you feel at the moment.

Q Your debut EP brings together four songs — what do you most want listeners to discover across them?

I want them to enjoy the EP as a journey. It's a collection of songs, and all of them are quite different from each other, just like different phases in our lives. If there is a part of the journey that resonates with one of the songs from the EP, then that's something you can carry with you.



THE ROOM Writing and tracking with the band.



THE STUDIO Where the four-song EP took shape.

THE SONGS & THE STAGE

Q What's the story behind your song 'Pieces'?

Back in 2023, there was a point in my life where I lost all of my friends and my relationship, and it felt like I couldn't move forward with the same lifestyle I had. I had to change and start again. So I journaled until I felt better, and 'Pieces' was born from that. The reason this song is so close to me is because I felt like a failure, but it's probably one of the best things to have happened to me.



PIECES Born from a season of starting again.

Q You've shared the stage with your band — @sanjaishine on keys, @shanky.plays on bass and @gautamenonmusic on drums — what does playing 'Pieces' live with them give the song that a recording can't quite hold?

Feeling alive in the moment — I always love playing 'Pieces' live, and to do it with a band and with such incredible musicians is a privilege and something I'm so grateful for.

Q What is this piece you're proud of, and what makes it one you keep coming back to?

It's my debut song, 'Nothing Ever Lasts Long.' It always reminds me that nothing is permanent, and what really matters is what you feel in the moment with people who matter the most. You cherish those memories and keep moving forward.

Q As your EP heads out into the world at the end of 2026, what do you hope this next chapter holds for you as an artist?

As an artist, I'm really working on more songs and albums that I think will establish my sound and artistry in the scene. Something that people will remember me by.

AT A GLANCE

BASED IN	Chennai · raised around Bangalore
SOUND	Alternative & indie-pop, jazz undercurrent
DEBUT SINGLE	'Nothing Ever Lasts Long'
DEBUT EP	Four songs · arriving end of 2026
LIVE BAND	@sanjaishine · @shanky.plays · @gautamenonmusic

SCAN TO WATCH

'Pieces' performed live with the band.

SCAN TO WATCH

'Nothing Ever Lasts Long' — her debut single.

LISTEN & FOLLOW

INSTAGRAM @itss_anj_ali **YOUTUBE** @anjalisinging **SPOTIFY** Anjali Manoharan

IN CONVERSATION · NATURE & TRAVEL

A Sunflower at Sunrise

KANISHKA SINGH · NATURE & TRAVEL PHOTOGRAPHY

From a journalism diploma in 2012 to the nature trails of Atlanta and the fog over the Golden Gate, Kanishka Singh photographs both the stillness of a landscape and the pulse of a new place — one patient, well-lit frame at a time.



ALPHARETTA · 2015

AT A GLANCE

FIRST CAMERA	Nikon DSLR D-3200 (2015)
STUDIED	Digital & Broadcast Journalism
GENRES	Nature & Travel
FRAMES FROM	Atlanta · Washington DC · California
SHOOTS	Weekends, around the business week

Q How did photography first find its way into your life?

My bond with photography began during my postgraduate days when I was pursuing a diploma in Digital and Broadcast Journalism, way back in 2012-13. It was during those formative years that I first started seeing the world through a different lens, and something about capturing moments just clicked with me.

Q Was there a moment when you realised this was more than a hobby?

Yes, after completing my degree and during my PG days, I used to go out for shoots regularly. But in 2015, everything changed when I got my Nikon DSLR D-3200 and had the golden opportunity to visit the US. I explored many nature trails and exotic locations in big cities like Atlanta, Washington DC and California. Those experiences truly cemented my passion for photography.

Q You call yourself both a nature and a travel photographer — how do the two shape each other?

In search of the best nature and travel shots, I started visiting parks, nearby monuments, and even began attending events around me. I started visualising every moment through my camera frame, which helped me blend the serenity of nature with the vibrancy of travel. Each genre informs the other, allowing me to capture both the stillness of a landscape and the energy of a new place.

Q Tell us the story behind that nature shot — where you were, and why it stays with you.

This shot was taken in Alpharetta Township, Atlanta, US, in 2015. I captured it while exploring a pumpkin farm during the summer season. I got a very good vision of a sunflower in a lush green farm with the sunrise, and that moment of perfect light and natural beauty has stayed with me ever since.

IN THE FIELD

Q And the story behind that travel image — the place, the moment?

This shot was taken at the San Francisco, California Bay Area in 2022. It was an eye-catching moment as the glimpse of the city was very much in vision. I wanted to capture that sweeping urban landscape and the feeling of being in such a vibrant place.

Q Walk us through your process out in the field.

Before approaching a location, I usually do a small amount of research on it. I visualise the right moment and then capture my shot. This preparation helps me be patient and ready for when the perfect scene unfolds.



SAN FRANCISCO BAY · 2022

TRAVEL The city reads small across the water — a sweeping urban landscape, seen from across the Bay.



GOLDEN GATE · 2022

TRAVEL The much-awaited destination, the Golden Gate Bridge, half-lost in fog on a cold morning.

Q What made that trip so memorable — how did the day and the image come together?

My trip to San Francisco, California, in 2022 was one of the most memorable trips I've had with my family. We visited our much-awaited destination, the Golden Gate Bridge, on a very cold day. It was a wonderful experience to capture that very moment, and the image brings back all the joy of that day.

Q What does a place need to have for you to raise the camera?

First of all, the correct light setting is crucial when capturing any place or moment. I also do some quick changes if needed before the shot to make sure I get the best possible frame.

THE TURNING POINT

2015

A new Nikon D-3200 and a first trip across the US — Atlanta, Washington DC, California — cemented the passion.

STILLNESS

Q What is it about that last image that feels so 'you'?

This was shot at Ana Nueve Beach in California. I captured a steady moment of a sea gull while wandering. That sea gull looked very calm and composed, just like me, and that sense of stillness and peace really resonates with my personality.



ANA NUEVE BEACH, CALIFORNIA

> *That sea gull looked very calm and composed, just like me — that stillness really resonates with my personality.*

Q You're also an entrepreneur — how do you balance that with photography?

I usually work on weekdays and plan my weekends for shoots. This balance allows me to dedicate time to both my business and my passion, and the discipline from one often helps me stay focused in the other.

Q Looking ahead, what are you most hoping to photograph next?

Right now, I'm looking forward to the autumn season and hoping to capture some shots during the festive season. I'm excited to see what beautiful moments and colours that time of year will bring.

WORKING RHYTHM

WEEKDAYS	Running his business as an entrepreneur
WEEKENDS	Out shooting nature & travel
FIRST US TRIP	Atlanta & the East Coast, 2015
NEXT UP	The autumn & festive season

CONNECT WITH KANISHKA

INSTAGRAM @kanishksingh937

DIPTARKO BANDYOPADHYAYA

IN CONVERSATION · URBAN WILDLIFE

My Friendly Neighbours

@DIPTARKOB · WILDLIFE STORYTELLER, WRITER & NATURALIST

A teenage naturalist from the IIT Bombay campus who learned that wildlife isn't only in forests and national parks — it is in our balconies, lakes and gardens. Through writing, photography and film, he documents the animals sharing our cities.



THE LESSON WALK

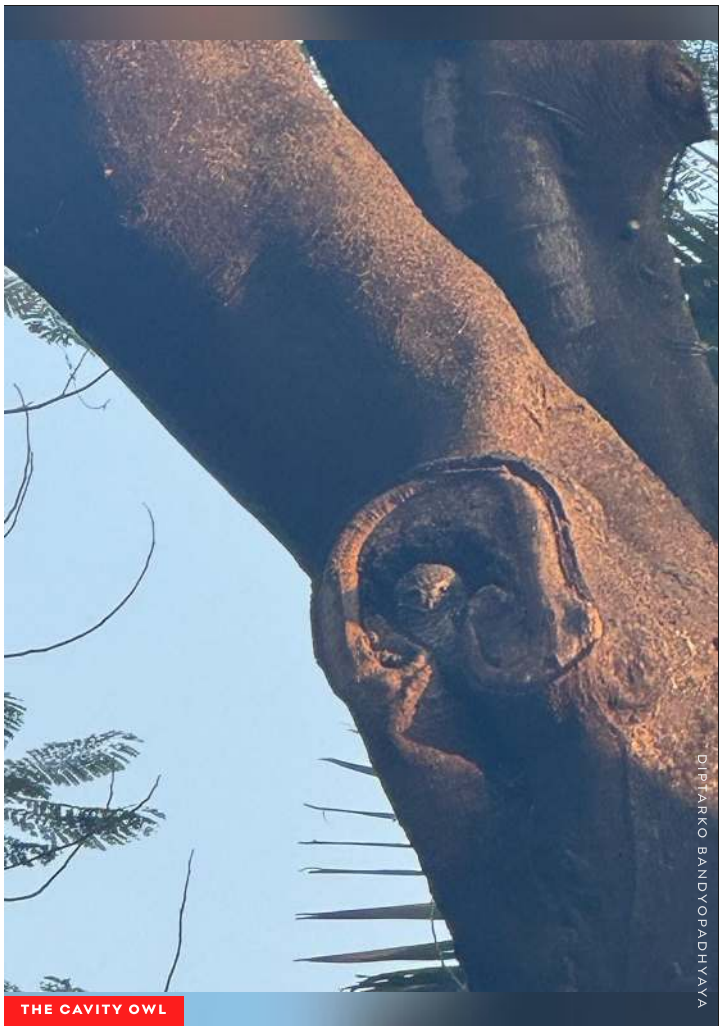
DIPTARKO BANDYOPADHYAYA

ROAR FOR CONSERVATION A tigress leads her cubs down a forest road — the subject that won Diptarko 1st Place in WWF-India's Global Tiger Day 2026 infographics contest.

Q Tell us about your journey. How did you first get interested in documenting urban wildlife?

My journey began with a simple curiosity about the living world around me. Growing up on the IIT Bombay campus, I gradually realised that wildlife was not something found only in forests and national parks — it was all around us, in balconies, backyards, lakes, gardens and neighbourhoods. I became fascinated by the birds and animals sharing our urban spaces, and I started observing, photographing and documenting them; my journals filled up with sketches and stories. What began as informal observation grew into a structured project, 'My Friendly Neighbours: Animal Biodiversity of IIT Bombay'. Today I see myself not just as someone who observes wildlife, but as a wildlife storyteller — I want my photographs and writing to help people, especially young people, pause, look more closely, and understand that protecting biodiversity begins with noticing what already lives alongside us.

SPOTTING THE SPOTTED OWLET



THE CAVITY OWL



KOTORE PENCHA In Bengali the Spotted Owlet is the 'cavity owl' — seen here roosting in a tree hollow, and peering out against the IIT Bombay sky. His essay on this night won Second Prize in the IIT Bombay Biodiversity Lab writing contest.

Q Which photograph best represents urban wildlife in your eyes, and what's the story behind it?

It was 13th October, 2025. I was walking, torch in hand, looking for the Spotted Owlet, waving the beam around for a small brownish owl perched on a branch. But there were none — or so I thought. The crickets had just begun their concert, coupled with the monotonous croaking of night-frogs. Suddenly I heard a distinctive, bouncy bark — an interrogative "uth...uth...uth" repeated at irregular intervals, as the bells of the Padmavati temple on the IIT lakeside tolled in the distance. It was the Scops-Owl! I was very, very excited, as I had never seen — or heard — one before.

Then I heard the cackling of the Spotted Owlet, a harsh, screechy "cheevak, cheevak". Now I was in a dilemma: should I find the Spotted Owlet, or look for the Scops-Owl? I didn't have to choose — as I turned and pointed my torch at a branch at random, there it was. A Spotted Owlet with bright yellow eyes and Eugene Levy-like eyebrows. It stared, but didn't seem to care about the torch at all.

"Oh my GAWD!" said I. Crickets chirped. The 'uth' of the Scops-Owl. Eight seconds passed. Another 'uth'. "Gaari dekho pechhoné" — look at the car behind, said my father. A vroom was heard; the owl, disturbed, flew off. Still, we could observe it for 45 seconds. That was truly amazing. Nearly two months later, my wish came true once again, when I met a beautiful relative of the Spotted Owlet at Keoladeo National Park, Bharatpur.

> *Some encounters stay with you. Others return, quietly, when the time is right.*

WHERE WRITING MEETS THE LENS

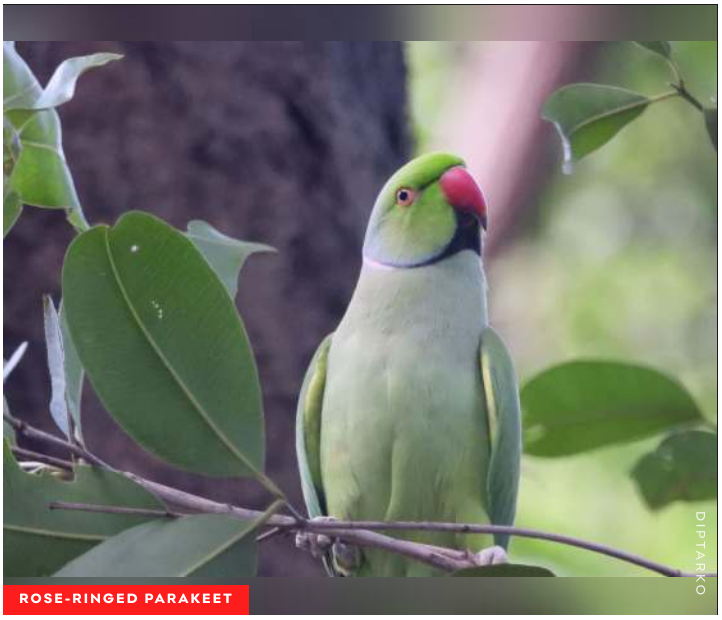


Q How do you integrate photography and writing in your storytelling?

For me, photography and writing are two complementary ways of telling the same story. A photograph captures the moment, while writing provides the context, emotion and meaning behind it. I often begin with an observation in the field — a bird, an animal, or a small moment of interaction between wildlife and its surroundings. Photography helps me pause and notice the details; writing allows me to explore what that moment tells us about the species and its environment. My experience with urban wildlife has taught me that even an ordinary sighting can become a meaningful story — my photograph of a slider turtle on a morning walk, which won Third Prize in the BNHS Urban Wildlife Photography Contest 2025, came with a caption reflecting on the animal moving away from its familiar lake habitat and the quiet presence of nature within the city.

STRIPED TIGERS, MID-MONSOON A cluster of butterflies on a vine — the kind of small, overlooked moment he builds a story around.





MY FRIENDLY NEIGHBOURS Birds documented around home and campus — part of his iNaturalist record of 1,798 observations across 377 species, 1,175 of them Research Grade.

WRITING SAMPLE · AMBOLI, IN THE MONSOON

Monsoon turns the misty mountains of Amboli, in the Western Ghats, into a biodiversity wonderland for herpetofauna. On a three-hour night trek among the roads and streams of Amboli Forest Park we spotted pit vipers, vine snakes, endemic frogs, caterpillars and toads. One of the most memorable sightings was *Isometrus amboli*, an arrow-breasted scorpion: under a UV flashlight it glowed a distinct bluish-green, its segmented body and tail lit up by fluorescent compounds in the exoskeleton. We even saw bioluminescent fungi on the forest floor — nature's own lantern.

Our first discoveries were three species found only here — the Amboli Tiger Toad (*Beduka amboli*), a Critically Endangered gem of the Western Ghats; the Amboli Bush Frog; and the Amboli Leaping Frog. Among the snakes, the Malabar Pit Viper lay motionless on mossy rocks, beautifully camouflaged, while the bright-green Green Vine Snake glided among the vines. For me, Amboli wasn't just a destination — it was a reminder of how alive, mysterious and fragile our world truly is.

IN MOTION · SCAN TO WATCH

Q What do you hope to achieve through your work in the next few years?

I hope to grow as a young naturalist, writer and wildlife storyteller and reach a wider audience, especially young people. As the founder of Biodiversity Buddies, I want to build a community that encourages young people to observe, understand and care for the biodiversity around them, and to make conservation accessible, engaging and youth-driven. In the longer term, I hope to bring together Environmental Sciences, storytelling and conservation — using creativity and the collective enthusiasm of young people to build a stronger connection between communities and the natural world.

Q What challenges have you faced balancing writing, photography and conservation work?

The biggest challenge has been finding time alongside the demands of the IB curriculum. Fieldwork requires patience — a bird does not appear simply because I have an hour free. So I make the most of small windows: a short nature walk, a sighting on campus, or birds around home. It has taught me that what you genuinely care about does not require large amounts of time — it requires consistency.

Q Could you share the films that show this work?

My documentary on Mumbai's biodiversity is meant to act like a giant window into a hidden world — showing people that leopards, jackals and flamingos are their neighbours. My presentation on the Little Rann of Kutch set out to prove that even an arid landscape can hold extraordinary biodiversity.

AT A GLANCE

CITIZEN SCIENCE	1,798 iNaturalist observations · 377 species · 1,175 Research Grade
FIRST PLACE	WWF-India Infographics Contest · Global Tiger Day 2026 "Roar for Conservation"
ALSO WON	3rd — BNHS Urban Wildlife Photography 2025 · 2nd — IIT Bombay Biodiversity Writing
IN PRINT	"A Walk down the Hills of Amboli", The Hindu In School
TRAINED BY	BNHS Naturalist Training & Leadership Course in Biodiversity Conservation
FOUNDER	Biodiversity Buddies · founding member, Wildlife Club, Oberoi Int'l School

SCAN TO WATCH

The Documentary
Mumbai's hidden biodiversity — a window into the wild side of the city.

SCAN TO WATCH

Little Rann of Kutch
His presentation on the Ramsar wetland and its migratory birds.

SCAN TO WATCH

Service Excellence
The award ceremony for a year of volunteering at Aman Day Care.

"I want my work to turn observation into awareness, and awareness into action."

DIPTARKO BANDYOPADHYAYA · BIODIVERSITY BUDDIES

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WILDLIFE PHOTOGRAPHY

RAJAJI · BANDHAVGARH · DUDHWA

NOTHING PERFORMS FOR YOU.



IN THE FIELD





THIS SPREAD Left: ten hours a day in the field, the RF 200–800mm on his shoulder. Right: tigers on the track, and a sarus pair at the wetland.

DEV VIKRAM UPAADHYAY

WILDLIFE PHOTOGRAPHER · CANON R6 MARK II · RF 200–800MM

An international competitive golfer who reads a forest the way he once read a course. On four five-hour safaris spent waiting on one tigress, a tusker bathing in Rajaji, and why the frame is only ever a fraction of the story.

A REASON TO LOOK CLOSER

AT A GLANCE

KIT
Canon R6 Mark II · RF 200–800mm

PARKS
Rajaji · Bandhavgarh · Dudhwa · Keoladeo

PROUDEST FRAME
The tigress Dotty, Bandhavgarh

WHAT IT COST
Four safaris, five hours each, one spot

BEFORE THE CAMERA
Competed internationally at golf

NEXT
A short film on migration at Keoladeo

Q What first pulled you toward wildlife and made you want to photograph it rather than simply watch it?

I think what first pulled me toward wildlife was not a particular animal, but the feeling of being in a place where I wasn't in control. In the wild, nothing performs for you. A bird may appear for three seconds, a leopard may remain hidden for hours, and sometimes you can spend an entire day without making a photograph. That uncertainty fascinated me. It taught me to slow down, to listen, and to notice things I would have otherwise walked past. Photography came into that relationship almost naturally. I realised that a photograph could do more than preserve a moment — it could preserve a feeling, a behaviour, a connection between an animal and its habitat. The longer I photographed wildlife, the less interested I became in simply collecting pictures of animals and the more interested I became in telling their stories. For me, the camera became a reason to look closer. It made me notice the small things: the way a bird communicates with its mate, the hesitation before an animal crosses a road, the first light touching a wetland, or the silence before a forest suddenly comes alive. And perhaps that is what keeps me photographing wildlife today. I don't want to photograph nature simply because it is beautiful. I want to create photographs that make someone pause and wonder what exists beyond the frame — and, hopefully, care enough to protect it.

Q Can you take us back to one of your earliest encounters in the field — a moment with an animal that told you this was going to be your path?

One of my earliest encounters that made me feel I was on the right path happened in one of the quieter, less-visited zones of Rajaji National Park. We came across a tusker in a water body, simply enjoying a bath. There was no chase, no dramatic behaviour, no sense that it knew it was being watched. It was just completely at ease — spraying itself with water, moving slowly, and enjoying the moment. I remember sitting there and watching this enormous animal behave with such a sense of freedom and calm. For someone with a camera in his hands, it would have been easy to become obsessed with getting the perfect photograph. But that encounter taught me something more important: sometimes the best thing you can do in the wild is simply be present. The photograph I eventually made was special to me, but the memory of that encounter is even more so. It was one of the first times I truly understood that wildlife photography isn't about making an animal perform for your camera. It is about being patient enough to witness a moment that would have happened whether you were there or not. That tusker was simply living its life. I was fortunate enough to be there quietly and witness it. Looking back, I think that was when I began to understand what I wanted my photography to be — not just a collection of beautiful wildlife images, but a way of showing animals as they really are: wild, unpredictable, peaceful, powerful, and completely independent of us.

Q You carry a serious golf background into the hide, having competed internationally. How does the patience and precision of the course show up when you're waiting on a wild subject?

Golf taught me something that has become surprisingly valuable in wildlife photography: patience is not the absence of action; it is the discipline of knowing when to act. When you play competitively, you learn to read the course before making a shot. You study the conditions, understand the terrain, account for variables you cannot control, and then commit completely to the shot. Wildlife photography demands much of the same mindset. In the field, I may spend hours waiting for an animal to emerge, watching its behaviour, studying the light and anticipating what might happen next. But unlike golf, I don't get to decide when the moment happens. The animal does. That is where the patience really comes in. You can prepare your camera perfectly, find the right position, understand the light — and still come away without a photograph. You have to be comfortable with that uncertainty. Golf also taught me the importance of precision. A fraction of a second can change a photograph just as a small change in a swing can change the outcome of a shot. When the moment finally arrives, there is no time to hesitate. You have to trust your preparation and react instinctively. Perhaps the biggest lesson both have given me is that you can control your preparation, but you cannot control the outcome. In golf, you play the course as it is. In wildlife photography, you photograph the wild as it is. And in both, the better you become, the more you understand that the goal isn't to force the moment — it's to be ready when the moment gives you an opportunity.

FOUR SAFARIS, ONE SPOT

Q Which wildlife photograph are you proudest of, and what's the story behind that frame?

I was in Bandhavgarh National Park, following the tigress Dotty. I had to wait in the exact same spot for four safaris, each lasting nearly five hours. The area was remarkably still, and there was very little around us — just the forest, the silence, and the possibility that she might appear. For a while, I didn't photograph her at all. I simply watched and waited. Dotty moved through the forest with complete confidence, entirely absorbed in her surroundings and unconcerned by our presence. There was something powerful about observing her in that space, where every movement felt deliberate and every pause seemed to carry meaning. Then, in the seconds before I pressed the shutter, she paused for a moment. The light, the forest and her posture all came together, and I knew the moment was about to disappear. I didn't want to interrupt it by moving or trying to make the photograph happen. I just waited, composed the frame, and let her decide what came next. The shutter clicked almost as a consequence of that patience. What I remember most isn't the photograph itself, but the four safaris spent waiting in that exact spot — four five-hour safaris during which I was simply watching a wild tigress being a tigress. That, to me, is what makes a wildlife photograph meaningful. The frame is only a fraction of a second; the story begins long before you press the shutter.

> *The frame is only a fraction of a second; the story begins long before you press the shutter.*

Q Walk us through that kit — which lens or body do you reach for most when you're chasing an intimate moment in the wild?

For most of my wildlife work, my go-to combination is the Canon R6 Mark II paired with the RF 200–800mm. It gives me the reach and flexibility I need while still allowing me to stay at a respectful distance from the animal. I particularly like the 200–800mm because wildlife rarely gives you a perfectly predictable moment. At 800mm, I can isolate a small behavioural detail — an expression, a gesture, a look — while still maintaining the distance that keeps the animal comfortable. And when the situation changes, I can pull back and bring the surrounding habitat into the frame. The R6 Mark II complements that really well. Its autofocus and tracking allow me to concentrate less on operating the camera and more on reading the animal — anticipating where it might look, move, or interact with its surroundings. But honestly, the most important part of my kit isn't the camera or the lens. It's patience. The equipment gives me the ability to capture the moment. Understanding the animal, respecting its space, and knowing when to press the shutter is what makes the photograph.

Q How long were you watching before that shot came together, and what kept you patient?

I had been observing and photographing the openbills for nearly three months. Over that time, I began to understand their rhythms — when they moved, when they took flight, and how they used the wetland around them. Then, one monsoon evening, the weather finally gave me something I hadn't been expecting. After the rain, the clouds began to clear, and the sky opened into these deep shades of blue and purple. The light was changing by the minute. An openbill lifted off and began gliding across that sky. I remember not wanting to rush the moment. I waited for the bird to move into the right part of the frame, allowing the sky to become as important to the photograph as the bird itself. When the bird finally crossed that patch of colour, I pressed the shutter. The photograph happened in a fraction of a second, but it was really the result of three months of observation and one unpredictable monsoon evening. That's what I love about wildlife photography. You can spend months learning an animal and still have no control over when the perfect moment will arrive. Sometimes, all you can do is be there — and be ready when nature decides to give you something extraordinary.







THREE FROM THE FIELD The Rajaji tusker — "completely at ease"; a rhino isolated at 800mm from a distance that keeps the animal comfortable; and the hour the forest gives you nothing but light.

Q Which park is this, and what made that particular day in the field memorable for you?

It was in Dudhwa National Park, and the day became memorable because of an encounter with a tigress known as Scissor and her three sub-adult cubs. We were fortunate to have the entire sighting almost to ourselves — a single vehicle with the four tigers in front of us. For nearly an hour, they remained in the area, often facing us head-on. What made it special wasn't simply the opportunity to photograph four tigers together. It was being able to observe their dynamics over such a long period. The cubs were at an age where they were becoming increasingly independent, yet you could still see the connection between them and their mother. There were moments when they would simply sit, look towards us, move through the grass, and interact with one another. Having that much uninterrupted time allowed me to stop thinking about individual photographs and start watching the story unfold. For a wildlife photographer, an hour like that is a rare privilege. You aren't just witnessing an animal; you're given enough time to observe behaviour, relationships and personality. I came away with photographs that I value, but more importantly, with the memory of having been given a quiet window into the life of a tiger family — something that the forest allowed us to witness, but never promised us.

Q What does a typical day on location actually look like — the hours and the quiet most people never see?

A typical day in a national park begins well before sunrise. A morning safari can mean leaving in complete darkness, reaching the gates before first light, and then spending several hours inside the reserve as the forest gradually comes alive. After returning, there is usually a short break before heading out again for the evening safari, which can take you through the changing landscape all the way towards sunset. Together, those morning and evening drives can easily make up around ten hours of the day in the field. And most of those hours aren't spent photographing. They are spent reading the landscape, listening to alarm calls, watching animal behaviour, following tracks, understanding the light and simply being present in the environment. Some days are filled with extraordinary encounters; on others, you may return with very few photographs. That's the part of wildlife photography people rarely see. They see the final frame, but behind that single image may be an entire day shaped around the forest — the early start, long drives, changing weather, dust, missed opportunities and the discipline of being ready when something finally happens. The photograph may take a fraction of a second. The day behind it can take ten hours.

Q Tell us about this — what draws you to it, and what are you hoping to capture?

One project I'm particularly drawn to right now is a short film on the migratory birds that arrive at Keoladeo National Park each winter. What draws me to it is the journey behind their arrival. These birds travel thousands of kilometres, crossing borders and landscapes, only to return to a wetland that provides them with food, shelter and a place to survive the winter. By the time we see them at Keoladeo, we are seeing only one chapter of a much larger story. I want the film to go beyond simply showing beautiful birds. I want to tell the story of migration — the instinct that brings them back, the challenges they face along the way, and the fragile wetlands that make their journey possible. Having spent time photographing migratory species at Keoladeo, I've become fascinated by the contrast between the scale of their journey and the quietness of the place where they finally arrive. A bird can travel thousands of kilometres, yet its survival may ultimately depend on a relatively small patch of wetland. Visually, I want the film to move between intimate behavioural moments and the larger landscape — flight, feeding, courtship, interactions between species, and the changing character of the wetland through the season. But at its heart, I want it to leave the viewer with one thought: "Migration is not simply a journey. It is a relationship between a bird and the places it depends on." If those places disappear, the journey can no longer be completed. That is the story I hope to capture at Keoladeo — not just where these birds come from, but why they keep coming back, and what we stand to lose if there is no longer a place for them to return to.

Q When you're sitting in silence waiting for an animal to appear, what is it that keeps you coming back to the wild again and again?

I think what keeps bringing me back is the fact that the wild never gives you the same experience twice. You can return to the same forest, sit in the same vehicle, follow the same trail, and still have no idea what the day is going to give you. One day it might be a tiger walking through the grass; another day it might be a bird calling from somewhere you cannot see, or simply the light falling differently across the landscape. But beyond the photographs, I think I've become addicted to the feeling of being completely present. When you're sitting in the wild, there is very little room for everything else. The noise of everyday life disappears, and you become intensely aware of the smallest things — a movement in the grass, a distant alarm call, the change in light, or the sudden silence of the forest. And then, occasionally, nature gives you something extraordinary. It might last for three seconds, or it might stay with you for an hour. You cannot ask for it, you cannot recreate it, and you certainly cannot guarantee it will happen again. That's what keeps me coming back. The possibility that tomorrow, the wild might show me something I've never seen before.

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IN CONVERSATION · PHOTOGRAPHY

THE GRAY MEMOIR

MUSKAN VERMA · PHOTOGRAPHER · THE GRAY MEMOIR

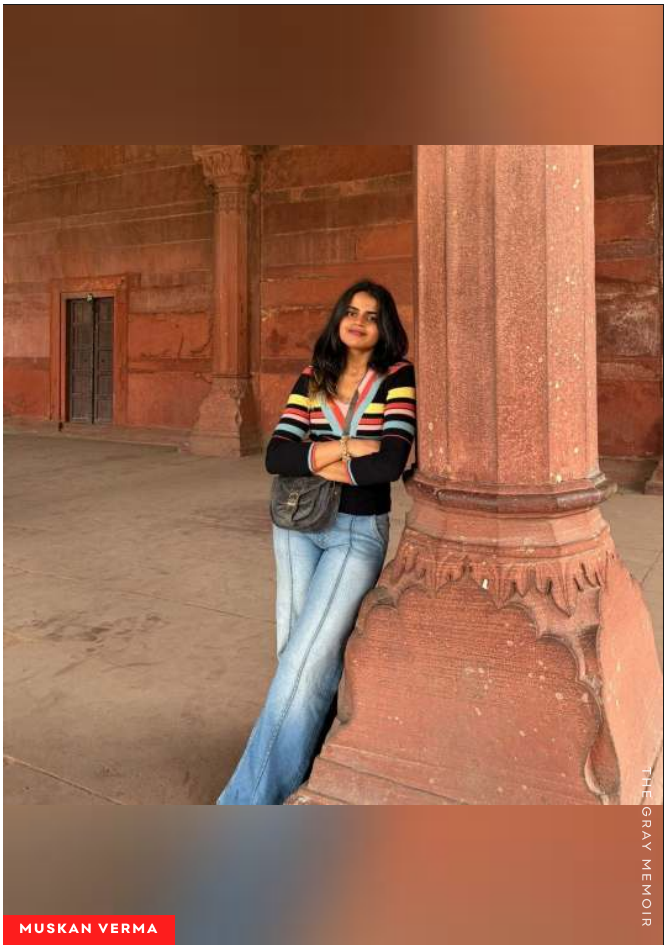
Self-taught from a childhood spent on a mobile phone — she never followed a rule book, only her heart and her vision. Muskan Verma photographs what the rest of us walk past: a chai poured from a height, birds on a wire, a broken house holding its secret. She shoots as The Gray Memoir — because life was never only black or white.

Q How did photography begin for you — was there a moment that made you pick up a camera and never put it down?

It started as a hobby that a kid discovered while exploring a new mobile in the house. I never tried to understand the technicalities behind the art form, never followed any rule book as such. I always tried to follow my heart and vision. If I could remember a particular moment, it happened when I was on a family trip to Nainital. I held a camera for the first time — it was my relative's — and started clicking a few photos. My relative then told my mom, "You should really consider buying a professional camera for her." In that moment, that kind of validation, given to someone who had held a DSLR for the first time in her life, instantly clicked with me. I knew I had to get a camera for myself and explore this hobby at a deeper level.

Q 'The Gray Memoir' is lovely — what does it mean to you, and how did you land on it?

For a very long time, grey has been my favourite colour. Grey is a feeling all of us humans have: being happy, yet guilty about it. The feeling of being confused yet confident about it. And, "Gray" is just the British version of the spelling "Grey" — yeah, I thought to make it a little quirky! For the "Memoir" part, I love to capture things around me and make a memory of them for the time when I'll no longer be able to live, experience, and see these anymore. In their memory, for their remembrance.



MUSKAN VERMA

THE GRAY MEMOIR

> *"Things can't only be 'white' or 'black'; there is always a grey to it — that comfort spot where you can justify your flaws, and yet accept their existence.*

THE OVERLOOKED



FEELS LIKE ME A broken, old, mysterious house in a gully of a pind outside Chandigarh — still standing gracefully, with all its withering.

Q Do you remember the first scene that made you stop and think, 'I have to photograph this'?

There are countless memories like these, as I find comfort and joy in the most mundane things that people walk past without even noticing. From a kid strolling on the streets, to birds chirping on a transmission wire, to a metro passing by, to a chai vendor pouring that burning chai from a height — all of these moments hold something that we don't see and don't care about. But I care enough to capture these "normal" things and store them in my camera. With changing times, we often see these things disappearing from big cities. This is the only thing we can do to remember 'where we come from?' when they completely vanish.

Q Which photograph feels the most like you, and what's the story behind it?

This photo was taken at a very random place and was totally unexpected. It was taken at a very old gully (street) of a pind (a village) on the outskirts of Chandigarh, Punjab. I had gone to that village for some fieldwork, and there, at a very distant corner, I saw a house — broken, old, mysterious, and dull. Standing alone at a random turn in a village road, I didn't know why it was abandoned like that, but by its character, I could see it definitely held some secret. Even after such a long time, it was standing there, enduring all the seasons, the laughter of a family, the pain of their leaving, the hate from its surroundings, and whatnot — still standing strong, gracefully, with all its withering. It made me realise how we, as individuals, are also a "home" to someone. And, just like this house, we'll also become a "House" to them, with all that we endure throughout our lives. In the end, we should also stand gracefully, with all the withering, just like this 'home'.



A SCENE THAT MADE ME STOP Shot on an iPhone, waiting out the flock for one focused, noiseless frame.

Q What landscape took real patience to capture, and how long did you wait for it?

I don't often click such motion photographs because I fear what if I don't take a good photo — good meaning the best shot of my life at that time. This was taken on an iPhone, so that came as a bit of help. Since the birds were flocking here and there near this place, it was so difficult to get a focused and noiseless shot. I waited for this not so long, but I was really happy with the shot I got.

IN THE FIELD



MORE THAN WATER Women of all ages carrying it home from a common source — a strength that is not loud, that lives in those steady hands.

Q What quiet, small-scene photograph are you proud of, and what drew you to it?

This is a very common practice across the rurals of the South Asian subcontinent. We all have seen this once in life — women, of all ages, carrying heavy containers to take home water from a common source. Though no one ever cared about this practice as such, even these women have accepted it as their life. When I pictured this, they were very hesitant, but still, with a pain in their smile, they agreed to get photographed. The idea behind it was simply the following: "For generations, these women have carried more than just water: inherited chaos, unspoken expectations, and shaping lives around them. Somewhere between duty and desire, responsibilities became routine, sacrifice became identity, and choices became inheritance." This silhouette holds a truth: their strength is not loud; it lives in those steady hands that carry the pots, the smiles that survive, and the resilience that endures each day.



THE KIT One piece she'd never leave home without: a charger and a spare battery.

IN THE BAG

CAMERAS	iPhone 16 · Nikon D5600
LENSES	AF-P DX 18–55 mm · NIKKOR 70–300 mm
ALWAYS PACKS	A tripod, a charger & a spare battery
BEGAN	As a child, on a mobile phone
FAVOURITE COLOUR	Grey — "always a grey to it"

THE MOUNTAINS



KASOL, HIMACHAL The ecstatic gradient of these mountains — 'no feeling in this world could describe how connected I feel to mountains.'

Q Which photograph from a trip stayed with you long after you left, and what made that place special?

I love mountains to my core. This photograph was captured in Kasol, Himachal Pradesh. It showcases the three major reasons I would want to go back to this place again and again. First and foremost, the mountains! The ecstatic gradient of these mountains is spellbinding. No feeling in this world could describe how connected I feel to mountains. Secondly, the amazing lush greens, the fresh smell of flora, and the moist mist on leaves. And lastly, the most ethereal sunsets and sunrises of the hills.



HER CURRENT FAVOURITE A colour frame converted to black and white — 'the mountains measure life in trees.'

Q What is it about this other photograph that you love so much?

This one, in particular, is my current favourite. Again, the mountains and greens are something that made it special. Along with that, this image has a mystically amazing composition, a black-and-white conversion — originally, it's a colour image — and a vibe that really stands out to me. This is what I would describe this image as: "We measure our life in years, the mountains measure it in trees. Standing beneath them, we realise how they make our little lives feel smaller and more meaningful."

Q Is there a place you're dreaming of photographing next?

I want to photograph the Kumbh Mela once in my life. Additionally, I feel that mountains and places like Varanasi and Ujjain have this mystical, spiritual aura, which is directly visible in their people and places. I would love to cover the nuances of such places.

CONNECT WITH MUSKAN VERMA

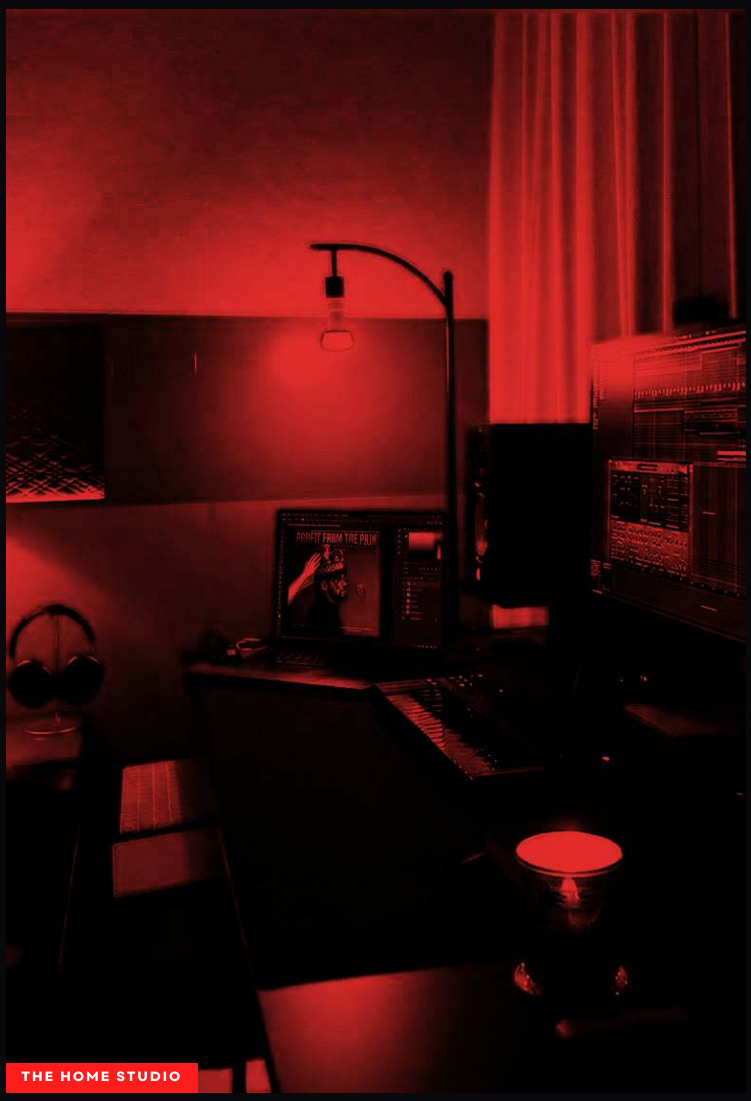
LINKTREE linktr.ee/TheGrayMemoir

RAP · PRODUCER

PROFIT FROM THE PAIN

PRINCE BAJPAI
RAPPER & PRODUCER · KANPUR TO DELHI

Self-taught since 2022 — writing, recording, producing and mixing his own records. On the mixtape he calls eight months of our lives recorded, the track that took runner-up at the WallMag Rap Awards, and why he would rather be a classic than a trend.



THE HOME STUDIO

WHERE MOST OF THE MIXTAPE WAS MADE

Q Take us back to the very beginning — how did rap first find you, and what was the moment you knew you wanted to make music yourself?

My journey with rap started in Kanpur, where I grew up and where my love for music slowly turned into something I wanted to pursue seriously. I've always been connected to music, but around 2022, I decided to stop just listening to it and start creating it myself.

Since then, I've been learning everything on my own — writing, recording, producing, mixing and finding my own sound. Moving to Delhi gave me a completely different environment and exposed me to new artists, sounds and experiences, while Kanpur has always remained an important part of who I am and where my story comes from.

Over the years, I've tried to document different phases of my life through my music. I released projects like From Now Until Forever, Pieces of Me, and eventually my mixtape Profit From The Pain. Each project represents a different stage of my growth, both as an artist and as a person. My music is basically a diary of everything I've experienced, felt and learned along the way.

I don't think there was one particular moment when I decided I wanted to make music. It was more of a gradual realization — the more I wrote and recorded, the more I felt that this was something I genuinely needed to do. What started in Kanpur in 2022 has now taken me to Delhi, and I'm still building, experimenting and trying to become a better artist with every release.

For me, rap isn't just about making songs. It's about telling my story, representing where I come from, and turning my experiences into something other people can connect with.

LEARNING IT ALL HIMSELF

AT A GLANCE

FROM
Kanpur — now Delhi

STARTED
2022

DOES
Writes, records, produces, mixes

MIXTAPE
Profit From The Pain

EARLIER
From Now Until Forever · Pieces of Me

AWARD
Runner-up, WallMag Rap Awards

AWARD TRACK
"Hatiyakand" feat. Pranay Joshi, prod. T Cee

BREAKTHROUGH
"Waaste" (2022) — 10K streams

MIXTAPE FEATURES
Samarth OG, Pranay Joshi, Armadok, Elim5k, Paraj, Mirage

PRODUCERS
T Cee, Kanishk

WITH MIRAGE
Bayaan · Melancholy · Kyun · Aryabhatta

BIO
"In a world full of trends, I want to remain a classic"

Q Do you remember the first bar or hook you ever wrote that made you think 'okay, I've actually got something'?

I remember it clearly. In 2022, I released a song called "Waaste," and it unexpectedly started getting a lot of attention. The song crossed 10,000 streams, which felt huge to me at that time.

What made it special was that I was still figuring everything out as an independent artist. I didn't have a big team or a major push behind me — seeing people actually discover the song, listen to it and share it made me feel like maybe I really had something here.

Looking back, 10K streams might sound like just a number, but for me it became one of those moments that gave me the confidence to keep going. Streaming has become even more competitive since then, and as an independent artist, getting 10K streams on a song can be difficult. So "Waaste" crossing that number early in my journey is still something I'm proud of.

Q You produce as well as rap — how did you get into making your own beats, and how does wearing both hats change the way you write?

I got into producing because I wanted to understand the music beyond just writing and rapping. As an independent artist, I didn't always have access to producers or the resources to turn every idea in my head into a song, so I started learning how to make beats myself.

Over time, production became a major part of my creative process. Being able to produce and rap gives me the freedom to build the entire atmosphere of a song around what I want to say. I can start with a feeling, create a sound around it, and then write my verses and hooks according to that mood.

I think wearing both hats has made my writing more connected to the production. I'm not just writing lyrics and then finding a beat for them — the beat, the flow, the lyrics and the emotion can all develop together. It also makes me more experimental because I can change the production whenever the writing takes me somewhere different.

Q Your bio says 'In a world full of trends, I want to remain a classic' — what does staying a classic mean to you when so much of hip-hop chases what's viral?

For me, staying a classic means not letting trends decide who I am as an artist. Hip-hop is constantly changing, and I'm not against that — I actually love experimenting and trying new sounds. But I don't want to make music just because I think something is going to go viral.

I want people to come back to my music years later and still feel something. I care more about the writing, the emotion, the production and the story behind a song than whether it fits whatever is trending that week.

Coming from Kanpur and now living in Delhi, I've seen different sides of the culture, and I want to build a sound and identity that represents my journey rather than an algorithm. Trends come and go, but if the music is honest and the craft is strong, I believe it can last.

That's what "classic" means to me — making music that doesn't have an expiry date.

> "
>
> *In a world full of trends, I want to remain a classic.*

EIGHT MONTHS RECORDED

Q Let's talk about 'Hatiyakand' — the track that earned you runner-up at the WallMag Rap Awards. What is the song about, and what were you going through when you wrote it?

"Hatiyakand" came from a frustration with a certain side of the hip-hop scene where a lot of rappers were focused mainly on flexing and showing off. Me and my friend, and a great artist, Pranay Joshi, wanted to approach it differently.

We wanted to make a track that was purely about the craft — our writing, flows, delivery and rap skills. There wasn't a need to prove anything through materialistic things; we wanted the music itself to do the talking.

The track was produced by my good friend and an amazing producer, T Cee, who really understood the energy we were trying to create. "Hatiyakand" became a very important song for me because it represented what I love about hip-hop: lyricism, skill, competition and the freedom to express yourself.

Winning runner-up at the WallMag Rap Awards with a song that was so focused on the craft made the recognition even more meaningful for me.

Q You've said Profit From The Pain is '8 months of our lives recorded' — walk us through what those eight months actually looked like day to day.

Those eight months were honestly one of the most intense periods of my life. There was a lot going on personally, especially with my past relationship, my struggles and everything I was dealing with mentally. Instead of keeping all of that to myself, I put it into the mixtape.

What makes Profit From The Pain special is that I made the entire project with my closest friends. I collaborated with artists like Samarth OG, Pranay Joshi, Armadok, Elim5k, Paraj and Mirage, and worked with producers like T Cee and Kanishk. They're not just collaborators to me — they're my homies, and we were all part of the same journey.

Most of the mixtape was made in my home studio. There wasn't some big professional setup or a fixed routine. Every day was a different struggle — writing, recording, producing, figuring things out, dealing with life and then coming back to make music. We would spend hours together in the studio, sometimes just experimenting and sometimes turning whatever we were going through that day into a song.

That's why I call it eight months of our lives recorded. It isn't just a collection of tracks; it captures a specific period of our lives, our friendships, our struggles and everything we were trying to become. The pain, the late nights and the people around me all became part of the music.

Q Tell us the story behind 'Bikhra' — and if there's a feature on it, who did you bring in and why?

"Bikhra" is a solo track, and the concept came from wanting to tell the same relationship story from two different perspectives. The song has two sides to it — the melodic part represents the girl's point of view, while the rap represents the boy's perspective.

I wanted both sides to feel different but still connected, because in a relationship, both people can experience the same situation completely differently. Instead of bringing in a feature, I decided to perform both perspectives myself, which made the song more personal and allowed me to tell the complete story exactly how I imagined it.

For me, "Bikhra" is less about choosing who was right or wrong and more about showing how the same relationship can leave two completely different emotions behind.

Q What's happening in that clip you shared — is it a live moment, a booth take, or something you filmed for the reel?

It's a verse from one of my tracks on the mixtape, and I made that for a reel.

SCAN TO WATCH

Hatiyakand

feat. Pranay Joshi · prod. T Cee — the WallMag Rap Awards runner-up.

SCAN TO WATCH

Bikhra

prod. Prince Bajpai — one relationship, told from both sides.

SCAN TO WATCH

The reel verse

"A verse from one of my tracks on the mixtape, and I made that for a reel."

REMAIN A CLASSIC

Q Who shaped your sound early on — the artists, producers, or people around you that you keep coming back to?

Early on, my sound was shaped by the artists I grew up listening to and the people around me who encouraged me to take music seriously. I was always drawn to artists who could turn their personal experiences into music and make their stories feel real rather than just trying to make a song.

As I started making music myself, I began taking inspiration from different artists, producers and sounds, but I also wanted to develop something that felt like me. Coming from Kanpur and later moving to Delhi exposed me to very different musical environments, and both places influenced the way I write and approach music.

I think the biggest influence on my sound has ultimately been my own experiences. Every project has taught me something new, and I keep coming back to the idea of making music that feels honest, personal and connected to where I come from.

Q You work closely with Mirage across your music — how did that collaboration start, and what does he bring that pushes your sound?

My collaboration with Mirage started naturally through our friendship and our shared love for making music. He's really good at creating melodies and bringing emotion into a track, while I naturally lean more towards rap, production and songwriting.

I've also produced some tracks for his album, and when we work together, the combination just makes sense. He'll bring the melodic side, while I bring the rap and sometimes add melodies of my own. That contrast gives the songs a different texture and makes them feel complete.

We've created tracks like "Bayaan," "Melancholy," "Kyun," and "Aryabhatta" together. I think what makes our collaboration work is that we don't try to force each other into a particular sound — we understand what the other person brings and build the track around that. That chemistry has helped both of us experiment and push our sound further.

Q Is there a bar or line you've written that you're most proud of? Share it and tell us why it hits for you.

There are a few lines that really stand out for me.

THREE HE KEEPS COMING BACK TO

FINE DINE

Mai wo matlabi insaan hi nahi
Or haan ye dolat kapda hoti pehchan hi nahi
Qismat ka rona hi kyu
Karmo pe dhyan hi nahi
Or kaise maanu unki jinka khud ka imaan hi nahi.

WASIYAT

Ye ankhein num maano jheel chupa rakhi jaan me
Fariyaad khuda meri sune na
Dua mai bol kya karunga raam se.

LETTER TO YOU

Milta hai pyar saccha bas tu thora sabar kar
Musafir hi kya jo bhatke na fir suffer par
Hindi me suffer english me thora suffer kar
Banunga gayak ekdin mai bhi bada jabardast.

There are many more, but these lines capture different emotions and moments that I'm really proud of.

Q With Profit From The Pain dropping and this award behind you, what's the next thing you're chasing as an artist — and how do you want people to feel when they press play?

Honestly, I'm still just getting started. I came into this just like a lot of people do — with a dream, a lot of doubts and no guarantee that it would work out. I'm still chasing growth, trying to become a better rapper, producer and artist, and I want to keep building something that genuinely represents me.

If there's one thing I want people to take away when they press play, it's to believe in themselves. I came from Kanpur, moved to Delhi and started making music in 2022 without knowing where it would take me. Everything I've achieved so far has come from simply continuing to believe in myself and keep going.

So if someone listens to my music and feels like, "If he can start from nothing and keep chasing it, maybe I can chase what I want too," then that means more to me than numbers or awards.

I'm just getting started — and I want people listening to feel like they can believe in themselves too.

CONNECT WITH PRINCE BAJPAI

INSTAGRAM @princebajpaii **YOUTUBE** @princebajpaii **SPOTIFY** Prince Bajpai

IN CONVERSATION · NATURE & TRAVEL

Before the World Wakes

KIRAN L · @KIRAN.L.REDDY · NATURE & TRAVEL PHOTOGRAPHER

It began with a Kerala sunset and a phone pulled out on instinct. Since then, Kiran L has built a quiet practice on patience — pre-dawn starts, long waits, and the faith that the next morning might hand you the one frame worth all of it.



THE VISTA

WHY HE KEEPS GOING Just how beautiful the world can be — the pull that first made him reach for a camera.

Q How did you first fall in love with photographing the natural world — was there a moment that made you pick up a camera?

I've always been fascinated by sunrises, sunsets, travelling, and just how beautiful the world can be. But my real journey into photography started during a trip to Kerala. I remember witnessing one of the most beautiful sunsets I had ever seen, and my first thought was that I wanted to capture that moment and share it with my friends and with the world. I simply took out my phone and photographed it. I didn't really think of it as the beginning of anything at the time, but looking back, that was my first step into photography. Since then, photography has become my way of showing people the beauty I see when I travel and experience nature.

Q What does a day in the field usually look like — the early starts, the waiting, the small rituals along the way?

For me, a day in the field usually starts pretty early, especially when I'm chasing a sunrise. There's something about being out before the world really wakes up that I enjoy. I'll usually reach the location a little early, find a good spot, and then just wait. A lot of photography is actually about waiting. You can't really control when the light is going to be perfect or when a particular moment is going to happen. So I've slowly learned to be patient and just observe what's around me. Sometimes I might spend a couple of hours waiting for a few seconds of the right light. What I enjoy most is that the process never feels exactly the same. Sometimes I go out with a very specific shot in mind and come back with something completely different. I think that's what keeps me going back out — you never really know what you're going to see.

KIRAN L · AT A GLANCE

GEAR	**Canon 75–300mm telephoto — on almost every trip**
APPROACH	**Pre-dawn starts; reach early, then wait for the light**
PROUDEST FRAME	**The Kargil War Memorial**
MOST PATIENT	**Three hours chasing a single squirrel**
ON THE WISHLIST	**Himalayan foothills · Turkey's balloons · Norway's auroras · Finland's glass igloos · snow leopards in Leh · bearded vultures in Spiti**

THE LONG WAIT

Q Nature and travel photography asks a lot of patience. What keeps drawing you back, even on the trips when the light or the weather refuses to cooperate?

I think what keeps bringing me back is the possibility of seeing something I haven't seen before. Even when the light doesn't work out or the weather completely changes my plans, I still enjoy being out there and experiencing the place. I've had plenty of trips where I've gone expecting a beautiful sunrise or sunset and ended up with clouds, rain, or just flat light. It can be disappointing, but at the same time, nature has a way of surprising you. Sometimes the conditions you weren't hoping for end up creating a completely different kind of photograph. More than anything, I think I've become attached to the experience itself. Travelling, being outdoors, finding a new place, and just taking the time to look around — photography has given me a reason to slow down and really notice those things. And there's always that thought in the back of my mind that maybe the next morning, the next evening, or the next trip will give me that one moment that makes all the waiting worth it.



THE KIT A Canon body and the 75–300mm telephoto — the lens on almost every trip, the one that taught him to keep his distance.



KARGIL WAR MEMORIAL

PROUDEST FRAME Small funeral flags lined up toward the Indian flag — "almost felt like they were still standing there, saluting."

Q What's the story behind that frame — where were you, and what made you press the shutter at that exact moment?

The story behind this frame is probably what makes it so special to me. I was at the Kargil War Memorial, and after reading the letters of the soldiers who lost their lives, I came out and saw this. All the small funeral flags leading up to the Indian flag. The way they were lined up almost felt like they were still standing there, heads held high, saluting the flag even after their death. That feeling stayed with me. It made me think about how some travels are more than just visiting a new place. Some places make you stop, think, and look at life a little differently. I stood there for a while just taking it all in. And when I looked through my camera, this was the frame I saw. This will always be my proudest photo, not because of how it came out, but because of the story behind it and what I felt standing there in that moment.

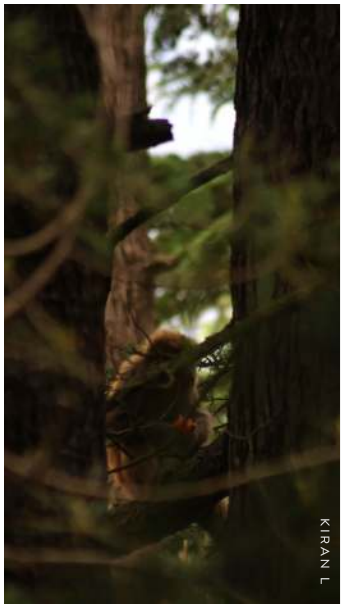
THE LONG ROAD



WORTH THE ROAD Massive mountains reflected in still water — reached over rough roads, snow-melt crossings and a high-altitude trek.

Q Tell us about that place. How did you get there, and what did it feel like to photograph it?

Chandratal is honestly one of the most beautiful places I've ever been to. Getting there wasn't easy though. The roads were rough, there were some pretty intense water crossings from the melting snow, and then there was a short trek at that altitude. It was tiring and, at a few points, I honestly wondered if the journey was going to be worth it. But the moment I finally stood there and saw those massive mountains reflected perfectly in the still water, I understood why it was. It immediately reminded me of that dialogue from the Bollywood movie Lootera — "Marne se pehle ek baar Chandratal dekhna chahta hoon." Standing there after that long, exhausting drive, with nothing but the mountains, the lake and complete silence around me, the line suddenly felt very real. This view, after everything it took to get there, will always be one of those memories I'll carry with me.



HIDE AND SEEK Three hours of chasing — then two branches crossed him like a natural frame.

Q What happened in the moments right before you caught it?

One of the photographs I'm really happy I didn't give up on is this one. I had been chasing this little guy for almost three hours, and every time I thought I was finally going to get a good shot, he would disappear again. After all that time, I finally found him sitting between the trees, completely unbothered, just enjoying his treat. What caught my attention was the way the two branches came across him. They almost felt like a natural frame, and after spending three hours trying to find him, it honestly felt like we were playing a little game of hide and seek. So instead of waiting for him to come out into the open, I decided to keep the branches in the frame. I wanted the photograph to feel like a game of hide and seek for the person looking at it too, where you have to take a second to find him. Every time I look at it, I remember those three hours of chasing, waiting, missing him and finally finding him there. And somehow, that whole experience is captured in the photograph.

A WIDER VIEW



A DIFFERENT ANGLE With a drone he finds a frame he'd miss from the ground — the subject becomes the perspective itself.

Q What draws you to this subject, and how is it different from the rest of what you shoot?

What draws me to this subject is the completely different perspective it gives me. I usually find myself photographing things that are already there, especially landscapes and wildlife, but with a drone I get to look at the world in a way I normally wouldn't be able to. I like that sense of exploring and finding a frame that I might have completely missed from the ground. This photograph is different from most of what I shoot because the subject itself isn't really the landscape or the wildlife. It is the process of getting that different perspective. I was drawn to the movement of the drone, the shallow depth of field and the way the background falls away, making something as simple as a flying drone feel almost cinematic. It also reminds me that photography for me is not always about having a particular subject in mind. Sometimes it's just about noticing something interesting in front of me and trying to capture it in a way that feels different.

Q When someone stops on one of your photographs, what do you most hope they feel?

What I hope people feel when they stop at one of my photographs is curiosity about the story behind it. Sometimes a photo might look simple at first, but there's a small story hidden within it, and I hope people take a moment to find that. More than anything, I want my photographs to show people the beauty I see in the world through my lens.

> *"If someone comes across one of my photos, understands a little bit of the story behind it, and walks away with a smile while thinking, 'the world is actually so beautiful,' then I feel like I've done what I wanted to do with that photograph."*
>
> KIRAN L

CONNECT WITH KIRAN L

INSTAGRAM @kiran.l.reddy

WILDLIFE · INDIA'S GREAT CATS

On His Terms

SARFARAZ AHMED · WILDLIFE PHOTOGRAPHER · FOUNDER, TIGER WALA

From a ten-year-old's first safari at Kanha in 1981 to four decades spent tracking leopards and tigers across India's forests, Sarfaraz Ahmed has learned that the wild reveals itself only when it chooses to — on its own terms.



The leopard that emerged onto the rocks after his meal — photographed, in Sarfaraz's words, entirely on his own terms.

THE PROUDEST FRAME

Q Which photograph are you proudest of?

When a bold leopard decided to give me his time. Leopards are among the most elusive and secretive big cats, and getting a close, unobstructed view of one is always a privilege. This leopard had just finished feeding on a Nilgai kill, leaving him completely satiated. After his meal he emerged onto the rocks, settling down to clean himself and eventually relax. For once, the leopard seemed completely at ease with my presence. From a remarkably close distance he remained in position — cleaning, resting and simply being himself — while I photographed him from different angles. It almost felt as though, after being so elusive, he had decided to give me the photographs I had been patiently waiting for, entirely on his terms. No chase. No disturbance. Just patience, trust and a beautiful wild moment unfolding naturally before my lens.

Q Take us back to the beginning — how did wildlife photography first pull you in?

My relationship with wildlife did not begin with a camera. It began when I was ten years old. In 1981, my late uncle, Mr. Zahoor Hasan, took me to Kanha National Park. It was my first visit to a truly wild forest, my first safari, and, most importantly, my first encounter with a wild tiger. I remember the excitement of entering the forest, the anticipation of what we might encounter, and then the unforgettable moment of seeing a tiger in its natural home. The freedom of the forest, the silence and the sheer presence of a wild tiger created something inside me that never really went away. Today, whenever I return to the jungle, a part of me is still that ten-year-old boy entering Kanha for the first time. Kanha was not simply my first tiger safari. It was the beginning of my journey with the wild. The wild never really let me go.

THE JOURNEY · KANHA TO TIGER WALA

Q You founded Tiger Wala. What made you want to build something of your own?

At just 17 I took an ambitious step and bought a piece of land near Kisli Gate, Mocha, Kanha. At that age I had neither the experience nor the resources to make the venture work, and the project did not materialise. In those early years around the park I often became the link between the local guides, drivers and international tourists — an interpreter bridging not only language but culture, helping visitors understand the forest. I sold that land in 2011 and later bought farmland near the Bor Tiger Reserve in Maharashtra. From 2022 onwards I became increasingly involved in organising safaris, and in 2023 I entered a partnership in a resort. That venture too did not work out, but it became another chapter of learning. Over time I wanted to build something legitimate, transparent and sustainable, with a clear identity. That vision led to Tiger Wala — my own legally registered wildlife-travel venture. The jungle was my first teacher. Tiger Wala is the next chapter of that journey.



SARFARAZ AHMED

THE JOURNEY

1981	First safari & first wild tiger, Kanha National Park (age 10)
AGE 17	Buys land near Kisli Gate, Mocha, Kanha
2011	Sells the Kanha land; buys farmland near Bor Tiger Reserve, Maharashtra
2022	Returns to organising safaris after COVID
2023	Resort partnership — another chapter of learning
TODAY	Founds Tiger Wala, his registered wildlife-travel venture

A TIGER NAMED KALWA

Q Tell us about a tiger you've come to know over repeated sightings.

Kalwa — the son who built his own kingdom. Kalwa, son of the legendary Chota Matka of Tadoba, is a tiger I have followed since his childhood. I watched him grow and followed his journey as he came into his own. Then one day Kalwa disappeared. He had reached the age when a young male must leave his father's territory and carve out one of his own. He moved into the neighbouring Shedegaon forest, where he established his own kingdom. Today the once-shy young male has become an imposing ruler. He has three tigresses, and all three are now raising litters sired by Kalwa. Tracking him has never been easy — he has always been secretive and elusive. But somewhere along the way something changed; perhaps the confidence that comes with maturity. For someone who has watched him since he was a cub, seeing Kalwa standing openly in the wild, looking every bit the king he has become, is nothing short of a blessing.



KALWA, IN THE SHEDEGAON FOREST

SARFARAZ AHMED

IN THE FIELD

Q Share a shot that tested your patience.

Patience beyond the photograph. This image of a sub-adult tigress was made just after the rains had stopped, when the forest roads were at their most challenging. The tracks were muddy and rough, and every movement through the forest demanded time and patience. But wildlife has its own way of rewarding persistence. After waiting and watching, I was fortunate to witness this beautiful tigress in a distinctive moment, her markings and posture creating a frame that lasted only briefly. For me, this photograph represents the countless hours, difficult roads and unwavering patience that wildlife photography demands.



A sub-adult tigress on the forest road, photographed just after the rains.

> *Sometimes, in wildlife photography, patience doesn't just reward you with a sighting — it rewards you with a story.*

A MESSAGE OF CONSERVATION

Q Share a frame that carries a conservation message you care about.

For me, conservation is ultimately about protecting the future. A photograph of a tigress with her cubs represents far more than a beautiful wildlife moment — it represents the next generation of wild tigers. Protecting forests, prey, breeding females and their young is essential if we want these magnificent animals to continue thriving in the wild.



A TIGRESS WITH HER CUBS



THE NEXT GENERATION

AFTER DARK

Q What does the forest reveal after dark that daylight never shows?

After dark, the forest reveals a completely different world. Sounds become sharper, movements more mysterious, and every rustle in the darkness carries a story. Being out there at night is a unique experience — part patience, part anticipation, and part surrender to the unknown. You may see less than you do in daylight, but you often feel much more. In the darkness, the forest seems to come alive in ways that daylight simply cannot reveal.



A TIGRESS, AFTER DARK

WHAT COMES NEXT

Q What's the project or place you're most excited to pursue from here?

I'm most excited about continuing to explore India's wild landscapes and the lives of its great cats, particularly tigers. Beyond photographing individual animals, I want to build deeper stories around their behaviour, personalities, territories and the people working to protect these forests. My aim is to create a body of work that lets people experience the wild not just through a photograph, but through the story behind it.



LOOKING AHEAD

AFTER A LONG DAY IN THE FIELD

It is the feeling of knowing I was able to witness something truly wild and preserve a moment that may never happen again. Sometimes it is not even about the perfect photograph — it is simply being there, patiently waiting, and being trusted by the forest with a glimpse into its world.

CONNECT WITH SARFARAZ

INSTAGRAM @pets_r_us_nagpur **YOUTUBE** @sarfarazphotography

ASHWINI

BHARATANATYAM

MY FATHER'S SALANGAI

ASHWINI

BHARATANATYAM DANCER · KARNATAKA

She was nine when her grandfather became her guru, and the ankle bells she still ties on were her father's. Twenty years after her arangetram, the basics are where every riyaz day begins.



ON STAGE

BEFORE THE MUSIC "I want everything to be perfect before I go on stage, so I ensure it happens, and I enjoy the whole process."

AT A GLANCE

FORM	Bharatanatyam
BEGAN	Age nine
GURU	Natyacharya Guru Sri H.R. Keshava Murthy, her grandfather
PARENTS	Karnataka Kalasri Dr. B.K. Shyam Prakash · Veena Vidushi Geetha Shyam Prakash
AUNT	Karnataka Kalasri Dr. B.K. Vasanthalakshmi
FIRST PROGRAM	Her Arangetram
SALANGAI	Her father's
ADAVU	Kudittha Mettu

HER GRANDFATHER'S CLASS

Q Take us right back to the very start — what first drew you to Bharatanatyam, and how old were you when you began?

I started learning Bharatanatyam at the age of 9 from my grandfather, Natyacharya Guru Sri H.R. Keshava Murthy. Since art was already at home, it was very easy for me to develop an interest in it.

Q Tell us about the guru you trained under — what were those early years in the dance hall like?

Though he was my grandfather, in class he was my guru — highly disciplined and punctual. We never dared to go late to class or miss it. Like any other student, I was also treated the same. We had to practice, without which no new lesson was taught. It was healthy learning and competition amongst us. We loved going to the class.

Q What do you remember about the first time you performed on a stage — the nerves, the lights, the moment just before the music began?

I was very nervous, but at the same time very happy to go on stage with costume and makeup.

Q What are some of your favorite performance photographs from your journey?

My Arangetram, my first full-fledged program.

Q What's the story behind your salangai — do you remember the first time you tied them on?

My father gave them to me, and they were my father's, so I am emotionally attached to them.



ABHINAYA



FULL POSE

FAVOURITE FRAMES "My Arangetram, my first full-fledged program."



IN POSE

SALANGAI

"My father gave them to me, and they were my father's, so I am emotionally attached to them."

SCAN TO WATCH

A PERFORMANCE, FILMED

The recording she shared with us.

RIYAZ, RASA, AND WHAT COMES NEXT

Q Walk us through getting ready for the stage — how long does it take to get fully into costume and makeup, and is there a part of it you love most?

It is a complete 2-hour process for me to get ready relaxedly. But that doesn't mean I can't get ready in an hour — I do both, depending on how much time I have. I want everything to be perfect before I go on stage, so I ensure it happens, and I enjoy the whole process.

Q Which abhinaya piece do you love performing, and what story or emotion are you bringing to life in it?

It's an Asthanayika piece, and the emotion is Sringara.

Q What does an ordinary riyaz day look like for you — and is there an adavu or step you find yourself returning to again and again?

An ordinary riyaz looks like sticking to basics and the roots — warm-up steps and then practicing a composition. One adavu that I liked going back to as a child and still do now is Kudittha Mettu Adavu.

> *Though he was my grandfather, in class he was my guru — highly disciplined and punctual.*

Q Is there a piece, a margam, or a performance you're preparing for right now? Tell us what you're working on.

In December it will be 20 years since I performed my arangetram, and also 20 years since the passing of my dearest grandfather, and 20 years of dancing along with my dance partner. So Swathi and I will be presenting a full-fledged recital.

Q When a performance ends and you step off the stage, what is the one feeling you hope you've left behind in the audience?

I wish I have entertained the audience and that rasa uthpatthi has happened in the minds of the audience.



THE PIECE SHE LOVES "It's an Asthanayika piece, and the emotion is Sringara."

CONNECT WITH ASHWINI

INSTAGRAM @ashwwinie **YOUTUBE** @ashwinishyam

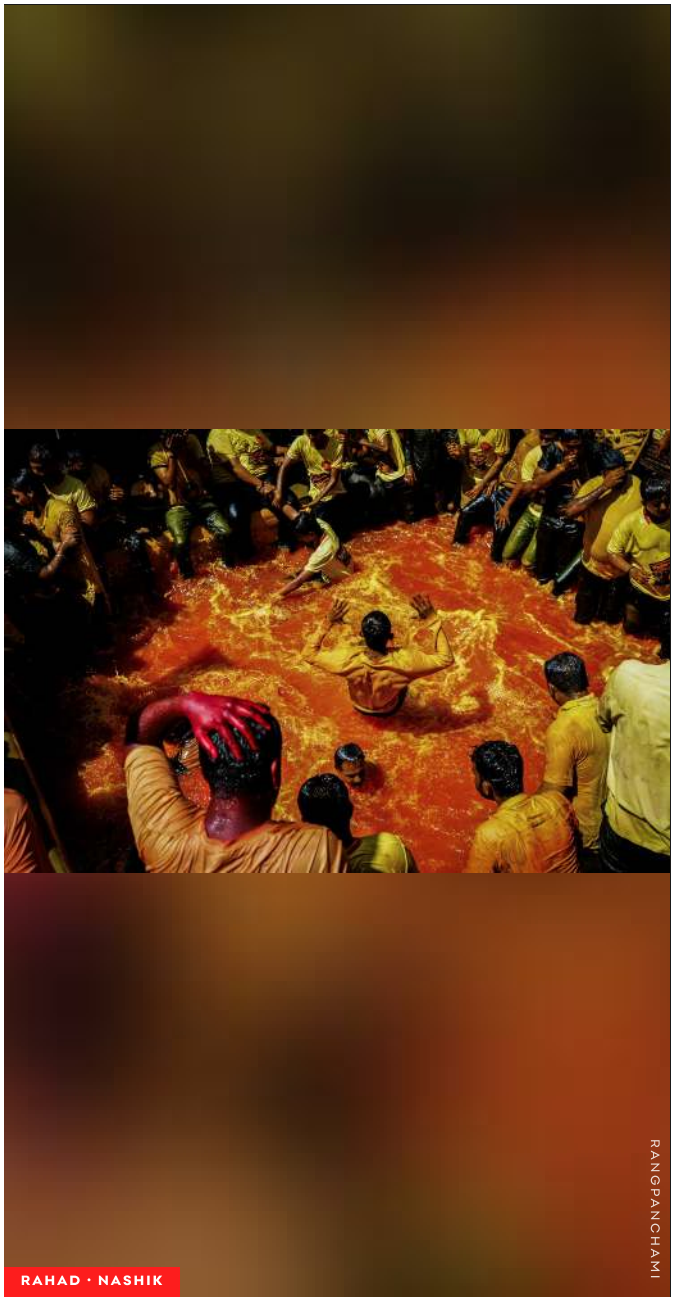
IN CONVERSATION · STREET & TRAVEL

NASHIK · MAHARASHTRA

The Colours of Rahad

MOHIT ASRANI · STREET & TRAVEL PHOTOGRAPHER · NASHIK

A street-and-travel photographer chasing the unstaged frame — from his hometown's riot of Rangpanchami colour to the quiet, walking faith of the Pandharpur Wari — after the one thing a picture can't fake: a moment that feels real.



RAHAD · NASHIK

RANGPANCHAMI

Q Do you remember the moment photography stopped being a hobby and started feeling like something you had to do?

Photography started feeling like something I had to do when I realized I didn't just want to take pictures—I wanted to document and tell stories through them. I began exploring different places, festivals, and everyday moments around me, and slowly, photography became a way of seeing and experiencing the world. What started as a hobby gradually turned into something I genuinely wanted to pursue, and that shift felt both natural and inevitable.

Q What's the one frame you'd want someone to see first from your work?

I captured this photo in my hometown, Nashik, during Rangpanchami, which is celebrated around the time of Holi. The way Holi is celebrated here is really different and unique—it's known as Rahad, where the celebration happens during Rangpanchami. It's still quite underrated, and very few people have documented this tradition. Since it's a part of my hometown and its culture, it holds a special place in my heart, which is what made me raise my camera and capture this moment.

Q When you head out with your camera, what are you usually hoping to come home with—a certain kind of light, a face, a small unrepeatable moment?

Honestly, I never head out looking for one specific thing. I just look for moments that feel real—interesting light, a face with a story, or a small moment that might never happen again. I think the best frames are the ones you don't plan for; they come to you when you're open and present, and that spontaneity is what makes them so special.

MOHIT ASRANI · AT A GLANCE

BASED	Nashik, Maharashtra
FOCUS	Street & travel — festivals, candid real moments
CAMERA	Sony A7 IV · 35mm (also iPhone)
NEXT	Travelling internationally

ON THE ROAD



THE PANDHARPUR WARI

HUMANITY AT ITS PUREST Thousands walking with the same faith and purpose — pots, tulsi and the deities carried on their heads toward Pandharpur.

Q Can you share a photo from a trip or a place that has stayed with you, and what made that experience so memorable?

This was honestly one of the best experiences of my life. The place is Pandharpur, and I captured this photo during the Pandharpur Wari. What made this experience so special was witnessing humanity at its purest—people staying grounded, coming together with such unity and devotion, and spreading an incredible amount of positive energy. There was something deeply beautiful about being surrounded by thousands of people who were all walking with the same faith and purpose. This photograph has stayed with me because the Wari wasn't just something I witnessed or photographed; it was a once-in-a-lifetime experience that I truly felt.

Q When you photograph strangers on the street, do you ask first, or catch the moment and move on?

I personally prefer to capture the moment first, because that's when it feels the most raw, natural, and real. A candid moment often shows a person's true personality and the reality of that particular moment. After taking the photo, I usually show them the frame, and most of the time, they genuinely enjoy seeing that candid side of themselves. For me, if I ask before taking the photo, the person can become conscious of the camera and start acting differently, which sometimes takes away from their natural personality. I feel street photography is about preserving real moments, real emotions, and real people as they are.

Q Street and travel both mean being out among strangers. How did you find your footing shooting people and streets you'd only just met?

I think it came down to simply spending more time on the streets. In the beginning, approaching strangers felt a little intimidating, but I slowly learned to observe first and shoot naturally. I also realized that people are more comfortable when you're respectful and genuinely interested in the moment rather than just trying to get a photograph. Traveling helped a lot too—it pushed me out of my comfort zone and taught me to adapt to unfamiliar places and situations, which made the whole process feel more intuitive over time.

ON THE STREET



A MOMENT BY THE SEA

SHOT ON IPHONE "Everything just came together right in front of my eyes" — a horse, a handler and the tide, caught before the moment disappeared.



THE KIT

Q Walk us through a candid street moment where the timing fell perfectly into place—did you see it coming or did it happen all at once?

It honestly felt like the universe aligned everything perfectly for me. I didn't really plan or wait for this moment—everything just came together right in front of my eyes, almost exactly like the image I had imagined in my mind. The moment I saw the frame coming together, I immediately knew I had to capture it. I quickly pulled out my iPhone and took the shot before the moment disappeared. It was one of those rare moments where everything just felt right.

Q What's the camera or gear you reach for most, and what do you love about it?

What I love most about my setup is its versatility. My Sony A7 IV is my go-to camera, and these days I'm using a 35mm lens most of the time, especially for street and travel photography. I love how it lets me get close to the moment while still keeping the frame natural and immersive. On a travel day, I usually carry my camera and lens, iPhone, extra batteries, SD cards, and basic accessories. I prefer keeping my setup simple and lightweight so I can focus on being present and ready when a moment unfolds. For me, the gear is just a tool—being there at the right moment is what matters most.

WHERE IT'S HEADING



MOHIT ASRANI

A DAY ON 16MM

OUT OF THE COMFORT ZONE A full day on a single 16mm lens — a self-imposed challenge to see ordinary moments through a wider frame.

Q What recent frame are you proud of that not many people have seen yet, and what does it say about where your work is heading?

That day, I challenged myself to shoot the entire day using only a 16mm lens. I wanted to step out of my comfort zone and see how creatively I could work with a wider perspective. Surprisingly, the results turned out really well. Lately, I've been experimenting a lot and constantly challenging myself in different situations. I feel these self-imposed challenges push me to look at ordinary moments differently and create something more unique and out of the box. I think that's where my work is heading right now—experimenting, taking risks, and finding new ways to tell stories through my photographs.

Q Is there a place or a project you are saving up to photograph one day?

I've travelled to quite a few places across India, but I still feel there's so much more to explore here—different places, cultures, traditions, and stories that are waiting to be documented. At the same time, I really want to start travelling internationally. A lot of my perspective and work so far has been deeply rooted in Indian culture, and I feel it's time to step outside that comfort zone, experience different countries, meet different people, and explore their cultures through my camera. I want to expand my perspective and tell stories beyond what I already know.

> *"I want someone to pause on my photograph and think, 'This feels so real.' I want them to feel the energy of that moment, connect with the emotions, and see the honesty behind the frame.*
>
> MOHIT ASRANI · ON WHAT HE WANTS YOU TO FEEL



THE PHOTOGRAPHER
Mohit Asrani
Street & Travel · Nashik

CONNECT WITH MOHIT ASRANI
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IN CONVERSATION · MUSIC

Mimicry to Melody

CALEB JACOB · TAMIL INDIE ARTIST

It began with impressions. A schoolboy in love with voices, Caleb Jacob learned to mimic the stars he grew up hearing — then co-founded the group Mamiboys, sang playback in Tamil and Telugu cinema, and finally turned the ear he'd trained on others toward a sound of his own: indie Tamil R&B, electropop and fusion, where the melody always comes first.

Q Take us back to the beginning — what first pulled you toward music?

Actually, my journey into Tamil music began with my passion for mimicry. From my school days, I was fascinated by voices and started developing my skills as a mimicry artist. As I grew older, I continued exploring and developing different vocal styles of celebrities, which gave me a deeper understanding of voice, expression, and performance. During my school and college days, I gradually began exploring my own interest in music. Over the years, my interest gradually evolved beyond singing. I began exploring songwriting, composition, and music production because I wanted to create music that could reflect my own sound and emotions. What originally began as a fascination with voices and mimicry has now grown into a passion for creating my own musical identity. Tamil music, for me, is more than just melody—it is a powerful medium to express emotions, tell stories, and connect with people. My goal is to continue exploring new sounds while staying rooted in the emotional depth that makes Tamil music so special.



THE ARTIST Front-lit under an amber ring, a waveform running through the dark — the promo image for his independent run of 2026 singles.

WHEN HE SITS DOWN TO WRITE, WHAT COMES FIRST

Melody.

Every time — before the lyric, before anything else.

DISCOGRAPHY & CREDITS

GROUP	**Mamiboys — co-founded 2009, with Krisheno & Kevi J**
SINGLES	**En Hormones Ellam Thoongudhey · Oru Mental Pola · Kakal · Chennai Ponnu; album *Dumtea***
PLAYBACK	**Srikanth Deva 'Seema Sirikki' · Jessy Gift 'Thottu Paar' · Harris Jayaraj 'Orange' (Telugu) · Bobo Shashi 'Bindaas'**
2026 SOLO	**Usurey Usurey · One Simple Love · Nizhal Kadhal Nee · Un Meedhey En Kangal**

THE CRAFT · FROM SPARK TO SONG

How a melody that arrives from nowhere is captured, shaped and built into a finished, fully produced song.



WHERE THE SONGS TAKE SHAPE A laptop running the DAW and an M-Audio Keystation Mini 32 — the whole studio folds onto a single desk.

Q How does a raw idea grow into a finished song for you?

For me, a raw idea can begin from anywhere—a melody that suddenly comes to mind, a particular emotion, a phrase, a personal experience, or even a sound that creates a certain mood. I usually start by capturing that initial spark before it disappears, sometimes as a simple vocal melody or a rough musical idea. From there, I begin building the emotional world of the song. I ask myself what the song should make the listener feel. Is it love, longing, heartbreak, nostalgia, happiness, or something more energetic? That emotional direction helps me shape the melody, rhythm, arrangement, and overall sound. The next step is developing the composition. I experiment with chords, melodies, and different vocal approaches until the song starts finding its own identity. I also enjoy exploring genres, so a track may begin as a simple Tamil melody and gradually evolve by incorporating R&B, EDM, Electropop, or fusion elements. Lyrics then play an important role in giving the music its story. Once the composition and lyrics come together, I move into the production stage, where the song really begins to take shape. I build the arrangement, select sounds and instruments, record and refine the vocals, and keep experimenting with layers and textures. For me, the most exciting part of the process is seeing—or rather hearing—a small, raw emotion slowly transform into a complete musical story. The final song may be polished and fully produced, but at its core, it still carries the original feeling that inspired it in the first place.

IN THE STUDIO

WRITES ON	**Laptop + DAW**
MIDI	**M-Audio Keystation Mini 32**
ROLES	**Sings, composes & produces every track himself**
GENRES IN PLAY	**R&B · EDM · Electropop · Fusion — often inside one song**

ROOTS · THE RHYTHMS OF HOME

On writing in his mother tongue, the people who shaped the sound, and how far an independent Tamil track has already travelled.

Q What does writing and singing in Tamil let you say that no other language could?

Singing and writing in Tamil lets me express emotions, memories, and cultural nuances that would lose their full depth in any other language. Tamil carries the rhythms of home, the intimacy of everyday speech, and layers of history that shape how I see the world. Through it, I can say not only what I feel, but where those feelings come from.

Q Who shaped the artist you are today?

My family is my biggest inspiration. Everything I create in Caleb Jacob Music carries a piece of the love I feel for my wife and son.

INFLUENCES

TAMIL & INDIAN	Ilayaraja, A.R. Rahman, Yuvan Shankar Raja, Anirudh, Sai Abhyankar, Pritam, Silambarasan
GLOBAL	Michael Jackson, Akon, R. Kelly, Eminem, Jay-Z, Usher, Black Eyed Peas, Zayn, The Weeknd
CLOSEST PEERS	Krisheno, Kevi J, Jude Niranjan

THE REACH

LYRICS	'Un Meedhey En Kangal' written with Praveen K, a lyricist from New Zealand
HEARD IN	United States, Russia & New Zealand
UPCOMING	New tracks with Kevi J, Saravanan & other independent artists

WHERE TO LISTEN

STREAMING	Spotify · Apple Music · YouTube Music · Deezer
SOCIAL	TikTok · Instagram · Facebook



THE MAKER Away from the mixing desk — the artist behind an independent Tamil sound, built one track at a time.

WHAT'S NEXT · THE SOUND AHEAD

New collaborators, a choreographed stage moment in the works, and one simple wish for everyone who presses play.

Q What are you working on right now — and what do you hope listeners feel?

I want to deliver unique music to the users, and they should feel good music, filled and satisfied. I'm also set to collaborate with choreographer Ilavarasan for the I Am Star event — those conversations are already underway.

Q What do you remember most about putting your songs out into the world?

I received overwhelming comments from Native Americans, Russians, and New Zealanders.

Q What's the story behind a track you'd want someone to press play on first?

I thought of swapping to the body of aliens and trying to feel singing on another planet.

Q Is there a song that made you fall in love with music?

One Simple Love from Calebjacobmusic, my own song.

Q The one feeling you most want your music to leave people with?

Listeners should be satisfied to listen to my sound.

UP NEXT

COLLAB	Choreographer Ilavarasan — the *I Am Star* event
WRITING WITH	Kevi J (lyricist & singer), Saravanan (lyricist) & others
OUT NOW	'Un Meedhey En Kangal' — his latest single

THE JOURNEY

2009	Co-founds the group Mamiboys
CINEMA	Playback for Tamil & Telugu films
2026	Four solo singles — sung, composed & produced himself

SCAN TO WATCH

'Un Meedhey En Kangal'

His latest single — written with lyricist Praveen K. Point your camera at the code to watch the music video on YouTube.

CONNECT WITH CALEB JACOB

INSTAGRAM @calebjacobmusic · YOUTUBE @CalebJacobMusic · SPOTIFY Caleb Jacob Music · APPLE MUSIC Caleb Jacob Music

DOCUMENTARY · LANDSCAPE | KASHMIR

"The camera becomes a way of noticing **rather than capturing.**"

A WAY OF NOTICING

LALIMA BOSE · DOCUMENTARY & LANDSCAPE PHOTOGRAPHER

She came to photography in 2023, from communications, and has spent it learning to wait. On a heron she has sat with for two years, the Dal Lake boat that had to be monochrome, and the paddy fields on the road to Gurez.

AT A GLANCE

CAME TO PHOTOGRAPHY
2023, from communications

WORKS IN
Kashmir — Dal Lake, the road to Gurez

DRAWN TO
Landscapes, trees, historical architecture

SERIES
In Passing Light · Rooted in Time · Before the Snow

NEXT
A body of work in black and white



LALIMA BOSE

Q How did photography first find its way into your life, and do you remember the moment you knew it was more than a passing curiosity?

From communications to photography, what began simply as a passion in 2023 has unfolded into a journey of learning and discovery. I am drawn to landscapes and the timeless presence of trees. I also find myself wandering into historical architecture, carrying stories of the past. Each photograph I click is a reminder of the simplicity that nature offers and a small step forward in honing this craft.

THE CLIPPED WING

Q Is there an early frame you still feel proud of? Tell us the story of it, and what made it feel like the one where something finally clicked.

I've been sitting with this photograph for nearly two years. The subject is sharp, the foreground holds—but the clipped wing has always stayed with me. The frame felt unresolved. It didn't quite stand on its own. And yet, I couldn't bring myself to delete it.

So, a few days back, I went back to it. Over time, a shift had taken place. The frame I was looking at now felt less about the image and more about what it holds—a reminder of how much sits between seeing and framing. Of timing, of space, of knowing when to leave room.

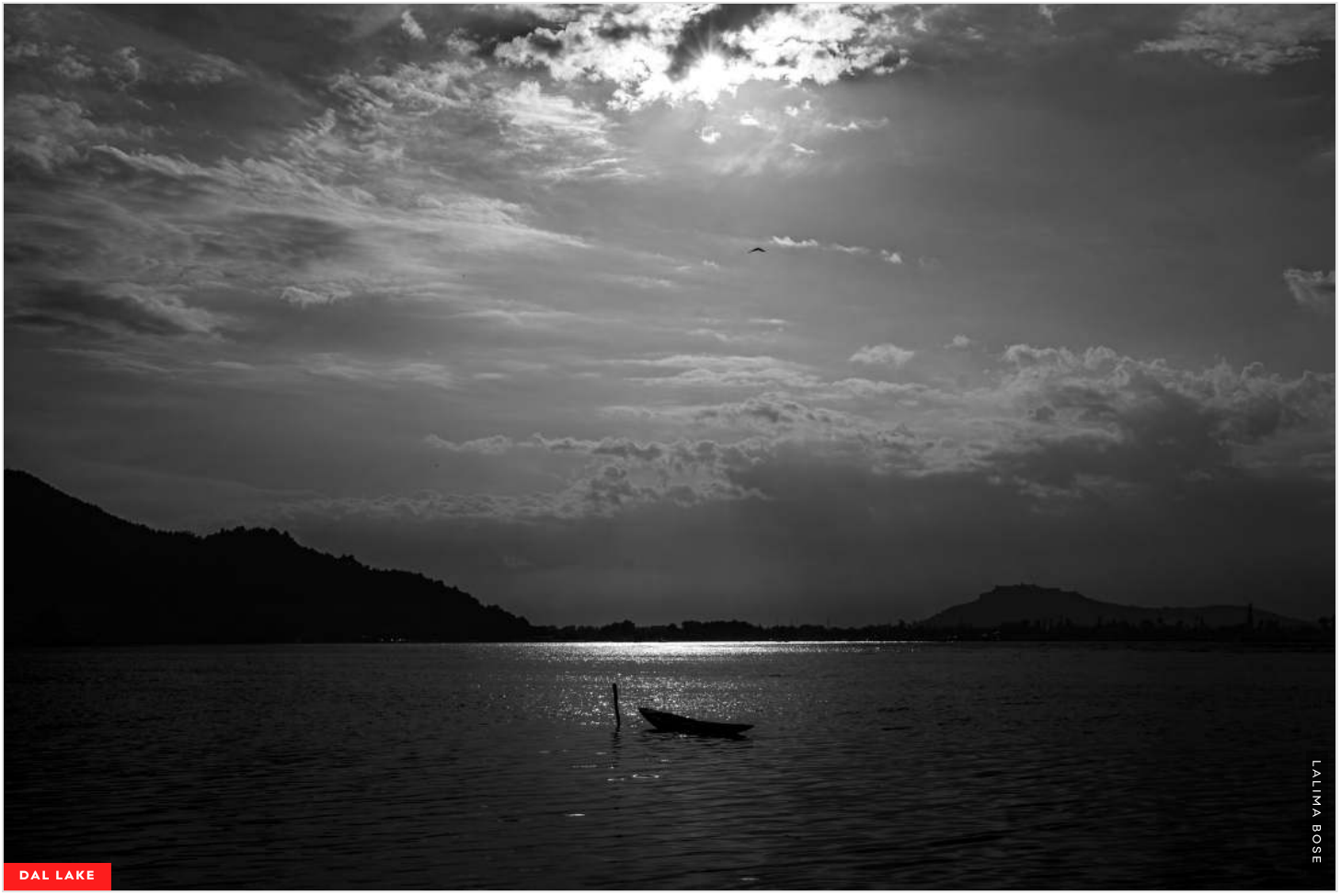
More than anything, it brought back the memory of that moment. The boat ride on the lake, in search of a frame that might catch my eye. The cool breeze, the gentle sway as the boat glided away from the shore, and bustle of city life. There were birds all around, but nothing held my attention—until suddenly, the stillness broke.

A black-crowned night heron lifted off from the water. There was no time to think, only to react, a moment held for just a second and I had to act fast. And that was it. The full wingspan didn't stay within the frame. I had wanted both—the spray of water and the full stretch of the bird. It felt like a missed chance.

But as I revisit the photograph, I'm not sure that's what this moment was. It was brief, slightly chaotic, and gone almost as quickly as it appeared. The frame carries that—it doesn't settle, it doesn't fully resolve. It moves through. The foreground remains, the water returns to stillness, and the bird is already elsewhere. Perhaps that is enough. Some frames stay not because they are complete, but because they mark where the learning shifted.

Q What does a Kashmir or valley frame that feels most like you look like?

The Dal Lake is my go-to place whenever I am in the valley. From sunrise to sunset, there's always a frame waiting to be witnessed. The vastness of the water and sky merging on the horizon always evokes a soothing calm I hold close. On one such visit, I noticed a single boat resting quietly on the lake, still against a shifting sky. The setting sun filtered through layers of cloud, breaking into silver ripples across the water. It felt like a moment that demanded to be captured — not in colour, but in monochrome. I was standing at the lake perimeter by myself, alone, yet not lonely.



ALONE, YET NOT LONELY The lake she returns to — "a moment that demanded to be captured — not in colour, but in monochrome."

LETTING THE FRAME REVEAL ITSELF

Q Your work lives in the mountains and valleys, so much of it around Kashmir. What first pulled you toward these landscapes, and toward photographing them the quiet, documentary way you do rather than as postcard views?

To begin with having a permanent abode helps. Now coming to my photography style, well the land is beautiful in its own way and the sense of quiet it holds, the stillness even within movement, simply attracted me. And, in time, I realised I am less interested in photographing these places as grand or dramatic views. What stays with me are the smaller moments—the way light settles on water, a lone tree, a passing boat, or the rhythm of everyday life unfolding in the landscape. Perhaps that comes from how I experience these places. I don't arrive looking for a picture; I spend time, observe, and let the frame reveal itself. The camera becomes a way of noticing rather than capturing.

Q What photograph from your "In Passing Light" gallery would you like to share?

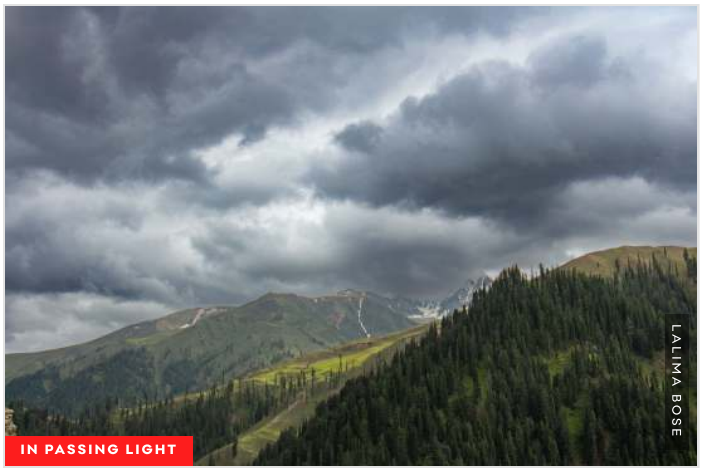
The images in this series do not follow any fixed hour, only the passage of light—brightness into shadow, haze into clarity, and eventually into fading light again. They are made across different locations and times of day: some at daybreak, some in the stillness of midday, and others in the evening into blue hour. I don't work to a schedule. When I find a frame, I stay with it. In the early hours, that means waiting as the light slowly shifts and haze begins to appear. In the evening, the wait continues until the light fades completely. Midday is different—the light is often constant, unless it is a cloudy day, which offers brief moments of change. In photography, time cannot be measured by the clock. Most often in the field you are guided by light, sometimes even with flat daylight. I am still learning the patience it demands and adapting to given situations.

Q What "nature and people" moment would you like to share, one of those everyday glimpses of mountain life you frame so gently?

On the way to Gurez, the road cuts through stretches of paddy fields. It was sowing season, and the fields were a vivid green, with labour in full flow. That is what first made me stop. On both sides of the road, men and women were at work. I took a few frames, then moved across and saw this moment come together. The red of the clothing stood among the green surrounding, the stained mud, the bundles of paddy shoots held in both hands, and the careful, uneven walk through the fields - it was like a story being told in one frame. I used a mid-range focal length and stayed where I was, allowing the subject to move into the frame. As he came closer, I made a few images without interrupting the flow of his work. The distance between us worked well. In fact, I consciously try not to be seen. This is not street photography—it is more about the land and the people within it. The photograph wasn't planned, but the intent was always there. I had been trying to capture the paddy fields and the labour they demand for some time.



SOWING SEASON "The red of the clothing stood among the green surrounding... it was like a story being told in one frame."



BRIGHTNESS INTO SHADOW "When I find a frame, I stay with it."

SOMETHING WE INHERIT AND PASS ON

Q You've spoken about observing everyday stillness and about solitude being part of how you work. What does a slow morning alone with your camera actually feel like when you're out there?

Solitude sometimes can bring joy.

Q What favourite image from one of your other series, whether it's the trees of "Rooted in Time," the autumn of "Before the Snow," or another that means a lot to you, would you like to share?

I know the request is for an image from one from a series, but this photograph—featured on my homepage—stands apart for me. The vantage point is key here followed by the elements at play. Shot through an airplane window, it revealed a landscape I could not have accessed on foot. As the fog rose, the peaks still visible but quickly fading so are the layers of the mountain range almost touching the horizon, the soft beautiful light painting the sky in pink hue, all added naturally into the frame makes it a rare opportunity. I think that's why it is a special frame for me. I wasn't trying to construct a message. What drew me was the interplay of elements—mist, light, and terrain—coming together. It felt less like something to capture and more like something to witness. There isn't a larger message I'm trying to impose here. If anything, it is a reminder to pause and look—at what nature reveals without being asked. A moment, shaped by light, mist, and terrain.



FROM AN AIRPLANE WINDOW

MIST, LIGHT AND TERRAIN "A landscape I could not have accessed on foot."

Q What are you working on now, or what frame hints at where your eye is heading next?

Right now, my mind hasn't fully settled on a single theme. The only clarity I have is that the next body of work will be in black and white. With autumn setting in, it's becoming harder to narrow my focus. Trees—one of my enduring subjects—lend themselves well to monochrome, as do more intimate landscapes. So, I'm still working through my choices.



TOWARD MONOCHROME

TREES "One of my enduring subjects" — and where the next body of work is heading.

Q "Land, Light & Legacy" is the line you carry. When someone sits with your photographs years from now, what do you most hope they carry away from them?

When someone sits with my photographs years from now, I hope they evoke a sense of pause. They are not dramatic frames, but simple ones—the land as it exists, the light as it changes, and the traces we leave behind. If they take away anything, I hope it is this: to look a little longer, to notice what quietly exists around us, and to recognise that these landscapes—natural and human—are part of something we inherit and pass on. The value lies simply in having seen it.

CONNECT WITH LALIMA BOSE

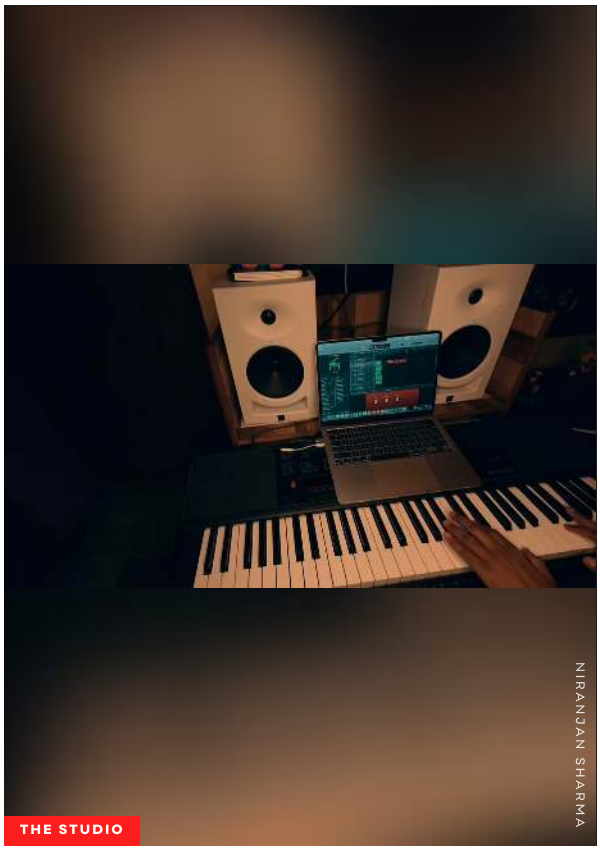
INSTAGRAM @be__lali

IN CONVERSATION · MUSIC & EDIT

A Track Called Third-Eye

NIRANJAN SHARMA · NSYNCSTUDIOS · MUSIC PRODUCER & VIDEO EDITOR

NSyncStudios' producer-editor on the first piece of music that felt truly his, the brother who pulled him into DAWs, and why nothing works without sync.



THE STUDIO

Q Take us back to the very first piece of music that felt truly like yours — what was it, and what were you making it on?

The first piece of music I created was called Third-eye. I named it that because it gave me a sense of knowing myself more, and every time I would listen to it, I felt inspired and motivated to keep creating. It was a trap genre with a drill rhythmic pattern.

Q Was there a person — a teacher, a guru, or an artist you were obsessed with — who shaped the way you hear and build music today?

Yes, there were a lot of artists I was obsessed with when I started my music production journey, mainly my brother, because he was the one who introduced me to producing music through DAWs. Listening to Indian hip-hop like Yo Yo Honey Singh made me understand how to add rhythms on the beat. MC Stan's music composing helped me understand how to add depth in the music.

Q Do you remember the moment you realised production could be more than a hobby — that this is what you wanted to build your days around?

I remember when I started to produce music, it was just a hobby, but there were times when I took a break from producing and I thought it was the end of it. But there are some things that still connect me to create. Whenever I felt something wasn't right, I would just go and enter the dilemma of music production that makes me feel happy.

Q Music production and video editing are two crafts most people keep separate — how did you end up doing both, and which one came first for you?

For me, making music came first, and video editing came later. This was when I was around 14-15 years old, when I found out about editing softwares and I would try every software possible. I had a special place for Premiere Pro in my heart. Music production and editing require one common thing, which is SYNC. If there is no sync in both these aspects, then it feels messy and improper. When I took a break from music, I found editing, and it was a flow of just creating, whether it's video editing or music.

THE STUDIO



THE SPACE



ONE PIECE OF GEAR The space walked through — and the one piece of gear he could not work without.

Q Walk us through this space — what's the one piece of gear or corner of the room you couldn't work without?

It's the main setup which I have, the Yamaha CTX700. This keyboard has allowed me to explore for creation and to be more every time, and the sustain pedal, which is the second most important aspect.

Q What's the story behind this track — how did it come together, and what makes it special to you?

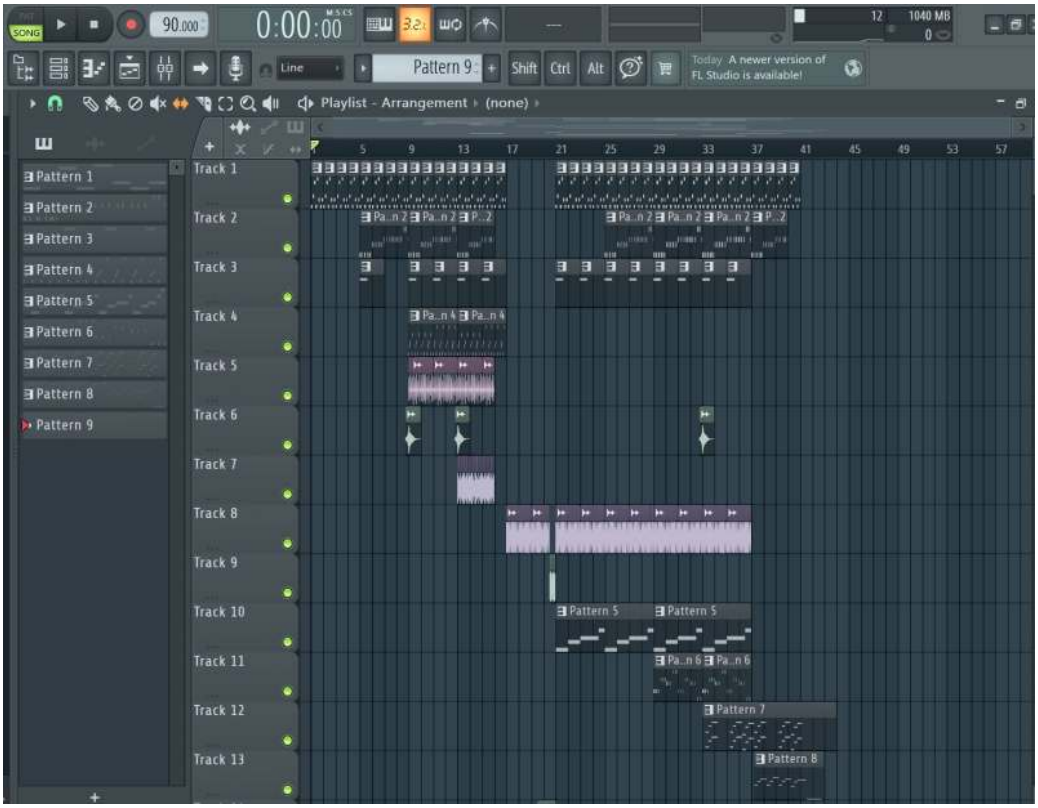
This is an instrumental track called Moodswings, and by the name it derives various emotions. This track has 6 layers of emotions, from feeling rage and energetic to regret and guilt. I wanted to glorify these few emotions in one instrumental track.

> *"Every time I would listen to it, I felt inspired and motivated to keep creating.*

THE EDIT

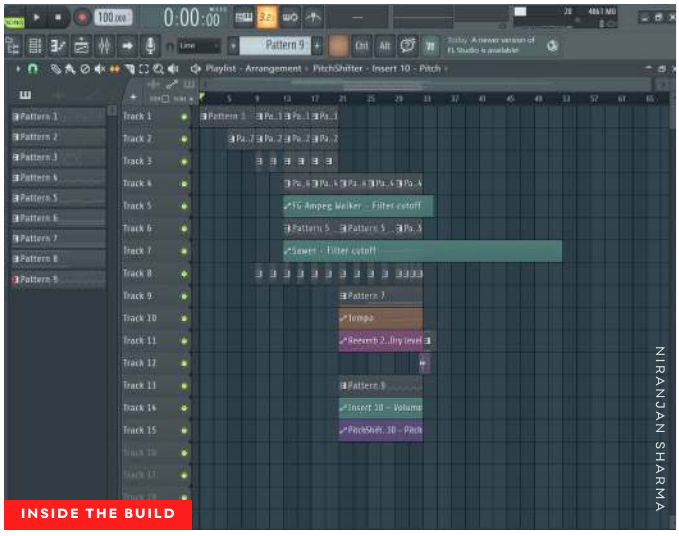
Q What are we looking at here, and which software do you build your music in?

I started to make music with FL Studio, then gradually shifted to Logic Pro X (Mac). After a year or so, I shifted back to FL Studio. There were hurdles because I shifted from a PC to laptop, and again I have changed my laptop as a form of upgrade, so I started making music in FL Studio and looking forward to make more.



THE TIMELINE Where the tracks are built, layer by layer — the software stack behind NSyncStudios.





IN MOTION · SCAN TO WATCH

Q Who did you make this with, and what do you remember most from working on it?

This project is a part of the track Moodswings. So basically, I wanted a female voice and the song name is Regret. The song explains how expectations can lead to misunderstanding that leads to regret. The most tough part was finding a voice because everyone were busy or if they agreed, then they have back off due to their own personal reasons. And when I got the voice, special thanks to my female friend who did the voiceover part, and I was looking for a dreamy voice which I think I succeeded.

Q What is this, and what stage are you at with it?

This song I'm recently working on is a hip-hop vibey flex kind of song and I have almost completed the song. There are some mixing and layers to be done and I hope when it's released it goes viral!!!

Q What were you going for with this edit, and what was the trickiest part to get right?

I uploaded my among favourite edits. So basically, one was for a college event and I had creative liberty to shoot and edit, so I went for what I thought. The trickiest part was to make it look cool while making sensible information. Edit is not just about cuts, it's also about why those cuts. Another is an experimentation video where I shot with one of my friends; he was very helpful. The third one is a travel edit, and this was the most trickiest because hill travel edits are to be peaceful and slow. Instead, I decided to make a modern fast-cut edit and turned out to be liking it.

SCAN TO WATCH

The collaboration — scan to watch 'Regret', the track with the dreamy voice he found.

SCAN TO WATCH

Work in progress — scan to watch the session recording of the hip-hop flex track.

"I get very excited when the track finally reaches the point I imagined — it is very peaceful, a win-win moment."

NIRANJAN SHARMA · NSYNCSTUDIOS

CONNECT WITH NIRANJAN SHARMA

YOUTUBE @nSYNCStudios INSTAGRAM @niranjansharma.9

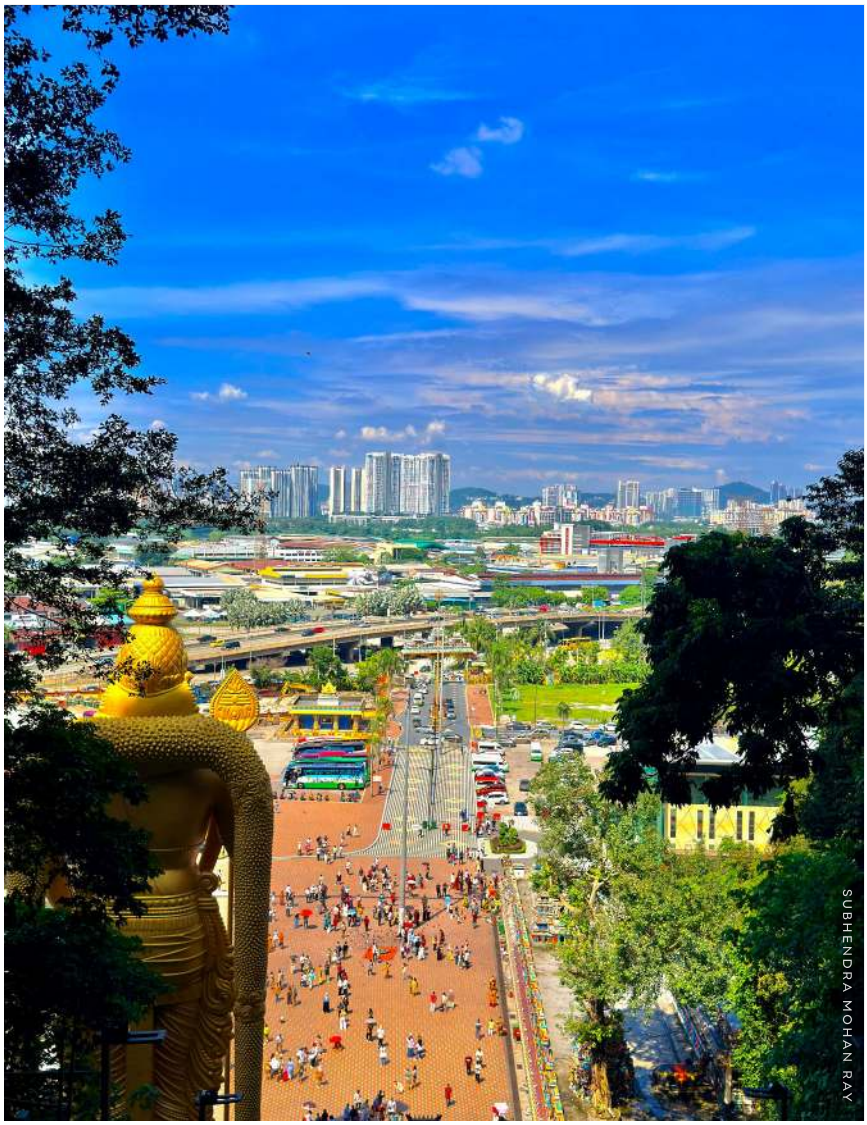
IN CONVERSATION · MOBILE PHOTOGRAPHY

IPHONE ONLY

Mood, Movement, Mystery

SUBHENDRA MOHAN RAY — PHOTOGRAPHER

An iPhone, an open road, and an eye that refuses to pick a lane — Subhendra Mohan Ray chases mood, movement and mystery from abstract still lifes to wildlife, from the mountains to the sea.







Q How did your journey in photography begin?

I didn't know it was called photography back then—I just knew I couldn't walk past a moment without wanting to freeze it. Years later, that feeling hasn't changed a bit. This platform is where I'm finally sharing what I see, and I want people to experience the world through my eyes.

Q When was the first time you realized photography was your passion?

I took a random shot on my phone, and later I couldn't stop sharing it. The light, the mood, the story in it—it felt different from just 'a pic.' That's when I knew this was more than a hobby.

NO SINGLE LANE



NATURE, STARK A single tree, read in high contrast — the quiet end of a restless range.

Q How has your photography style evolved over the years?

I don't stick to one lane. My style has evolved into abstract, wildlife, nature—really anything that catches my attention and refuses to let go. If it has mood, movement, or mystery, I'm shooting it.

Q What makes the photos you uploaded your best work?

For me, my best photographs are the ones where I'm able to capture more than just a beautiful frame—they capture a feeling, a story, or a moment that makes the viewer pause. I'm most proud when the composition, light, timing, and emotion come together naturally to create an image that speaks without words.





ABSTRACT & OPEN SEA A toy car staged like a film still, and a lone sail under a wall of cloud.

MOUNTAINS & SEAS

Q What does the photo you uploaded to showcase your unique style represent?

My showcase photo represents my love for mountains, seas, and places that carry a sense of mystery and emotion. I'm drawn to moments where nature seems to tell a story of its own. When I capture them, I want the photograph to go beyond what I saw—to leave enough space for the viewer's imagination to create their own story, emotion, and meaning. For me, the true beauty of a photograph is not just in the moment I captured, but in the different stories it inspires in everyone who sees it.

AT A GLANCE

EQUIPMENT	iPhone
GENRES	Abstract · Wildlife · Nature
TERRAIN	Mountains · Seas
SIGNATURE	Mood · Movement · Mystery
INSTAGRAM	@camera_ray



MOUNTAINS A ridge-top monastery held in the last of the warm desert light.



SEAS The kind of light that leaves room for the viewer to finish the story.

THE WANDERER & HIS TOOL



CANDID The photographer, in a moment with no strings attached.

Q What story does the candid shot you uploaded convey?

It's a candid where the person is trying to be in a relaxed mood with no strings attached—a moment of pure authenticity.

Q Why is your iPhone important to your photography?

Mostly my equipment has always been my iPhone, and it is the best because it gives meaning to the photos with its clarity and purity.

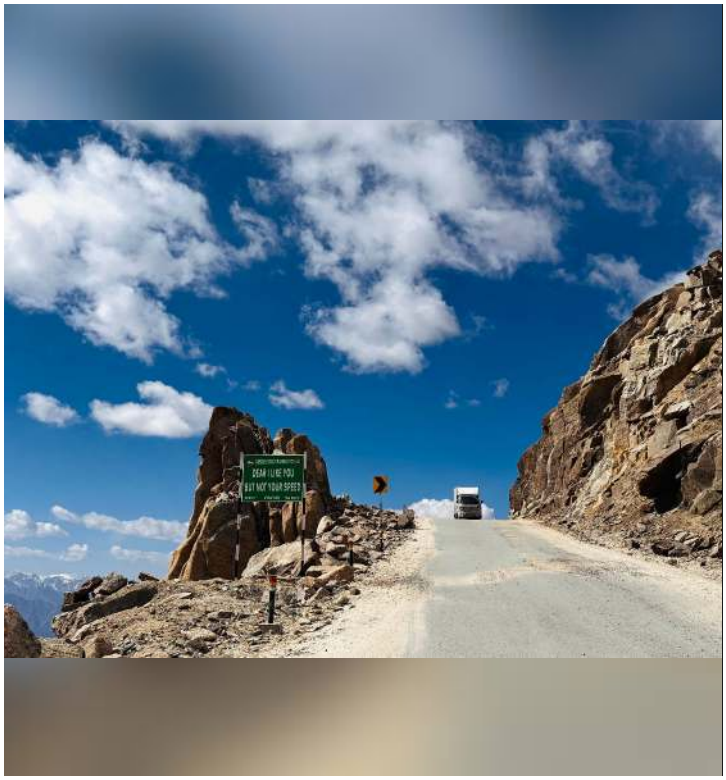
Q Describe the project or shoot from your recent travels.

I was a traveler, and I wanted to capture the uniqueness of the place and how creative the city is. Every corner had a story waiting to be framed.

ONE TOOL, NO EXCUSES

Clarity & Purity

Every frame in this feature was made on a phone — no camera, no lens kit, just an eye for the moment.





ON THE ROAD Every corner a story waiting to be framed — movement, always, between the mountains.

CONNECT WITH SUBHENDRA MOHAN RAY

INSTAGRAM @camera_ray

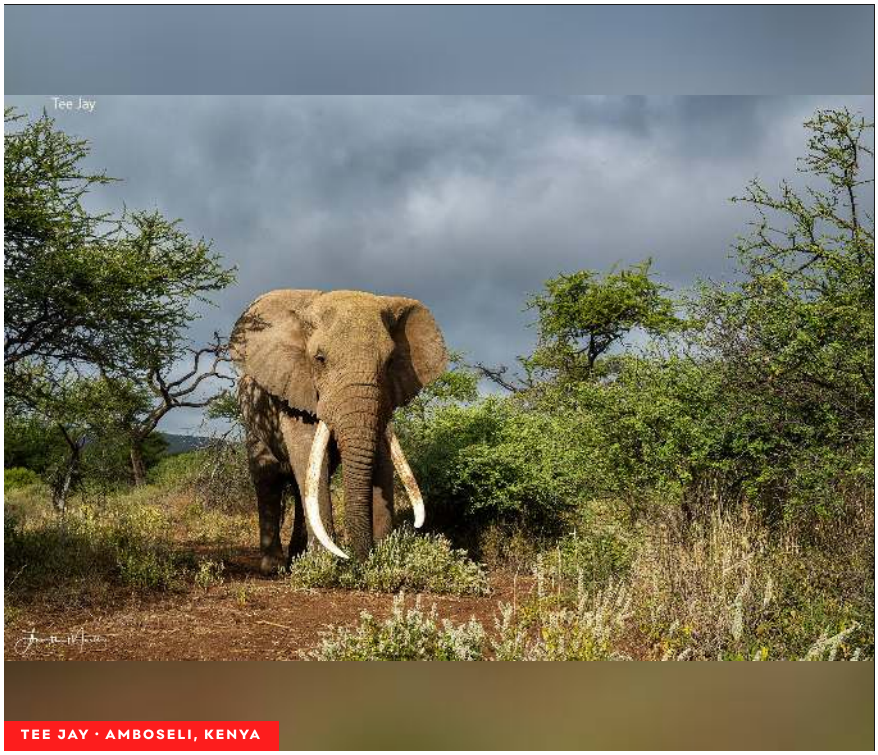
IN CONVERSATION · WILDLIFE

BENGALURU, INDIA

When the Clouds Opened

R. ANANTHA MURTHY · WILDLIFE PHOTOGRAPHER · BENGALURU

A Bengaluru wildlife photographer whose craft is patience and the decisive moment — from an Indian Roller on a Hesarghatta anthill to a tusker in Amboseli the morning the clouds opened.



TEE JAY · AMBOSELI, KENYA





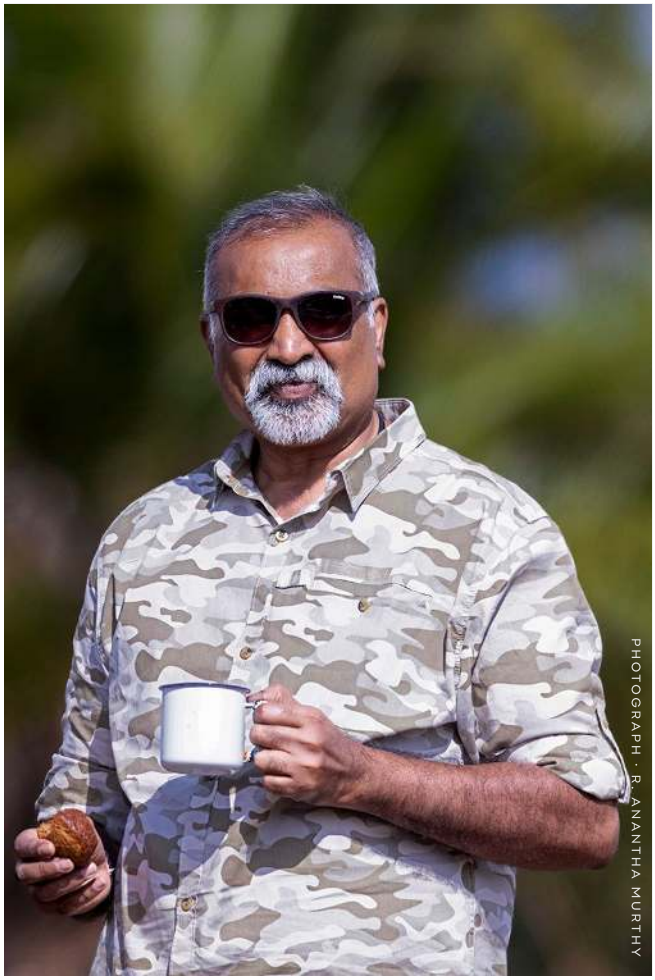
Q What is the one photograph you would call your signature shot — and the story behind it?

This photograph was made in Amboseli, Kenya, during a morning safari. It was around 10 a.m., and the day had been mostly cloudy, with the light constantly changing. We had been watching this magnificent tusker, Tee Jay, as he slowly moved through the bush. For quite some time, the light was flat and there was little opportunity to make the image I had in mind. Then, almost unexpectedly, the clouds opened for just a few minutes, and sunlight fell beautifully on Tee Jay while the sky behind him remained dark and dramatic. In the seconds before I pressed the shutter, Tee Jay was walking directly towards us. He paused briefly, raised his head, and looked straight in our direction. I quickly composed the frame to include the surrounding acacia trees and the dramatic sky, waited for him to take that final step into the open patch of light, and pressed the shutter. The light disappeared almost as quickly as it had arrived. That brief window lasted only a few minutes, but it transformed an otherwise ordinary morning into a moment I will always remember.

Q Who first put a camera in your hands and pointed you toward the wild?

It was my friend and guru, Suresh Basavaraju, who first put a camera in my hands and taught me how to photograph birds in the wild. He was the one who initiated me into this world and showed me the ropes, and I will always be grateful for that.

THE BEGINNING


PHOTOGRAPH · R. ANANTHA MURTHY

IN THE FIELD Camouflage, a flask of coffee and a long wait — the unglamorous craft behind the frames.

Q You started out chasing birds. Which was the first that made you think, this is what I want to do?

The first bird that truly made me think, "This is what I want to do," was an Indian Roller sitting on an anthill at the outskirts of Bengaluru, at the Hesarghatta lake bed. That moment, seeing that beautiful bird in its natural habitat, sparked something in me that has never faded.

Q Who were the mentors who shaped how you see, and what did they pass on?

Oh yes! I was mentored by many esteemed photographers. The first was Suresh Basavaraju, who did the initial hand-holding from the beginning. Then came the late Vijay Cavale, who taught me the nuances of bird photography—like the perfect pose and the depiction of colors. And Dr. Bishan Monappa deeply impressed and influenced me with his way of framing the picture, showing the wide habitat as it is. Each of them passed on invaluable lessons that I still carry with me.

Q Wildlife photography is mostly waiting. What is it about the forest that keeps drawing you back?

For me, wildlife photography is as much about being present as it is about making an image. When I'm sitting quietly in the forest, camera ready, everything else seems to fade away. There is no rush, no noise—just the sounds of nature, the changing light, and the anticipation of what might appear. The waiting teaches patience and acceptance. You may spend hours without a photograph, but you never really feel that time is wasted. And when that unexpected moment finally comes, the reward is much more than a photograph. It is the feeling of having been there, completely present, when nature decided to reveal itself. That peace is what keeps drawing me back.



AS THE LENS WIDENED From birds to big cats — a cheetah surveys the open plains.

AT A GLANCE

BASED	Bengaluru, India
GURU	Suresh Basavaraju
MENTORS	The late Vijay Cavale · Dr. Bishan Monappa
BODIES	Nikon Z9 & Z8
GLASS	600mm f/4 · 180–600mm · 70–200mm · 24–120mm · 20mm f/1.8

THE DECISIVE MOMENT



THE HARDEST FRAME Black-collared Hawk, flying into the sun — the Pantanal.

Q What is the shot that tested your patience the most — and what kept you waiting for it?

This Black-collared Hawk was one of those images that demanded a lot of patience and persistence. I photographed it in the Pantanal, where the bird was flying directly towards the sun. The strong backlighting made it extremely challenging for the camera to acquire and maintain focus, especially with the bird approaching at speed. I knew, however, that if I could keep it in focus, the backlight would beautifully illuminate the wings and feathers. I stayed with it, anticipating its flight path and repeatedly trying to lock focus. Finally, everything came together—the focus held, the wings opened beautifully, and the sunlight created the rim-lit effect I had envisioned. The result made all those missed frames worthwhile.

Q Which bird photograph are you especially proud of, and how did it come together?

These are Greater violet-eared hummingbirds, shot in the Colombian highlands of the Andes mountains. Getting even one hummingbird perfectly sharp in flight is challenging; getting two birds in the same frame and both in focus is an entirely different proposition. The conditions made it even more difficult. The light was low, leaving very little room for error with shutter speed, focus, and exposure. I waited for the birds to cross the same plane and, when they finally came together, managed to capture this fleeting moment with both hummingbirds beautifully sharp, their iridescent turquoise and violet plumage standing out against the soft green background. What makes the image special to me is not just the beauty of the birds, but the precision required to capture two incredibly fast-moving subjects simultaneously in challenging light.



THE ONE HE IS PROUDEST OF Two Greater violet-eared hummingbirds, both in focus — the Colombian Andes.





CLOSER TO HOME, AND FAR AFIELD Great Hornbill over Rongtong, Mahananda Wildlife Sanctuary, West Bengal — one of his favourite birding grounds — and an African fish eagle dropping to the water.

THE VISION



TIM · AMBOSELI, NOVEMBER 2019

HEART RACING Tim, one of Amboseli's most iconic tuskers — so close that Anantha reached for a 20mm lens.

Q A memorable encounter with a big animal that got your heart racing?

One of my most memorable encounters was with Tim, one of Amboseli's most iconic elephants, photographed in November 2019. Encounters with an elephant of this stature are always humbling, but being this close to Tim, with his enormous tusks and sheer presence, was an experience that truly got my heart racing. As he walked towards me, dust rising around his feet and the late afternoon light catching his massive form, everything seemed to come together—the dramatic sky, the golden light, the dust, and those magnificent tusks. He was so close to me that I had to use my 20mm lens, which I rarely use for wildlife!

Q Of all the creatures you have not yet photographed, which calls to you loudest?

I am yet to shoot bald eagles! Next on my wish list are polar bears, brown bears, and the puma!

Q What do you most hope someone feels standing in front of one of your images?

After all these years in the field, what I hope most is that my images make people pause and feel a connection with the wild. I want them to experience, even for a moment, the emotion I felt when I stood behind the camera—the awe, excitement, vulnerability, and sheer beauty of being in the presence of a wild animal. Photography, for me, is not just about making a technically perfect image or documenting a species. It is about telling a story and creating an emotional connection. If someone looks at one of my photographs and feels humbled by nature, curious to know more, or develops a deeper respect for wildlife and the need to protect it, then I feel the photograph has truly succeeded.

> *"Ultimately, I want my images to leave people with a sense of wonder — and a desire to keep the wild wild.*

CONNECT WITH R. ANANTHA MURTHY

INSTAGRAM @murthyanantha **FACEBOOK** anantha.murthy.90

"I don't capture what I see; **I capture what I feel."**

HUMBLE PIXELS

RASHMI NAYAK S · PHOTOGRAPHER

She has never owned a professional camera. Every frame on "Humble Pixels" is caught on an ageing iPhone 13 — a quiet argument that seeing, not gear, is what makes a photograph.

AT A GLANCE

CAMERA	**An age-old iPhone 13**
HANDLE	**@humble_pixels_**
SUBJECTS	**Skies, nature, streets**
DREAM FRAME	**Wildlife in Masai Mara**



RASHMI NAYAK S

Q How did your journey into photography first begin?

As far as I can remember, my photography journey began way back when I was old enough to hold a camera in my hand. I've always loved taking pictures. There was something about capturing a moment and preserving the beauty I saw in it that fascinated me. I would photograph almost anything that caught my eye—anything and everything interesting, beautiful, unique, or simply aesthetic. What started as a little habit of capturing things I loved slowly grew into a genuine passion for photography.

Q Who or what drew you toward photographing the natural world in particular?

The natural world itself is what drew me towards photographing it. There is something so magical about the way nature simply exists in its true element. Nothing in the natural world tries to be something else—it exists exactly as it is, in its own natural essence. If you really pause and look around, there is so much beauty in this creation, often in the simplest of things. And I don't necessarily want to change it or make it something more. All I want to be is the beholder of that beauty—to notice it, appreciate it, and preserve a little piece of what I felt through my photographs. They say "beauty lies in the heart of the beholder", and I couldn't agree more.

WHAT SHE FEELS



RAMOJI FILM CITY Hyderabad — the frame she feels most is her own.

Q You chose this photograph as the one that feels unmistakably yours. What is it about this image?

Every picture I take feels very close to my heart, so choosing just one is difficult. But I selected this particular photograph on an emotional note. I captured it at Ramoji Film City in Hyderabad. When I took the picture, I remember knowing that there was something artistic and beautiful about it. But I feel much more connected to it today than I did back then. The reason is motherhood. I am now a mother to a five-month-old son, and looking at this photograph today speaks to me in a completely different way. Experiences change the way we see things, and motherhood has given this image a meaning that I could not have understood when I first captured it. I think that is what makes it unmistakably mine, not just the way I saw and captured the moment, but the emotions and memories I have attached to it over time. What was once simply a beautiful frame has now become something that speaks to my heart in a much deeper way.

Q Your handle is "Humble Pixels" — is there a story or a feeling behind that name?

Absolutely! When I was thinking of a suitable name for my handle, I knew I wanted to have something with "pixels" in it because it naturally connects to photography. But I also wanted the name to carry a little more meaning and reflect what I intended my page to be. That's how "Humble Pixels" came about. The word "humble" adds a personality to the name because my page isn't about any particular niche. It's simply about the things I find beautiful, interesting, or worth capturing. The fact that I don't yet own a professional camera and still capture my photographs through my age-old iPhone 13 somehow makes the name even more meaningful to me. It represents where I am in my journey and my desire to simply share with the world what I see and, more importantly, what I feel. And I think that is what "Humble Pixels" truly stands for—authenticity, simplicity, and being completely unpretentious about the art I love.

Q Do you remember your first camera, or the first scene that made you want to photograph it?

Like I mentioned, I don't actually own a camera yet. My first experience with one was with a borrowed camera that I took along with me to an adventure camp during my high school days. Honestly, I don't remember the exact first scene I photographed. But knowing myself, I'm quite sure it must have been something simple and beautiful—a sunset from my terrace, the pretty colours of the sky, an accidental rainbow, a colourful flower, the happy face of a child, or perhaps even my neighbour's cat. Looking back, I think that says a lot about how I've always seen photography. I've never really needed a grand or extraordinary scene to reach for a camera. If something catches my eye or makes me feel something, I instinctively want to capture it and hold on to that moment.

FRAMES ALONG THE WAY

SCAN TO WATCH

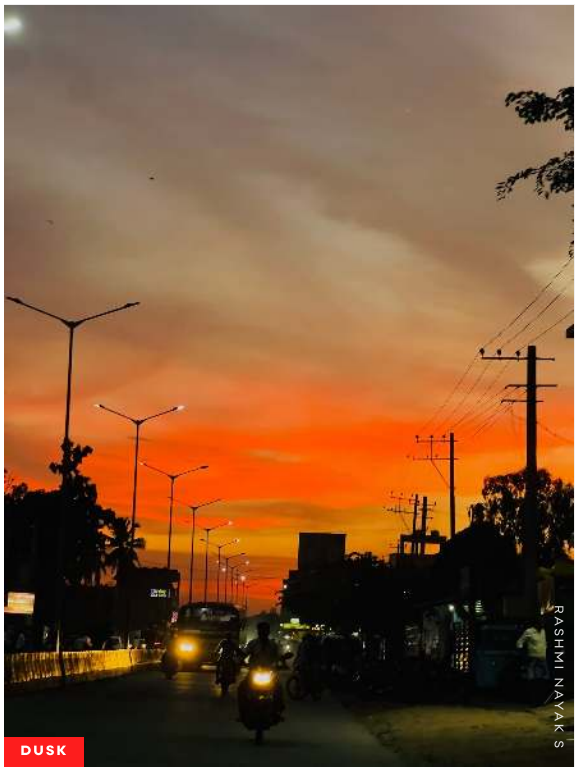
Kashmir · on her phone

Q One shot from a trip has stayed with you. What made this place so memorable?

So many factors make this place so memorable to me. One thing is that it's my dream destination—Kashmir. A true heaven on earth. This is also the first holiday I went on with my husband. The beautiful landscapes of this place, the adventurous journey and the lovely companionship made it so beautiful and most memorable.



HARD-WON



DUSK

Q This photograph was hard-won. What did it take to finally get this shot?

Patience—to wait, and to seek the perfect alignment of the setting sun to be captured between the trees in the frame.

Q Which piece of gear could you never head out into nature without?

Well, most of my photos—or even all of them—are shot on my phone. So the answer is phone. Even if I head out without one, I am sure every photographer captures through their eyes and stores it in their hearts, which apparently never runs out of storage.

Q What pulled you to this moment?

The city street, slowly falling into the dusk.

Q Is there a place, creature, or moment in nature you still dream of photographing one day?

Indeed. I want to dip my feet into the wild. I want to capture the wildlife in Masai Mara.

CONNECT WITH RASHMI NAYAK S

INSTAGRAM @humble_pixels_

DEEPAK BEATZ

MUSIC PRODUCTION | BEATZ RECORDS

POEMS INTO BEATS

DEEPAK BEATZ

MUSIC PRODUCER & COMPOSER · @BEATZ_RECORDS_

He wrote poetry before he wrote songs. Then his dad bought a computer, one poem became a track, and a school club heard it sung back to him. On Kuthu and deep house, on Anirudh, and on why everything he builds runs toward the drop.

AT A GLANCE

STARTED WITH	**Poetry, during school**
FIRST SONG	**"I'm There for You" — a reworked poem**
FIRST TRACK	**"Rise Up", for the club Englathon**
EARLY INFLUENCE	**Anirudh Ravichander**
RIG	**FL Studio · Komplete Kontrol · Maschine**
NEXT	**"Draft Mixtapes", an English album**

Q How did you first fall into making music — was there a moment or a song that made you think 'I want to be the one building this'?

I actually started with poetry before I ever thought about making music. During my school days, I used to write a lot of poetry, and when my dad bought me my first computer, I started experimenting with making music on it. That's when I thought, "Why not turn one of my poems into a song?"

I took one of my poems, "I'm There for You," and reworked it into a complete song with an acoustic-style arrangement. That experience was probably the moment I realized I didn't just want to write words — I wanted to build the whole world around them through music. From there, I became really interested in songwriting, arranging, and the process of turning an idea into an actual song.

Q Do you remember the very first beat or track you ever made? Tell us the story of it, even if it was rough.

I remember one of the first tracks I made during my school days called "Rise Up." I wrote it for a school club called Englathon, and it ended up becoming much more than just a song.

I got the opportunity to perform it from class to class, and later I performed it at our school annual day as well. What really stayed with me was seeing people appreciate the song and actually sing along while I performed it. For someone who was still figuring out music and production, that feeling was incredible.

That experience made me realize that music isn't just about creating something you like — there's something really special about creating something that other people can connect with, remember, and sing back to you. "Rise Up" was one of the moments that made me want to keep making music.

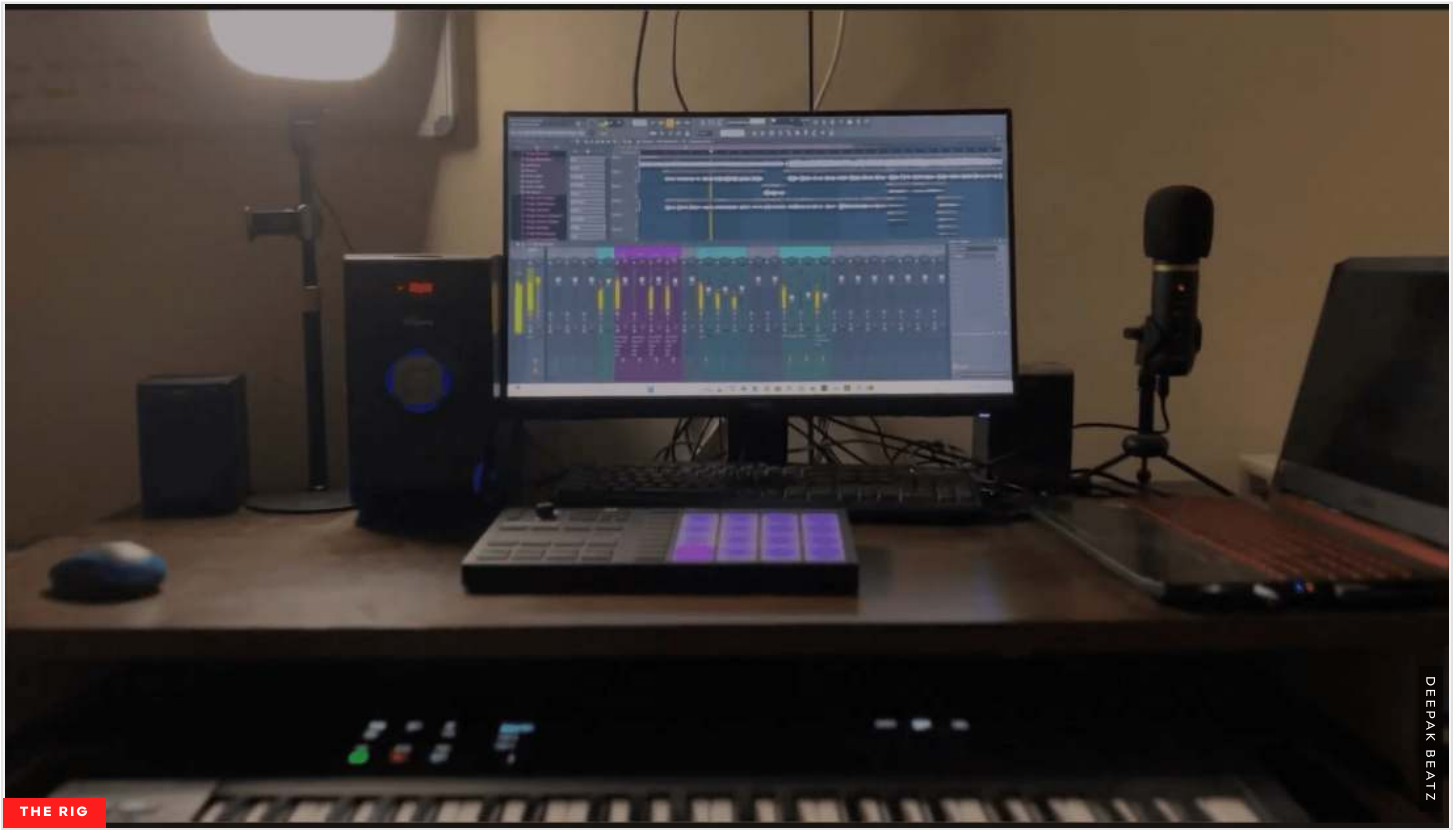
INSIDE THE ROOM

Q Who or what shaped your sound early on — a composer, an artist, a mentor, or just a genre you couldn't stop listening to?

Anirudh Ravichander was definitely one of the biggest influences on me growing up. I used to listen to his music constantly, and I've sung along to and covered so many of his songs — Why This Kolaveri Di, Kannazhaga, Kanave Kanave, and many more.

What I loved about his music was the energy, emotion, and the way he could move effortlessly between different styles while still having his own identity. His songs made me want to sing, experiment, and eventually understand how the music itself was being built.

He continues to be a huge inspiration for me even today. Looking back, I think a lot of my early interest in music came from simply listening to his songs and wanting to create that same feeling for someone else.



THE SETUP FL Studio on the screen, Maschine for drums and grooves, the Komplete Kontrol keyboard underneath — and the work-in-progress headed for "Draft Mixtapes."

Q Walk us through what we're seeing in your setup — what's your go-to tool and why can't you work without it?

My main setup revolves around FL Studio, along with my Komplete Kontrol keyboard and Maschine drum machine.

FL Studio is where I build and shape most of my ideas, while the Komplete Kontrol gives me a more hands-on feel when playing melodies and chords. Maschine is my go-to for drums and grooves. I love having that combination because it lets me move quickly from an idea in my head to something I can actually hear and feel.

Q Where is this work-in-progress headed — what's still missing before you'd call it done?

This one is headed towards my upcoming English album, "Draft Mixtapes." It's a love song built around a deep-house sound, with a catchy drop that gives it a different energy from a typical love track.

The core of the song is already in place, and I'm currently fine-tuning the production, sounds, and arrangement to make sure everything flows naturally. I want the final version to feel both emotional and danceable, while keeping that signature energy in the drop. It's still a work in progress, but I'm really excited about where it's heading.

THE SONG BEING BORN

Q How did that moment you just shared come together — was it planned or did it happen by accident?

The moment in "Dhooram Sella Parakkirom" actually came together quite naturally, even though the song itself was carefully planned. The concept was visualized and directed by Prasanna K. Venkat, while I wrote and composed the song. Naresh Madhur and Sriram Muralidharan brought their voices to it.

The video captures a studio session where we were just about to work on and record the hook of the song. I was explaining to Naresh and Sriram how I imagined the hook, the emotion behind the words, and the overall feel I wanted them to bring into the performance.

The song is a beautiful love song, but the idea behind it is a little different. We use the metaphor of travelling in a car to represent a relationship — two people going on a journey together, with the road becoming a metaphor for their love and everything they experience along the way.

What I love about that particular moment is that you can see the song coming to life in real time. Naresh brought in these beautiful classical alaaps, adding a sense of depth and emotion, while Sriram's melodious voice brought a softer, intimate quality to the song. Their contrasting vocal textures worked beautifully together.

So while the song was planned, that particular moment wasn't really staged. It was a genuine snapshot of the creative process — me explaining the emotion and direction, the singers interpreting it in their own way, and the song slowly finding its final character in the studio. That's what makes the moment special to me: you're not just seeing the finished song, you're seeing the song being born.

SCAN TO WATCH

The studio session for "Dhooram Sella Parakkirom" — the hook being worked out on the spot.

THE CREDITS

SONG	**Dhooram Sella Parakkirom**
CONCEPT	**Prasanna K. Venkat**
WRITTEN & COMPOSED	**Deepak Beatz**
VOICES	**Naresh Madhur, Sriram Muralidharan**

> *"You're not just seeing the finished song, you're seeing the song being born.*

Q You move across English indie, Tamil indie, Afro-pop and folk — how do you decide which world a new idea belongs to?

I don't really decide beforehand which genre an idea belongs to. I usually just go with my gut and let the idea itself tell me where it wants to go.

My friends and listeners come from different places and speak different languages, so I'm quite comfortable experimenting across English, Tamil, Hindi, Afro-pop, and folk. Sometimes a melody or a beat comes to me and I immediately feel whether it should become an English song or a Tamil one.

If I'm working on a folk-influenced or high-energy beat, I naturally lean towards Tamil because I'm a huge fan of Kuthu, which has such a raw, energetic local folk character. For more pop-oriented ideas, I often find myself leaning towards Tamil or Hindi. And if the vibe feels more contemporary or indie, English comes naturally.

For me, it's less about putting music into a particular box and more about finding the language and sound that best brings the idea to life.

Q Tell us about a track you're genuinely proud of — what's the story behind it?

"Aathi Un Loveah Vendam" was my first attempt at a Tamil Kuthu song, so it was quite different from my usual style. I wanted to experiment with the genre while telling a fun, energetic love-failure story.

I wrote and produced the track and collaborated with Rohitmanoj and Dacalty. We also made it into a music video directed by Gokulnath Muthaiyan, which was later featured by Behindwoods.

It was a completely new experience for me, and I think stepping outside my comfort zone is what made the song special.

VOICES & WHAT'S NEXT

Q What about a beat or instrumental that feels the most 'you' — what makes it unmistakably yours?

"Joker's Scream" is unmistakably me because I've always been drawn to electronic and dubstep-inspired sounds. I love experimenting with heavy beats, textures, and high-energy drops, and this track captures that side of me really well.

For me, the energy and the drop are the heart of the piece — it's the kind of sound I genuinely enjoy creating and listening to.

Q You compose for other artists and run your own label @beatz_records_ — what do you love about building something for someone else's voice versus your own?

I actually love both sides of it, but they give me very different creative experiences.

When I'm composing for another artist, I have to step outside my own voice and think about what suits them — their vocal style, personality, strengths, and the emotion they naturally bring to a song. There's something really satisfying about creating a piece and then hearing another artist take it somewhere I may not have imagined.

Q What's the sound or project you most want to make next — the one you haven't quite pulled off yet?

The next project I'm really excited about is an upcoming song that has a strong story behind it. Prasanna K. Venkat has scripted the story for this one, and we're building the song around that narrative rather than treating it as just a standalone track.

Musically, we're working on a beautiful melody with classical elements woven into it. I'm really looking forward to pushing myself with this one because I want the music to carry the emotion of the story and make the listener feel like they're part of that world.

It's still a work in progress, but this is definitely one of those projects where I'm trying to create something a little different from what I've done before.



WHERE IT STARTED A 2019 recording session — the first one he ever posted.

THE CATALOGUE

I'M THERE FOR YOU
A school poem reworked into his first song

RISE UP
First track, for the school club Englathon

AATHI UN LOVEAH VENDAM
Tamil Kuthu, with Rohitmanoj and Dacalty

JOKER'S SCREAM
Dubstep-leaning, built on the drop

DHOORAM SELLA PARAKKIROM
A car journey as a metaphor for a relationship

DRAFT MIXTAPES
Upcoming English album

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SLICE OF LIFE









IN CONVERSATION · MULTI-GENRE PHOTOGRAPHY

Every Slice of Life

SOUMYARANJAN MAHARANA · STREET · FASHION · WILDLIFE · WEDDING

He began shooting and editing everything on a mobile phone — today he moves freely between street, fashion, wildlife and wedding frames, chasing the real moments and emotions in every slice of life.

Q Tell us about how your journey in photography began.

My journey in photography began in childhood. I have always loved painting, travelling, exploring villages, and discovering the stories of people and places around me. Movies and series also inspired me to understand the power of visual storytelling. I started creating videos, taking photographs, and editing everything on my mobile phone. After completing my 10th grade, I bought my first Nikon COOLPIX camera. In 2019, my father brought me a Nikon D7500, and that became a turning point in my journey. Photography gradually became more than a hobby—it became my passion.

Q When did you first feel a strong connection to it?

Right after completing my intermediate studies, when I gained the time and perspective to explore visual storytelling and document the world around me.

ON WORKING ACROSS GENRES

"Every genre captures a unique slice of life."

Classic cinema, nostalgic village life, and films like 3 Idiots keep him curious to experiment across street, fashion, wildlife and weddings.



SOUMYARANJAN MAHARANA On the power of visual storytelling.

AT A GLANCE

FIELDS	Street · Fashion · Wildlife · Wedding
FIRST CAMERA	Nikon COOLPIX
TURNING POINT	Nikon D7500 (2019)
INSPIRED BY	Classic cinema · village life · *3 Idiots*

STREET · THE WEIGHT OF A DAY

Q What does your best street photography work look like, and what story does it tell?

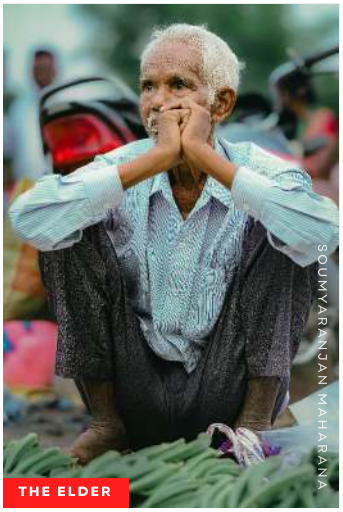
This photo series captures the unfiltered essence of rural India, highlighting both the quiet beauty of everyday life and the harsh realities faced by the elderly. It tells the story of an older man striving tirelessly for his family's livelihood—from enduring the rain on country roads to patiently sitting in local markets—reflecting the deep resilience, sacrifice, and dignity embedded in the struggle for survival.



RURAL INDIA The quiet beauty of everyday life on the country road.







THE SERIES Enduring the rain on country roads, waiting in local markets — resilience, sacrifice and dignity.

FASHION · LIGHT & FLARE

Q Which fashion photograph best showcases your perspective, and what makes it stand out?

What stands out is the creative use of warm foreground lens flare and soft bokeh, which adds a dreamy, modern aesthetic to a classic saree look. The clean, minimal backdrop keeps the focus entirely on the subject, effortlessly blending traditional styling with a contemporary photographic feel.









CLASSIC SAREE, MODERN FEEL Warm lens flare and soft bokeh over a clean, minimal backdrop.

WILDLIFE · THE UNTAMED SPIRIT

Q Can you share a wildlife photograph you're most proud of, and the story behind it?

While visiting a zoo, I set out to capture raw, authentic moments of these magnificent animals by focusing on tight compositions, natural lighting, and patient timing. By carefully framing out background barriers and focusing on raw expressions—like the roar of a tiger or the piercing gaze of a leopard in the rain—I aimed to honor their untamed spirit and tell a compelling story within a managed environment.



TIGHT FRAMING Raw expression within a managed environment.





NATURAL LIGHT, PATIENT TIMING Honoring their untamed spirit.

WEDDING & EDITORIAL · EYES AS THE ANCHOR

Q What makes a wedding or editorial shot truly successful in your eyes?

Focus sharply on the subject's gaze to convey depth and vulnerability, letting catchlights reveal real emotion rather than posed reactions. Use controlled, directional light to sculpt the face, creating soft shadows that draw attention to eye detail. Preserve deep, velvet shadows while enhancing warm jewel tones—crimson, gold, deep amber—for a cinematic, painterly atmosphere.









VELVET SHADOWS, JEWEL TONES Crimson, gold and deep amber for a painterly atmosphere.

IN THE EDIT · MOOD & SHADOW

Q How do you approach post-processing, and what decisions go into your edits?

Overall exposure is lowered and shadows deepened to eliminate harsh highlights and create an intimate, low-key ambiance. Deep greens in the canopy are desaturated and shifted toward dark, earthy tones, while warm tones—gold, red, yellow attire—are isolated and enhanced for vivid contrast. Radial masks subtly brighten the subjects' faces and eyes, guiding the viewer's focal point against a dark backdrop. For close-up portraiture, converting to monochrome removes colour distractions, maximizing texture in the gaze.



THE GRADE Lowered exposure, isolated warm tones, dodge & burn on the eyes, monochrome for close-ups.

ON LOCATION · BEHIND THE SCENES

Q How has your experience and style grown over the years?

Over the years, my work has evolved from capturing basic, candid snapshots to purposefully composing stories with a focus on lighting, mood, and depth. As my technical understanding grew, my style became more deliberate, allowing me to shift from simply taking photos to crafting meaningful visual narratives.

Q What does a behind-the-scenes moment reveal about your workflow?

It shows my hands-on approach to capturing raw, immersive details. I focus heavily on getting precise camera angles and framing on location, ensuring the texture and story of the subject are captured authentically.



HANDS-ON Precise angles and framing, in the field.

"My aim is to visualize stories through photographs—images that connect people with real moments, emotions, and stories."

SOUMYARANJAN MAHARANA

CONNECT WITH SOUMYARANJAN MAHARANA

INSTAGRAM @sawmyaranjan

"I paint when words and language fail to express **my inner life."**

WHEN WORDS FAIL

SREEJATA ROY · PAINTER, PHOTOGRAPHER, WRITER

From crayons in a nursery-school scrapbook to a prize-winning poem on the Hooghly, and paintings that arrived as visions at twenty-eight — a Kolkata life made across three mediums, and the everyday urgency that keeps it moving.

AT A GLANCE

BASED	**Kolkata**
MEDIUMS	**Painting · Photography · Writing**
BEGAN PAINTING	**At twenty-eight, from visions**
EARLY WIN	**Prize poem on the Hooghly**
HANDLE	**@avaray101**



KOLKATA

THE THREE LOVES

Q Of your three loves — painting, photography and writing — which one called to you first, and what did that very beginning look like?

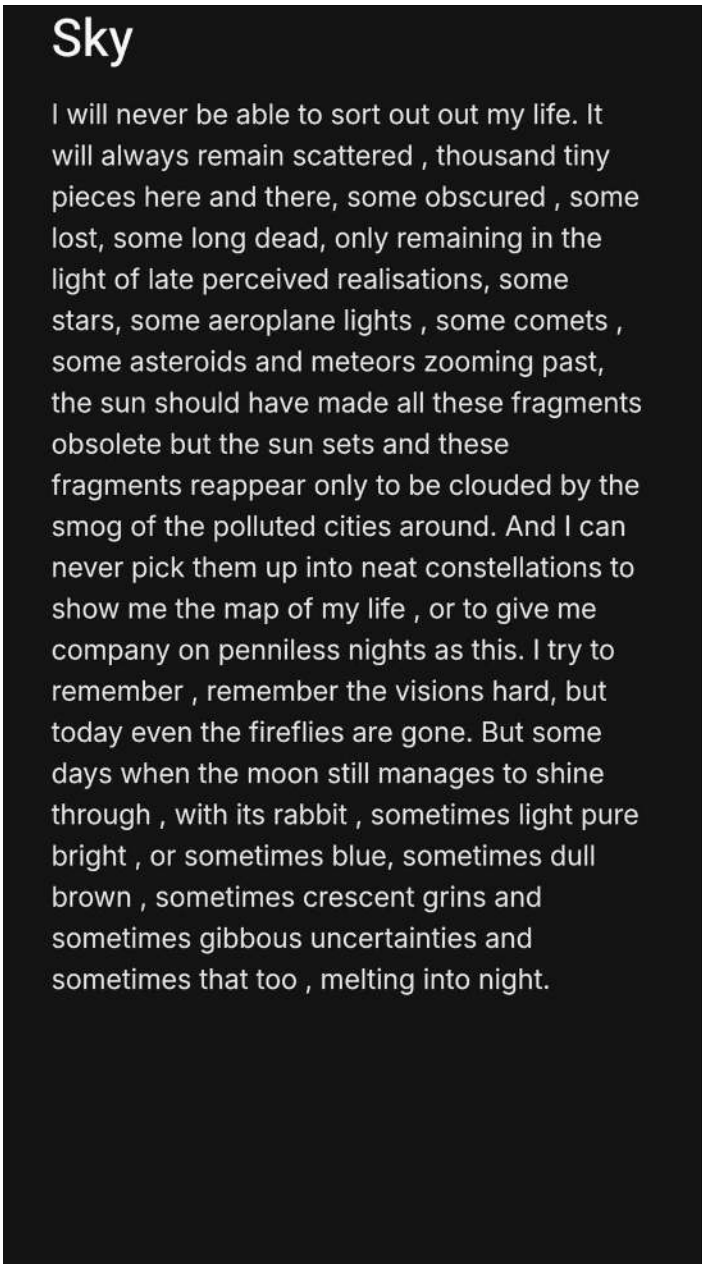
Drawing with crayons way back in nursery school is what called to me first. Letters and alphabets came later. Writing came as a calling when I first started journaling at the age of 12, and when my school English teacher, who also conducted our value education classes, prompted us to write a poem on being thankful to God along with an illustration of what God means to us personally. I recall that when I had written the poem and illustrated it in my school scrapbook, my teacher could barely believe that I had written it myself. I have been writing ever since, and I owe my love for English literature to her.

Q You see art, photography and writing as one blend rather than three separate practices. When did they first start to fold into each other for you?

Additionally, there were classmates and batchmates who used to love what I wrote. One of them was a The Telegraph in Schools reporter, and she insisted that I submit a poem for a poetry writing contest. The poem was on river Hooghly. It had won the contest and was published on the first page of the paper. Another one had inspired me to start journaling as a method of recording my everyday life. Thereafter I went on to publish poems and articles in my school magazine and my college magazine, and I have never not written since then. Coming into the world of formal publishing, however, was a different chapter. Painting called me similarly. First in school, where I was a messy painter. My mother had put me in an art school and I grew to love working and playing around with colours, but I had to quit it for the sake of "studies". I resumed drawing again in college but could not paint anything original. It was much later, when I was 28, that I found myself having visions and dreams that compelled me to try and put them on paper. And I have not stopped painting or making art since then. Photography came in much later, only after I had my first tab back in my university days.

Q Tell us about a page or an excerpt of your writing that has stayed with you.

This is an old excerpt that I had written, hoping to develop it into a poem or a prose-poem or a painting. But that never happened. It was written as a personal reflection or a journal entry of sorts and I just happened to keep it saved and discover it again later. Reading it gives me a strange kind of peace. So I keep it saved.



Sky

I will never be able to sort out out my life. It will always remain scattered , thousand tiny pieces here and there, some obscured , some lost, some long dead, only remaining in the light of late perceived realisations, some stars, some aeroplane lights , some comets , some asteroids and meteors zooming past, the sun should have made all these fragments obsolete but the sun sets and these fragments reappear only to be clouded by the smog of the polluted cities around. And I can never pick them up into neat constellations to show me the map of my life , or to give me company on penniless nights as this. I try to remember , remember the visions hard, but today even the fireflies are gone. But some days when the moon still manages to shine through , with its rabbit , sometimes light pure bright , or sometimes blue, sometimes dull brown , sometimes crescent grins and sometimes gibbous uncertainties and sometimes that too , melting into night.

THE EXCERPT "Sky" — an old piece she kept saved and rediscovered; a journal entry she hoped might one day become a poem or a painting.

THE PAINTINGS



SREEJATA ROY

Q Which painting are you especially proud of?

The original is no longer with me as I had gifted it to a co-worker who had always been less of a senior colleague to me, and more of a sister who always stood by me in times of personal crisis and professional uncertainty. This was inspired by a pullover I had bought for myself years ago and by my love for multicoloured hibiscuses which blossoms at my present workplace as well as on our terrace. And most of the times the works turn out to be too untidy, but this, amongst a few others, was a piece that was not so.

THE PAINTING The hibiscus piece — inspired by a favourite pullover and the multicoloured hibiscuses that blossom on her terrace; later gifted to a colleague who stood by her like a sister.



WORK IN PROGRESS A vision of the Mother — the Warrior Goddess Durga, still finding her colours.

Q What's on your table right now as a work-in-progress?

It's becoming a vision of the Mother -Warrior Goddess of Durga. I am working on the ways to make the picture more evocative with the usage of colours.



FOUND A painting at the Greek Orthodox Church near Kalighat metro — photographed with curiosity and awe at another artist's skill.

Q What have you made in the last few days?

This was a painting I found at the Greek Orthodox Church near Kalighat metro station. I felt curious and awed while editing this picture. Curious as I felt like learning about the subject of the painting accurately. And awed by the skill and imagination of the artist who painted it.

KOLKATA & THE EVERY DAY

Q Is there a person, a place, or even a book that shaped the way you see and make things? Kolkata itself seems to run quietly through so much of your work.

All the experiences I have ever had in my life, all the books that I have ever read, my teachers, both from school to higher education, all the places I have travelled to — everything informs what I create in terms of writing and photography and painting. But there is one comic book series that inspired me a lot, that is Herge's Tintin. And another that I had gotten for free from Kolkata Book fair that deeply influenced me, that is the Bible. Much later it were graphic novels that I had come across during covid years.

Q You create something almost every single day. Where do you draw that steadiness from?

The steadiness comes from the fact that I have to live everyday as it comes fully before the penultimate day of my life arrives predictably or all of a sudden. I capture on the go, I sketch whenever I can and I edit pictures on my way back home from work. It's the urgency of everyday life that makes me want to create every day in order make the everyday manageable and tolerable.



THE CITY The tower '42' rising behind St Paul's Cathedral, near Nandan — a frame of the city caught between tradition and modernity.

Q What's one of your favourite photographs from your walks around Kolkata?

I had just wandered into the complex of Nandan at Rabindra Sadan and I found this site. It's the towering building, 42 and the St Paul's Cathedral. I took this shot as the 42 did not exist even a few years back. But now both these architectural creations from two different ages define how the city is caught between tradition and modernity.



FROM THE ROAD Baranti, Purulia — the serenity of a place otherwise marked by extreme poverty.

Q What work came out of your travels?

Baranti, Purulia. The serenity of the place which is otherwise affected by extreme poverty.

WHAT THEY WALK AWAY WITH

"Fulfilled, curious."

SREEJATA ROY

CONNECT WITH SREEJATA ROY

INSTAGRAM @avaray101

IN CONVERSATION · IPHONE PHOTOGRAPHY

Sun in a Bottle

RAJAT RANJAN PRIYADARSHI · IPHONE PHOTOGRAPHER · INDIA

For Rajat Ranjan Priyadarshi, a phone in the hand became a way of seeing — changing skies, quiet landscapes and fleeting light, each frame chasing not the thing in front of him but the feeling of the moment it held.



Q To start at the beginning — what first made you pick up your iPhone and start photographing the world around you?

It actually began with something very simple—the urge to preserve moments that caught my eye. I started using my iPhone to photograph things I found beautiful in everyday life: changing skies, quiet landscapes, reflections, fleeting light, and little moments that might otherwise go unnoticed. But somewhere along the way, photography became more than just taking pictures. It changed the way I look at the world. I began paying attention to light, colours, textures, perspective, and the emotions hidden in ordinary scenes. My iPhone was simply the tool; curiosity was what kept me going. What started as a casual hobby gradually became a way of expressing how I see and feel the world. Every photograph became less about simply capturing what was in front of me and more about capturing the feeling of that moment.

Q Was there one early photo, or one moment, where you looked at what you'd just captured and thought, 'this is what I want to do'?

I wouldn't say there was one single photograph that changed everything. It was more of a gradual realization. There were moments when I looked back at a photograph I had taken and felt that I had captured something beyond what my eyes had seen—a particular mood, a quiet emotion, or a fleeting moment of light. That feeling stayed with me. I realized I wasn't just interested in taking photographs; I was interested in telling stories through them. That was the moment photography started feeling less like a hobby and more like something I genuinely wanted to pursue.

AT A GLANCE

SHOOTS ON	**An iPhone — "simply the tool"**
DRAWN TO	**Skies, light, reflections & quiet landscapes**
FARTHEST RIDE	**600 km to Deomali, Odisha's highest peak**

LIGHT & PATIENCE

Q Your bio says 'every click is a piece of someone's forever.' Where did that belief come from for you?

That belief comes from how I see photography—not simply as capturing an image, but as preserving a moment that can never happen in exactly the same way again. A photograph can hold a memory, an emotion, a place, or even a person at a particular point in their life. The moment we capture may last only a second, but the photograph can remain with someone for years. That's why I believe every click becomes a small piece of someone's forever. For me, photography is ultimately about giving fleeting moments a chance to live on.

Q What's the story behind that frame — where were you, and what pulled you to shoot it?

That frame came after a lot of frustration. I went out with a specific idea—to capture the sun in an unusual way—and took nearly a hundred photos, but nothing felt right. As dusk approached, I remembered a quote about looking closer at what's already around you. That's when I noticed a small leaf near a rock. I quickly placed it on the rock and adjusted it until the setting sun aligned perfectly behind it. The magic truly came alive during editing. After all those failed attempts, I realized—sometimes the frame you're searching for isn't in front of you; you find it only when you keep looking. Patience really does pay off.



THE FRAME HE WAITED FOR



THE MOON & VENUS

Q You clearly love the night sky — what's it like waiting for and catching a moment like the Moon and Venus together?

For me, photographing the night sky is about patience, timing, and composition. Capturing the Moon and Venus together requires waiting for the right alignment and light, while carefully considering the surroundings. When everything comes together in a single frame, the patience behind the shot makes the moment truly rewarding.

> *Every click becomes a small piece of someone's forever.*
>
> — RAJAT RANJAN PRIYADARSHI

THE LONG ROAD

Q Walk us through the journey to that spot — how far did you go, and what greeted you when you finally arrived?

I rode nearly 600 km to reach Deomali, Odisha's highest peak, drawn by the possibility of witnessing its landscape at first and last light. The journey was demanding, but arriving at the summit brought an entirely different sense of anticipation. As the sun moved across the horizon, the mountains, mist, and sky gradually transformed—offering fleeting compositions that could not be recreated. For me, the photograph was not simply about reaching a destination; it was about the patience, perspective, and willingness to travel for a moment that exists only for a few minutes.



600 KM · THE RIDE TO DEOMALI

Q Your work has such a distinct moody, atmospheric feel — how much of that happens in the moment, and how much comes later in editing?

I'd say the mood begins in the field and is refined in post-processing. I usually look for naturally atmospheric conditions—soft light, mist, shadows, reflections, and subtle tones—and try to capture the feeling of the scene as authentically as possible in-camera. In editing, I focus on enhancing what was already there rather than creating a mood that didn't exist. For me, post-processing is less about changing the photograph and more about bringing out the atmosphere I experienced when I pressed the shutter.

THE RIDE

DISTANCE	Nearly 600 km, one way
DESTINATION	Deomali — Odisha's highest peak
CHASING	First and last light at the summit



AT THE SUMMIT Mist, mountains and a sky that changed by the minute.

THE EVERYDAY SKY

Q What made that one difficult, and how did you finally land it?

The hardest part was managing hand-shake and extreme perspective alignment without a tripod. When you're trying to frame a fast-moving sunset dead-center inside the microscopic threads of a plastic bottle using just an iPhone, the tiniest millimeter of movement throws the whole shot off. I finally nailed it by locking my elbows to stabilize, tapping the screen to manually lock the exposure so the sun's fiery glow wouldn't blow out, and relying on precise timing and burst mode to capture that exact fraction of a second when everything aligned.

Q What drew you to capture this one?

I'm someone who constantly observes the clouds and the sky every single day, watching how their colors and moods shift constantly—much like our own human mood swings. Because of that deep connection, I feel compelled to capture every moment, whether it's a calm, beautiful collection of clouds or a heavy, dramatic one, framing them alongside whatever landscape or structure is available to tell that emotional story.



SUN IN A BOTTLE



THE EVERYDAY SKY







Q When someone stops to really look at one of your photographs, what's the one feeling you hope stays with them?

As photographers, we often see much more in a frame than what the photograph can immediately reveal. Not everyone may see what I saw or understand what I was trying to convey, and I think that's part of the beauty of photography. I hope my images give people enough to pause, interpret, and find their own meaning—while perhaps catching a glimpse of the feeling and intention that existed behind the frame.

IN CLOSING

"I hope my images give people enough to pause, interpret, and find their own meaning."

RAJAT RANJAN PRIYADARSHI

CONNECT WITH RAJAT

INSTAGRAM @sailens1111

IN CONVERSATION · TRAVEL

To the Unreachable

DR. SATYABRATA MAITI · TRAVELOGUE WRITER & PHOTOGRAPHER

A travelogue writer and photographer drawn to the hard-to-reach — ancient temples in the lap of undisturbed nature, Himalayan routes closed by landslide and rain. He writes each journey down to take people to places many cannot reach, for want of time, money, or health.



PHOTOGRAPH · SATYABRATA MAITI





THE SERIES From snow line to sanctum — first light on the high range, an ancient temple, and a meadow reached on foot.

Q You call your travelogues an invitation to enjoy journeys into places that are hard to reach. What first made you want to write your travels down, rather than simply take them?

I started writing travelogues with the thought of taking people to places that many cannot visit due to lack of time, money, or health issues, even though they deeply desire to see such locations. I mostly add photographs rather than providing detailed descriptions of the sites, since nowadays all that information is available online in great detail.

Q Was there one early journey that quietly turned you from a traveller into someone who had to write it all down? Take us there.

It would be difficult to pinpoint an exact moment, as I have been passionate about photography since my school days, starting with a Kodak box camera. However, my visit to Kailash Mansarovar was the trip that internally encouraged me to share my travels in detail.

AT A GLANCE

DISCIPLINE	Travelogue writer & photographer
BEGAN	School days — a Kodak box camera
TURNING POINT	Kailash Mansarovar
INFLUENCE	Tagore — 'Letters from Europe & Russia'
CAMERA	Nikon · 18–300mm lens
ALWAYS PACKS	Two battery sets · a stand

THE PULL OF THE UNREACHABLE



THE VALLEY OF FLOWERS ROUTE The range that has never let him go — and keeps drawing him back.

Q Your journeys keep returning to ancient temples resting in the lap of undisturbed nature. What pulls you toward those quiet, hard-to-reach corners rather than easier destinations?

I have been curious by nature since childhood. Moreover, I find immense satisfaction in reaching hard-to-reach places. I always take on challenges to reach difficult destinations, and that drive is what pulls me toward those quiet, undisturbed corners of the world.



THE WRITER, WALKING Dr. Satyabrata Maiti on the trail — camera, two battery sets and a stand in the bag.

Q What about this place has refused to leave you?

The magnificent mountains of the Himalayas, seen from the Valley of Flowers route, have never left me. The sheer beauty and grandeur of those peaks remain etched in my memory, always drawing me back to that experience.



ETCHED IN MEMORY The photograph that stayed with him long after the walk home.

WHERE THE ROADS CLOSE

Q What was happening on this journey that made the words come easily?

It was a trip to Tungnath and Deoria Tal. On our arrival in Rishikesh, we were informed that roads were closed due to heavy rain warnings. Despite that, we managed to reach our destinations, experiencing many thrills on the road, such as landslides and other challenges. These experiences made the words flow naturally.



HEAVY-RAIN COUNTRY The season the roads were warned shut — they pushed on anyway.

Q What did reaching this place ask of you?

It was a Rudranath trip, one of the Pancha Kedar in Uttarakhand. It is the toughest trek in the Pancha Kedar circuit, demanding immense physical and mental strength to complete.



DESPITE THE WARNINGS On the trail to the high temples — thrills, landslides, and the words that came easily.



AFTER THE RAINS A mountain stream in spate on the way up.



THE HARD WAY UP Rudranath — the toughest trek of the Pancha Kedar circuit, reached on foot.

THE PEOPLE & THE STONE

Q Who is this, and what did that encounter add to your journey?

On my trek, I met school-going children on the way. I also encountered a lady carrying fodder for her cattle, visited a local school, and talked with local teenagers. These encounters added a rich, human dimension to my journey, reminding me of the vibrant life that thrives in these remote areas.



CARRYING FODDER A woman met on the way — cattle to feed in the valley below.



THE LOCAL SCHOOL

ALONG THE PATH A village classroom, and children met on the way up.

Q Which journey is still waiting on your list — the one you haven't written yet but can't stop imagining?

I am planning a visit to Harsil and Niti village next October. This journey is still on my list, and I can't stop imagining the experiences and stories it will bring.



BADAMI Figures carved in stone.

Q What keeps calling you back to this place?

The ancient sculptures in Badami and the Himalayas, where I find nature and magnificent mountains, keep calling me back. The blend of history and natural beauty is irresistible, and I find myself drawn to these places time and again.



HISTORY AND NATURAL BEAUTY, SIDE BY SIDE The relief that keeps drawing him back to Badami.

> *"I started writing travelogues with the thought of taking people to places that many cannot visit due to lack of time, money, or health issues, even though they deeply desire to see such locations."*
>
> **DR. SATYABRATA MAITI · TO THE UNREACHABLE**

CONNECT WITH DR. SATYABRATA MAITI

INSTAGRAM FACEBOOK 500PX

IN THE FIELD · WILDLIFE PHOTOGRAPHY

Fraction of a Second

SUDIP ROY · WILDLIFE PHOTOGRAPHER

For Sudip Roy, wildlife photography was never about the animals alone — it was about being present for moments that can never be recreated. A conversation about patience, reading the wild, and the frames worth waiting for.



The toss — a bee-eater and its catch



Behind the lens



A cub and its mother

Q That signature frame — what was happening right before you pressed the shutter?

I was watching the subject closely, trying to anticipate what might happen next. The light, the movement, the body language and the surroundings were constantly changing. I knew the moment might last only a fraction of a second, so I stayed completely focused, camera ready. Then everything came together — no time to think, only to react and press the shutter.

Q And the lion cub with its mother — what makes that one special?

Watching a lion cub play with its mother is always an emotional moment for me. There is something incredibly beautiful about the playful innocence of the cub alongside the patience, protection and affection of the mother.

> *"You can prepare for a moment, but you can never completely predict it.*

THE CRAFT



IN THE FIELD Reading the forest — the habitat, the calls and the light, long before a frame ever exists.

Q What first pulled you toward pointing your camera at wild things?

For me, it was never just about photographing animals — it was about being present in the wild and witnessing moments that cannot be recreated. The unpredictability of wildlife, the patience it requires, and the connection I feel while observing an animal in its natural habitat slowly pulled me toward wildlife photography.

Q Tell us about an early moment that made you think: this is what I want to keep doing.

One of my earliest experiences that truly stayed with me was realizing how unpredictable and intimate wildlife can be. I remember waiting patiently for a subject, watching its behaviour, the changing light, and every small movement through my viewfinder. When the right moment finally came, I captured an image that was far more than just a photograph — it told a story.

Q Is there a photographer or naturalist whose work shaped how you see wildlife?

Yes, several photographers, naturalists and field guides have influenced the way I look at wildlife — like Dhritiman Mukherjee. But more than their photographs, what has stayed with me is their patience, observation and respect for nature.

Q So much of wildlife work is waiting and reading the scene. How do you anticipate a subject before it appears in the frame?

Finding wildlife is about luck and learning to read the environment. Before I even raise the camera, I observe the habitat, listen to bird calls and other sounds, watch for movement, and look for signs an animal has been there. Animals have patterns — where they feed, where they rest, how they respond to light and weather. Spending time in the field teaches you to recognize these small clues. Once I know where the subject might appear, I position myself carefully and wait. I don't want to chase the animal; I want to give it space and let the moment unfold naturally.

THE FIELD KIT

Q Walk us through the kit — your go-to combination, and why it earns its place in the bag.

My bag is built around versatility, reliability and the ability to respond quickly to whatever the wild presents. I shoot a Think Tank bag, and my go-to combination is the Nikon Z6 III paired with the Nikon Z 180–600mm — the reach and flexibility I need for birds and wildlife, while the Z6 III's autofocus, low-light performance and colour give me confidence when conditions turn challenging. For macro and smaller subjects, my Nikon 105mm Macro is a fantastic companion — a completely different side of wildlife, from tiny creatures to nocturnal subjects.



NIKON Z6 III



NIKKOR Z 180–600MM



BEANBAG REST



TRIPOD

Q Which frame from a location or trip stays with you — and the story of coming away with it?

This one is the story of a thrush and the quiet dedication of a parent caring for its chicks. I spent time observing the bird as it moved through its surroundings, searching for food and repeatedly returning to the nest to feed the hungry little ones.

AT A GLANCE

BODY	GLASS	SUPPORT	LOOKS UP TO	APPROACH
Nikon Z6 III	Nikkor Z 180–600mm · 105mm Macro	Think Tank · beanbag · tripod	Dhritiman Mukherjee	Patience, observation, space

CHASING NEXT
The snow leopard

WHAT'S NEXT



NEXT The snow leopard — the subject Sudip hopes to photograph next, high in the cold mountains.

Q What are you hoping to capture next that you haven't managed to yet?

My next project would be the snow leopard. It is not just about having the right camera and lens — it demands physical fitness, endurance, patience and the ability to work in extremely cold, high-altitude conditions. The terrain, the long walks and the unpredictable weather make it physically demanding. But that challenge is exactly what attracts me. I want to experience the mountains, understand the habitat of this elusive animal, and patiently wait for that one unforgettable moment when it appears against the landscape.

Q When a shoot goes exactly the way you dreamed it would, what does that feeling give you?

It is a combination of joy, relief, gratitude and a deep sense of fulfilment. After all the planning, travel, waiting, changing light and uncertainty, suddenly everything comes together — the subject, the behaviour, the light, the composition. The greatest satisfaction comes from knowing I didn't just capture a photograph; I captured a moment I had patiently waited and worked for. The image becomes a memory of the entire experience, and that feeling stays with me long after the shutter is pressed.

> *"It reminds me why I walk into the wild in the first place."*
>
> SUDIP ROY

CONNECT

INSTAGRAM @Sudipdotroy

NATURE PHOTOGRAPHY | CARPE DIEM

Look up, **slow down.**

DR. GUNJAN RATHORE
NATURE PHOTOGRAPHER · AN ENTHUSIAST, STILL LEARNING

Her first photograph was an orange insect on a green stem in a college garden — made not as a photographer but as someone simply curious about the beauty hidden in everyday life. On clouds no artist could repeat, a handheld moon, and why slowing down is not about doing less.



DR. GUNJAN RATHORE

AT A GLANCE

FIRST FRAME
An orange insect, in a college garden

PHOTOGRAPHS
Sky, clouds, light and shadow

ETHOS
Carpe Diem — slowing down to see more

CALLS HERSELF
An enthusiast, still learning

EXPLORING NOW
Symmetry, silhouettes, light and shadow

> *"Slowing down is not about doing less; it is about seeing more, feeling more, and learning to appreciate the beauty of being alive."*

LOOKING UP

Q Do you remember the moment photography first caught your attention and made you want to pick up a camera?

My journey began unexpectedly. I was in college, walking through the garden, when a tiny moment of nature made me stop and look closer—an orange insect resting on a green stem. It seemed ordinary to everyone else, but to me it was worth capturing. I took that first photograph as someone simply curious about the beauty hidden in everyday life. It taught me that photography isn't about extraordinary places; sometimes it is about slowing down and noticing the little things that go unseen.

Q You describe photography as a way of slowing down and observing. What does that slowing-down feel like for you when you're out with your camera?

For me, slowing down with my camera is a way of being truly present. I have always been drawn to literature, beauty, and the idea of Carpe Diem—seizing the day. Perhaps that is why I find beauty in the simplest things: an insect on a leaf, a bird at sunset, the play of light and shadow. When I am out with my camera, I become more aware of my surroundings and begin to see ordinary moments as little stories waiting to be told.

Q Can you recall one early moment or scene you photographed that stayed with you, the one that made you feel 'this is something I love'?

One of the earliest moments that stayed with me was watching the clouds at sunset. I was fascinated by how quickly they moved, their colours changing with the fading light. What made it beautiful was its simplicity—just the sky, the wind, and the setting sun, something we see almost every day. Yet when I stopped to observe, it felt extraordinary: a changing canvas no artist could reproduce. That was when I understood what I love about photography—it lets me see the magic in ordinary moments.

Q What draws you to photograph the sky or clouds, and what were you feeling as you framed this shot?

What amazes me most about the sky is how effortlessly nature creates something extraordinary from ordinary elements. The clouds keep moving, gathering, separating, transforming their colours as the light shifts from day to evening—sometimes soft and peaceful, sometimes dramatic. Nature follows its own rhythm, and no two moments are ever the same. The golden glow of sunset and the deep blue patches of sky remind me that beauty is often already happening right in front of us.

Q What is it about simple, everyday subjects that catches your eye and makes you stop to photograph them?

I am drawn to simple things we see every day but rarely stop to appreciate—a drop of water on a leaf, a flower covered in raindrops, the way light reflects on a droplet. They may seem ordinary, but when I look closely I discover details I would otherwise miss. Sometimes all it takes is a little patience and a different perspective to turn an everyday sight into something extraordinary. That is what makes photography special to me.

Q What was it like chasing the moon for a photograph, and what do you love about it?

My first attempt at photographing the moon was filled with excitement and a little struggle. As I zoomed in, my hands kept shaking and the moon seemed to move within the frame. I had no tripod, so I managed with what I had—and somehow capturing it made the moment more special. I was excited not because the photograph was perfect, but because I had tried something new and captured a little piece of that beauty.







A CONSTANTLY CHANGING CANVAS "The clouds transformed from one shade to another, creating a constantly changing canvas that no artist could reproduce in exactly the same way."

LEARNING TO SEE

Q You call yourself an enthusiast still discovering your own visual language. How would you describe that language as it feels right now?

My visual language is still evolving, and I don't feel the need to rush. I want to learn slowly, observe patiently, and let my understanding grow naturally. When I look through my camera, I try to understand why something catches my attention and what I feel when I observe it. Sometimes I simply stand still and look, allowing the moment to unfold. Right now my visual language is about patience, curiosity, and mindful observation—slowly discovering how I see the world, one photograph at a time.

Q What were you experimenting with in your close-up work, and how did it change the way the scene felt?

Here I was experimenting with close-up photography and how a small detail can change the feeling of a scene. I focused on a tiny drop of water on a green leaf, letting the surrounding leaves and shadows fade away. The droplet reflects its surroundings, almost like a miniature world held within it. It helped me see how changing the focus and perspective can transform an ordinary subject—making the scene feel quieter, more intimate, almost magical.

Q You mentioned symmetry, silhouettes, and light and shadow as things you're exploring. What are you learning as you work with them?

As I keep exploring, I am learning to pay attention to light, shadow, colour, and how elements come together in a frame. In these photographs I captured the changing moods of the sky, from the quiet beauty of twilight to the warm colours of sunset, and played with silhouettes—a building or a bird against the sky for contrast. I am learning that photography is not simply about capturing what I see, but understanding how light and perspective shape what I feel.

Q You want to move from capturing beautiful images to telling stories. Which photo feels closest to carrying a real story, and why?

The photograph of the bird against the sunset sky feels closest to telling a story. There is something beautiful in the way it stands in silhouette, surrounded by the soft colours of evening. It makes me think about freedom, solitude, and quiet moments when the world slows down. I don't know where it was going—and that is what I love, it leaves room for imagination. A photograph becomes more than a picture when it makes someone pause and feel something.

Q As you grow more observant, what feeling do you most hope your photographs will hold for the people who see them?

I hope my photographs encourage people to slow down and notice the beauty in their everyday lives. We are often so occupied with our routines that we forget to look at the world with curiosity and wonder. Through my photographs I want to capture the little moments that make us pause. As someone still learning, I only hope each one carries a little piece of what I felt. For me, photography is about learning to see, to feel, and to appreciate life as it unfolds.







NO TRIPOD "My hands kept shaking, and the moon seemed to move within the frame."

CONNECT WITH DR. GUNJAN RATHORE

INSTAGRAM @gunjanchampawatphotography **INSTAGRAM** @champawatgunjan

IN CONVERSATION · MUSIC

Simple & Honest

NEIL UMWI · SINGER-SONGWRITER

From the church choirs of Shillong to a cowboy hat under the stage lights, Neil Umwi found his voice in country music's plain-spoken storytelling — songs about life, love and heartbreak. He wrote his favourite, "That's Where I Come From," one sleepless night when he missed home a little too much.

Q How did your journey in music begin?

Going to church was a huge part of life growing up in Shillong. We were always surrounded by music everywhere we went, and that's how my musical journey started. I would sing and play in church, with the worship team or the choir. Outside of church, I would listen to various genres of music, from rock and metal to folk and pop. However, it was the storytelling aspect of country music that truly connected me with the genre; songs that tell stories about life, love, heartbreak and the simple things that we go through every single day. I started writing my own songs because I felt it was the best way to express my thoughts and emotions, whether they were inspired by my own imagination or by real life experiences.

Q What was the first song you ever performed — and how did it feel?

The first original song I ever performed is an unreleased song called "Let's Get Lost." It felt really good singing an original because all I was used to was covers. It was a bit nerve-wracking, but the audience was clapping to the beat of the song, and I had a good time playing it as well.

AT A GLANCE

FROM	Shillong, Meghalaya
GENRE	Country — story-first songwriting
WRITES ON	Epiphone Masterbilt AJ-45ME
ROOTS	Church choir & worship team
NOW	Working on new music



LIVE · ON STAGE

NEIL UMWI · LIVE

THE CRAFT · FINDING A VOICE

Q How has your songwriting grown over the years?

I've been writing songs for around 10–12 years, and there has been a lot of improvement as the years went by. The biggest improvement is finding my voice rather than copying one of my heroes. I do struggle with writer's block sometimes, but it's a little easier to find a way past that. I think because of the improvement in my guitar playing, I have a better understanding of melody and also the choice of words that I use rather than using the same words over and over again.

Q What makes your guitar so special to you?

My acoustic guitar, an Epiphone Masterbilt AJ-45ME, is incredibly special to me. This guitar sounds so good both plugged and unplugged, and I mainly write my songs playing this guitar, so it is one of those things that I care about the most. It's become an extension of my creative process.

Q What's the story behind 'Burnin' This Summer'?

"Burnin' This Summer" is all about being around someone you like and just having the best summer together. It's a fun, feel-good song about making memories, staying out late, and enjoying every moment while it lasts. I wanted to capture that carefree, joyful energy that comes with summer romance.

INFLUENCES

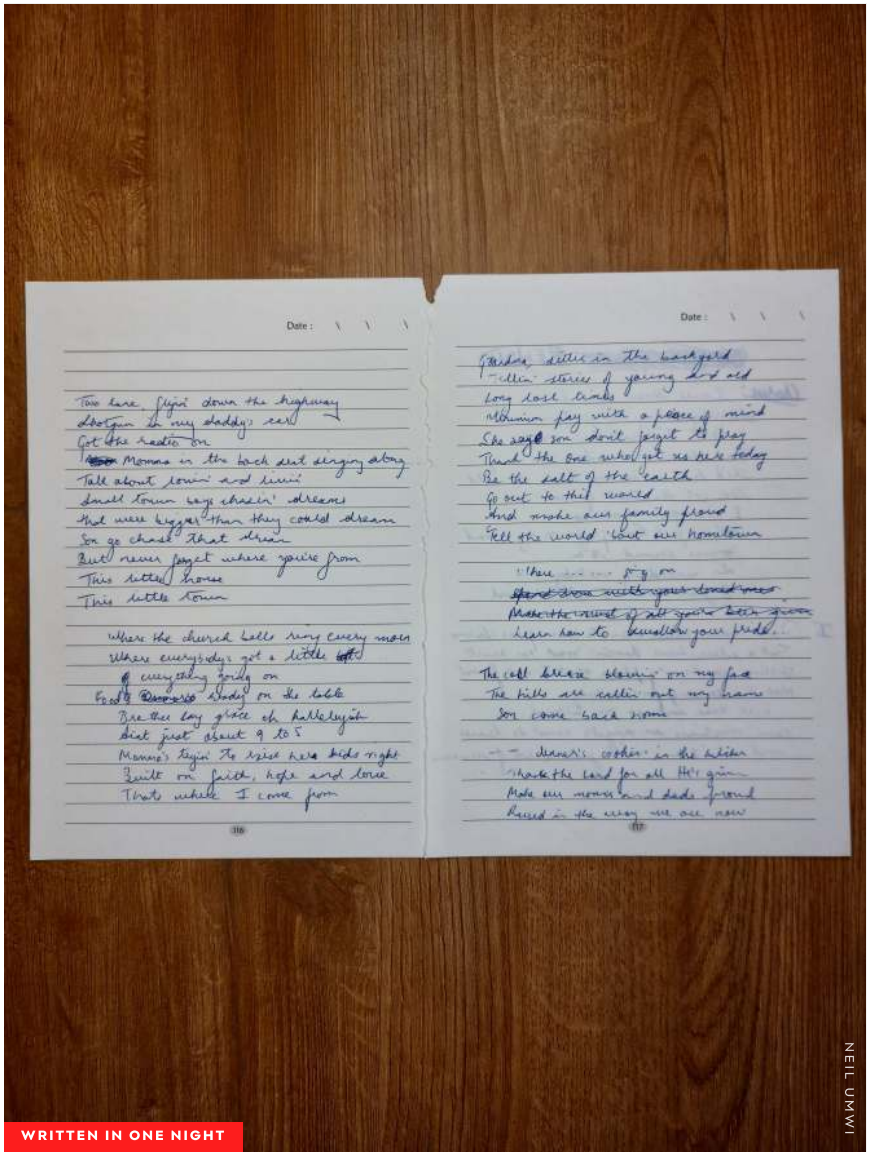
LEGENDS	George Strait, Alan Jackson, Brad Paisley, Kenny Chesney
NEW COUNTRY	Luke Combs, Morgan Wallen, Brett Young, Brett Eldredge
AND MORE	Blake Shelton, Florida Georgia Line



THE WORKHORSE

HIS EPIPHONE AJ-45ME The sunburst acoustic he writes nearly every song on — it sounds as good plugged as it does unplugged, and has become an extension of his creative process.

ROOTS · THAT'S WHERE I COME FROM



NEIL UMWI

WRITTEN IN ONE NIGHT

THE HANDWRITTEN LYRICS "That's Where I Come From" — small-town verses about church bells, back roads and a hometown he carries with him.

Q What inspired the lyrics of 'That's Where I Come From'?

The lyrics of the song "That's Where I Come From" were inspired by my home and my hometown. I'd been away from home for a couple of years, and I kind of missed home a little too much one night. Sleep just wouldn't come, so I ended up writing this song that night, and it's one of my favorite songs that I've ever written. It's a deeply personal piece that reflects my roots.


NEIL UMWI

AT THE DESK

BACK HOME IN THE STUDIO Where the demos take shape.

THE SONG

TITLE	"That's Where I Come From"
WRITTEN	One sleepless night, away from home
ABOUT	Home & roots
STATUS	A personal favourite

"I'd been away from home for a couple of years, and I kind of missed home a little too much one night. Sleep just wouldn't come, so I ended up writing this song that night."

NEIL UMWI · ON 'THAT'S WHERE I COME FROM'

SIMPLE & HONEST · THE LOOK & THE STAGE

Q What draws you to the cover songs you perform?

It's a fun song to sing because of the up-tempo, fast-talking "western cattle auctioneer" type of singing and great lyrics. It is also a challenging song because there are a few things that need to be precise: timing the breaths, getting the lyrics right, and enunciating the words properly. I love a good challenge, and this one really pushes my vocal skills.

Q How does your visual style reflect your music?

Simple and honest. The cowboy look adds a bit to the aesthetics, but just like the songs that I write and sing, I try my best to keep it simple, keep it honest, and just be me. My visual style is a direct reflection of my music—authentic and unpretentious.

THE CREDO

Keep it simple, keep it honest.

— just be me.



THE LOOK

BLACK HAT, ARMS CROSSED The cowboy look — simple and honest, just like the songs.



ON STAGE

COWBOY HAT, ACOUSTIC IN HAND The plain-spoken country storyteller, live under the lights — simple and honest, just like the records.

CONNECT WITH NEIL UMWI

INSTAGRAM @neil_umwi **FACEBOOK** facebook.com/neilumwi **YOUTUBE** @NeilUmwi

FASHION · PORTRAITS · TRAVEL

THE GANGA AARTI

KARTIKEYA MISHRA

PHOTOGRAPHER

He picked up his first camera in his first year of college and pointed it at the birds on campus. The frame he is proudest of came later, on a dark riverbank in Varanasi, where the diyas lined up exactly as he wanted them.

AT A GLANCE

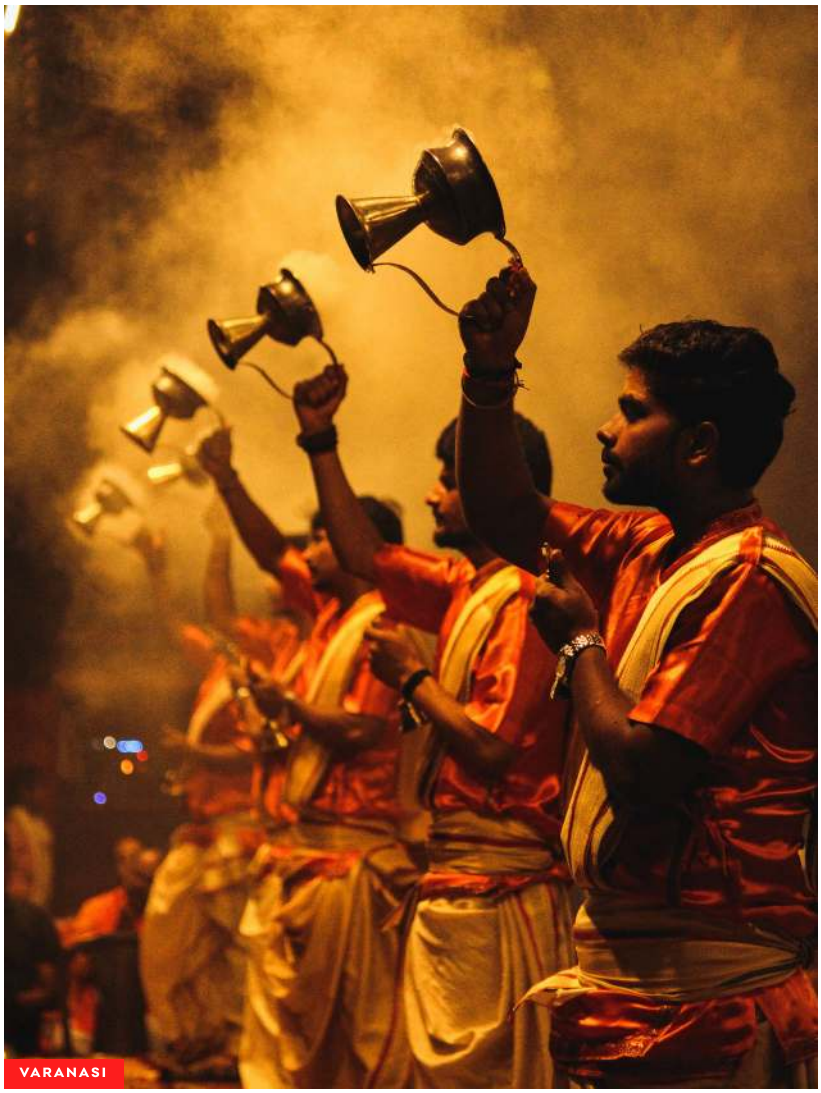
GENRES	Fashion, portraits, travel
BEGAN	First year of college, shooting birds on campus
SIGNATURE FRAME	Ganga Aarti, Varanasi
FAVOURITE PORTRAIT	Chandni Chowk, in monochrome
CAMERA	Canon R8
LENSES	50mm · 18–55mm · 55–250mm
LONGEST PROJECT	Harwaste harvest, almost two months

Q How did your journey in photography begin?

It started as a hobby during my first year of college when I got my first camera. I began by capturing birds on campus, then explored various niches like events, street, portraits, and more. As I learned more about operating the camera, I traveled, shared my work on social media, and eventually landed my first commission for a documentation project. Since then, I've been freelancing in fashion, portraits, and travel photography, always exploring new things.

Q Tell us about a travel photo that truly represents your work.

This is a photograph of the Ganga Aarti in Varanasi. The pandits, with their diyas aligned perfectly in the frame, create a striking contrast between the warm colors and the darker shades of the night. It's one of my best shots from my travel series in Varanasi.



VARANASI

THE GANGA AARTI "The pandits, with their diyas aligned perfectly in the frame, create a striking contrast between the warm colors and the darker shades of the night."

COMPOSITION, AND GETTING OVER THE FEAR

Q How has your photography style evolved over the years?

When I started, I focused solely on centering subjects without much thought to composition—like those zoomed-in bird shots. Over time, I learned composition techniques, street photography, long exposures, and recently, multiple exposures. Now, I aim to create visual stories in my photos, letting each image convey what I want people to see or interpret in their own way. I'm eager to experiment with more creative styles, like fashion shoots.

Q What motivates you to capture travel and portrait moments?

Travel photography lets me explore unseen landscapes, meet new people, and discover unique frames while getting to know a place. Portraits, on the other hand, initially made me uncomfortable, but overcoming that fear has been incredibly rewarding. Now, portrait photography is one of my favorite genres.

Q What's the story behind your favorite portrait photo?

This portrait was taken in Chandni Chowk, Delhi, during a photowalk. We met a person who asked about our cameras, and we asked if we could take his portrait. He posed with his beedi, and the smoke added an interesting element. I captured it in monochrome on the spot.

Q What gear do you use and why do you prefer it?

I use a Canon R8 as my primary camera with several lenses: a 50mm for portraits, travel, and landscapes; an 18-55mm for streets and scapes; and a 55-250mm for wildlife and travel. I started with a DSLR and upgraded to mirrorless for its advanced photo and video capabilities. I often pair the camera with the 50mm prime lens for its compactness.



CHANDNI CHOWK, DELHI "He posed with his beedi, and the smoke added an interesting element. I captured it in monochrome on the spot."

Q What is the story behind a location or landscape that inspires you?

This is a frame from the Qutub Minar complex, shot during sunset. I found a small entry door on a corner, and the minar fit perfectly within the door frame, creating one of my best-framed travel shots.

Q Describe the editing process for a before-and-after edit of one of your photos.

I edited a close-up photo of a street artist in Chandni Chowk who walked on ropes and had bruises on her feet. During editing, I focused on bringing out the textures of her feet by increasing texture and clarity, and color graded the image to give it a deeper look, emphasizing the greys and blacks.

BEFORE HE PRESSES THE SHUTTER

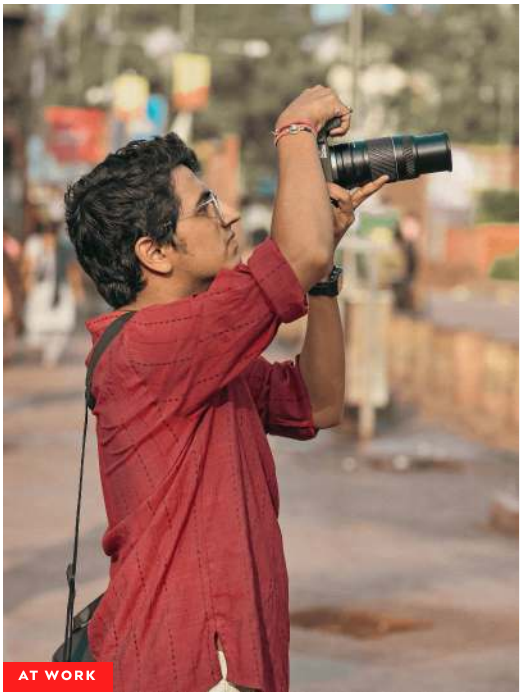
Q What makes a candid moment while traveling special to you?

This is from my recent trip to Mussoorie. While riding back from Kempty Falls, I saw a village on the foothills of the mountains, standing out as a unique subject against the landscape. The colors embedded in the green lush mountains looked really cool.

Q Tell us about your creative process.

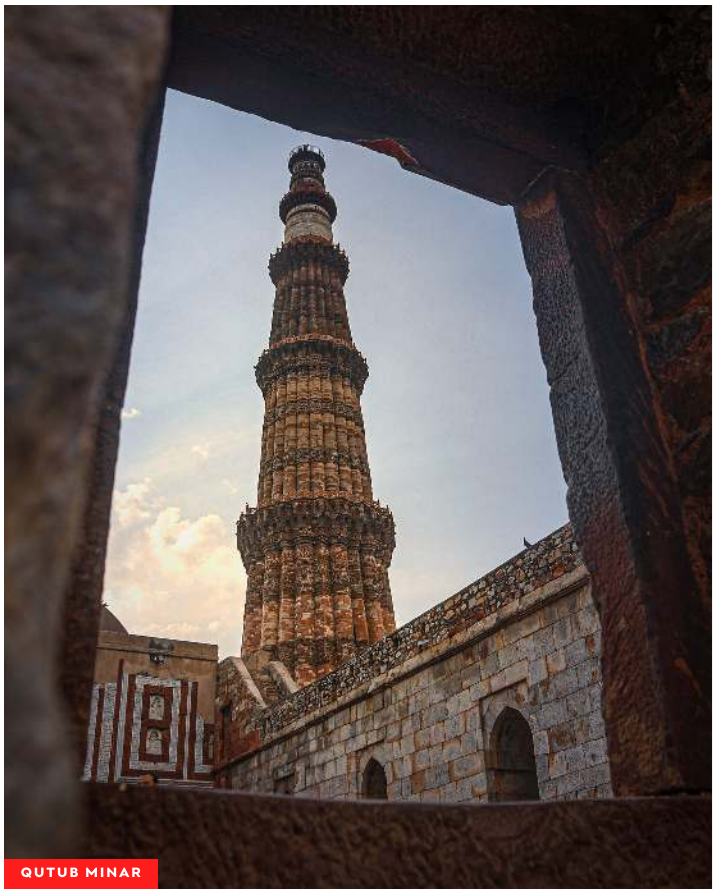
To me, photography starts before I even press the shutter. I enjoy sitting in one spot and watching what's going on—how the light hits it, the textures, the colors, and the little things which most people don't notice. Those details can make the best part of a portrait, as they show the character of a place or a moment. My work is about visual storytelling as a cohesive story rather than single frames, invariably with a narrative arc. I love making beautiful images but I also love to capture feelings, culture, architecture and everyday life in an honest and engaging manner. I enjoy playing with in-camera processes as well as some creative edits, but only when they add to the story, not detract from it.

> *"Not to rush for the "perfect frame," but to be patient, consistent, and to trust the people whose stories you're telling.*



AT WORK

IN THE FIELD Kartikeya Mishra, shooting — a Canon R8, most often paired with the 50mm prime for its compactness.



QUTUB MINAR



THE EDIT

LEFT at the Qutub Minar complex, "the minar fit perfectly within the door frame." **RIGHT** the frame he regraded — "bringing out the textures of her feet by increasing texture and clarity, and color graded the image to give it a deeper look, emphasizing the greys and blacks."

TWO MONTHS IN THE FIELDS

Q Tell us about a memorable shoot.

Some of my most significant work was for Harwaste, documenting the rice and wheat harvest. This was not a one-day assignment but a photographic documentation that lasted almost two months, following it all the way from the standing crop to the harvest. I came back to the field many times to build relationships with the farmers and familiarize myself with the working schedule, which made for far more personal images than otherwise. It taught me a real lesson in documentary photography: not to rush for the "perfect frame," but to be patient, consistent, and to trust the people whose stories you're telling. It remains one of the projects that most shaped how I approach long-form visual storytelling.

Q What's next for you?

I'm looking forward to more learning as I continue to pursue photography across various genres, while keeping my focus on storytelling. In the coming years I would like to keep developing my travel photography and add long-form photo-documentation projects that record the culture, geography, and daily life of different places. Meanwhile, I'm eager to take on more interesting photoshoots that incorporate film ideas and compelling visual storytelling. When I photograph people, places and ideas, I want people to see my work, take away a lasting impression, and find the stories I see in the details.



MUSSOORIE

ON THE WAY BACK FROM KEMPTY FALLS "A village on the foothills of the mountains, standing out as a unique subject against the landscape."

CONNECT WITH KARTIKEYA MISHRA

PORTFOLIO kartikeyamishraphotofolio.framer.website

NATURE & WILDLIFE

THE EMOTION OF THE FOREST

PARAG KAILAS PRAJAPATI
NATURE & WILDLIFE PHOTOGRAPHER

He went into the forest first and found the camera second. What he brought back from Melghat was not a trophy animal but a mother carrying her cub through the grass.

AT A GLANCE

AWARD	**WallMag Nature Photography Awards 2026**
WINNING FRAME	**"Melghat wildlife"**
SUBJECTS	**Forests, birds, reptiles, mist and light**
ETHOS	**Photography as a language with nature**

Q Take us right back to the start: what first pulled you toward the wild, and toward photography?

This journey began with a quiet, yet equally powerful magic of nature that changed my life forever. My first attraction to nature and the forest began in childhood itself. Far from the hustle and bustle of the city, when I first stepped into a dense forest, its silence felt as though it was telling me something. The rustling of leaves, the chirping of birds, and that fragrant scent of the earth—all of it cast a spell over my mind. When I went into the forest, I realized that every tree, every animal, and even the tiniest insect was living its own story. It was this vast and unchanging truth of nature that first drew me toward the forest. Then came the question of how to share this beautiful experience with the world? That was where photography entered the picture. At first, I would simply absorb the sights of the forest with my eyes. But gradually, I began to feel that a particular moment in the forest—such as the gentle sunlight filtering through the mist at dawn, or the cautious gaze of a deer—should be captured forever. I picked up a camera, not to take beautiful photographs of nature, but to capture the living 'emotion' of the forest. When I began looking at the world through the camera's lens, I understood that photography is not merely a medium, but a language for communicating with nature. In short, the forest taught me how to live, and photography taught me how to show that life to others.



MELGHAT WILDLIFE

THE WINNING FRAME "Melghat wildlife" — WallMag Nature Photography Awards 2026.



THE PHOTOGRAPHER Parag Kailas Prajapati.

THE MORNING BY THE CREEK

Q Was there one early encounter in nature that made you think, "this is what I want to spend my life doing"?

The turning point came on a quiet, misty morning by a hidden creek in the woods, a moment where the worlds of the sky and the earth collided perfectly. I was sitting completely still on a mossy log when a flash of electric blue cut through the gray fog. It was a common kingfisher, hitting the water like a streak of sapphire lightning and emerging a second later with a small silver fish, completely unfazed by the chaos of its own splash. As I watched it retreat to a low-hanging branch to adjust its catch, a subtle rustle in the leaves right next to my boots caught my attention. Gliding silently through the damp ferns was a beautifully patterned corn snake, its scales catching the filtered morning light, moving with an effortless, fluid grace that mirrored the river itself. In that single frame of time, I saw the two extremes of nature's design: the explosive, vibrant speed of the bird and the quiet, hypnotic elegance of the reptile. Both were flawless, focused, and entirely alive. Watching them coexist in that undisturbed pocket of the world made me realize that I didn't just want to visit nature on weekends—I wanted to surround myself with that raw, breathing art every single day. Bringing that magic into my daily life by caring for my own kingfishers and snakes grew naturally from that one unforgettable morning.

Q Did anyone — a photographer, a forest guide, a mentor — shape the way you see through your lens in those early days?

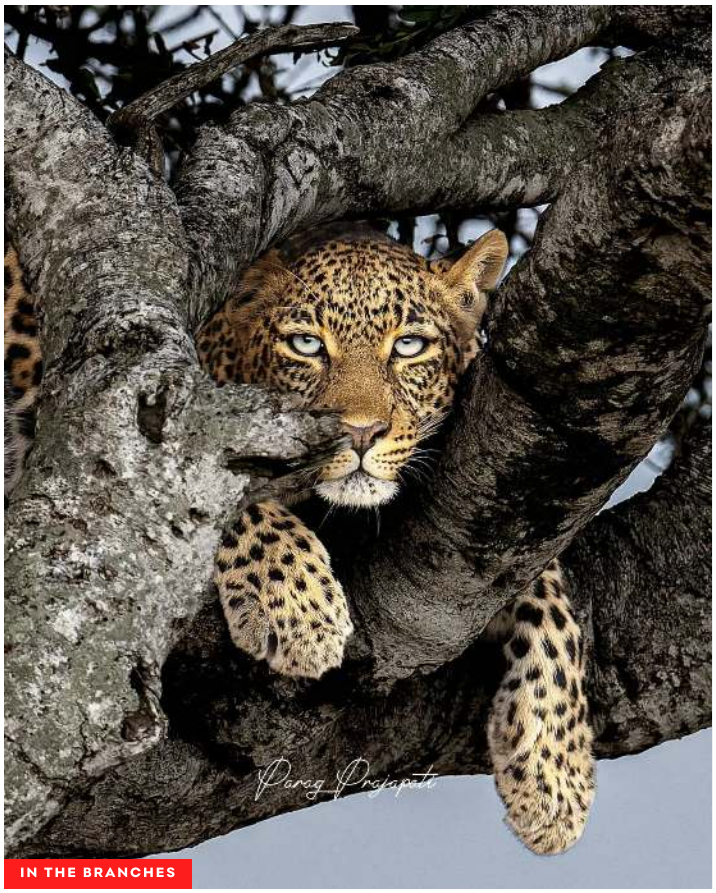
Honestly, in my early days, my mentors were the creators I watched through a screen, and my classroom was a late-night YouTube rabbit hole. Because I learned photography almost entirely online, I didn't have a single person standing next to me in the field. Instead, a few specific channels shaped exactly how I see through my lens.

Q Tell us about the moment you photographed the leopard with her cubs — how did it come together?

It was one of those moments in the wild that you simply cannot plan. I had been quietly observing the area for some time when I noticed the leopardess moving through the grass. A little later, her cubs appeared, staying close to her and cautiously following her lead. I kept my distance, stayed completely still, and let the animals decide how close the moment would unfold. What made it truly special was watching the relationship between the mother and her cubs—the little ones curious and playful, while she remained alert and protective. I was fortunate enough to be in the right place at the right time, with beautiful light adding to the atmosphere. I took only a few frames, trying not to disturb them. For me, the photograph is much more than an image of a leopard and her cubs; it captures a fleeting family moment in the wild. Those are the encounters a wildlife photographer waits for, sometimes for years.



IN THE HOLLOW



IN THE BRANCHES

FRAMES HE IS PROUD OF "I kept my distance, stayed completely still, and let the animals decide how close the moment would unfold."

A PHOTOGRAPH OF MOTHERHOOD

Q What's the story behind that sighting?

"At first, I thought she had made a kill." She appeared quietly through the grass, carrying something in her jaws. I raised my camera, expecting to see another hunt ending in the usual way. Then I looked through the viewfinder. It wasn't prey. It was her cub. For a few seconds, everything changed. The powerful leopard in front of me suddenly wasn't a predator—it was a mother carefully moving the most vulnerable thing in her world. The cub hung beneath her, its tiny paws and tail visible, completely trusting its mother. She kept walking, occasionally adjusting her grip, disappearing and reappearing through the grass. I didn't know where she was taking it. Perhaps she was shifting it to a safer den, perhaps simply moving it away from danger. Leopard mothers are known to relocate their young, sometimes carrying cubs one at a time to safer cover. And that is what made the sighting unforgettable. As a photographer, you go into the wild hoping to photograph an animal. But sometimes, if you're patient enough, the animal gives you something much more valuable—a glimpse into its life. This wasn't just a photograph of a leopard. It was a photograph of motherhood in the wild. And for me, that moment was a reminder that behind every powerful predator is also a world of tenderness, protection and instinct that we rarely get to witness.

> *"This wasn't just a photograph of a leopard. It was a photograph of motherhood in the wild.*

Q What do you want people to feel about that wild place?

I want people to feel that they have stepped into a wild place that existed long before we arrived—and will continue long after we leave. The leopard is only one part of that story. The silence, the trees, the light, the uncertainty of not knowing what might appear —that is what makes the wilderness powerful. I want the image to leave people with a sense of wonder, but also respect: this is not a place we own or control. We are only visitors.



THE FOREST AS THE SUBJECT

WHEN THE PLACE IS THE SUBJECT "The silence, the trees, the light, the uncertainty of not knowing what might appear — that is what makes the wilderness powerful."

WHAT HE CARRIES, WHAT HE WAITS FOR

Q Which lens do you reach for most when a moment can appear and vanish in seconds?

I reach for most when a moment can appear and vanish in seconds is a 100-400mm f/4 zoom lens, often paired with a 300mm f/4 or 400mm f/2.8 prime lens mounted on a second camera body.

Q Why has this one stayed close to your heart?

Because this frame feels like more than a leopard photograph—it captures a moment of movement, tension, and mystery. The leopard isn't simply sitting there waiting to be photographed. It is descending the tree, one careful step at a time, almost suspended against the pale background. The foreground foliage adds another layer, making the viewer feel as though they are witnessing the moment from a hidden place in the forest. What makes it stay close to my heart is that I didn't just capture the animal; I captured the feeling of the encounter—the silence, anticipation, and fleeting connection between photographer and wild subject.

Q What's drawing you toward it?

In the wild, nothing is guaranteed. You wait, you listen, you observe—and sometimes, after hours of nothing, a fleeting moment unfolds that you could never have planned. That uncertainty keeps pulling me back. But beyond the photographs, it is the connection with the landscape and the lives within it. The more time I spend there, the more I realise that I'm not simply photographing wildlife; I'm witnessing a world that exists independently of us. That is what draws me toward it—the privilege of observing without interfering, telling stories through images, and hopefully making people care enough to protect these wild places and the creatures that depend on them.

Q At the end of a long day in the wild, what feeling do you hope your photographs leave with the people who see them?

At the end of a long day in the wild, I hope my photographs leave people with more than just the memory of an animal. I hope they make them pause—to feel the silence of the forest, the uncertainty of a sighting, and the quiet privilege of witnessing a wild life on its own terms. But more than wonder, I hope they create responsibility. Every photograph is a reminder that these animals and the landscapes they call home are under pressure, and that their future depends on the choices we make today. If an image can make someone care deeply enough to protect a forest, respect wildlife, support conservation, or simply choose not to disturb what they came to see, then the photograph has achieved something far greater than beauty. For me, the best image isn't simply the one that shows the wild beautifully. It is the one that makes you feel connected to it—and leaves you asking what you can do to ensure it is still there for generations to come.



THE KIT



NEVER ENTERED

LEFT TO RIGHT what he carries into the field; and the frame he never entered into any award — "descending the tree, one careful step at a time, almost suspended against the pale background."

CONNECT WITH PARAG KAILAS PRAJAPATI

INSTAGRAM @parag_prajapati1

IN CONVERSATION · CREATIVE STUDIO

Beyond the Camera

FLIQAINDIA · SOUVIK JANA, FOUNDER · KOLKATA

From a fragmented Kolkata scene, Souvik Jana set out to build more than a studio — a creative ecosystem where talent, technology and opportunity meet. A conversation about going beyond the person behind the lens.



SOUVIK JANA

FOUNDER · FLIQAINDIA · KOLKATA

AT A GLANCE

FOUNDER	Souvik Jana
BASED	Kolkata, India
DISCIPLINES	Weddings · Corporate · Travel · Aerial
PLATFORM	fliqa-AI — AI Face Search & gallery delivery
ECOSYSTEM	Fliqa Partner · Fliqa AI · Fliqa Studio
NOTABLE WORK	Royal Enfield · Weddings · Varanasi travel film

Q Take us back to the very beginning of FliqaIndia in Kolkata — what was the first spark that made you want to build a creative studio rather than just shoot on your own?

The first spark behind FliqaIndia came from something I kept noticing around me in Kolkata: there was no shortage of talented photographers and creative professionals, but the industry itself was highly fragmented. Great talent existed everywhere, yet clients often struggled to find reliable creative professionals, while photographers struggled with visibility, consistent opportunities, and a structured way to grow. I loved photography, but I soon realized that I did not want to build something that depended only on me being behind the camera. I wanted to create something larger—a platform where creative talent, technology, and real opportunities could come together. Over time, the vision naturally grew beyond being just a creative studio. We began thinking about the entire ecosystem around a creative professional: how they find work, manage clients, deliver their work, use technology, build credibility, and grow their career. Looking back, the real first spark was not simply a desire to take better photographs. It was the belief that creativity deserves better infrastructure, better opportunities, and a stronger ecosystem around it. That belief eventually became FliqaIndia.

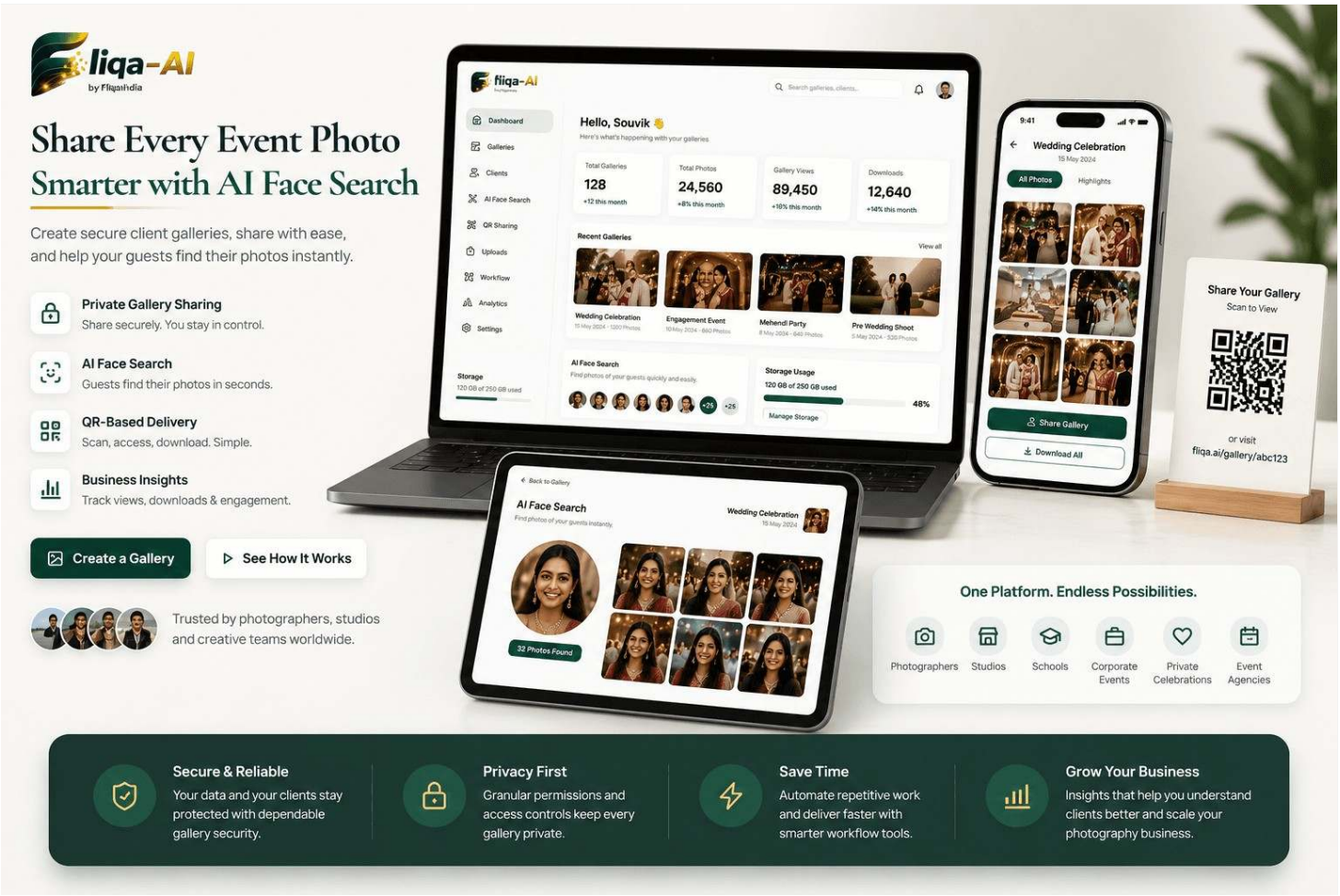
Q Was there one early project that felt like a turning point — the moment you realised FliqaIndia could really become something?

Yes. One of the biggest turning points was when we started getting projects where clients were not simply looking for a photographer—they were trusting us with their entire visual story. That was when I realised FliqaIndia could be much more than a photography studio. We could build a professional creative ecosystem that connects clients with the right talent, manages projects at scale, and uses technology to make the entire experience better. That early trust from clients gave us the confidence to think beyond individual shoots. It made the vision feel real: FliqaIndia could become a platform that makes professional photography and creative services more accessible, organised, and scalable.

THE ECOSYSTEM · BEYOND THE STUDIO

Q Looking ahead, where do you dream of taking FliqaIndia next — and what would it take to get there?

My dream for FliqaIndia is much bigger than working with one particular client or completing one dream project. I want to build something that can change how professional photography and visual storytelling are experienced, delivered, and built as a career. Over the years, I have realised that the creative industry needs more than talented people with cameras. Photographers and filmmakers need opportunities, technology, professional systems, stronger client experiences, and an ecosystem that allows them to build sustainable careers. Through Fliqa Partner, I want us to create a strong professional network where photographers, filmmakers, drone operators, editors, and other creative talent can access meaningful projects, build credibility, and grow with us. Through Fliqa AI, we are exploring how technology can improve what happens after the camera stops shooting—from intelligent photo discovery and private galleries to sharing, delivery, and better digital workflows for photographers, studios, and their clients. Through Fliqa Studio, I want to make the professional photography experience more connected—from discovering and booking a service to managing the production and ultimately delivering the finished memories or creative assets to the client. One of my biggest dreams is to take this ecosystem far beyond the cities where we began—to build a strong creative network across India and, eventually, create opportunities and productions internationally.



FLIQA-AI The technology layer of the ecosystem — private client galleries, QR-based delivery and AI Face Search, built from the studio's own experience in the field.

> *"We started by capturing moments. The dream is to build an ecosystem that creates opportunities, empowers creators, serves clients, and takes Indian visual creativity to the world."*
>
> SOUVIK JANA · FOUNDER, FLIQAINDIA

ON ASSIGNMENT · ONE STUDIO, MANY STORIES

Q You cover everything from weddings to corporate films to drone work under one roof. How do you keep a single FliqaIndia signature across such different shoots?

The subject may change, but our way of seeing a story does not. That is how we try to maintain a FliqaIndia signature across very different kinds of work. A wedding, a corporate film, a travel story, or an aerial sequence naturally requires a different visual language. Instead, we begin by asking the same questions: What is the story? Who is it for? What should the audience feel, and what moments will communicate that most honestly? What remains consistent is our approach—thoughtful preparation, strong composition, attention to genuine moments, visual consistency, and careful post-production. For me, the FliqaIndia signature is therefore not a preset or a particular camera technique. It is the balance between storytelling, emotion, technical discipline, and reliability. I would rather have people recognise our work by the care behind it than by a filter applied to it.

Q How is capturing a brand's corporate event different from covering a wedding for your team?

For our team, the biggest difference is not the camera or the equipment—it is the purpose behind the story we are documenting. A wedding is deeply personal. A corporate event requires a different mindset. Before we begin shooting, we need to understand the brand, the objective of the event, the audience, and how the final content will be used. We are not only capturing what happened; we are creating visual assets that may later represent the brand across social media, campaigns, internal communication, PR, or marketing. With projects such as Royal Enfield, this becomes especially interesting because the brand already has such a strong visual identity. Our responsibility is to respect that identity while still bringing FliqaIndia's storytelling perspective to the coverage. But whether we are covering a wedding or a corporate event, one principle remains the same: understand why the moment matters before deciding how to capture it.





ROYAL ENFIELD 'Apparel — Out of Office', Kasauli — respecting a brand's identity while bringing the studio's storytelling to the coverage.

THE WORK · ON FILM

Q Your bio talks about "creating memories and crafting moments." What does that actually mean to your team on set, day to day?

For us, "creating memories and crafting moments" is not just a line in our bio—it is a principle that influences how we approach every project. On set, it starts with understanding people before picking up the camera. The emotion, relationships, atmosphere, timing, and even the small unscripted details often matter more than a perfectly posed frame. We also believe that meaningful moments cannot always be manufactured. Our job is to create the right environment, observe carefully, anticipate what is about to happen, and be ready when something genuine unfolds. Ultimately, our goal is simple: years later, when someone looks at an image created by FliqaIndia, we want them to remember not only how that moment looked, but how it felt. That, to us, is the difference between simply taking photographs and creating memories.

SCAN TO WATCH

Antara & Rahul — Wedding Highlights, Kolkata

SCAN TO WATCH

Crafting Moments — Wedding BTS

SCAN TO WATCH

Varanasi — Travel Film

SCAN TO WATCH

Royal Enfield Apparel — Corporate

CONNECT WITH FLIQAINDIA

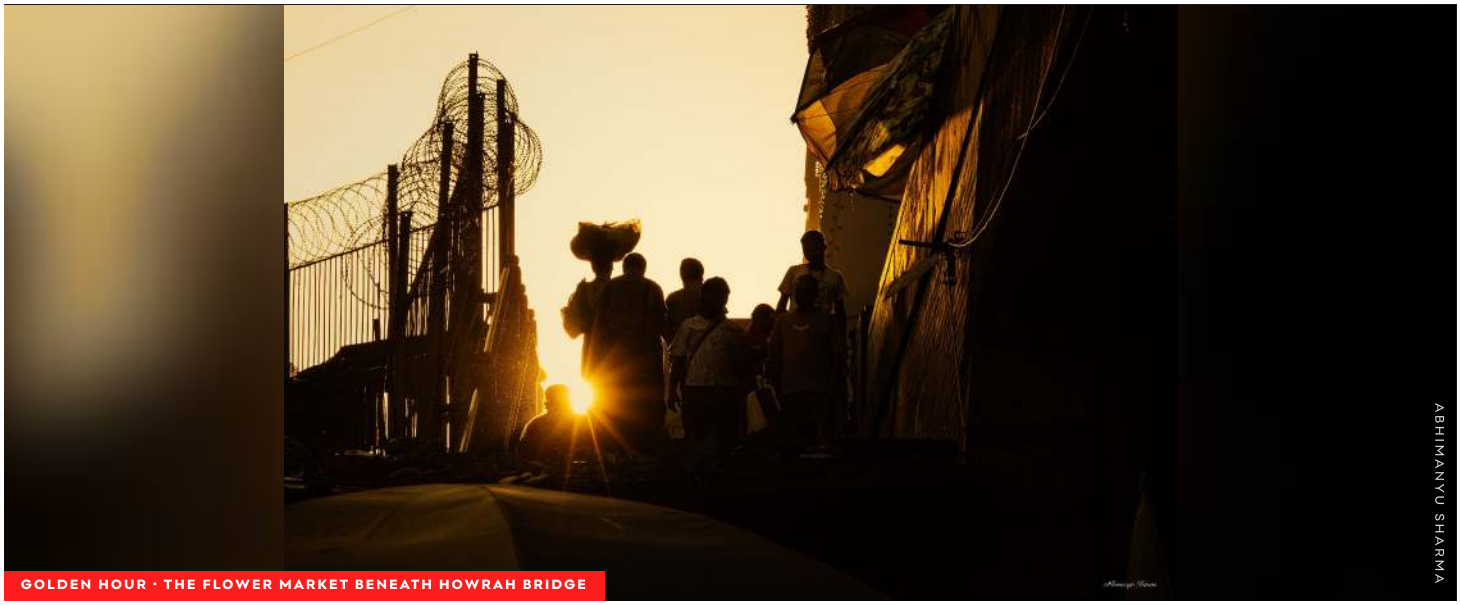
INSTAGRAM @FliqaIndia FACEBOOK FliqaIndia YOUTUBE @FliqaIndia WEBSITE FliqaIndia.com

IN CONVERSATION · STREET PHOTOGRAPHY

Beneath Howrah Bridge

ABHIMANYU SHARMA · STREET PHOTOGRAPHER · KOLKATA

A Kolkata college student who started on an iPhone and bought his first camera only last year — now he chases the city's light from the idol-makers' lanes of Kumartuli to the flower market beneath Howrah Bridge, and shoots a second, quieter world entirely in black and white.



GOLDEN HOUR · THE FLOWER MARKET BENEATH HOWRAH BRIDGE

ABHIMANYU SHARMA

Q What first pulled you toward photography, and how did Kolkata become the place you kept returning to?

From the very beginning, I've always loved capturing moments. At first, it was just a hobby. I used to take pictures of random things, places, people, sunsets, streets, basically anything that caught my eye. Back then, I used to shoot everything on my iPhone. But as I kept taking more pictures, I started getting more curious about it. I started noticing light, compositions, different perspectives and how small changes could completely change a picture. Last year, I finally bought my first camera. Since then, I've honestly become more and more addicted to photography. Now whenever I'm outside, I automatically start looking around for something to capture.

Q Walk us through the evening you made this golden-hour frame.

I shot these recently in the evening, around 5:30 PM actually. I was just walking around and shooting the flower market beneath Howrah Bridge when I somehow came across this frame. Ohh man, it looked so gorgeous straight on the camera screen. I knew I had to get the shot. Later, while editing, I colour graded it a little warmer to give it that perfect sunset feel. But honestly, without that sunlight, I don't think the shot would have had the same feel. The light was doing most of the magic here.

AT A GLANCE

BASED	Kolkata
STARTED ON	An iPhone
FIRST CAMERA	Last year
INFLUENCE	Divyanshu Verma (@street_ashh)
IN MONO	@abhi.jxl.bnw

KUMARTULI · THE IDOL-MAKERS' LANES



KUMARTULI A craftsman lit deep in a narrow lane of clay idols — the frame he always comes back to.

Q What's the story behind this signature street frame, and what made you press the shutter at that exact second?

The lighting, the immersive frame and the atmosphere — always love to shoot Kumartuli, pre Durga Puja days.

Q What drew you to this quiet corner of Kumartuli, and what did you want to preserve in the frame?

There's nothing particularly special about this frame, but one thing really caught my eye. On the left, the idol is being handcrafted. On the right, it's being packed by the shopkeeper, ready to be sold. And in between them, another craftsman is guiding both sides. It's just a simple everyday scene, but somehow, the whole process of making, guiding, packing and eventually selling comes together in one frame.



ONE FRAME Making, guiding, packing and selling — the whole process in a single lane.

THE QUIET FRAME · LIGHT & MONOCHROME



IN MONOCHROME The same lanes with their colour stripped away — what's left is mood, shadow and the work of hands.

Q You shoot a whole monochrome world under @abhi.jxl.bnw. What does stripping away colour let you say about Kolkata that colour hides?

For me, stripping away colour lets me focus on what Kolkata really feels like. The people, old buildings, shadows, chaos and quiet moments all start speaking louder. Colour can sometimes distract, but monochrome brings out the mood and stories hidden in the everyday Kolkata we often overlook.

Q How long did you watch for this candid moment, and what tipped you off that it was about to happen?

I was shooting the train and the platform, it was creating a nice leading line but in editing i cropped the photo a bit and spotted that man crossing the tracks, it was pure luck, i didn't even thought of this shot, holding the camera.



PURE LUCK The man crossing the tracks — spotted only while cropping the frame in the edit.

AWAY FROM HOME · DELHI



HUMAYUN'S TOMB, DELHI A dog asleep in the grass — 'the contrast felt right, so I stopped and took the picture.'

Q How does shooting a new city like Delhi change the way you work compared to the streets you know by heart?

Delhi is a little different for me because my mom lives there, so I'm not completely unfamiliar with the city. I know a few places and streets, but every time I visit, I still end up noticing something I hadn't seen before. That's what I like about shooting in Delhi. You can know a place and still be surprised by it. The dog sleeping peacefully in front of Humayun's Tomb was one of those moments. There was nothing planned about it, I just happened to notice the scene and the contrast felt right, so I stopped and took the picture.

Q Do you remember a frame that made you feel like a photographer, and why has it stayed with you?

During my recent trip to Delhi, I shot Qutub Minar during the blue hour. There was something about that moment that felt so calm. I've been in a long-distance relationship with my girlfriend for years, and being there made me miss her a lot. While I was walking around, I came across a stranger couple and captured them, just like we usually do when we're out shooting street photography. Looking at that picture later, it somehow reminded me of her. That blue hour at Qutub Minar became more than just a photograph for me. It became a little moment where I felt close to her, even though she wasn't there.



THE PHOTOGRAPHER Abhimanyu Sharma, Kolkata.

CONNECT WITH ABHIMANYU SHARMA

INSTAGRAM @abhi.jxl **IN MONOCHROME** @abhi.jxl.bnw

FUZZYNRAW

IN CONVERSATION · PHOTOGRAPHY

Movement in Stillness

NEENA NISSAR · @FUZZYNRAW · MOBILE PHOTOGRAPHER

*Working on nothing but an iPhone 13, Neena Nissar — **Fuzzynraw** — chases motion inside the still frame: blur, shutter and light bent to hold a fleeting second. From the fishermen of Alappuzha to the quiet in-between of home and away, hers is a photography of movement — and of belonging.*



ALAPPUZHA

FIRST SERIES The fishermen of Alappuzha — the earliest frames she felt proud of.

FUZZYNRAW · AT A GLANCE

CAMERA	iPhone 13 — and nothing else
SIGNATURE	Motion — blur, shutter speed & light
FIRST WORK	Fishermen series, Alappuzha
BEGAN	About six years ago, with her father
THEME	The in-between — home & away

Q To start at the very beginning, how did photography first come into your life?

I actually have no idea when photography first came into my life. I never really thought much about taking photos until about six years ago, when I went somewhere with my father and casually took a few pictures. What surprised me was how the photographs somehow looked as good as the moments had felt while I was there. After that, I started noticing that whenever something felt beautiful, fleeting, or simply good, I wanted to capture it too. I think that feeling is what brought me here, and I'm still figuring out where the journey takes me.

Q Can you tell us about the first photograph you made that felt truly yours, one you were proud to have taken?

I think it has to be the earliest photograph I can remember feeling truly proud of, the fishermen series, I took on a trip to the coast in Alappuzha with my father. It was my first time there, and there was so much passion and energy in the environment that I found myself wanting to capture it. Honestly, I didn't even look properly at the photographs until I got back home. When I finally did, there was something about them that felt... complete. Like everything in the frame had somehow fallen into place exactly where it was meant to be. I thought it was perfect.. perfect to me, at least. And even now, years later, that series still holds a very special place in my heart.

CHASING MOVEMENT

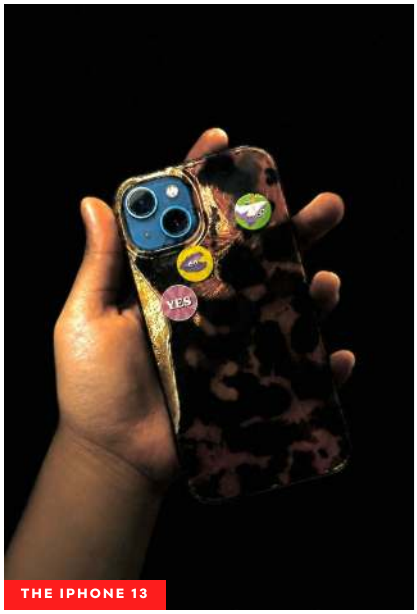


MOTION STUDY



LIGHT IN MOTION

STILL, MOVING A fairground wheel and a smear of city light — stillness built out of motion, shutter and blur.



THE IPHONE 13

THE WHOLE KIT One phone, carried everywhere.

Q What drew you to keep returning to that story or subject?

This isn't really a single story or subject that I followed, but more of a photographic path I've kept returning to. I became interested in creating a sense of movement and fleeting moments within a still photograph. I started experimenting with shutter speeds, blur and light whenever I felt they could capture the energy of a scene. Over time, I kept coming back to it, trying to understand and refine how I could make a photograph feel like it is in motion, almost as if the moment is still unfolding.

Q What is it about that setup that makes it the one you trust on a shoot?

I shoot entirely on my iPhone 13, so I don't really have a complicated setup that I reach for. It's simply the camera I have with me, and over time I've learned to trust it. I like the immediacy of it, seeing something, feeling the moment, and being able to capture it right away. For me, it's less about the equipment and more about learning to see with what I have.

THE IN-BETWEEN

Q What made that particular place or day so memorable to photograph?

The photograph itself may not be anything extraordinary, but for me, it captures a feeling I know deeply, the instability of always moving between home and the places we are bound to stay. It speaks of being in between, of constantly settling into unfamiliar spaces while carrying a sense of where you come from. Perhaps, more than anything, it reflects what it feels like to be away from home, a foreigner, always adapting, yet never entirely belonging to one place.

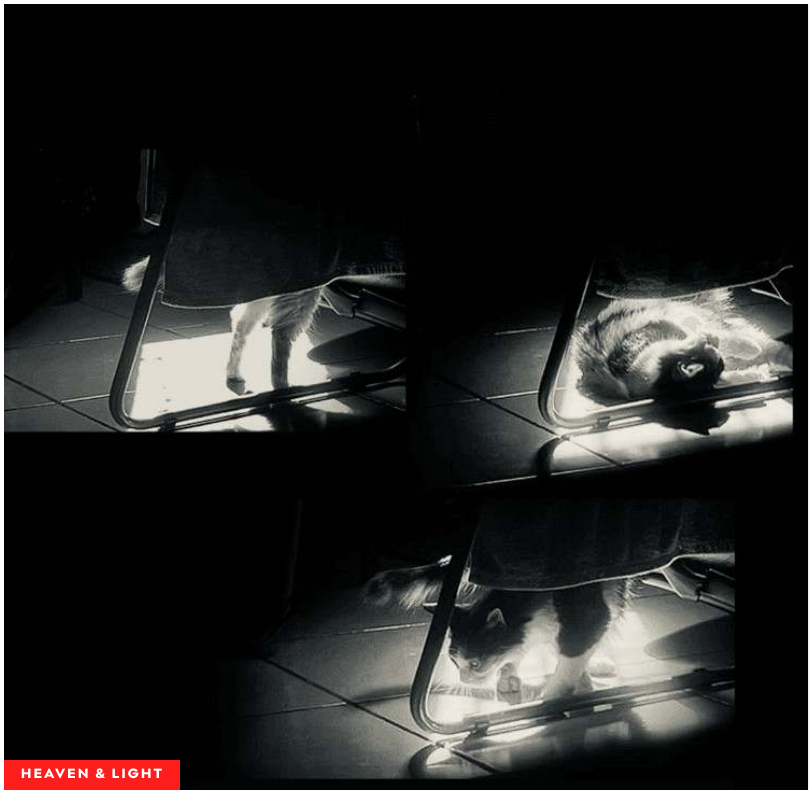
Q What are you hoping this new piece of work will become?

I hope this piece becomes a quiet exploration of light, stillness, and the small moments of comfort we find in everyday life. Through this image, I want to explore how something as simple as light falling on a familiar presence can hold a feeling of warmth, peace, and home.

> *Photography has been one long process of learning to look.*
>
> NEENA NISSAR



PARDESI Away from home — a foreigner, always adapting, never entirely belonging to one place.



NEW WORK Light falling on a familiar presence — warmth, peace, home.



A fleeting moment, held still.

WHAT COMES NEXT

Q Is there a story, subject, or place you have not photographed yet but really hope to one day?

Yes. Growing up outside India, I feel I have experienced certain parts of my own culture from a distance, and there are still so many traditions I have yet to photograph. I would love to document cultural art forms, dances, rituals, and celebrations in the way I see them, through the light, smoke, textures, movement, and fleeting moments. I want to capture these experiences through the visual language of Fuzzynraw, not just as documentation, but as a personal way of reconnecting with a culture I have always felt slightly removed from.

Q When a photograph finally comes together the way you imagined it, what does that moment feel like for you?

Honestly, it feels like a kind of euphoria. Sometimes I take photographs without expecting much, and then suddenly, while I'm there, I think, "Oh, this is happening. What if I can actually capture this feeling?" It could be something as simple as a quiet moment, a certain light, a gesture, or an ordinary scene that suddenly feels beautiful to me. When I see that the photograph has come together in a way that holds even a small part of what I was feeling or experiencing in that moment, there's this rush of adrenaline and excitement. And knowing that someone looking at the photograph might feel even an ounce of what I felt while taking it.. that, for me, is a beautiful feeling in itself.



ON THE STREET The ordinary scene that suddenly feels beautiful.



WHERE IT BEGAN Back at the water in Alappuzha — the energy that first made her want to capture a moment.

CONNECT WITH NEENA NISSAR

INSTAGRAM @fuzzynraw

IN CONVERSATION · NATURE, WILDLIFE & URBAN LIFE

A Hand's Length

VIHAAN BHALOTIA · NATURE & WILDLIFE PHOTOGRAPHER

A self-described beginner who first fell for the towering cityscapes of Dubai, Vihaan Bhalotia now turns his Canon on the things most people walk past — owls in Goa, a spider a hand's length away, weeds climbing through a fallen street lamp. A conversation about the small, fleeting moments he believes are the ones worth keeping.

Q What first pulled you toward a camera — the moment, or the thing you saw through the lens, that made you want to keep shooting?

The thing that first pulled me towards photography is my ability to express my vision through visual art, whether it be nature, wildlife or just urban life. One of the first things I saw through my lens that made me connect even more with the field was a beautiful golden sunset melting over the horizon.

> *"It made me realise that these small moments, that most people seem to miss, are the moments actually worth capturing.*
>
> VIHAAN BHALOTIA

Q Your photos wander from owls in Goa to macro flowers after the rain to neon city nights. Which came first, and how did it spill over into the others?

I first got into photography when I was in Dubai. I fell in love with the giant cityscapes and buildings towering above me — that's how I started to break into the field. Eventually, after experimenting with styles, I realised that I have a real knack for wildlife and nature photography. I slowly started leaning more towards those themes than urban life, but I occasionally go back to my roots to remind myself of how my journey started.



BEHIND THE LENS

VIHAAN BHALOTIA

AT A GLANCE

STARTED IN	Dubai, UAE — drawn to the cityscapes
SHOOTS ON	Canon EOS 800D · 24MP APS-C
RANGE	Wildlife, nature, macro & urban nights
LOOKS UP TO	Anthony Gugliotta, Arnulfur Hakonarson

FINDING THE FRAME

Q Early on, was there a photographer, a friend, or a single image that changed the way you look at things through the lens?

When I began this journey — and even now — I try to take inspiration from other photographers on social media such as Anthony Gugliotta and Arnulfur Hakonarson, and I try to incorporate some of their techniques into my own style of photography.

Q What do you love about shooting on the 800D, and is there one piece of gear you'd never head out without?

Since I'm only a beginner, I don't have much hands-on experience with other camera bodies, but what I absolutely love about the Canon 800D — and Canon cameras overall — is the simplicity and the simple operating system. One thing I love about my Canon EOS 800D is that it is a 24MP crop APS-C sensor, which means I can get sharp photos without much effort. The autofocus is also one of the best I've tried to date.

Q What's a shot that really tested your patience — one you had to wait for, sit still for, or go back for? How long did it take?

This is a photograph of a blue Polaris Slingshot — only about 300 of these beautiful three-wheelers were sold at the time in the UAE. I waited for almost two hours in an open food-truck park with no luck finding any sports cars worth photographing. That was until I saw this Polaris Slingshot pull into the parking, and without wasting a second I went over and got the perfect shot I'd been waiting for.



THE BLUE SLINGSHOT, UAE

NATURE FINDS ITS WAY



'NATURE ALWAYS FINDS ITS WAY...'

Q You call one photograph 'Nature always finds its way...' — what's the story behind that shot?

I was out on one of my weekly walks that I take with my camera in hand, and I noticed a lamp had fallen on the ground. When I looked further, I saw small weeds growing through the lamp, indicating it had been like that for a while. That scene almost looked as if the forces of nature were 'retaking' what was originally theirs — hence the title of the photograph, 'Nature always finds its way...'.

THE LONG WAIT

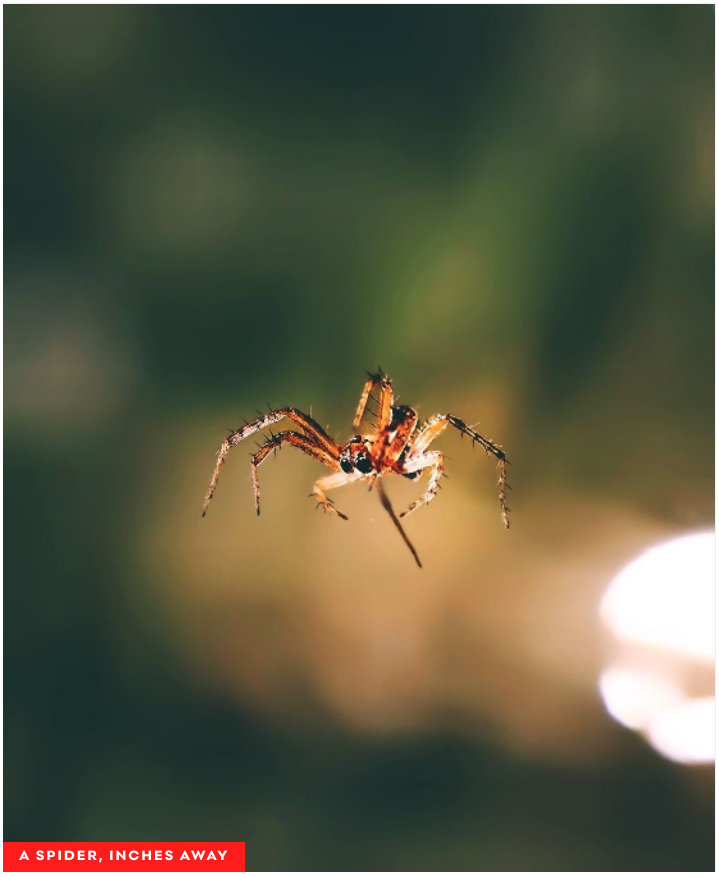
2 hrs

Time he spent in an open food-truck park waiting for a single car worth the frame — the blue Polaris Slingshot above, one of roughly 300 ever sold in the UAE.

THE LIGHT & THE SMALL



SUNSET OVER NOIDA, 7PM



A SPIDER, INCHES AWAY

Q What's a photo from your most recent time out shooting — where did you go, and what were you hoping to capture?

It was a fairly normal day — up until about 7PM, when I witnessed a sunset I thought I'd never witness again in a city like Noida. I immediately grabbed my camera and, with the last setting it was on, I took this photo. I wasn't hoping to capture a picture with this level of framing and colour; to be completely honest, I just wanted to capture the moment while it would have lasted.

Q Do you decide beforehand whether it's a nature day or a city day, or do you just follow whatever catches your eye?

Typically I would just capture whatever I find intriguing, be it nature or cityscapes. But there are some days where I feel like I want to get some nice shots of the urban life in big cities like Delhi, just to capture the diversity of the place — and other days I feel like I just want to have a really calm shoot, which would usually involve nature and wildlife.

Q What draws you to the tiny details — a lizard's scales, a spider — and how close do you actually get to catch them?

The small details I just love to get in the frame, like a lizard's scales or a weed growing inside a lamp, are often gone unnoticed by people walking by. What draws me to capture those details is the fact that the complexity of these details is all natural, developed over thousands and even millions of years of evolution — even the smallest things built for purpose. And to get these details I often have to get extremely close to the subject — when capturing a spider, to get the perfect focus and level of detail, my lens is sometimes even less than a hand's length away.

Q When someone scrolls through your photographs, what's the one feeling you hope stays with them?

I want people to remember me for my journey. When I first started out, I wasn't all that good at photography, but as time went on I improved — and I want people to scroll from the bottom to the top of my page and think to themselves that I've come a long way.

CONNECT & FOLLOW

INSTAGRAM @vihaanbhalotia **PORTFOLIO** Personal Portfolio **LINKEDIN** Vihaan Bhalotia

WILDLIFE · AVIAN PHOTO ESSAY

The Eleventh Kingfisher

SHEKHAR BOPARDIKAR · MUMBAI, INDIA

From a borrowed box camera and a Rs 3,000 Pentax K1000 to twenty-three safaris trailing a single tigress' bloodline — a four-decade pursuit of India's wild, told one patient frame at a time.



BANDHAVGARH


ORIENTAL DWARF KINGFISHER


T85 'PACMAN', RANTHAMBORE

Q How did wildlife photography first find its way into your life?

Photography has been my passion since childhood, in an era when owning a camera was a rare luxury. As a schoolboy, I borrowed a camera from my uncle, eager to explore and study it on my own. Later, while pursuing a professional course in Architecture, my passion had to pause under the weight of career compulsions. Yet, the spark never faded. With earnings from interior design projects during college, I purchased my first SLR—the Pentax K1000—for Rs 3,000, a princely sum in the 1980s. For the next three decades, until 2010, that camera became my faithful companion across travels in India.

The decline of traditional film rolls and the dawn of digital imaging ushered in a new era. DSLR technology transformed photography, and like many, I embraced this shift. Being a nature lover at heart, I gravitated toward avian and wildlife photography. What began as a hobby soon deepened into a defining passion.

THE FIELD LOG

FIRST SLR	Pentax K1000, Rs 3,000 in the 1980s — a 30-year companion
TURNING POINT	2011 — a Toehold trip to the Rann of Kutch
CADENCE	~4 safaris a year across India
RANGE	Ranthambore · Kaziranga · Bharatpur · Kanha · Sundarbans

THE MUSE

Q Take us back to the first sighting that truly hooked you.

After my early tours in the Rann of Kutch, Bandipur, Jamnagar, and Khijadia, I realized the need for a more powerful telephoto lens—something that could bring me closer to tiny birds perched far away, without disturbing them. For my next trip to Bharatpur Bird Sanctuary in 2013, I rented a Canon 100–400mm f/4–5.6 IS lens. That decision changed everything.

At Bharatpur, I captured sharper images of starlings, storks, mynas, sunbirds, barbets, vultures, eagles, darters, and even Indian jackals. Yet one bird stood out—the Little Blue Kingfisher, also known as the Common Kingfisher. Barely 16 cm long, with a short tail, dagger like beak, and electric blue upperparts set against vibrant orange underparts, it became my muse. Perched above slow moving waters, it would dive with precision to snatch fish, toads, or insects, repeating this ritual until sunset. For three days, I watched and photographed its rhythm, mesmerized. Later, I learned that the Indian subcontinent is home to eleven kingfisher species. That discovery sparked a lifelong pursuit: to photograph them all. By 2017, I had captured ten of the eleven, with only the elusive Ruddy Kingfisher still beyond my lens.

The second defining moment came during my first tiger safari in Ranthambore in 2014. There, I photographed the legendary tigress Machali. As I studied her remarkable life story, I resolved to follow her lineage. Between 2014 and 2016, I undertook 23 safaris, documenting her descendants—Noor (T39), Star (T28), Ustad (T24), Shiva (T57), Teddy Bear (T74), Bijalee (T83), Arrowhead (T84), and Pacman (T85). The climax arrived on my 23rd safari: I witnessed Pacman, a determined young male, execute a flawless hunt, bringing down a deer barely eight feet from our jeep. It was a once in a lifetime spectacle, a raw and unforgettable testament to the wild.

Q What is it about the kingfisher that keeps drawing you back?



ODKF — DUCK POSE

Across India's rivers, forests, and mangroves, flashes of sapphire, emerald, and ruby streak through the air—the kingfishers, nature's living jewels. With twelve dazzling species gracing the subcontinent, they embody both beauty and mastery. From the tiny Oriental Dwarf Kingfisher glowing like a gemstone in shaded forest streams, to the mighty Stork billed Kingfisher ruling riverbanks with its crimson bill, each species tells a story of adaptation and survival.

Kingfishers are more than ornaments of the wild. Their sharp vision and precision dives make them guardians of aquatic ecosystems, while their varied diets—from fish and crabs to insects and lizards—reveal their versatility. Solitary yet spectacular, they carve burrows into riverbanks, raise their young with devotion, and fill the forests with rattling calls and whistles.

THE KINGFISHER COUNT

10 of 11

Eleven kingfisher species grace the subcontinent. By 2017 he had photographed ten — only the elusive Ruddy Kingfisher still beyond the lens.

THE VOICES IN THE FIELD

Q Who shaped the way you see the wild?

In the early stages of my wildlife photography journey, I found inspiration in a passionate birder, Giri Kavale, then a partner at Toehold. His enthusiasm and guidance left a lasting impression on me. As I progressed, I turned to online resources, immersing myself in YouTube tutorials and lessons from renowned photographers. Among them, Sudhir Shivaram and Simon d'Entremont stood out—Sudhir for his mastery of Indian wildlife photography, and Simon for his continuous, insightful lessons on nature photography. Their work not only sharpened my technical skills but also deepened my awareness of the wild.

And then there is Ranthambore Tiger Reserve. Over the course of 23 safaris, its diverse landscapes and rich tapestry of fauna and avian life became more than just a destination—it became a mentor in itself. The forest taught me patience, respect, and the art of waiting for the wild to reveal its secrets.

Together, these voices—human, literary, and natural—shaped the way I see the wilderness. They continue to echo in my mind every time I lift the camera to my eye. That's when I started thinking that Wildlife Photography is all about 3 P's "Patience – Perseverance - Prudence".

THE SIGNATURE FRAME

Q What's the story behind the signature frame — where were you, and what made it the shot you keep coming back to?

The storm after the Yawn. June 14, 2016. Ranthambore's Zone 3, the magical Rajbaag lakefront. The air was hushed, the meadows glowing in the early light, and the forest alive with anticipation.

At 7:07 a.m., inside a thicket, a sudden yawn broke the silence. The male tiger T85—better known as Pacman—had revealed himself. One minute later, he emerged, stretching, eyes locked on us, aware yet undisturbed.

For the next ten minutes, he prowled the track, pausing in a classic cat pose, tongue flicking as if to say: "Where is my meal?" Then, frustrated by the empty lakefront, he slipped into the meadows, his gait restless, his eyes scanning desperately for prey.

By 7:21 a.m., Pacman vanished toward the hillside. Tourists thought the show was over—but the driver's instinct proved right. Moments later, Pacman reappeared, concealed in dry grass, his gaze fixed on a herd of unsuspecting spotted deer.



THREE LIGHTNING LEAPS

THE HUNT Pacman closes on a young stag.



FRAME 04

7:26 A.M. — THE STRIKE

RANTHAMBORE · ZONE 3 Rajbaag lakefront, 14 June 2016.

Then came the explosion. In three lightning leaps, Pacman struck. At 7:26 a.m., he clamped the neck of a young stag. The deer faltered, struggled, and fell—life extinguished in seconds.

The forest froze. 10 odd jeeps stood in stunned silence, witnessing the raw mastery of predation. Pacman had triumphed.

But the drama wasn't over. He briefly attempted a second kill, then returned to his prize. By 7:46 a.m., after dragging the carcass half a kilometer to his hideout, the hunt was complete. From that single yawn to the final drag, forty minutes of spellbinding wilderness had unfolded before our eyes.

For me, after 22 safaris in Ranthambore, this was the moment of a lifetime—capturing a young tiger's determination, his hunger, and his victory at barely ten feet away. Story & Photographs by ThirdEye Reflections.

"The storm after the Yawn — forty minutes of spellbinding wilderness, a young tiger's hunger and his victory, at barely ten feet away."

T85 'PACMAN' · RANTHAMBORE, 14 JUNE 2016



01 · THE YAWN



02 · LICENSE TO KILL



11 · WITH THE KILL

IN THE FIELD

Q The expedition that stayed with you long after you left?

No, it was at Kaziranga, a close encounter. It was only the first day, barely three hours into our safari, when the jungle reminded us of its raw unpredictability. What began as a calm sighting turned into a life threatening charge that could have ended in disaster.

We had stopped to admire a solitary rhino grazing peacefully on a grassy plain, about 500 meters from the track. He seemed oblivious to our presence, and I raised my telephoto lens, framing his massive silhouette through the viewfinder.

Then, in a heartbeat, the mood shifted. The rhino suddenly broke into a rapid trot, moving parallel to our axis. Before we could process his intent, he wheeled around and sprinted straight toward us—covering half the ground in a split second.



RHINO & CATTLE EGRET, KAZIRANGA

A calm sighting — 500 metres out — moments before the charge.



CHARGE · 01



02



03



SHEKHAR BOPARDIKAR

Q What do you hope your images make people feel for the wild?

Fifteen or sixteen years in the wilderness have taught me that photography is more than images—it is recollection, reflection, and responsibility. Each bird's song, each tiger's gaze, each lion's roar is a reminder that the natural world is fragile yet eternal.

IN THE BAG & WHAT'S NEXT

ESSENTIAL	**A full-frame body + a versatile 100–400mm telephoto**
CREDO	**"Wildlife photography begins where technique ends."**
NEXT	**Udupi & Gokarna — hornbills & kingfishers; Tadoba in October; a Tanzania safari, Jan 2027**

"These roars, these silences belong not just to me, but to all of us. Protect their world — preserve yours."

SHEKHAR BOPARDIKAR

CONNECT & FOLLOW

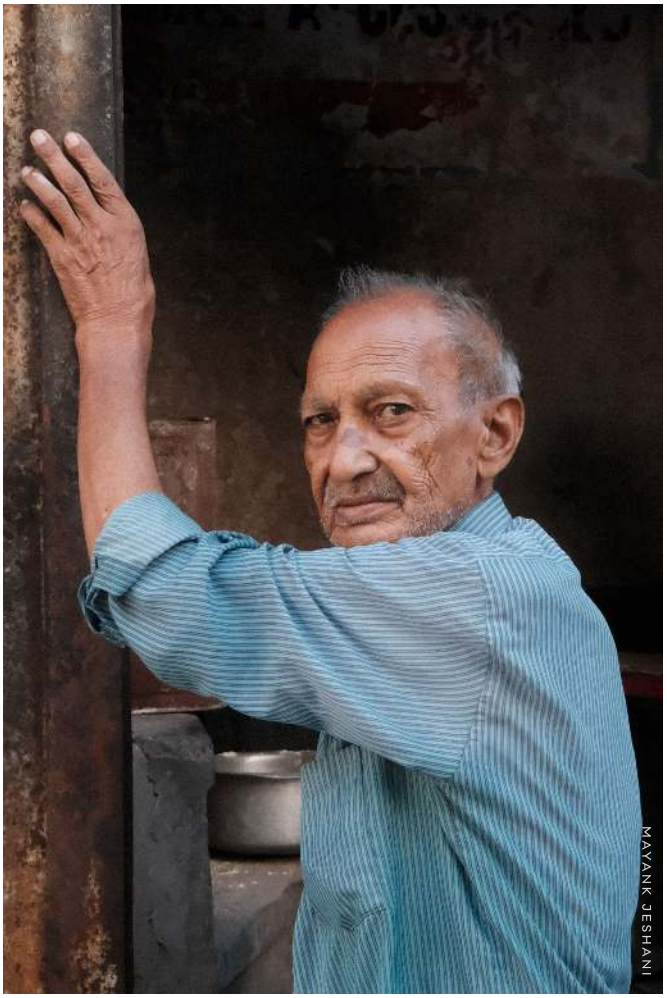
INSTAGRAM @bshekhar22 **JOURNAL** shekharbopardikar.blogspot.com

IN CONVERSATION · STREET & DOCUMENTARY

Frames That Feel

MAYANK JESHANI
STREET & DOCUMENTARY · VADODARA

His first frames were of Bappa's arrival in Vadodara, made with a camera he almost left behind. Since then: a 2am bus to Ahmedabad's old pols, a Fujifilm that reminded him of home, and the belief that a photograph should be remembered for how it made you feel.



SUBAH-E-AHMEDABAD FUJIFILM

Q Vadodara is home — what was the corner, street, or moment there that first made you want to raise a camera and start shooting?

It was during Ganesh Aagman in Vadodara. I had reached my village and had decided not to bring my camera back with me, but at the last moment something pushed me to. I don't really know what compelled me at that moment, but I suddenly felt the need to document Bappa's arrival. So I brought my camera back to Vadodara, not knowing that this would be the start of my journey with my first camera. What makes this incident so significant is that these are literally the first photographs I clicked with my first camera. I was not concerned about technicalities or clicking amazing pictures that would make it to magazines or newspapers, but just wanted to witness Bappa's arrival in my city and express it through my camera. Vadodara has seen almost all my firsts as a photographer, but Ganesh Aagman will always be special for me. It was not the city that got clicked, but the people whom I respect and admire a lot. I was just a simple guy with his first camera clicking pictures of Bappa's arrival, not knowing what awaited him in the journey ahead.

Q What's a frame from your Subah-e-Ahmedabad morning series that you'd like to share?

That morning, we were exploring the old heritage city of Ahmedabad, wandering the pols and narrow streets as the city awoke. It was my first-ever experience with street photography, and so I was discovering it all for the first time. What inspired me to capture a particular frame was most often the experience of a person doing ordinary things, a smile, an unplanned meeting, and the overall harmony of the environment in which people find themselves. I wanted to find authenticity and not look for pretty places to take pictures of. The old buildings in which the city's heritage is hidden are simply enhanced by the presence of people in them. I was perhaps more interested in people and discovering their morning routine than taking pictures of buildings. I wanted to find beauty in everyday life and the faces of local people, so I wandered the streets searching for them.

BEFORE THE CITY WAKES

Q Take us back to one of the first early mornings you headed out to shoot before the city had woken up — what made that morning stick with you?

One morning that I vividly remember was the morning of my first ever photowalk and street photography in Ahmedabad's old heritage city. We barely slept as we travelled from Vadodara. We had only gotten a couple hours of sleep, we woke up around midnight or 1am, and we reached the Vadodara bus stand by 2am to catch the earliest bus possible to Ahmedabad. It almost seems ridiculous that we would do all that just to go out and take pictures, but when you are truly passionate about something, you barely think about the sacrifices. We wanted to get a true feel of the city and its culture at a time when not many people would be out and about. This particular morning walk stands out because of the beautiful heritage buildings and the pictures I got, but it was also because of the people I met and the interactions I had. The feel of the streets was different at that particular hour, where you could almost see the morning air coming alive. Sometimes I get such beautiful stories and interactions with people that I cherish them even more than the beautiful pictures I got. Street photography is beautiful because you cannot predict what will happen. I think now you can see why mornings are my favorite time to do street photography and why I think they are worth it even when you barely got any sleep the night before.

Q You often shoot alongside other photographers on photowalks — Ganesh Vanare (@haram_khor_) among them. How has shooting in that kind of company shaped the way you read a street?

Shooting along with Ganesh Vanare, also known as Haramkhor, was a great experience for me as I have been following his work for the past four to five years. Getting a chance to shoot along with him in the old heritage city of Ahmedabad was a different world for me as compared to seeing his work on a screen. What inspires me the most about his work is that he does not go out and click, he waits for the right moment. It is easy for anyone to get inspired by his work but at the same time it is also really easy to end up shooting the same photos as him. What makes a photograph different is the content within the frame and the patience to wait for the right moment to click. I did not want to come back with the same pictures as the other people who went along. I wanted to find my own frame, look at the little things and capture moments differently, and guess what I did. You have to learn to shoot less and see the world around you better. I want people to look at my photographs and know that it is my work and not someone else's!

Q You share a lot of your work straight out of camera — what is it about Fujifilm's colours and feel that made it the camera you reach for?

It was a long way. Just prior to coming to Vadodara for my studies, I was in Kenya, where I did social service, and I had the chance to work with a media team for about a year and a half. I had the pleasure to get to know some cameras from different brands, such as Sony, Canon, Nikon, and others. It was around late 2020 when the thought first came into my mind. Up until that moment, I had been considering other systems, yet none of them seemed to click with me. For me, the decision to go with Fuji was rather intuitive – the colors, the look of the photos somehow reminded me of home. To me, it was important to feel comfortable with the camera. As it was mentioned before, I am a fan of the "straight out of camera" look that Fuji offers. The feeling that the pictures clicked with me, the atmosphere they recreate, the aesthetic appeal, all of that is hard to put into words. Perhaps, it really is a case of "you know it when you see it." I believe that the best pictures are those that capture the moment and the emotions one felt back at that moment – the feeling that cannot be recreated. As such, I think that editing is overrated and should be used in moderation – for me, it is a tool to enhance the look I already like, not to create something out of nothing.

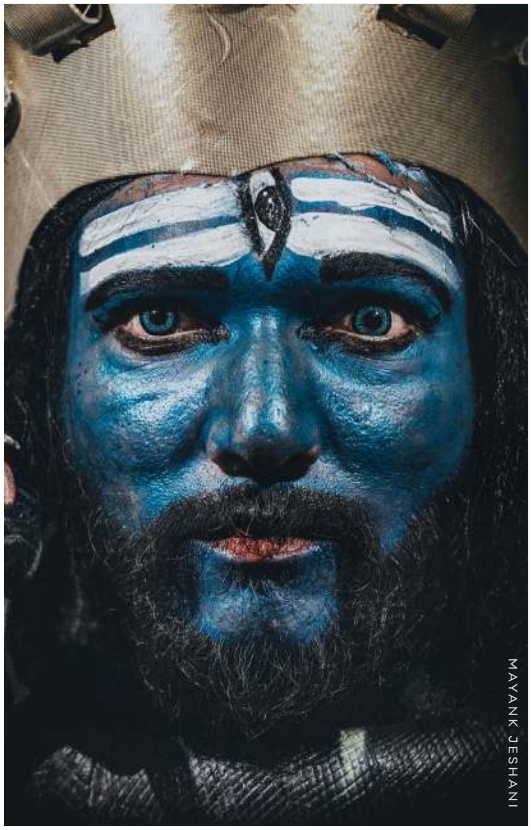
Q How do you carry your Fujifilm X-H2 when you head out to shoot?

FUJIFILM X-H2 →

> **"You have to learn to shoot less and see the world around you better."**
>
> MAYANK JESHANI



GANESH AAGMAN & WITHOUT ITS COLOURS



NIZAMPURA, VADODARA — ISO 10,000



BAPPA'S ARRIVAL — BURST MODE

Q What's a street candid you had only a split second to catch?

This portrait was captured during Ganesh Aagman in Nizampura, Vadodara. The reason why I captured this one is because it was unplanned. I went there to shoot the celebrations with my Fujifilm (which was really new to me) but somehow I missed the shows I actually wanted to capture. So I followed their bus and when the show started the choreographer allowed me to get close to the performer dressed as Lord Shiva. What makes this picture so special to me is the circumstances under which I captured this portrait. There was no light, no lights set up or anything for that matter. It was really dark outside (with no streetlights to aid me either). I was shooting at ISO 10,000 trying to capture the details in his blue paint, his face, the power he was giving out in the role without ruining the picture because of the circumstances under which it was captured. Another thing that adds to its value is the fact that I did not have a media pass or VIP pass or anything to get me to where I needed to be. I had a camera and a small window of opportunity I knew I had to use. It was also one of the first portraits I captured with my first real camera and to this day I'm still amazed at how I captured all the detail I did with such a high ISO and in the dark. Sometimes you have to work with the tools you're given.

Q Which frame from a festival or devotional moment, like Vadodara's Ganesh Aagman, would you like to share?

Photographing Vadodara's Ganesh Aagman close up was an experience for me where I truly understood the beauty and devotion of simply observing the event. My favorite photo is of a little girl who was sitting on her father's shoulders looking at Bappa coming towards them. She had such an innocent look of joy and devotion on her face, as to her it was not the crowds, the chaos, or the celebrations that mattered, but Bappa himself and I felt that I had to capture this moment specifically. All I did was turn my camera on Burst mode and waited as she admired Bappa, taking the picture as she did so, resulting in me getting a very candid shot of the young girl. As far as I know, none of the other photographers or their teams were able to get this exact shot. Being a photographer myself I know that one can prepare and plan a shot, set the scene, and be ready for the shot of a lifetime, but one cannot force it to come if the moment isn't right. I didn't just capture a child looking at a procession going by but something more meaningful, a moment of faith that I might not be able to witness again.

Q When you're out shooting, what makes you decide a moment is better told without its colours?

For me personally, it is the choice between what do I want to focus on in my photo by using black and white. Sometimes it is easier for me to work with the contrast in a black and white manner due to poor lighting, but sometimes I just get this feeling where it would be better to look at the moment in black and white. I think it allows me to get closer to the subject at hand and to see the finer details. I believe that without the distraction of color the eye can focus on specific things, like the eyes or the expression of a face or even the small details and the emotion that comes with it. I like the idea of being able to capture something that could be from any time frame, instead of being stuck in one era with its specific style. Sometimes I do it for the story, other times for the moment.

SOMETHING NEW



SLOW SHUTTER MOTION BLUR

Q What's a recent frame where you tried something new with your camera?

In this frame, I was experimenting with a slightly slower shutter speed to allow the motion blur to appear in the shot. We are used to seeing pictures where everything is clear and visible. I wanted to achieve a slightly different look and see how the motion of the model would express in the picture. Apart from the motion blur, the use of dark colors allowed me to capture the model's expression and what details were visible despite the movement. The main point of this experiment was not to capture a perfectly clear image. I am constantly trying to find new settings and experimenting is exciting. One can look at the same object countless times, but if you change something in your perception of it, you will get a different result.

AT A GLANCE

BASED	Vadodara, Gujarat
CAMERA	Fujifilm X-H2
GENRE	Street & documentary
FIRST FRAMES	Ganesh Aagman, Vadodara
CHASES	“Frames that feel, not just look”

Q Your bio says you chase 'frames that feel, not just look.' When someone stops on one of your photographs, what do you hope they walk away feeling?

To me a photo is something much more than the colours in it, its crisp edges or perfect composition. You can have the most beautiful colors and the best camera on earth, but if there is no feeling for someone that looks at your work, then I think something is missing. What makes a photo for me is what is captured in it. Be it the admiration of a child for Bappa, someone's facial expression, a stranger's smile or a moment in the street that will not repeat itself ever again. It is about stopping, observing and raising your camera. Capturing something real. Something that goes beyond the surface. I also hope that people can put their feelings into my photos. That when they look at a certain frame it triggers their memory of something that happened to them, maybe in their childhood or their hometown and something they might not even want to remember. They might feel completely differently from how I felt when capturing that moment and that is okay. In the end I hope people will not remember my photos for how they looked. But for how they made them feel. Because the colors might trigger our visual senses, but I think it is the feelings inside a frame that keeps us lingering.

CONNECT WITH MAYANK JESHANI

INSTAGRAM @shots_bymj



WITHOUT ITS COLOURS B&W

WALLMAG AWARDS 2026

The Finalists' Honour Roll

Across the five WallMag Awards whose winners were announced since our last volume, these are the Top 100 Finalists — chosen by community votes, before the jury decided the winners. Each roll is listed alphabetically, without rank: every name here stands equally.

DRONE PHOTOGRAPHY AWARDS 2026

Abhishek Jaunwar
Abishek DM Joel
Akshay
Akshay Kanade
Akshay Rathod
ALVIN MATHEW
Amogh Jain
Anshul Agarwal
Arup Shil
Aryan Naik
Ashwin KV
Ayush Patel
Beven Coutinho
Bhaskar Jyoti Tamuli
Bhavik Saluja
ch surya kumar
Chrisly Carvalho
Deepayan Chakraborty
Dhananjaya Mahendran
Dharmesh Kher
Dhinakaran
Dhruv nimbhorkar
Dhruvv Maskyy
Dr. J. SHANTHA RUBAN
Evyavan
FAIJAS HASSAN
Gautam Malviya
Gowtam R
Harsh Panchal
Harshit Dharmendra Patel
Himadri Bhuyan
Hrithik Saini
Jaival khared
Jigmet Otsal
KAMESH KUMAR K
Lakshya
Manoj Hegde
MD Minhaj Quraishi
Mehtab Singh
Mona Tibrewal
Naga Nikhil Akkishetty
nikhil chauhan
Ningthoujam Abung Meitei
Omkar Rajendra Mane
Prankul agarwal
Praveen kumar
Prem Kumar AR
Prince Kumar Mehra
Prithvi Raj R
Ragavan Subbiah
Rahul
rajdhani memoriesmaker
Reginold Bose
Rehan
Rohit Kumar Yadav
Santosh D
Sathishkumar
Saurabh Sirohiya
Shashank Patil
Shyam Kumar
Sohan Das
sudheesh komath
Tarun Krishna
Viraj Mistry
Viswa Tripathi
Yash Save

PHOTOJOURNALISM PHOTOGRAPHY AWARDS 2026

Aarya Srivatsan
Aaryan Dmelo
Aastha Grover
Abhijay
Abhijeet srivastava
Abhimanyu Sharma
Alapan Photography
Aneek Chatterjee
Anirban Ganguly
ANISH MAITRA
Anjan Ghosh
Ankit Bisht
Anurag Trivedi
Arpit Sharma
Asimesh Pal
BHASKAR NANDI
Bhavya Gambhir
Bimurtya Ganguli
Chinmoy Patra
Daksh shardul
DEEPAK
Deepak Mishra
Dev Inwati
Dhananjjeyan K
Dherya Bhargava
Dilkhush Choubey
Divyam
EPPLAPALLI CHARAN SAI
Govardhan Madhavam
Gulshan Singh
Hari Kadam
Harsh RATHOUR
Harsheet Kashyap
Basumatary
Hefzul Bahar
Imran Khan
Indraneel Saha
Jai S
Jay Agrawal
Jay R
Jayasish Banik
Kaif Shaikh
Khushdil Goyal
Korlapu Sudeep kumarr
Kushagra Pandya
Kushal Chaudhary
Lalithaksh S
Madhuri Maitra
Mahendra Bhat
Mahesh soni
Milindh M
Mohammed Shiyaji
MONIL SONI
Mrunmay Suryawanshi
Muskan Verma
Navaneeth Krishnan
Naveen JR
Neel Chaudhari
Netra Murbadkar
Nilimesh Bhowmik
Om Devendranath
Prakash Vaghela
Pravalsinh Rathod
Provasish Haldar
RAHUL ARYA
Raj Maurya
Ride O Reels
rohan telang
ROURIB SARKAR
Rudra Sonava
Sai Kumar
Sameer Dubey
Sandip Chakrabarty
Sangeetha.s.pai
Sanjib Bhattacharjee
Santanu Mallick
Santanu Sengupta
Santosh Kadam
Satya Prakash Rout
Sayani Chakraborty
Shaik Sabeel Mahmood
Shankar Iyer
Shibanjan Saha
Sivakrishna.V
snehashis chatterjee
Sovan Das
Sraavan Kallen
Subhadeep Chakraborty
SUBHAJIT DATTA
Sudeep Chakravarty
SUTHANTHIRA Sith
Tanumoy Chattopadhyay
Tarak Nath Roy

Tathagat Roy
Tharini S
Ujaan Samanta
Vaibhav Gharve
Varun Makar
Vishal Kapoor
Vishnu Gopal Visakkhan
Yashvi Sarin

TRAVEL PHOTOGRAPHY AWARDS 2026

Aaish Alam
Aamir Khan
Abhay Prajapati
Abhishek Sonwani
Abish
Afzal Khan
Ajai
akshay S
Akshaya Sonawane
Anant Sharma
Ankita Basak
Ansh Jain
Arindam Mullick
Arit Dhar
Arnab Biswas
Arnav Sahu
Astrin Rodrigues
Avantika Suryavanshi
Avinash Phadatare
Ayush Anand
Balaji Uthayakumar
Brishti Rakshit
Chaitanya Karkase
chintan vyas
Debojyoti Bhattacharya
Dev Rai
Devika Pramod
Dhyeya Sekhalia
Dipankar Ghosh
Diptadip Roy
Disha Shah
Divyasree Hazare
Diya Shah
Dr. Haryax Pathak
Dr. J. SHANTHA RUBAN
Farman Ansari
febin babu
Harshal Ram Yojana Surve
Hrithik Saini
ISHANK SACHIN DESHPANDE
Jaya Chandra V
JAYANTA RAY
jithin kishore
Kajal H
Kuntal Paul
Lakshay Chandna
Loyal Manuka
Maitree Acharya
Manjunath Karanth
Manjunath S
Massera Siddique
Mayuri Sonsale
Mohd Asif Khan
Mohit Asrani
Mr Sumit Bose
Muralidharan Dhandapani
Nalayak_Kalakar
Nikita Malla
Nilendriya Sinha Ray
Nilimesh Bhowmik
Oraganti Saicharan
parv panchal
Pragya Varma
Pranay Kapahi
R I Nandini
Rahul Das
Rahul Wedpathak
Ranit Kukreja
Ratnadip Das
Reyan sofi
Riju Adgiri
Roopal Aditya
Rupak Sinha
Sabyasachi chakroborty
sagar mondkar
Sandip Chakrabarty
Sanjay Joshi
SANJUNA K
Santanu Mallick
Saurav
Shivaji Dhute
Shreya Das
Shreya Satish
Sneha Sengupta
Souharda Roy
SUBHAJIT DATTA
Subhankar Dhar
Suneeth S G
Sushovan Sar
Suyash Sinha
Swapnil Deshpande
Tanay Verma
TUSHAR SHARMA
udayan kundu
Ujjawal Agarwal
Vansh Duggal
Vinit Patel
Waljagring N Sangma
Yashwant Marathe
YOGA KUMAR

NATURE PHOTOGRAPHY AWARDS 2026

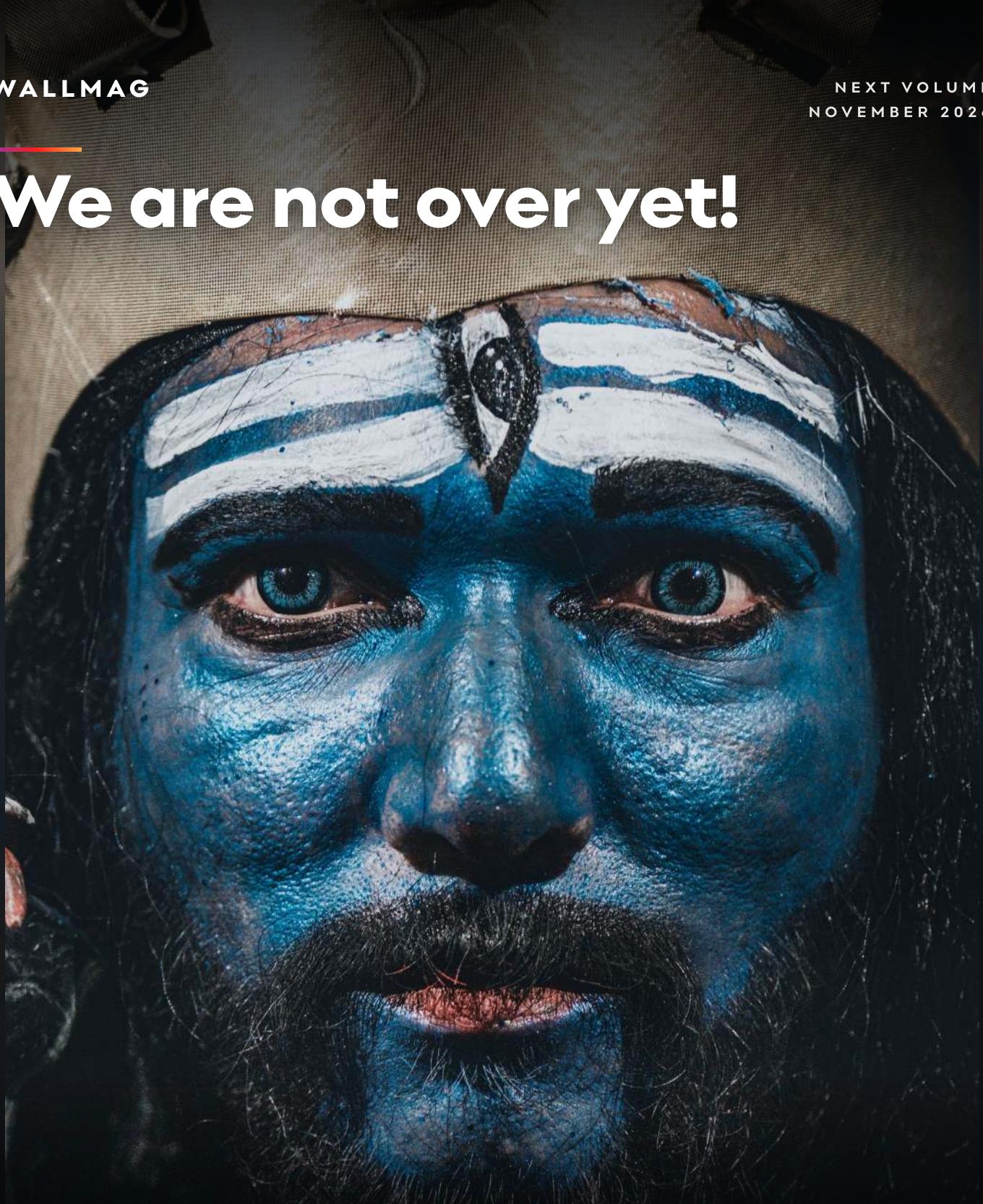
Aakanksha Sharma
Abel Binu
Abhijaditya Pandey
Achintya Kumar
Aditya Vemulakonda
Agastya Patel
Ajit Mishra
Anais Carmen Bourquin
Anil kumar Kandukuri
Anirban Mudi
Aniruddha Das
Anjali Verma
Anuleesha Sautya
Anvay Patil
Arit Dhar
Arnab Biswas
Arya Chatterjee
Ayush kumar Singh
Ayushi Apurva
Barefoot_Thoughts in pixels
beena gangani
Bideepta Gogoi
Bimoykumar Pktr
CHALAMALLA NISHANTH
Chanchal Dhruw
CHINTA HARAN GHOSH
Deepika Rani
Devang dayalal soni
DIPANJAN NATH
Diptadip Roy
Divyansh Dharmadhikari
Dr. J. SHANTHA RUBAN
Gaurav Nakra
Girish Ananthamurthy
Hanshitha R
Jaival khared
Jaya Chandra V
Jayanth
Jotham Adriel Johnson
Kalpana rath
Kalpesh Naik
Kenvi Maniar
Kiran Dey
Kiran L
MahediHasan Matiya
Manish Kumar
Manoj kumar
Manoj Kumar R
Manthan Patil
mir moomin
Mohammed Redzuan
Mohan Durga
Mohit Singh
Moumita Chaudhuri Dutta
Mriganko Sarkar
Naresh
Nikhil Krishna V H
Nilimesh Bhowmik
Ninestar
NIPUN RAJ
Nitika Sharma
Parag Prajapati
Prajapati Yash
Pratyay Dey
Prem Sahana
Priyanshu Sengupta
Pulkit Pandey
Purva Banchhode
Radhakrishnan P
Ramachandran. R
Ramya R
Ranjith Menon P V
RISHI KHATRI
ROHAN Sai
Sakib Ahmed
Sanchit Koli
Sani Paul
Saptarshi Bhattacharya
Sarthak Bhardwaj
Shashwat Shaurya
SHEKHAR BOPARDIKAR
Shivang Anand
Shivansh Gupta
Solanki Dhaval Rajeshkumar
Soumyyendu Bagg
Sounak Chatterjee

SUBHAJIT DATTA
Sudip Mayra
SUDIP ROY
Sutanu Biswas
Svs Ganesh
udayan kundu
Vedang churi
Vignesh T
Vikas KS
VINEETH K.C
Visakh Sivan
Vishal Goswami
VISHAL PARIHAR
Yeshwanth Ajay Chandra

MUSICIAN OF THE YEAR AWARDS 2026

Abdul Kadir Ali
Aditi Pethe
Akanksh Sahoo
Amlanjyoti John Singh
Ananta Adhikary
Anubhav Silas
Archana Kamath
Arindam Sen
Aritra Ganguly
Arjun Singh Rawal
Arnab Chowdhury
Arpita Biswas
Arun GS
ARUN SHARMA
Aryan Singh
Astrit
Atharva Kadam
Avatsara Gadiraju
AVIRUP DASGUPTA
Baidurjya Banerjee
Benita Laishram
Bhavyansh Sharma
Bhuvan Ahuja
Chandan Mukherjee
Daksh Bothra
DeadlyMaximus
Dhriti Kartik
Dipti Madane
Evan Sawant
Infected Studio
Ishan Mahansaria
jaisingh daf
Jay Andrew
Joel Sheen
John Sebastian D'souza
Jonathan Paul
joydeep bhattacharjee
Kanhai Kapoor
KarN
Kartikeya Deahpande
Kavitha Jayaraman
Kowshik Saha
Krishnendu Hari
Kumar Madhukar
Kzee
Lakshmi Sarvari
Lakshmi Shankarrao
Madhav Praveen
Madhuri Kashyap
Manas bora
Manju Karur
Manonmani Sridharan
MARKANDEY RAMAN
Md Hassan Iqbal
MINT BERRY
Mousom Prayas Changmai
Mr AS Venom
Mr Pizza Panda
MSADD
naresh shah
NILLANJAN nandy
Nipun Basotra
nitesh poddar
Ojasya Sharma
Omkar Bagve
Pamphah Sen
Pathikrit Dutta Mazumder
Pritesh Chakraborty
Punit Soni
Raahi
Rangrez
Reyon Acharya
Riff Guru School Of Music Training
RISHU
Ritesh Pardeshi
Rituraj Mitra
Ronit Mahadik
Sai Ganesh Nagpal
Shilp Shah
Shrey Khurana
Shreyash Patole
Shreys Divvaakar
SNEHIT
Somnath Roy
Soumalya Mukherjee
Sruti Sharma
Subhadrakalyan
Sugeet Mathurti
Sumedha
Swapnil Garg
themanlybrown
Tushar
Tushar Gunjal
Tushar Sharma
Vaishali Ghag
Varsha Nataraj sriguru
Victor Mckertich
Vilohitt
Vinayak Pol
Vishwak Banerjee

We are not over yet!



Volume 9 lands in November 2026 — new creators, new instruments, new frames. If you have been making something nobody asked for, this is the part where you send it to us.

Submit your work at **join.wallmag.io/add-samples** *— or DM us on Instagram. Every feature begins with a conversation.*

EMAIL TEAM@WALLMAG.IO INSTAGRAM @WALLMAG.CREATORS WEB WWW.WALLMAG.IO

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