WALLMAG

FOOD · PHOTOGRAPHY · MUSIC · DANCE

Vol 9

NOV 2026



Salt & Story

— **Stories at Every Meal** — Joyadrita Ragavendran Chatterjee
— **Nani's Kitchen** — Sakshi Arvind Agrawal
— **The Floor Oven** — Brinda Kumar
— **Helping Hand** — Chinta Haran Ghosh

ON THE COVER / JOYADRITA RAGAVENDRAN CHATTERJEE

$9

EDITORIAL SUMMARY · IN THIS ISSUE

Salt & Story

This volume begins in the kitchen. Joyadrita Ragavendran Chatterjee starts in Numma's, where anyone could walk in hungry; Sakshi Arvind Agrawal, India's #2 food creator of 2026, still cooks from the memories of Nani's kitchen; Brinda Kumar once sat on a floor oven that was baking a cake. Twenty-one creators sat down with us this month — photographers, musicians, home cooks, a dancer — among them a sound designer who finished a full Dolby Atmos mix in twenty-four hours and a wildlife photographer who followed a tiger for half an hour. Every story here was made slowly, by hand, and is meant to be shared.

21	83	177	200
CREATORS	PAGES	PHOTOGRAPHS	AWARD FINALISTS

TWELVE TO BEGIN WITH

01 Stories at Every Meal — Joyadrita Ragavendran Chatterjee
It begins in Numma's kitchen, where anyone could walk in hungry: a journey through Bengali home cooking and memory.

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Winner of the Nature Photography Awards 2026, on the hour and a half spent waiting for two weaver ants to line up for "Helping Hand."

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Ajja taught Archana an Abhang at the age of three; the singer-composer traces every song back to that grandfather's home.

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The scores that started it all, the mentor who sharpened an ear for detail, and a full Dolby Atmos mix finished in 24 hours.

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India's #2 food creator of 2026 grew up with Nani, Nana and Mama, and still cooks from the memories of Nani's kitchen.

07 Seeing Is Not the Same as Reaching — Ritibrata Samanta
More observer than photographer, Ritibrata looks for the stories beneath ordinary scenes, and knows seeing is not the same as reaching.

08 The Voice of My Soul — Dr. Ranjanidevi Saravanan
A Saraswathi Veena artist and lecturer at Thiruvaiyaru Music College, on an instrument that once felt impossibly large.

09 I See You — Harsh Rathour
It started with a phone, a bicycle and the streets of home; now photography is a reason to travel and to listen to strangers.

10 Banned from the Staircase — Jaivardhan Verma
From a Junior KG stage at Shanmukhananda Hall to 3 AM jam sessions in an office stairwell, and a band named for being banned.

11 The Floor Oven — Brinda Kumar
As a child, Brinda once sat on a floor oven that was baking a cake; today the focus is millet recipes that are flavourful and easy to cook at home.

12 The Energy That Holds — Arnav Bachospati Chakraborty
Bassist, producer and "vibe curator": from spool-tape recorders to founding the boutique label Gunzooloo Records, and a 30,000-strong satsang crowd.

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BENGALI HOME KITCHENS · FOOD

Stories at Every Meal



JOYADRITA RAGAVENDRAN CHATTERJEE
BENGALI HOME CHEF · @FOODOFJOYFLAVOURSOFBENGAL

Raised between a Baangal mother's kitchen and a Ghoti father's, she cooks the food of both Bengals — and, like her grandmother Numma, serves every dish with its story.

Q Take us back to the very first kitchen you remember — the one where your love for Bengali food began. Paint us that scene.

It has to be Numma, my paternal grandmother's kitchen, where there was food for everyone. There was no bias based on caste, color, culture, or someone's societal stature. Anyone could walk in hungry and leave satiated. Later, this became a practice with Maa too; she found happiness through cooking and feeding people. For me, their kitchen would be the ultimate space that helped me develop a taste for good food. Numma and Maa remain the first culinary geniuses who inducted me into loving and respecting my regional food.

Q What was the first dish you ever cooked entirely on your own, and how did it turn out?

The first dish that I can recollect is a plate of Mutton Biryani, which turned disastrous because of my misjudgement of the ingredients and their quantity to be used.

Q So much of Bengali home cooking is handed down, hand to hand. Who taught you yours — a mother, a grandmother, someone else?

For me, it's not only the female family relations but the men too. Having been brought up in an extended joint family, I have had the privilege to enjoy culinary delights across East and West Bengal—or now as we know as Pre and Post Partition food. Having my maternal side originate from Bangladesh while my paternal side being native to Bengal, I have had the good fortune to be pampered in both styles of cooking. While the women meticulously and tirelessly planned the day's menu and executed the same, the men indulged in procuring the best supplies from the market. So I find myself extremely entitled to have inherited my culinary capability or instincts from both the female and male family relations.

And then post-marriage, even though a cross-cultural one, my husband has been the real force who keeps me motivated to take my native cuisine to the next level every time. Having acquired the real flavours behind some of the Bengali vegetarian fares well, he makes sure that I reach the level of perfection with one dish at a time.

AT A GLANCE

CUISINE	Bengali home food, East & West Bengal
TWO KITCHENS	Baangal mother · Ghoti father
RAISED IN	An extended joint family
FIRST TEACHERS	Numma and Maa
SIGNATURE	A story with every dish
VEG BENCHMARK	Shukto · Chochhori · Dhokar Dalna
GUEST CHEF	"The Joy of Pujo on a Plate", Marriott Hyderabad · OKRA

A STORY WITH EVERY DISH

Q Which Bengali dish would you call unmistakably yours?

For me, every dish carries a story; for instance, as a child while feeding me a full course meal (both lunch and dinner), Numma, my paternal grandmother, would narrate stories about the food, the ingredients involved, the style of cooking, and also where the ingredients came from. She did this without fail. This is something that I do with every meal—sharing stories and anecdotes that people carry with them as a memory.





FROM HER KITCHEN Three of her bowls: the curry on the opening page, and the two at right.

THE PUJO SPREAD

Q Walk us through this Pujo spread — what did you cook, and who were you feeding that day?

The first two images reflect a Bengali Vegetarian and Non-vegetarian Thali comprising of both comfort as well as celebratory food. We had some amazingly talented content creators from Hyderabad who graced the meal and thoroughly enjoyed it.





THE FIRST TWO The vegetarian and non-vegetarian thalis.

The final two images reflect a "Paanta Platter" which is an overnight soaked rice congee served with some vegetarian and non-vegetarian condiments signifying the numerous rituals in Bengali Hindu tradition. It's an offering made to Goddess Durga on the last day of Durga Pujo, thus symbolising the pure, unadulterated love of parents for their daughter, which need not always be an ostentatious display of some rich food alone.





THE FINAL TWO Paanta, and the Paanta Platter at her guest-chef residency, Marriott Hyderabad · OKRA.

THE VEGETARIAN BENCHMARK

Q You clearly love the vegetarian side of Bengali cooking as much as the non-veg — the Shukto, the Aloo Posto. Which vegetarian dish of yours do you wish more people gave a real chance?

It has to be Shukto- different versions of it Mixed Shukto, Neem Phooler Shukto, Motor Dal er Bora Diye Shukto, Jhinge-r Shukto.

Also, the different versions of Chochhori or Mixed Vegetable Mish-mash. And the eternal favourite Dhokar Dalna.

For Bengalis, the benchmark of a good cook is their expertise at the vegetarian dishes because all these dishes are prepared without onion/garlic which are considered (as per Ayurveda) "tamasik" or flavours that induce inertia, darkness, or agitation and also "rajasik" which is known to stimulate passion and sensory desires as opposed to "sattvik" flavours that bring in calm.

Having been brought up in an extended joint family comprising multiple widows in the household that included my great-grandmother and great-grand aunts, vegetarianism was encouraged as a good practice. Besides, being ardent followers of Lord Vishnu my paternal grandparents only indulged in eating fish as most Bengali Hindus consider fish to be the "fruits of the ocean"!

GOTA CHOCHHORI · A FAMILY'S HISTORY



THE CORNER The light in this area of her kitchen.



SHEETAL SHOSHTHI From the dish that carries her family's history.

Q What's the one tool or corner of your kitchen you couldn't cook without?

The light in this particular area in my kitchen is the most conducive to some great photography.

Q Which dish carries your family's history?

At a time when convenience takes over traditions and customs, our previous generation still adheres to them irrespective of anything—in spite of factors like age and frailties, they prefer acting in accordance to the demands of their homes or homies. It's their adherence to conventions that gives them a sense of purpose, a sense of belonging, or even staying relevant. As time flies, these practices keep them rooted. Being born to a Baangal mother and a Ghoti father, I've always had the best of both worlds. Thus witnessing traditions, customs, and rituals have been quite common. One such is Sheetal Shoshthi (the day after Saraswati Pujo) wherein the women of the household will not cook as they practice something called "Arandhan" or no cooking day. Vegetarian food is made the previous night which is consumed the next day cold (as Sheetal translates to cool). Sheetal Shoshthi also denotes paying homage to Goddess Sheetola, thus praying for the well-being of the children. This is also an act of showing respect and gratitude to Mother Nature for showering us with the new harvest season—hence Ghoti households prepare "Gota Sheddho", translating to whole boiled vegetables and whole green moong, symbolising that we shouldn't tamper with the produce of Mother Nature, thus maintaining their authenticity and originality. A common practice in my paternal side too, with a slight modification suggested by my great grandmother (whose tastebuds were way ahead of her time even though she was a widow), was something that was later coined as "Gota Chochhori" or the same whole winter vegetables, spinach shoots/stalks, and whole green moong dal turned into a spicy vegetable mish-mash! Perhaps we are the only home doing that. With everyone passing away, Maa and Baba have kept this tradition alive in spite of all odds that life throws at them—this time Baba's right hand being in a sling! It is this dedication of theirs year after year which makes me wonder if I too would be able to do justice to their legacy—a question which only time will answer!

BABA'S REZALA

Q What's something delicious you cooked recently?

The dish is Kolkata Style Mutton Rezala. Baba, a man of exceptionally few words, is quite loud and eloquent when it comes to food and everything associated with it. He's the most enthusiastic person in the room when you debate about food/sports/politics—in no particular order though! While sports and politics can wait for another day, let's focus on Baba's primary interest—food; he enjoys having the best fares, which need not at all be the ostentatiously expensive ones but the ones that truly touch a true blue Bengali's soul and heart! For instance, a simple yet flavourful "Macher Jhol/Mangshor Jhol" or a good "Shukto"!

Having his office in Dalhousie area, the quintessential "Office Parar Khawar" aka the food sold by the hawkers in that area wasn't unknown to him. Till date he raves about how good and fresh the food was since he's at times been part of their breakfast spread or the lunch during his hay days! And just like any other food lover/connoisseur, he always shares his love for food with anyone he meets—the best "baajaar" in Kolkata or the best "Mutton Cutlet". And one of his best recommendations across Kolkata has been Sabir's Hotel; nestled in the busy lanes of Chandni Chowk, this legendary 76 years old serves one of the most iconic Mughlai food. Started by Late Chef Sabir Ali who traveled from Lucknow to Kolkata in 1940, Sabir's (opened in 1948) pioneers in the unanimously celebrated Kolkata Mutton Rezala apart from other iconic dishes like Biryani, Gurda-Kaleji, and its flaky Parathas. From a time when "hidden gems" still escaped the eyes of pseudo-content creators, this truly qualifies for one only if you aren't too late in discovering it! Whether or not we share the same interest in sports or politics, Baba and I have the same fondness for good food! Thus recreating one of his and my favourite—Sabir's Hotel style Kolkata Mutton Rezala!





KOLKATA MUTTON REZALA Her Sabir's Hotel style Rezala, recreated for Baba.

Q What's a dish you're dreaming of cooking next?

The dish here is "Sujir Halua" or "Suji ka Halwa" which has a beautiful story in our house which goes like... Now, we all have grown up in households wherein at least one grandparent's presence loomed large; not to miss how enjoyable the entire environment at home used to be. You could always get away without being thrashed if they were around, because they literally took the role of a protector just too seriously. Imagine then how fortunate I was as a child as I had both my paternal grandparents, great-grandparents, and their closest kith & kin around! Due to the presence of grandparents, as a child, I led a sheltered life, cocooned by their love, affection, and friendly reprimands. The days when I fell sick, my grandmother barely allowed us to call on the doctor. She would prepare her own medicines at home, meticulously selecting her ingredients. One of the best of the lot used to be a "miracle halwa" that was laden with ghee and dry fruits because these were deemed to be directly proportional to her or Maa's love for me! Being the glutton I am, sometimes all I needed to do was feign an illness and demand the "miracle halwa"! It's been more a decade that Numma, my paternal grandmother, and Dada, my paternal grandfather, isn't around but I still dream of this Halwa and I truly look forward to making it whenever I am unwell as these are the moments when you crave the warmest hug and for me this "Sujir Halua" or "Suji ka Halwa" is one such dish.



SUJIR HALUA The "miracle halwa", laden with ghee and dry fruits.

Q When someone, years from now, says the words "Joy's food," what do you hope the first thing they remember is?

Every morsel should remind them of home —its warmth and all those who added to this warmth.

CONNECT WITH JOYADRITA **INSTAGRAM** @foodofjoyflavoursofbengal

NATURE PHOTOGRAPHY · AWARDS 2026 WINNER

Helping Hand

CHINTA HARAN GHOSH
NATURE, WILDLIFE & MACRO

Winner of the WallMag Nature Photography Awards 2026, he works close and low to the ground: an hour and a half at a weaver ant nest, three hours lying beside a lizard, and years spent looking for one hornbill.



HELPING HAND The winning photograph: two weaver ants carrying a black ant.

1.5 hours APPROX., AT THE NEST

Q How long did you have to watch that nest before the two weaver ants lined up to carry the black ant for this exact frame?

I had to watch that nest for approximately one and a half hours before the two weaver ants lined up to carry the black ant for this exact frame. It was a patient wait, and I stayed with the nest until that precise moment finally came together.

Q How did your journey into nature photography begin — what first pulled you toward watching and framing wild creatures?

My journey into nature photography began after I saw some stunning bird images captured by my Guru, Biswajit Ghosh. He was the one who inspired me and also taught me wildlife and nature photography. Seeing his work opened my eyes to the wild world around me, and from there I started learning to watch and frame the creatures I had once simply passed by.

Q Do you remember the first wild moment you managed to photograph that made you think, "this is what I want to keep doing"?

Yes, I remember it clearly. The moment that made me feel this is what I want to keep doing was when I first captured an image of a Tickell's Blue Flycatcher. That first successful frame of the bird gave me a feeling I had not experienced before, and it confirmed for me that nature photography was something I wanted to pursue.

THE GURU & THE KIT



IN THE FIELD Chinta Haran Ghosh, from his portfolio.

Q Was there a person, a mentor, or a photographer whose work shaped the way you see the wild?

Yes, there certainly was. As I mentioned earlier, that person was Biswajit Ghosh, my Guru. His work shaped the way I see the wild, and he is the one who inspired me as well as taught me wildlife and nature photography. His guidance has stayed with me throughout my journey.

Q What is this setup, and why is it the one that suits the close, patient work you do?

This setup is a Nikon D500 paired with a Tamron 90mm Macro lens. It gives me sharp images with great autofocus, and it creates beautiful bokeh. That combination is exactly why it suits the close, patient work I do.





THE KIT Nikon D500 and Tamron 90mm Macro.



PORTFOLIO One of the favourite images from his portfolio.

AT A GLANCE

WON	WallMag Nature Photography Awards 2026
GURU	Biswajit Ghosh
FIRST KEEPER	Tickell's Blue Flycatcher
SETUP	Nikon D500 · Tamron 90mm Macro
FIELD FAVOURITE	Manglajodi Wetland

LYING LOW



MID-DISPLAY A fan-throated lizard.

3 hours APPROX., LYING DOWN

Q Males flare that colourful throat-fan only for a few seconds in mating season — how did you time catching it?

I was lying down and watching his movement, and whenever he displayed, I pressed the shutter button. This continued for approximately three hours. Staying low and staying patient let me catch those brief displays as they happened.

> **"Staying low and staying patient let me catch those brief displays as they happened."**
>
> CHINTA HARAN GHOSH

LITTLE RANN OF KUTCH



THE FEATHER SERIES A bird of prey with its kill.

Q Where did you come across this bird of prey tearing and isolating the feathers from its kill?

I came across this bird of prey tearing and isolating the feathers from its kill at Little Rann of Kutch in Gujarat. It was there that I was able to witness and photograph this moment.

A LONG SEARCH

Since the start OF HIS WILDLIFE WORK

Q What was it about this subject that made you want to photograph it?

This image is of a Rufous-necked Hornbill, a female. It is one of the beautiful-looking hornbills. I had been looking for this bird since I started wildlife photography, so this image is special for me.



NOT SHOWN TO MANY A female Rufous-necked Hornbill.

GOING BACK



MOTHER AND YOUNG A blackbuck feeding her baby.

Several visits

BY CAR

Q How did you stay unnoticed long enough to capture such a tender moment between the mother and her young?

I was looking for this moment, so I visited the location several times by car. I stopped the car at a distance so that they could not notice us. Finally, one day I got this beautiful moment between the mother and her young.



THE FIELD Manglajodi Wetland.

Q Where was this taken, and what made that outing one you still think about?

This was taken in Manglajodi Wetland. This place is one of the favourite places among bird photographers, where you can find lots of migrated water birds as well as resident water birds. Above all of that, it gives you every type of shot you wanted for.

Q When you head out with your camera now, what kind of wild moment are you still hoping to witness and bring home?

I will go to Manglajodi at the end of this year. I am looking for some creative nature shots as well as some action shots. Those are the kinds of wild moments I am still hoping to witness and bring home.

CONNECT WITH CHINTA HARAN GHOSH

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HINDUSTANI CLASSICAL · SINGER & COMPOSER

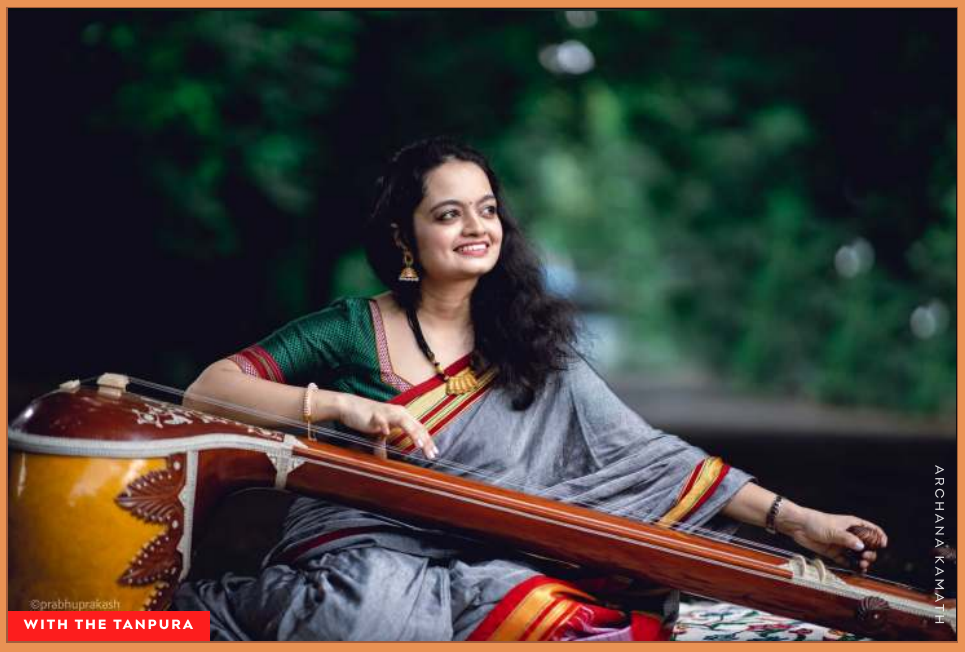
Ae Savere

ARCHANA KAMATH
@SWAR_CHANA · THE WHITE WINDOW

A bhajan learned on the floor from her Ajja at three; a mentor in Shankar Mahadevan; and a first composition that led her to her roots in Kashmir.

AT A GLANCE

SINGS	Hindustani classical · composer
BAND	The White Window
COMPOSITION	"Ae Savere" with Shankar Mahadevan
FIRST SONG	"Omkar Pradhaan", at age three



WITH THE TANPURA

Q You've shared that your Ajja (grandfather) taught you an Abhang when you were just three years old. What do you remember about those earliest moments of music at home?

My Ajja, my grandfather, has been a huge inspiration in my life, musically and in other ways too. He was a great singer, writer and composer himself. I vividly remember sitting on the floor and being taught this beautiful bhajan, 'Omkar Pradhaan', by him, and then performing it as a three-year-old on stage! Every time I sing this song even today, it brings a different kind of peace to my heart, remembering him and carrying the love he shared with me throughout.

Q Was there a particular moment — a performance, a song, or a reaction from someone — when you first felt that music was going to be your life and not just something you loved?

For me, it was a progression of many such events. Getting the lifetime opportunity to perform in front of the late legends Lata Mangeshkar ji and Zakir Hussain ji, being appreciated and encouraged by the legend Shankar Mahadevan ji, whom I consider my mentor and a guiding light in my life, and getting opportunities to perform for terminally ill patients and simply see the joy in their hearts and the smile on their faces — all of this makes me realise I am on the right path!

TAALIM & AE SAVERE

Q You trained in Hindustani classical music. Who were the teachers or gurus who shaped your voice, and is there a lesson from those years of taalim that still stays with you?

I owe a lot to all my gurus and, more importantly, to my parents, who brought me into this beautiful world of music. I owe it all to them for blessing me with the opportunity to learn from the best gurus. I got the opportunity to learn from many gurus — Shruti Gokhale tai, Swaroopa Gadgil tai, Padmashree Padmaja Phenany ji, ghazals from Talat Aziz ji, and hugely from Shankar Mahadevan ji through his songs and performances. I owe it to all my gurus for bringing me to where I am today, and I truly believe in the importance of getting trained classically, as an essential part of the foundation for any genre of singing. I also feel that every singer, in some way or another, teaches you little but important things.

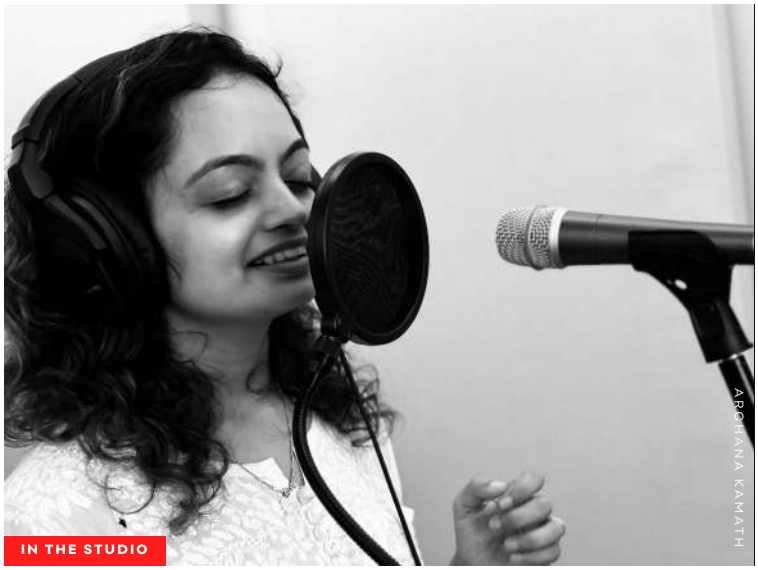
Q What drew you to compose 'Ae Savere', a song that carries the Kashmiri Pandit community's longing to return home and even weaves in a Kashmiri verse?

Becoming a household name in Kashmiri homes, receiving so much love and warmth from them, and ultimately discovering my roots in Kashmir, all through music, was the most beautiful thing that happened to me and still is. Ae Savere was a way of showing my love and gratitude to all of them, with the help of my Kashmiri friends — the lyricist of this song, Sunayana Kachroo, and the director of the original video featuring Soni Razdan and Taha Shah Badhushah, Danish Renzu — and it was woven in beautifully by the magical voice and warmth of the legend Shankar Mahadevan ji. Shankar Mahadevan ji did not just sing for this; he played a huge part in bringing out the composer side of me through this song. I am ever grateful to him for this. Ae Savere will always remain the most special part of my life and also the legacy that I leave behind.



MENTOR With Shankar Mahadevan.





THE CREATIVE CORNER Where the songs take shape.

Q What was it like to compose a song and then share the mic with Shankar Mahadevan on it — a moment from those sessions that stayed with you?

Ae Savere was made during the Covid times. I remember getting a call from my Kashmiri friend and a wonderful lyricist from Boston, Sunayana Kachroo, about the lyrics she had written and wanting me to compose and sing it. Never having composed before, I called up Shankar Mahadevan sir to seek some guidance, and I still remember that call and probably always will till the end. Getting beautiful words of encouragement from an artist like him, making me believe in myself and my musicality, was all I needed at that moment. I would always be grateful to him not just for that, but also for happily wanting to lend his voice to it. It took me around two days to compose it, and the most beautiful parts came to me at the most unexpected moments — cooking or taking a shower and running to my phone to record those tunes before I forgot them. Cut to meeting one of the best musicians in the industry, Shon Pinto, through Shankar sir, and him weaving all the elements of the song through his music arrangement — that was the best thing that could happen! Ae Savere got the best out of me through the best people I could meet.

THE WHITE WINDOW



Q When a new song begins to take shape, where does it usually start for you — a tune at the harmonium, a line of lyric, or a feeling you want to capture?

I feel they all work together, and it depends on what takes precedence at that moment — sometimes it's the emotion, and sometimes it's the lyrics that bring out the emotion, followed by the tune. The absence of a standard way of approaching it is what makes it more beautiful and interesting, like the true nature of art and of the artist as well.

Q The White Window has two albums out, with originals like MAAVI, MEHR and Ek Aas Hai. Which of these feels most like 'you', and what's the story behind it?

All three are beautiful choices! All these songs gave me an opportunity to express through words. Out of these, I would say Mehr is something I would always hold on to all through my life, and it would be a standard theme for my life as well. It beautifully talks about the beauty of finding the common space between what we want out of life and what life has to offer — it's a tough spot to get into, but that's the whole purpose of learning by discovering our strengths through the hardest lessons and stepping into our best version at every step!

SCAN TO WATCH · AE SAVERE, DOOR KAHI, KAHANIYAN & MORE

SCAN TO WATCH	SCAN TO WATCH	SCAN TO WATCH	SCAN TO WATCH	SCAN TO WATCH	SCAN TO WATCH	SCAN TO WATCH
Ae Savere Shankar Mahadevan × Archana Kamath	**Door Kahi** Out now	**Door Kahi** Teaser	**Kahaniyan** The White Window	**Out Now** Release clip	**Clip 1** From her submission	**On Stage** Performance clip

> **"Learn to understand the art, and not for getting a few more likes or views."**
>
> ARCHANA KAMATH

ON STAGE



GOA, NOVEMBER 2025



Q Tell us about that live performance that meant a lot to you — where it was, and what made that particular evening stay with you.

Sharing the stage with Shankar Mahadevan ji, with an audience of around 5,000, was a highlight in my musical career! Sharing the stage with him isn't just about singing; it's a great learning experience in itself. This happened in Goa, in November 2025. Apart from that, I have had the privilege of performing in front of the legends Lata didi and Zakir Hussain ji, which are etched in my heart forever!

Q You also teach music. What's something you find yourself telling almost every student — a habit or a bit of advice you try to pass on?

'Learn to understand the art, and not for getting a few more likes or views.' The intention that we set while learning any art is very crucial and sets the tone for the rest of your trajectory. I also strongly believe in learning the basics and building the foundation so well, which comes through prolonged practice and training under a knowledgeable guru. It sets a great foundation for building over any style or genre that you later want to pursue.

Q After placing second among musicians nationally, what's the one dream or next song you're most excited to bring to life?

Getting an opportunity to present my original on WallMag's platform was a truly great experience. The song received a lot of love from the audience and the jury as well. It's also a great platform to connect with other amazing artists and increases the probability of collaborating with them in the future. That's a great takeaway for me and also a huge encouragement to keep doing what I love — composing and singing for the love of art!





CONNECT WITH ARCHANA KAMATH

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GRASSLAND RAPTORS · PHOTOGRAPHY

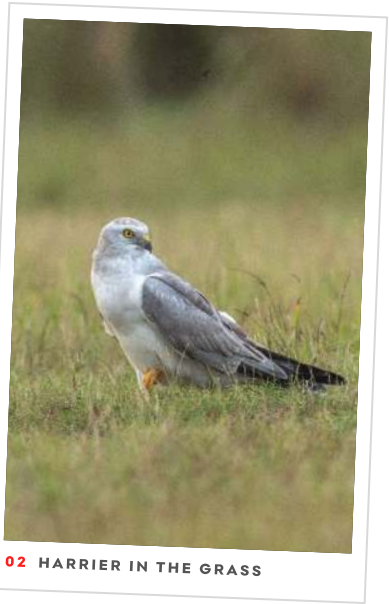
Patience, Not Pursuit

SRIVATSAN SATHIYAMOORTHY
WILDLIFE & BIRD PHOTOGRAPHER · @VATSANSGALLERY

Weekdays in finance, first light in the Chennai grasslands: a photographer of harriers, eagles and owls on the long wait for a few seconds when the bird, the light and the background align.



01 SHORT-TOED SNAKE EAGLE



02 HARRIER IN THE GRASS



03 FALCON WITH PREY

Q Take us back to the beginning — what first pulled you toward birds and wildlife around Chennai?

My journey began in 2018 when I went on my first birding adventure to Pulicat Lake near Chennai. It was an awesome experience that fascinated me and inspired me to start my photography journey.

Q Is there a photographer or birder whose work shaped how you see the grasslands? Tell us about that early influence.

Yes, there are a few photographers who influenced me. The one who introduced me to grassland birding in 2018 was Dinesh Munnuswamy, and Seshan Ezhumalai, a senior photographer from the Zoological Department of India, taught me how to identify and differentiate raptors and understand their behaviour. The photographers whose work shaped my approach to grassland birding were Karthik Ramamoorthy, Aravind Venkatraman, Parthi, and Gokul.

Q You carry two worlds — the numbers of finance and MBA life on weekdays, and the stillness of the grasslands at first light. How do those two sides of you meet?

For me, they meet in the same place: discipline, patience, and perspective. Finance and an MBA teach me to work with numbers, make decisions, manage uncertainty, and stay focused on the bigger picture. Bird and wildlife photography teaches me something very different—but equally valuable: to slow down, observe, wait, and appreciate moments that cannot be forced. The weekday world teaches me how to chase goals; the grasslands teach me when to simply be present. One keeps my mind sharp, the other keeps me grounded. And perhaps that's why I enjoy both—I spend my weekdays analysing numbers, but my mornings in the wild analysing light, behaviour, and silence.

AT A GLANCE

BASED IN	Chennai
BEGAN	2018, a first birding trip to Pulicat Lake
GRASSLAND BIRDING	Introduced by Dinesh Munnuswamy; raptors with Seshan Ezhumalai
HARRIERS	Pied · Montagu's · marsh harriers
KIT	Sony A7 IV + 200–600mm
SHOWN AT	Nepal Art Council, Kathmandu — featured artist
CHASING	Great Indian Bustard · Macqueen's Bustard

THE SIGNATURE FRAMES



IN FLIGHT Low over the grass — one of the frames he calls his signature.

Q Which frame feels most like your signature?

▶ HIS ANSWER: THE FRAMES ON THESE PAGES

Q The harriers of the Chennai grasslands run through your work — the male Pied Harrier, the Montagu's, the marsh harriers. Tell us about the bird in this frame and the wait that led to it.

For me, this frame is about more than just a Pied Harrier. The Chennai grasslands have taught me that these birds reward patience more than pursuit. Pied Harriers are winter migrants and are closely tied to open grassland and wetland habitats, where they hunt low over the ground. This particular photograph came after one of those waits where you spend far more time watching empty grass than watching the bird. You wait for the light to soften, for the wind to settle, and for the harrier to finally come into the right patch of light. And then, for a few seconds, everything aligns—the bird, the light, the background and the composition. That is what I love about photographing harriers: the photograph may last for a fraction of a second, but the patience behind it lasts much longer.

THE FIELD KIT

Q What does your field kit look like when you're out in the grasslands?

▶ HIS ANSWER: THE PHOTOGRAPHS AT RIGHT

Q You shoot almost everything on the Sony A7 IV paired with the 200-600mm — what makes that combination work for you out in the grasslands?

What makes the A7 IV and 200–600mm work for me is that the combination lets me stay flexible without getting in the way of the moment. The A7 IV gives me a full-frame 33MP sensor, bird/animal Eye AF and 759 phase-detection AF points, while the 200–600mm gives me the reach I need for birds that are often distant and unpredictable. In the grasslands, that flexibility matters. I can work around 600mm when a harrier is far out hunting, then pull back when it comes closer instead of constantly repositioning. The lens's internal zoom and OSS are particularly useful when I'm shooting handheld and trying to keep up with a bird moving across open terrain. But honestly, the biggest advantage is familiarity. I've spent enough time with this setup that I'm not thinking about the camera anymore. I'm watching the bird, reading the light, anticipating the flight path—and waiting for that one frame. The camera captures the moment; knowing when to press the shutter is still the photographer's job.



THE LENS On the tripod, above the clouds.



The photographer, in the field with his camera and long lens.

FAR FROM HOME

Q Share a frame from a trip that took you far from home.

▶ HIS ANSWER: THESE FRAMES





FAR FROM THE GRASSLANDS A tiger crossing between safari jeeps; a tiger in water.

Q Your Owls of Andaman — Walden's Scops Owl, the Andaman Boobook and the rest — came from a journey far from the Chennai grasslands. Tell us the story behind tracking down one of them.

One encounter that stands out is the Walden's Scops Owl. Finding these little owls is a different kind of challenge. Unlike harriers flying across open grasslands, owls blend beautifully into the forest surroundings. Sometimes, you hear them before you get a glimpse of them. The experience was all about listening carefully, scanning the trees and being patient. When that little owl finally came into view, it made all the waiting worthwhile. What made the journey special wasn't just adding another species to my collection. It was experiencing a completely different ecosystem and learning to adapt as a photographer. From chasing silhouettes in the Chennai grasslands to searching for tiny eyes in the darkness of Andaman forests, every bird has its own story, and every encounter teaches me something new. And that's what keeps me going as a wildlife photographer.



OWL Perched on a branch, from his owl frames.

BEHAVIOUR, NOT JUST THE BIRD



KEEP COMING BACK A harrier on the ground in the grasslands.

Q Which frame do you keep coming back to?

▶ HIS ANSWER: THE HARRIER AT LEFT

Q Some of your most-loved frames catch behaviour, not just the bird — the courting Little Ringed Plovers, the nictitating membrane of a Short-toed Snake Eagle. What is the moment unfolding in this one?

For me, wildlife photography is not just about documenting a bird; it's about capturing a moment in its life. The courting Little Ringed Plovers and the Short-toed Snake Eagle displaying its nictitating membrane are perfect examples. These are fleeting behavioural moments that you might miss if you're focused only on getting a beautiful portrait. I always try to observe the bird first, understand its behaviour and anticipate what might happen next. Sometimes, patience rewards you with something far more special than a perfectly posed frame. A beautiful photograph shows you what the bird looks like; a behavioural photograph gives you a glimpse into its world. That's the kind of storytelling I want my wildlife photography to be about.

WHERE HE'S HEADED

Q What's a recent frame that points to where you're headed next?

▶ HIS ANSWER: THESE FRAMES





RECENT FRAMES A high mountain valley, left; a striped hyena at a cave mouth, above.

Q What are you chasing this season — a new grassland raptor, a species still missing from your collection, or a place you've been longing to shoot?

This season I am eager to get a glimpse of the Great Indian Bustard and Macqueen's Bustard, and I am more concentrated towards that. I am also working on finding a male Pied Harrier as well.

Q Your work recently travelled to the Nepal Art Council in Kathmandu, where you were shown as the featured artist. What did it feel like to see your grassland frames on a gallery wall abroad?

Seeing my wildlife photographs displayed at the Nepal Art Council in Kathmandu as a featured artist was truly a special and humbling experience. Most of my photographs are born out of quiet mornings in the grasslands, countless hours of waiting, challenging field conditions and the excitement of witnessing wildlife in its natural habitat. I never imagined that moments captured in the grasslands of Chennai would travel beyond borders and find a place on an international gallery wall. What made it even more meaningful was knowing that these photographs were not just being viewed as images, but as stories of wildlife, habitat and conservation. It was also a reminder that photography has no boundaries. A moment captured in one corner of the world can connect with someone thousands of kilometres away. For me, it wasn't just about seeing my photographs on a gallery wall in another country; it was about seeing the stories of our grasslands travel beyond borders. It has certainly motivated me to keep exploring, documenting and telling more stories through my lens.

Q When you think about all the cold, dark mornings spent waiting in the grass for a single bird to appear — what is it that keeps pulling you back before sunrise?

I think it's the excitement of the unknown. Every morning in the grasslands is different. You never know what the day will bring — a Pied Harrier gliding low over the grass, a Short-toed Snake Eagle scanning for prey, or perhaps a species you haven't encountered before. There are mornings when you spend hours waiting and return without a single photograph. But even those mornings teach you something about nature, patience and observation. For me, it's not always about getting the perfect frame. It's about being out there, witnessing wildlife in its natural environment and experiencing moments that cannot be recreated. And there's always that little excitement that tomorrow might bring something extraordinary. I don't wake up before sunrise just to capture a photograph. I wake up because I don't want to miss what nature might reveal that morning.

> **"The weekday world teaches me how to chase goals; the grasslands teach me when to simply be present."**
>
> SRIVATSAN SATHIYAMOORTHY

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IN CONVERSATION · MUSIC & SOUND DESIGN

Twenty-Four Hours in Atmos



PORTRAIT Courtesy Shibin Chrisby

SHIBIN CHRISBY
MUSIC COMPOSER · SOUND DESIGNER

The scores that first stopped him, the mentor who sharpened his ears, and Devilan — a full audio post and Dolby Atmos mix completed inside a single day.

Q Take us right back — what was the first sound, song, or film score that made you stop and think, "I want to be the one shaping that"?

The soundtracks of *Interstellar* and *Black Panther* have been two of my biggest inspirations. Hans Zimmer's emotionally powerful and atmospheric score for *Interstellar* and Ludwig Göransson's unique fusion of African musical traditions with modern cinematic sound in *Black Panther* truly fascinated me. Both films made me realise how deeply music and sound can shape storytelling and evoke emotions. They inspired and motivated me to pursue my passion for music composition and sound design, creating experiences that audiences can truly feel.

Q Was there a particular moment early on when composing or engineering stopped feeling like a hobby and started feeling like your calling?

Absolutely! It was when I first started experimenting with music composition and sound design and realised how powerful sound could be in bringing emotions and stories to life. What began as a creative hobby gradually became something I couldn't imagine my life without. The satisfaction of turning an idea into an emotional experience through sound made me realise that this wasn't just something I enjoyed doing, but something I genuinely wanted to dedicate my life to. That's when I knew music and sound engineering were my calling.

01 THE EAR & THE FIRST SCORE

Q Who shaped your ear along the way — a mentor, a composer, an engineer, or even a record you studied obsessively?

One of the biggest influences on my journey has been my mentor, Mervin Thomas, the Principal of The Audiophile's School of Sound Engineering in Chennai, where I pursued my Diploma in Sound Engineering and Music Production. He's an incredible audio engineer and an even greater mentor. His knowledge, guidance, and passion for audio helped me develop my technical skills, sharpen my ears, and understand the art of sound on a much deeper level. He taught me that great audio engineering isn't just about technical perfection, but also about creativity, emotion, and attention to detail. I'm truly grateful for the impact he's had on my journey as a music producer and sound engineer.

Q What was the piece for Cosmic Crazies scored for, and what did you want the audience to feel the second it played?

This was composed for Cosmic Crazies, a sci-fi-themed slot machine game by Darpha Studios. I wanted the music to instantly immerse players in a fun, futuristic, and energetic atmosphere. I blended modern synth sounds with catchy pop elements to create something fresh, vibrant, and full of personality. My goal was to make players feel excited and hooked from the very first second, while keeping the overall experience playful, immersive, and full of cosmic vibes!

02 THE ROOM



COURTESY SHIBIN CHRISBY

THE STUDIO At the desk, a session open on the screens above him.

Q Walk us through how you built that atmosphere — what did you want the listener to feel surrounded by?

I handled the entire sound design, Foley, and ambience, focusing on creating a natural, immersive, and cinematic soundscape. My goal was to make every sound feel authentic and seamlessly connected to the environment. From subtle background details to the movement and interaction of objects, I wanted listeners to feel as though they were physically present in the scene, experiencing everything firsthand rather than simply watching it unfold.

Q What does your studio and setup look like?

◀ HIS ANSWER: THE PHOTOGRAPH AT LEFT

Q What's the one piece of gear or software you'd never mix without, and why does it earn its place?

Two essentials I could never mix without are my Focal Alpha 65 Evo studio monitors and Avid Pro Tools. The Focal monitors give me the clarity, accuracy, and detailed sound reproduction I need to make confident mixing decisions. Pro Tools, on the other hand, is my go to software for its powerful editing, mixing, and audio production capabilities. Together, they help me achieve the precision, creativity, and professional sound quality I aim for in every project.

03 DEVILAN · THE RECORD

Q Can you show us something from your "Devilan" world-record work — a still, a clip, or a screenshot from the sessions?

▶ HE ANSWERED IN FOUR FRAMES









01 · The mix
The Dolby Atmos mix for the Tamil film *Devilan*, open on his session screen.

02 · The medal
Shibin with the "Record Holder" medal and certificate.

03 · The screen
Devilan in the cinema, billed as "A World Record Film".

04 · The stage
Group photographs on stage beneath the "World Record Film" banners.

04 AGAINST THE CLOCK

Q Completing a full audio post and Atmos mix in 24 hours is intense — what did those hours actually feel like?

It was an incredibly intense yet rewarding experience! Those 24 hours were filled with adrenaline, creativity, pressure, and a lot of coffee! From sound editing and design to the final Dolby Atmos mix, every minute mattered. The biggest challenge was maintaining precision, creativity, and sound quality while racing against the clock. There were moments of exhaustion, but my passion for audio kept me going. Hearing the final mix come together made every sleepless hour worth it. It was a true test of my technical skills, endurance, and ability to deliver under pressure, and definitely one of the most unforgettable experiences of my career!

HIS OWN SONGS

Q This one's your own songwriting rather than scoring to someone else's story — what's the feeling at the heart of it?

At the heart of my songwriting is a very personal mix of emotions, experiences, and self-discovery. Unlike scoring for films or games, where I'm bringing someone else's vision to life, songwriting gives me the freedom to tell my own story. I draw inspiration from life's struggles, loneliness, heartbreak, hope, and the little moments of happiness we often overlook. For me, it's about finding peace within myself, embracing independence, and learning to appreciate life as it comes. More than anything, I want listeners to feel something genuine and perhaps find a little piece of their own story in my music.

Q What makes this one special — the project, the people, or the moment you finally nailed the sound?

What makes this piece special to me is the emotion behind it. It's a soul-touching composition that I created with the intention of connecting with listeners on a deeper emotional level. Every melody and harmony carries a feeling, and I wanted the music to speak for itself, even without words. The most rewarding moment was hearing everything come together and realising that I had created something that could genuinely touch someone's heart. For me, that's the true beauty of music!

Q What's the dream project or the sound you're still chasing — the one you can already hear in your head but haven't made yet?

My dream is to compose and design sound for a large scale Hollywood sci-fi or fantasy film, creating an unforgettable cinematic experience. I've always been fascinated by the emotional depth of "Interstellar" and the unique sonic world of "Black Panther". I want to create something that blends powerful orchestral music, futuristic electronic textures, and immersive Dolby Atmos soundscapes. I'm constantly chasing that perfect balance between emotion, innovation, and storytelling, a sound that doesn't just accompany the visuals but makes audiences feel like they're living inside the story. Ultimately, I dream of creating a soundtrack that stays with people long after the film ends.

> **"A sound that doesn't just accompany the visuals but makes audiences feel like they're living inside the story."**
>
> SHIBIN CHRISBY

AT A GLANCE

TRAINED	The Audiophile's School of Sound Engineering, Chennai
MENTOR	Mervin Thomas
MONITORS	Focal Alpha 65 Evo
DAW	Avid Pro Tools
DIPLOMA	Sound Engineering & Music Production
SCORED	Cosmic Crazies · Darpha Studios
THE RECORD	*Devilan* · audio post + Dolby Atmos mix in 24 hours
FIRST SPARK	*Interstellar* · *Black Panther*

CONNECT WITH SHIBIN CHRISBY

WEBSITE shibinchrisby.com

TRADITIONAL INDIAN KITCHENS · FOOD

Nani's Kitchen

SAKSHI ARVIND AGRAWAL
TRADITIONAL-FOOD CREATOR · @BLISSFUL_BITES_BY_SAKSHI

Ranked India's #2 food creator at the WallMag Food Creator of the Year Awards 2026, a Marwadi home cook who first learned at her Nani's side — and now revives the country's lost and lesser-known recipes.



THE THALI Served against the rice fields.

AT A GLANCE

COOKS	Marwadi home food; India's lost and lesser-known regional recipes
RANKED	#2 food creator in India — WallMag Food Creator of the Year Awards 2026
ROOTS DISH	Dal Baati Churma
WINNING DISH	Illegadabu, steamed on fresh amaranth stems
FIRST TEACHER	Her Nani
HER KITCHEN	Surrounded by greenery

Q Take us back to where it all began — what first pulled you into cooking and sharing recipes from your own kitchen?

My journey with cooking began during my childhood. From a very young age, I grew up with my Mama, Nani and Nana, away from my parents, and some of my fondest childhood memories are from my Nani's kitchen. It was under her supervision that I took my first steps into cooking — I would watch her prepare meals, learn little things from her, and slowly develop a love for food and everything that goes into making it. What started as childhood curiosity gradually became a part of who I am, and even today that love remains the same. For me, cooking has never been just about preparing food; it's about bringing people together, serving them with love, and seeing the happiness on their faces when they enjoy something I've made. I think that's what first pulled me towards cooking, and that feeling of making people happy through food is what keeps me going even today.

Q Is there a dish from growing up that you still remember vividly — one that made you fall in love with food?

If there's one dish that has always been close to my heart, it's Dal Baati Churma. Being a Marwadi, this dish is so much more than food to me; it's a part of my roots, culture and identity. I have always loved its traditional flavours and the beautiful way it brings everyone together around the dining table. It's one of those dishes that makes me feel connected to my roots and reminds me of home. I think my love for traditional food and preserving recipes comes from that very connection — some dishes are not just meant to be cooked; they carry stories, memories and generations of love.

Q Was there someone whose cooking shaped yours — a parent, a grandparent, someone whose kitchen you grew up in?

My Nani has been the biggest influence on my cooking journey. Since I grew up with her, I spent a lot of my childhood around her in the kitchen. Watching her cook, learning little techniques, and understanding the love and patience she put into every meal shaped the way I look at food today. Her cooking wasn't just about recipes; it was about tradition, taste, warmth and serving people with love. Even today, whenever I cook traditional dishes, a little part of her learning and influence reflects in my cooking. I owe my first love for cooking to her.

#2 IN INDIA

Q You've just been ranked #2 food creator in India at the WallMag Food Creator of the Year Awards 2026 — how did it feel when you found out?

Receiving this recognition at a national level was an incredibly overwhelming and emotional experience for me. I felt a mix of happiness, gratitude, excitement and pride. Seeing my work being recognised on a platform like this, across India, made me realise how far I've come and how much my journey means to me. There was a moment when I genuinely felt proud of myself, knowing that all the effort, passion and love I put into my work are being noticed and appreciated. I truly enjoyed the entire experience, and it has given me even more motivation to keep exploring, creating and bringing our traditional food, lost recipes and culture to more people. It was not just an award for me; it was a beautiful reminder that the work I believe in is reaching people.

BREAD OF INDIA

ILLEGADABU · KARNATAKA

Q Tell us about your winning dish, Bread of India — what drew you to this traditional Karnataka dish, steamed on fresh amaranth stems?

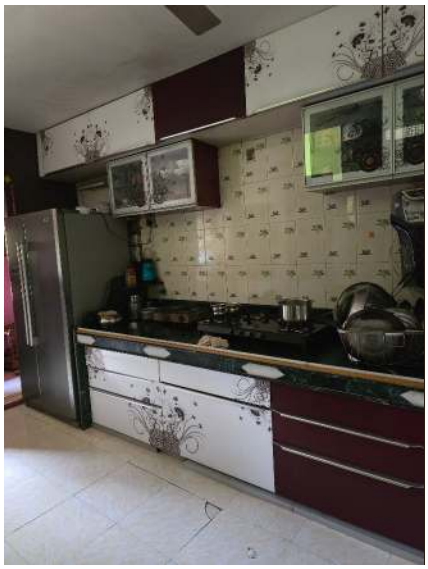
I discovered Illegadabu during my trip to the northern coastal region of Karnataka. I was staying at a homestay where I got the opportunity to see this traditional dish being prepared in a home kitchen. I was instantly curious about it, so I tried it myself and learned more about the dish.

CLOSE TO NATURE

Q Walk us through your kitchen — the space where you cook and film. What do you love most about cooking in this corner of your home?

What I love most about this corner of my home is the beautiful connection it gives me with nature. My kitchen area is surrounded by greenery, and I absolutely love spending time there, cooking at my own pace. The sound of birds chirping, the cool breeze, the greenery all around me... it makes the entire cooking experience so peaceful and special. I love taking my time, enjoying the little moments and cooking while being close to nature. For me, cooking here is not just about making food. It's my happy place, where I feel most connected to myself and to nature.

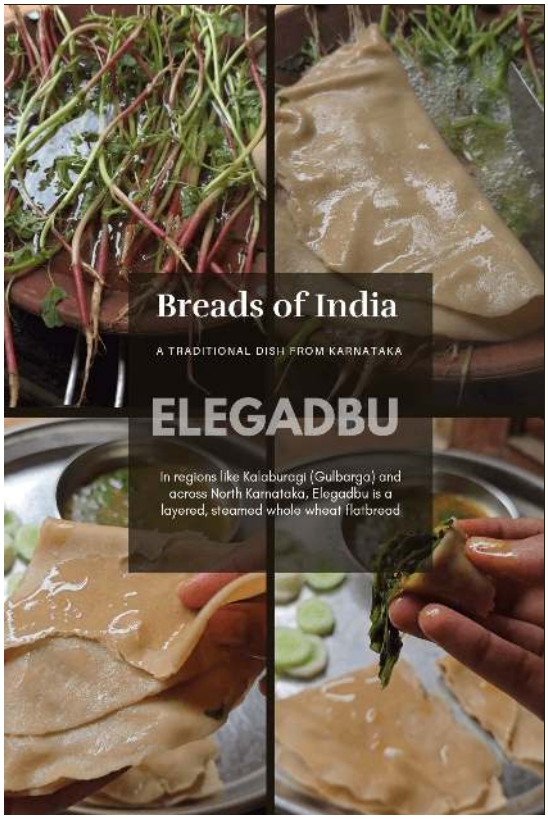




HER KITCHEN A pot on the stove outdoors, amid the greenery; the kitchen indoors.



THE AWARD Holding the trophy at the awards.



THE WINNING DISH Her "Breads of India" recipe card for Illegadabu.

THE KEEPERS

AMTI · RED CHILLI THECHA

Q Which of your easy, tried-and-tested veg recipes do you make again and again — and what makes this one a keeper for you?

I absolutely love making these traditional combinations! There's something so comforting about the mild, tangy flavours of Amti paired with the bold, spicy kick of red chilli thecha. I love how beautifully these flavours complement each other. It's a combination I genuinely enjoy preparing and eating. For me, the joy is in making these simple, traditional dishes and enjoying every bite!



THE COMBINATION Her Amti and Laal Mirch Thecha, step by step.

GOVARDHAN PUJA



ANNAKUT KI SABZI

Q What's the story behind the dish you cooked for a special moment — a festival, a celebration, or someone you love?

Govardhan Puja celebrates Lord Krishna lifting Govardhan Parvat to protect the people of Vrindavan from heavy rains. On this day, Annakut is offered to Lord Krishna as a gesture of gratitude. I prepared traditional Annakut ki Sabzi using a variety of seasonal vegetables, without onion and garlic, just like the traditional preparation.



ANNAKUT Her Annakut Sabji for Govardhan Puja, left; Sakshi, right.

LET THE FOOD SPEAK

Q What's one styling or plating trick you swear by when you shoot your food?

My biggest plating trick is to keep it simple and let the food speak for itself. I love using traditional utensils, earthy colours and fresh ingredients like coriander or curry leaves for a little garnish. I don't believe in over-styling food. For me, it should look as inviting and authentic as it tastes!



SIMPLY PLATED Steamed modaks on a leaf and in the steamer; a kadai of thecha by the diya.

FOR HER MOTHER · BEETROOT HALWA



BEETROOT Grated for the Halwa.

Q What's got you excited about what you're cooking up next?

One dish I was particularly excited to make was Beetroot Halwa. With winters approaching, I wanted to prepare something special for my mother, and I knew she loved it. Seeing her enjoy something I've made with so much love gives me more happiness than anything else. For me, cooking is also my way of expressing love and making my loved ones feel special.

Q As a national runner-up now, what's the one thing you most hope your cooking brings to the people who watch and try your recipes?

As a national runner-up, I hope my cooking inspires people to explore and reconnect with India's traditional food heritage, especially the lost and lesser-known recipes. I want my recipes to bring back childhood memories, emotions and stories associated with food. I also hope to keep discovering and sharing more interesting traditional dishes that people feel excited to try, enjoy and pass on to the next generation. If my recipes make someone remember their roots or rediscover a forgotten dish, I think that's the biggest reward for me.

> **"Some dishes are not just meant to be cooked; they carry stories, memories and generations of love."**
>
> SAKSHI ARVIND AGRAWAL

FROM HER KITCHEN







FROM HER KITCHEN A green patty on a leaf; golden fried sweets with almonds; and her own "food journey" frame.

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STREET & DOCUMENTARY PHOTOGRAPHY

"Seeing is not the same as **reaching.**"

FROM "BETWEEN ME AND THE WORLD"

RITIBRATA SAMANTA
@RITIBRATASAMANTA · WEST BENGAL

More observer than photographer, he looks for the stories beneath ordinary scenes — confinement and freedom, neglect and survival — and leaves the questions open for whoever looks next.

AT A GLANCE

BASED	West Bengal
WORKS IN	Street & documentary
THEMES	Confinement · freedom · the overlooked
SERIES	Between Me and the World · The Silent Aquifer · The Agony



BETWEEN ME AND THE WORLD

Q How did photography first find you — what pulled you toward picking up a camera and looking at the world the way you do?

I have always felt that there is more to a moment than what first meets the eye. Sometimes, it is a fleeting expression, a quiet corner of a street, the way light falls on an ordinary object, or a story hidden in the lives of people passing by. I think that is where photography began for me—not with the desire to take pictures, but with the urge to hold on to something I felt or noticed in a moment. I consider myself more of an observer than simply a photographer. I am drawn to the unspoken stories of everyday life, to contradictions, silences, and the emotions that often exist beneath the surface. For me, photography is a language of its own. It allows me to ask questions without necessarily providing answers, and to share a perspective without defining what someone else should see. Perhaps that is what continues to draw me to it—the possibility that a single frame can hold more than one story, and that everyone who looks at it might discover something different.

Q You describe yourself as more an observer than a photographer. Do you remember the first moment you caught yourself watching the world that way, rather than just photographing it?

I think I began to see the world differently when I started noticing that even the most ordinary things could hold stories far beyond their appearance. It could be an abandoned boat, a tree reclaiming a space taken over by concrete, footprints slowly disappearing into the tide, or a play of light and shadow that changes the way we perceive something. Perhaps that is why my photographs often explore things that aren't immediately visible—freedom and confinement, existence and neglect, the struggle to survive, or the quiet contradictions of the world we live in. Over time, I realised that taking a photograph and truly seeing something are two different things. The camera records what is there, but observation allows me to look for what might lie beneath it. Perhaps being an observer means learning to look beyond the visible—to find a question where others might see an ordinary scene, and a story where others might see nothing at all.

CONFINEMENT & FREEDOM

Q Early on, was there a person, a place, or a single image that shaped how you see — something you still carry with you today?

No single person or image has defined my vision. My photography has grown out of a constant curiosity about the world and the stories hidden within it. I'm drawn to scenes that make me pause, question what I see, and look beyond the obvious. Rather than following a particular influence, I let that curiosity guide my camera, allowing each photograph to become an exploration of something I'm still trying to understand.

Q Which street photograph in your portfolio feels most like you?

WORK I

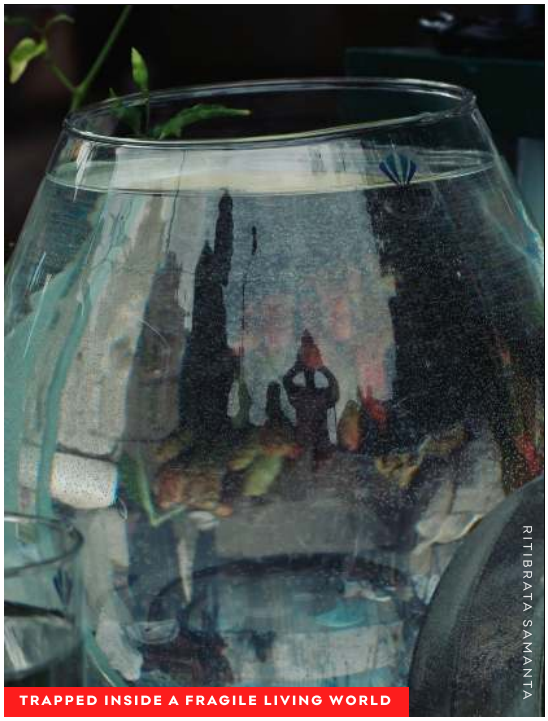
Between Me and the World

Separated by bars, yet surrounded by a world still visible. The blurred birds' eyes in the foreground add another layer to this quiet encounter, blurring the line between the observer and the observed, between confinement and freedom. Their presence evokes a world that exists just beyond reach, where the desire to be free meets the reality of being held back. Perhaps the deepest confinement is not simply being unable to leave, but being able to see what lies beyond—and knowing that seeing is not the same as reaching.

WORK II

Trapped Inside a Fragile Living World

Within the fragile walls of glass, the aquarium becomes a reflection of our own existence. The shadows reveal fragments of everyday life—a man absorbed in his work, another carrying a burden upon his head, and others moving through the demands of their lives. Each shadow carries a story, bound by responsibilities, social expectations, and the quiet struggles of survival. Perhaps there is no world beyond the boundaries that hold us; we are all confined within our own fragile realities, moving through life while carrying the weight of our obligations. The aquarium is not merely a vessel containing life—it becomes a mirror of a world where freedom, responsibility, and survival remain delicately intertwined.

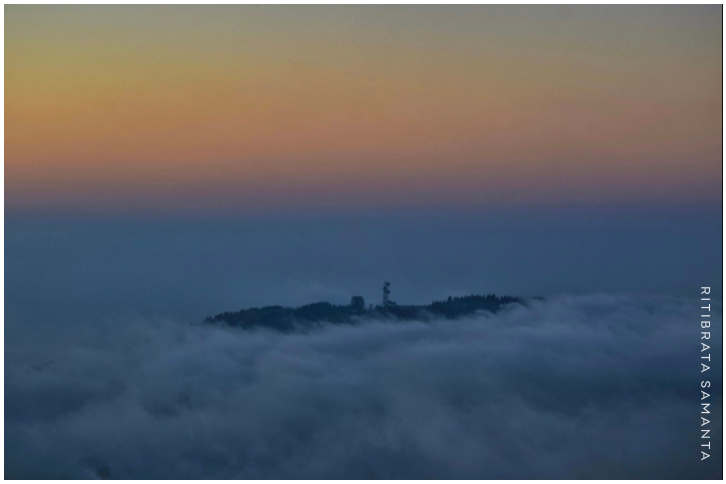


TRAPPED INSIDE A FRAGILE LIVING WORLD

DARJEELING

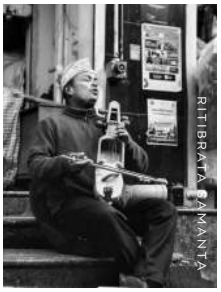


DARJEELING



Q Which travel photograph from a place that has stayed with you would you like to share?

Darjeeling has stayed with me for more than its mountains and mist. What draws me to the place is its culture, its people, and the stories that seem to live quietly in everyday life. I find myself noticing the small things—the rhythm of local life, the traditions people carry forward, the different communities sharing the same landscape, and the ways their identities are reflected in ordinary moments. The landscape may be what brings you there, but it is the people, their lives, and the cultural richness of the place that make you want to stay a little longer.







WHAT IT SAYS





Q Which photograph from your portfolio do you feel says something about what you saw, not just shows it?

The female body exists beneath layers of shame, silence, and social prohibition. The scars etched into her body speak of the violence inflicted upon her, while the cage embodies the social taboos and restrictions that enable such violence to persist. The cage confines her body, but the scars reveal what confinement has done to it.

In this raw, monochrome photograph, I present a deep, vertical fissure carved into a coarse, mineral surface—a form that naturally evokes the delicate architecture of female anatomy. From its central aperture, a dark, weeping trail descends like an open wound, symbolizing the silent trauma, physical pain, and systemic violence inflicted by rape culture. This work confronts a society that so often objectifies and dehumanizes the body, treating it like a ghost subjected to another's will. Yet, beneath this visible bleeding lies the ultimate truth: this form is not an object to be conquered or violated, but the sacred birthplace of all human existence, rising as my unyielding protest to demand reverence and dignity for the origin of life itself.

THE STORIES WE OVERLOOK



THE SILENT AQUIFER

Q Which photograph from your current personal project on people, society, and the stories we often overlook would you like to share?

THE SILENT AQUIFER

This photograph addresses a quiet yet critical story that society far too often overlooks: the severe, invisible depletion of our groundwater reserves. Standing amidst dry, parched grass, an abandoned hand pump yields no water, serving as a stark monument to finite resources exhausted by human neglect. Beside it sits a bowed woman—a universal symbol representing all of us brought to a state of grief, helplessness, and reflection as the earth dries up. Because groundwater flows unseen beneath our feet, its decline is easy to ignore until the wells run completely empty. Through this image, I turn an invisible ecological threat into a poignant human narrative, offering an urgent message to society: groundwater is not infinite, and we must honor and conserve our subterranean lifelines before sorrow and dry earth are all that remain.

REMNANTS OF MEMORY

This photograph captures more than an abandoned object—it depicts a thrown childhood, cast aside in the damp urban grit beneath the heavy, unyielding wheel of modern life. Once a vessel for innocence, comfort, and unconditional love, the worn red toy lies prone in a puddle, its vivid reflection serving as a fragile echo of a past intimacy. By placing this symbol of early emotion within a cold, industrial landscape, the image asks us to reflect on how swiftly we move past our beginnings—and whether, in throwing away the artifacts of our youth, we also discard the pure empathy that once defined us.



REMNANTS OF MEMORY

Q Which idea were you reaching for in that photograph — struggle, freedom, neglect, identity, or silence — and why that one?

In that photograph, I was reaching for the idea of neglect—specifically, the neglect of our groundwater reserves. I chose neglect because it's a quiet crisis that society often ignores, and I wanted to turn that invisible threat into a human narrative.

KOLOTAN



KOLOTAN



Q Which image from your work documenting the children and everyday life at Kolotan would you like to share?

Photographing everyday life at Kolotan has taught me something I hadn't expected: the need to become simpler, to loosen my grip on what I think I know, and to approach the world with a little more wonder. Children inhabit a universe of imagination that seems limitless, while we, as adults, gradually confine ourselves within structures of our own making—shaped by logic, expectations, habits, and the familiar ways in which we have learned to see things. Through my camera, I have come to realise that observing children is also an exercise in unlearning. In a way, while I am documenting their world, they are teaching me how to see my own anew.



STILL BUILDING TOWARD



THE AGONY

Q Which photograph from your body of work feels unfinished to you — part of something you are still building toward?

In The Agony, I saw more than the remains of cut trees. The twisted, broken forms seemed to take on the face of a dog or a fox, its expression resembling a scream of pain that could never be heard. It made me think about the suffering hidden within destruction—how cutting down a tree is often treated as an ordinary act, while the loss and pain it represents remain unacknowledged. That photograph left me with more questions than answers, and I hope to follow those questions through my future work. Eventually, I hope these photographs will come together as bodies of work that encourage people to look beyond the obvious and confront the realities that lie beneath the surface.

Q When one of your photographs leaves a viewer with something to think about, what do you most hope stays with them after they look away?

I hope my photographs leave behind a question that stays with the viewer long after they have moved on. If a photograph can make someone feel, question, or reconsider something within themselves, then it has travelled beyond the frame. And perhaps that is where its real life begins.

CONNECT WITH RITIBRATA SAMANTA

INSTAGRAM @ritibratasamanta **FACEBOOK** ritibratasamanta

MUSIC · SARASWATHI VEENA

"...and truly became **the voice of my soul."**

RANJANIDEVI SARAVANAN
DR. · DEVI VEENAI · @RANJANIDEVISARAVANAN

Saraswathi Veena artist, Ph.D. and Veena lecturer at Thiruvaiyaru Music College. The instrument once felt impossibly large to her; today she teaches it to the world online and explores how 15th-century Thiruppugazh melodies might nurture wellbeing during pregnancy.



HER FIRST VEENA, A GIFT FROM HER FATHER, 2004

AT A GLANCE

PLAYS	Saraswathi Veena · Ph.D.
TEACHES	Veena lecturer, Thiruvaiyaru Music College
FOUNDED	Devi Veenai label & online academy
TEACHING	Since 2009 · online since 2014
INSPIRED BY	M.S. Subbulakshmi · P. Unnikrishnan

Q **Take us back to the very first time you sat with a Saraswathi veena — and the moment you first felt it truly sing through you.**

My musical journey actually began at home, surrounded by devotional songs where my father—a true music lover—and my entire family, including my grandmother, warmly appreciated my passion for music. Wanting to pursue that further, I went to college to learn devotional singing. However, due to tonsillitis, I couldn't sustain higher pitches. When the college suggested I take up the Veena course instead, I thought, "Okay, I can still play my devotional music through the instrument." When I first sat with the Saraswathi Veena, my very first thought wasn't grand—it was a sudden, overwhelmed feeling: "How am I ever going to play this instrument? It is so large!" The Veena felt huge compared to me, and as the only girl music student in my hometown traveling almost four hours a day to my college, the challenge was immense. But as I patiently worked through it, it became my soulmate friend. It transformed from an intimidatingly large instrument into a living, breathing channel of spiritual devotion and a constant companion in my musical journey.

That magical shift—when the Veena truly started singing through me rather than me simply playing it—unfolded step by step. It first began back around 2009 when I performed on All India Radio, and my family and people in my hometown recognized my name and music on the airwaves. That bond deepened profoundly during live performances like my concert at our hometown Vinayagar temple, where the local community lively appreciated the music and understood the dedication I was pouring into my craft. Finally, that same spirit carried over into my digital teaching, where recording video tutorials brought heartfelt appreciation from parents and grandparents thankful that authentic devotional classics were being passed down to their children. Through every hurdle and triumph, the Veena stopped being just a large, intimidating instrument and truly became the voice of my soul.

MANY HANDS · ONE VEENA

Q From your earliest lessons to your Ph.D., many hands must have shaped the way you play. Who are the teachers or mentors you still hear in your music today?

My musical path was profoundly shaped at Thiruvaiyaru Music College—a sacred space that holds immense significance in my journey, as it was right there in college that I first encountered, held, and learned to play the Veena. Years later, that circle came to a beautiful completion when I returned to serve as a Veena lecturer and successfully completed my Ph.D. My academic foundation was further enriched by earning a Music Teaching Diploma from the Tamil Music University. I learned various traditional styles (banis) of Veena playing from different esteemed teachers. Above all, my deepest devotion to devotional music was ignited by the timeless artistry of M.S. Subbulakshmi Amma and my longtime admiration for P. Unnikrishnan Sir. As a dedicated fan, after joining college, I wrote him a letter sharing that I had joined music college and thanking him for the inspiration. His gracious reply—sending his warm wishes alongside CDs straight to my hometown—served as a profound encouragement that reinforced my path.

Q Tell us the story of this particular veena—how it came to you, and what makes it feel like yours.

This instrument holds a profoundly sacred place in my heart—it is my very first Veena, lovingly gifted to me by my father for my birthday back in 2004. Having practiced my earliest lessons on it, every string and curve carries the roots of where my journey began. Even today, its sweet, resonant voice remains the faithful companion through which I shape my music.

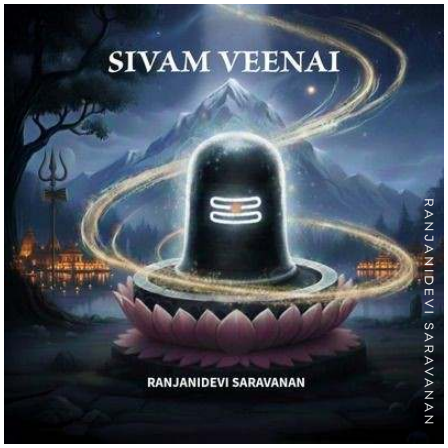


FIRST SOCIAL MEDIA POST

Q What was happening that day, and why has it stayed with you?

This was captured during my very first social media Veena music post—a milestone moment when I first decided to share my art beyond the walls of traditional practice. This memory has stayed with me because it marks the bridge between where my musical journey began and where it expanded into the digital world. Holding the instrument that carried my earliest lessons and stepping out to share its sweet, familiar resonance online changed everything. It was the very first heartbeat of connecting my Veena music with a global audience.

SIVAM VEENAI



SIVAM VEENAI

Q Why does this particular composition move you?

"Sivam Veenai" is structured as a progressive spiritual journey through three distinct speeds: beginning with the contemplative pace of Namamisha Mishan in the first speed, building into the rhythmic flow of Brahmamura in the second speed, and culminating in the powerful, driving intensity of Kalabhairavashtakam in the third speed. For me, true devotion transcends language barriers. Through instrumental music, I wanted listeners to feel completely immersed in the divine presence—to truly feel Lord Shiva in every vibrating note, experiencing absolute surrender, stillness, and cosmic energy directly through the soul of the Veena.

ON THE VEENA

Q What is this piece, and what made you want to render it on the veena?

KURAI ONDRUM ILLAI

A deeply revered, timeless Carnatic devotional masterpiece that holds a sacred place in the hearts of listeners worldwide, famously associated with the spiritual legacy of M.S. Subbulakshmi Amma. This piece is deeply close to my heart. I wanted to capture its profound, soulful surrender on the Saraswathi Veena, translating the vocal devotion into a meditative instrumental expression with music programming and production by Manu Prasad.

VELUNDU VINAIYILLAI

A vibrant, majestic devotional composition celebrating spiritual strength, protection, and divine energy. I wanted to create a piece with a vibrant, motivational, and powerful devotional energy. To capture that authentic spiritual atmosphere, I collaborated with P. Raghu to perform on the Nadaswaram, blending it with the deep resonance of the Veena. The track features music programming and production by Manu Prasad, bringing out a majestic, driving momentum that makes this spiritual anthem feel grand and deeply inspiring.

BHAGYADA LAKSHMI BARAMMA (VARALAKSHMI)

A celebrated traditional Carnatic composition by Saint Purandara Dasa, rendered here with a rich semi-classical, devotional feel. I love breathing new life into traditional devotional treasures for modern audiences on music platforms. I wanted to render this on the Veena, with music programming and production by Manu Prasad, and I personally added on-screen lyrics to the video so that viewers could effortlessly connect with, understand, and immerse themselves in its meaning.

SEGAMAYAI

An experimental second-trimester prenatal music composition structured from the perspective of an expectant mother singing directly to her child—and my very first exploration of my favorite Thiruppugazh. It blends the 15th-century Tamil Sandham meters of Saint Arunagirinathar with ambient, contemporary soundscapes. By bridging the historical craftsmanship of my 22-year-old Veena with the intricate execution of ancient Sandham meters, this piece explores uncharted harmonic landscapes. Rather than using a pickup, I wanted an authentic, pristine acoustic capture, so we recorded live at MOS Studios in Chennai using an AKG condenser microphone. Produced in collaboration with V.V. Shree Sai Dev, this release allowed me to bring this unique prenatal music vision to life across digital platforms, exploring non-traditional scale matrices (such as the minimalist four-note S - G3 - M2 - N3 model) and expanding the expressive boundaries of South Indian music. I personally handled the musical arrangements for all of these songs, blending traditional classical structures with fresh, contemporary soundscapes with the help of my music producers.

Q Your Segamayai research explores how 15th-century Thiruppugazh melodies might nurture wellbeing during pregnancy. What first led you to see the veena as something that could heal?

The inspiration for "Segamayai" grew directly from a deeply personal place during my own pregnancy. I used to recite Thiruppugazh during that time, and at its core, Thiruppugazh carries a father's heartfelt prayer for a child—specifically invoking Lord Muruga. As I connected with these verses, I imagined the rhythmic Sandham meters as the gentle, rhythmic motion of a cradle and the soothing cadence of pregnancy baby movement music. It is a song born from the heartfelt wishes of parents-to-be. Experiencing that profound connection firsthand during my pregnancy made me feel deeply that I needed to bring this project to life, turning that sacred emotion into a musical reality.

Q You've been teaching since 2009, and online since 2014—what's a moment with a student that still makes you smile?

That is one of those timeless student moments that instantly brings a smile to my face! There is nothing quite like a student logging into an online class and delivering the ultimate preemptive disclaimer in the very first minute: "I didn't practice this week, kindly ignore my playing!" It always lightens the mood and shows just how honest and endearing our student-teacher bond is. Even when they say that, it always turns into a wonderful, laughter-filled session where we gently work through the lessons together anyway!

SCAN TO WATCH · A RENDERING & TWO LESSONS

SCAN TO WATCH

Bhagyada Lakshmi Baramma
Veena rendering

SCAN TO WATCH

Kambeeranattai
Veena class clip

SCAN TO WATCH

Sarali Varisai
Veena course clip

WHAT'S NEXT



UPCOMING "Ninnukori" Veena version, cover art.

Q What are you creating right now, and when can we hope to hear it?

I am currently working on several exciting projects! Right now, I am preparing for the release of my brand-new instrumental cover—a special Veena version of the timeless classic "Ninnukori." Alongside this upcoming release, there is so much more to explore right now: Immersive Visuals & Audio: You can experience my extended 1-hour devotional Veena music streaming on YouTube, as well as my 1-hour Veena music on Spotify, both designed to offer a continuous, peaceful space for meditation and reflection. Global Learning & Resources: My Veena courses and downloadable Carnatic notations are fully available on my official website (deviveenai.com), which I am continuously developing and expanding. Curated Playlists: I am also actively pitching and curating music for my specialized streaming playlists. Stay tuned—you can hear and experience these new releases very soon across my official channels and on my website! Thank you for keeping classical tradition alive and supporting veena music!





STREAMING Her 1-hour devotional Veena streams.

Q When someone on the other side of the world presses play on your veena, what is the one feeling you hope reaches them?

When someone on the other side of the world presses play on my Veena, the one feeling I hope reaches them is a profound sense of inner peace and spiritual grounding. Whether they are seeking solace, exploring traditional Carnatic heritage, or simply pausing to breathe during a busy day, I want them to feel completely wrapped in the warm, resonant embrace of the instrument. Knowing that the traditional notes of my Veena can cross oceans to touch a heart, bridge cultural distances, and bring absolute stillness to someone's soul—that is the moment I feel truly fulfilled as an artist.

I run my own independent music label and online academy, Devi Veenai (Saraswathi Veena Music & Institute), through which I release all my self-recorded works. My entire catalog is also available for music sync licensing and commercial placements.

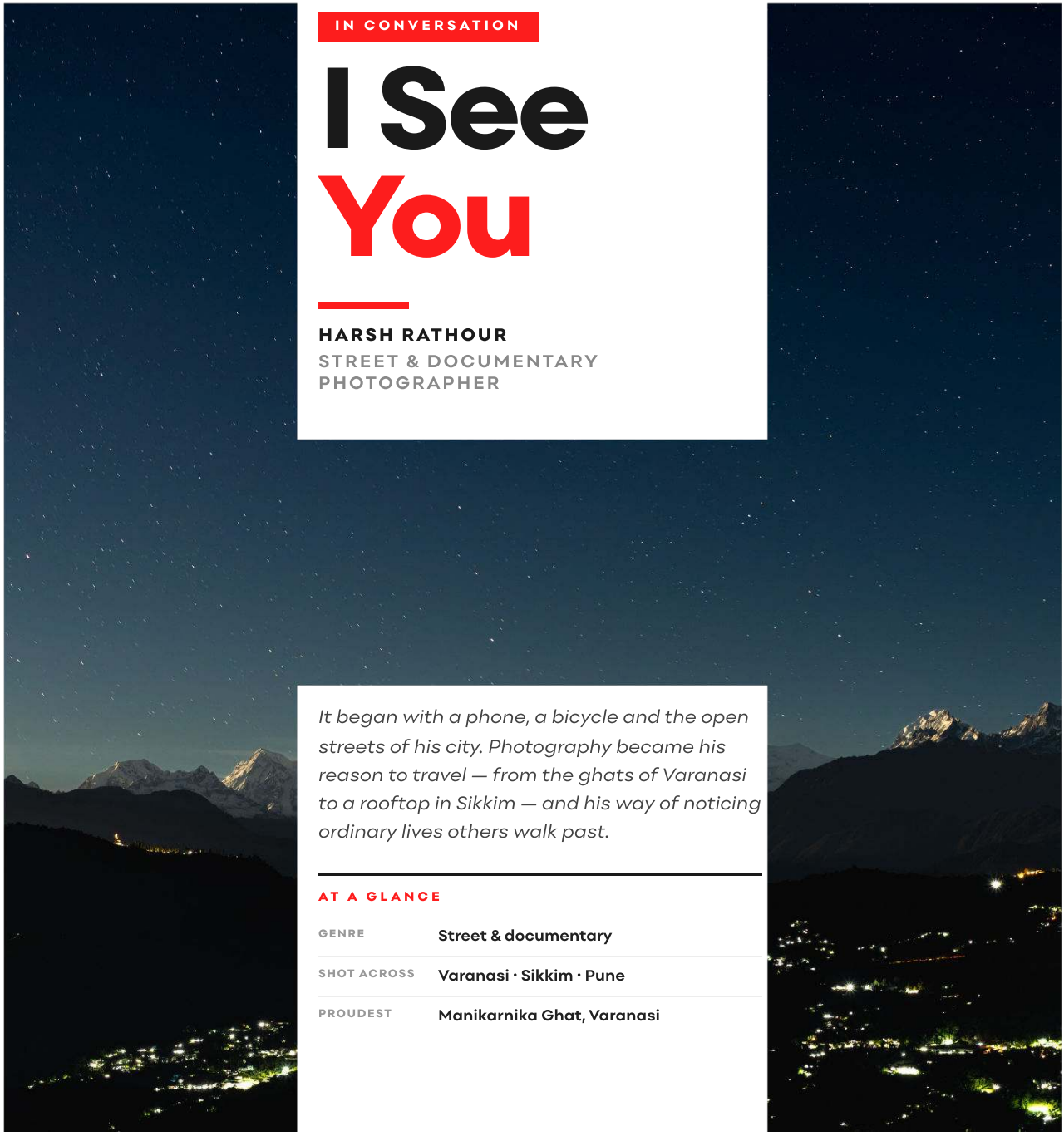
CONNECT WITH RANJANIDEVI SARAVANAN

INSTAGRAM @ranjanidevisaravanan **YOUTUBE** @devi_veenai **SPOTIFY** Ranjanidevi Saravanan **APPLE MUSIC** Ranjanidevi Saravanan
JIOSAAVN Ranjanidevi Saravanan **FACEBOOK** Ranjanidevi Saravanan **WEB** deviveenaimusic.com

IN CONVERSATION

I See You

HARSH RATHOUR
STREET & DOCUMENTARY PHOTOGRAPHER



It began with a phone, a bicycle and the open streets of his city. Photography became his reason to travel — from the ghats of Varanasi to a rooftop in Sikkim — and his way of noticing ordinary lives others walk past.

AT A GLANCE

GENRE	Street & documentary
SHOT ACROSS	Varanasi · Sikkim · Pune
PROUDEST	Manikarnika Ghat, Varanasi

INSIDE THE LETTER · A ROOFTOP IN SIKKIM, AT NIGHT

Q Take us back to the very beginning — how did photography first find its way into your life, and what made you want to keep going?

My journey with photography started with a phone, a bicycle, and the open streets of my city. Back then it was just something I loved doing, chasing sunrises and quiet moments around the city. I didn't know that small hobby would shape the life I wanted. By my final semester of 12th grade, I realized I couldn't see myself sitting in a cabin, doing the same routine every day. I wanted to travel, to meet people, to see the world with my own eyes, not just through a screen. That's when photography became my reason to travel. Through my camera, I could experience the lives of people, understand their emotions, listen to their stories, and see how differently people live in different parts of the world. Every place has a character, every person has a story worth listening to. I wanted to discover those stories and preserve them through my photographs. For me, photography isn't just my profession, it's my way of understanding life. It's how I chase experiences, how I learn from strangers, and how I step outside the ordinary. I don't know where this path will take me, but that's the part I love. Every day feels like there's something new to learn, someone new to meet, some story waiting to be discovered. Photography is my ticket to that world.

NO ONE HAD TAKEN HIS PICTURE

Q Can you remember the first photograph you took that made you stop and think, 'this is what I want to do'? Tell us about that moment.

One evening, I saw an old man polishing shoes near an electric pole. I clicked his photo and showed it to him. At first, he looked a little upset, but when he saw the picture, he smiled. He told me no one had taken his picture in years and shared stories from his life. That moment changed what photography means to me—it's not just about capturing pretty scenes, it's about listening, noticing people, and caring for their small moments. I'm still exploring and learning. But what keeps me going is the hope that, every day, somewhere, there's a story waiting to be heard. I want to be there to listen, and to capture those moments with care. That old man didn't just give me a smile, he gave me a reason to see people differently. And that's what I carry with me.

Q Who or what shaped the way you see the world through your lens? Share a person, place, or experience that quietly trained your eye.

The people and places I've encountered shaped the way I see photography. My parents have always supported me, while my Chacha ji, who is a DOP, helped me find direction in photography and filmmaking. My teachers in college taught me to look beyond a beautiful frame and understand the story behind it. Traveling taught me just as much, from the streets of my hometown to the ghats of Varanasi, Sikkim, and Shaniwar Wada in Pune, each place introduced me to different people, emotions, and ways of living. I'm still learning, but every person I meet and every place I visit, gives me another reason to keep exploring and telling stories through photography. It's not just about pictures, it's about noticing lives, and quietly saying, I see you.

Q You're drawn to the eyes of people and the emotions they carry. When you're out on the street, how do you know a face is the one you have to photograph?

For me, it's the expressions that catch me naturally. Sometimes it's a light in someone's eyes, sometimes it's a quiet smile, sometimes it's a face that looks tired, but still carrying something quietly. I don't always know what pulls me in. I just feel there's a story there worth noticing. And that's what I try to capture.

> **"It's not just about pictures, it's about noticing lives, and quietly saying, I see you."**
>
> HARSH RATHOUR

MANIKARNIKA GHAT, VARANASI



Q Which of your photographs are you most proud of, and what was happening in that moment?

I took this photograph at Manikarnika Ghat in Varanasi, where people experience grief, love and loss in different ways. So many emotions surround the burning pyres, some felt deeply, but never expressed. The man walking through the frame reminds me of myself, traveling to understand people, their stories, and the emotions that make us human.

WHO SHAPED HIS EYE

FAMILY	His parents' support
DIRECTION	His Chacha ji, a DOP
THE STORY	His teachers in college

A ROOFTOP IN SIKKIM



Q What did you feel or notice in the split second before you pressed the shutter on this next photograph?

I was on a rooftop in Sikkim, just watching the stars and the soft lights below. I didn't even notice the meteor when I clicked. Later, seeing that little streak of light felt like a gift, like the night left me with something I wasn't even looking for. It reminded me to just be there, to keep looking up, because sometimes life shows you tiny surprises when you're just sitting and noticing.

HER LITTLE ROOM



Q What was the simple, everyday story you saw here that others might have walked past?

I noticed a woman sitting in her little room, surrounded by utensils, clothes, and the things she uses every day. Nothing special was happening, but I found myself wondering about her life beyond that moment. Sometimes, we walk past people without thinking about their stories. I wanted to pause and notice hers.

THE RESCUER


HARSH RATHOUR

Q Beyond the rescues, what did you learn about the rescuer as a person — his ordinary days, his worries, the human side of the work?

What I found interesting about him is the way he connects with animals, even outside his rescue work. At home, he spends time caring for and looking after different animals, treating them with a kind of warmth that feels natural to him. There's something lovely about seeing this side of him, funny, loving, and protective, not just towards his family but towards the animals around him.

Q What surprised you most about how he lives alongside the creatures and the world he protects?

What stayed with me was how gently he treated those animals. Like they were his own babies. He told me he wants them to live freely, just like they're supposed to. Seeing him with them, I felt he wasn't trying to be brave or special. He was just being kind, and it felt real, like someone quietly doing what they feel inside.


HARSH RATHOUR

A LITTLE MORE CONNECTED

Q When someone stands in front of your photographs, what is the one feeling you hope stays with them long after they look away?

I hope they walk away feeling a little more connected to the people and the world around them. We often pass strangers on the street without wondering about their lives or what they might be going through. Through my photographs, I want people to pause for a moment, feel something, and look at ordinary lives a little differently. If a photograph makes someone curious about another person's story or reminds them to be a little kinder, I feel I've done something meaningful. For me, it's not just about seeing a photograph, but feeling the life behind it.

CONNECT WITH HARSH RATHOUR

INSTAGRAM @harsync.lab

MUSIC · SINGER · COMPOSER

Banned from the Staircase

JAIVARDHAN VERMA
THE STAIRCASE BAN(NE)D · @JAIVARDHANVOX

From a Junior KG stage at Shanmukhananda Hall to 3 AM jam sessions in an office stairwell — the singer and composer on a musical family, a band named for being banned, and turning hardship into songs.

Q Take us right back to the start — what's your earliest memory of music pulling you in, long before it ever became your craft?

My first performance was at the iconic Shanmukhananda Hall, and I was barely old enough to know what a stage was! I was in Junior KG when my mother, a Hindustani classical music teacher, insisted I perform at our school's annual day. I sang "Kisi Ki Muskurahaton Pe Ho Nisar" a cappella, while a teacher stood behind me, constantly turning my face towards the microphone because I was too busy searching for my parents in the darkened auditorium. I never managed to spot them, but when the song ended, the applause filled the hall. I had walked onto that stage looking for two familiar faces, but walked off having discovered something much bigger — a love for music and the joy of connecting with people through it. I think a part of me has been chasing that feeling ever since.

Q Was there a particular song or moment growing up that made you think, 'this is what I want to do with my life'?

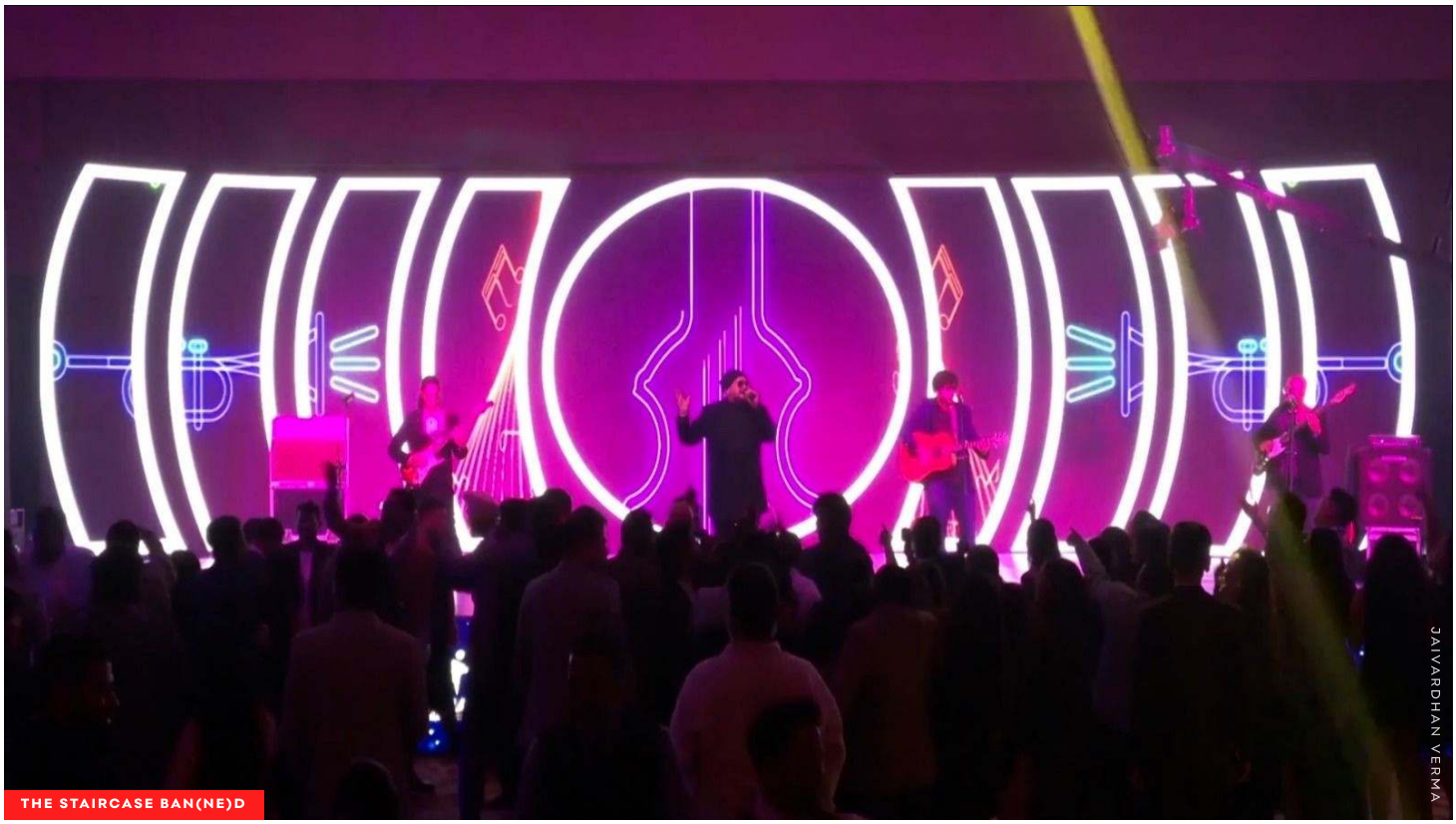
I've had the privilege of growing up in a family brimming with artistic talent. My mornings began with my mother's riyaaz, my father reading great literature in preparation for his roles, and my Chhota Papa (uncle) humming retro classics as he got ready for work. Music wasn't something I discovered; it was something I grew up breathing. Vividh Bharati was a constant companion, filling our home with timeless melodies like "Abhi Na Jaao Chhod Kar," "Kisi Ki Muskurahaton Pe Ho Nisar," and "Main Zindagi Ka Saath Nibhata Chala Gaya." As I grew old enough to understand the poetry behind these songs, Sahir Ludhianvi saab's words began resonating with me in ways I couldn't quite explain. Even today, the iconic opening notes of "Main Zindagi Ka Saath Nibhata Chala Gaya" stir something deep within me. I don't think there was one defining moment when I decided to pursue music. It was a thousand little moments, melodies, and emotions quietly shaping me. By the time I realised what music meant to me, it had already become a part of who I was.



AT A GLANCE

IS	Singer, composer & independent musician
FOUNDED	The Staircase Ban(ne)d, 2017
GURUS	Mona Sinha Varma · Pankaj Verma · Mohammed Rafi
DEBUT	"Ab Jo Jalaa Hoon" (2024) · IRAA Award

FROM STAIRWELLS TO SPOTLIGHT



THE STAIRCASE BAN(NE)D

JAIVARDHAN VERMA

Q You founded The Staircase Band and often speak of the journey 'from stairwells to spotlight' — how did the band first come together, and where did that name come from?

The name is actually The Staircase Ban(ne)d, and there's a rather amusing story behind it! I used to work at 3 Global Services (now Tech Mahindra), where my bosses and colleagues were gracious enough to tolerate my incessant singing. The job was meant to be a temporary arrangement until I found my breakthrough in music and filmmaking. That "temporary" arrangement lasted 11 years! During those years, the company organised fun contests like 3 Idol, where I met a few fellow aspiring musicians. Soon, impromptu jam sessions became a ritual, usually around 3 AM in the office stairwell. Colleagues would wander in, request songs, and we'd happily oblige. It became our little escape from the corporate grind. Until one fine day, the security guards decided they'd had enough and banned us from singing in the staircase! Fast forward to 2017, when we finally decided to form a band. We didn't have to think too hard about the name. The Staircase Ban(ne)d was born — a little wordplay, a little rebellion, and a whole lot of nostalgia. We may have been banned from the staircase, but thankfully, nobody could ban the music!

Q Is there a mentor, teacher, or artist whose influence you still carry in the way you sing or produce today?

My mother, Mrs. Mona Sinha Varma, has always been my first and most influential Guru. Whatever musical ability I possess today owes a great deal to her guidance and the environment she created for me. My uncle, Mr. Pankaj Verma, too played a very important role. He would teach me film songs, helping me understand not just the notes, but the emotions behind them. He taught me that singing a song and feeling a song are two very different things. And of course, Rafi saab! Mohammed Rafi has been an institution for generations of aspiring singers, myself included. There's an entire education hidden in his songs. The more you dissect his phrasing, expression, breath control, and effortless transitions between emotions, the more you realise how much there is still to learn. If my mother gave me my musical foundation, my uncle taught me to find the emotion, and Rafi saab continues to remind me that mastery is a lifelong pursuit.

> **"We may have been banned from the staircase, but thankfully, nobody could ban the music!"**
>
> JAIVARDHAN VERMA

AB JO JALAA HOON, ROSHNI TOH HOGI



DEBUT SINGLE, 2024 "Ab Jo Jalaa Hoon" cover art — IRAA Award winner.

Q What's the story behind the track you just shared — where were you in life when it came together?

"Ab Jo Jalaa Hoon, Roshni Toh Hogi" was a line I had written long before the song took shape. It came from a particularly dark phase of my life, grappling with something most independent artists know all too well — delayed payments. Whether it's clubs, restaurants, or event organisers, there's always someone holding back your hard-earned money. And unfortunately, passion doesn't pay the bills! Financial uncertainty has a way of making you question everything — your choices, your abilities, sometimes even your worth. But that line carried a stubborn sense of hope. If life has put me through the fire, surely that fire must illuminate something. The song evolved into something larger than my personal struggles. It's about resilience, finding strength in adversity, and surrounding yourself with like-minded people who help you forge ahead. In many ways, it embodies the spirit of The Staircase Ban(ne)d. It became our debut single in 2024, and eventually winning an IRAA Award made the journey all the more meaningful. For me, "Ab Jo Jalaa Hoon" is about turning pain into purpose. Because sometimes, you have to burn to become the light.

Q What's the one piece of gear or corner of your space you simply couldn't make music without?

It would have to be my workstation. It's where random thoughts become melodies, melodies become arrangements, and eventually, songs take shape. It's not the fanciest setup, but it's seen countless hours of experimentation, frustration, happy accidents, and those magical moments when everything suddenly falls into place. I've always believed that great music isn't about having the most expensive equipment. It's about what you bring to it — your ideas, your emotions, and your willingness to keep experimenting. The gear is simply there to help you translate what's playing in your head into something the world can hear.



NIGHTS TO REMEMBER





Q What made this particular show unforgettable for you? (If it was a night like performing for Hema Malini ji, we'd love to hear how that felt.)

Two performances come to mind, each unforgettable for entirely different reasons. The first was a corporate event at Sahara Star, where we had an audience of thousands who had just discovered that it was a dry day! Naturally, they weren't thrilled. They had come to let their hair down, and the news had dampened their spirits before the evening had even begun. So the responsibility fell on us to lift those spirits, and what followed was an absolute blast! The band brought its energy to the stage, and the audience gave it right back. Thousands of people singing, dancing, and celebrating together. That evening taught me that you don't always need spirits to lift people's spirits. Sometimes, all you need is great music! The second was an experience I will cherish forever. I was invited to perform at a private gathering, but until I actually reached the bungalow, I had absolutely no idea I'd be singing for Hema Malini ji! Having grown up watching her iconic films, it was surreal to find myself performing some of those timeless classics right in front of her. And when Hema ji herself began singing along, it was an extraordinary feeling! She and her daughters, Esha and Ahana, were incredibly gracious hosts, making the evening even more special. One performance reminded me of the sheer power of music to lift thousands of spirits. The other reminded me of the little boy who grew up admiring legends, never imagining he'd one day have the privilege of singing for one. Both are memories I'll carry for a lifetime.

KHWAAB

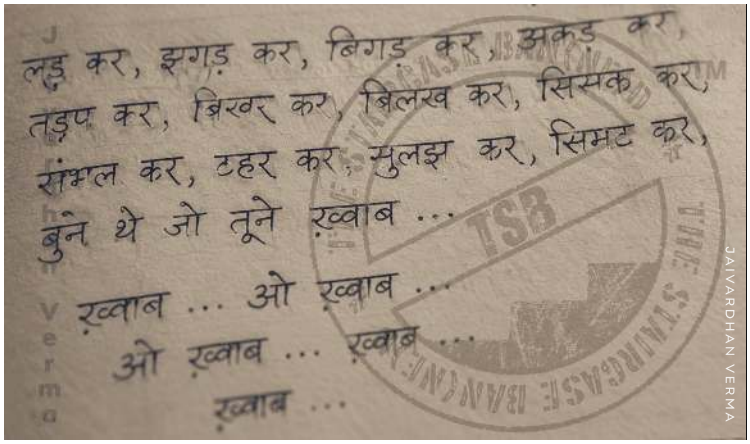


UPCOMING "Khwaab" cover art.

Q How did the song you just shared take shape — and what are you hoping to say with this next release?

It was a feeling. A persistent one. Melancholia. "Khwaab" explores how dreams can quietly fade under the weight of responsibilities, financial pressures, relationships, and everyday life. The song reflects on the painful distance between the lives we imagine and the lives we ultimately live. Rather than focusing on reclaiming lost dreams, it embraces the difficult acceptance that some aspirations are gone — and that we must learn to live with their absence. At its heart, "Khwaab" is about broken dreams, compromise, and making peace with the space between hope and reality.

Not every dream survives. Not every struggle ends in triumph. Sometimes, all we're left with is the memory of who we once hoped to become. The cover art reflects this emotion — a solitary young man suspended beneath an upside-down city skyline, caught between the life he imagined and the reality he inhabits. The bleak skies and muted colours evoke a sense of quiet devastation rather than liberation.



THE LYRIC SHEET "Khwaab", handwritten.

Q When someone hears your music for the very first time, what do you hope they're left feeling once the song ends?

More than anything, I hope they're left feeling something genuine. Music has this extraordinary ability to reach places that ordinary conversations sometimes cannot. A song can make you revisit a forgotten memory, confront an uncomfortable truth, smile through tears, or simply feel a little less alone. I don't necessarily want everyone to interpret my songs the way I intended them. In fact, I find it fascinating when listeners discover meanings that I hadn't consciously imagined. That's when a song truly becomes theirs. Whether it's the defiance of "Ab Jo Jalaa Hoon" or the quiet despair of "Khwaab", I want the music to resonate with something deeply personal within the listener. If the song ends but the feeling lingers, if a line stays with them long after the music has stopped, I think I've done my job as an artist.

CONNECT WITH JAIVARDHAN VERMA

INSTAGRAM @jaivardhanvox

HOME BAKING · MILLETS · MEMORY

The Floor Oven

BRINDA KUMAR
HOME BAKER · @BRINDA.KUMAR.BOM

As a child, lost in her mother's kitchen, she once sat on a floor oven that was baking a cake. Born in Rajasthan, she now bakes bread with millets — vegetarian, nutritious, colourful and low on fat.

Q What's the story behind this signature dish of yours?

This is a creamy kodo millet fruit pudding. I made this vegan dessert for a get-together, which was a first for me. After learning that a few guests had recently turned vegan, I wanted to create something everyone could enjoy. I needed it to be healthy, flavourful, and visually appealing, and also set well. I had to drive for an hour to reach it to its destination. It was almost a last-minute thought the night before. I managed to get edible flowers to decorate it with the same morning. Fortunately, it all came together perfectly.

Q Do you remember the first thing you cooked that made you think, "I've really got this"?

Cooking the Rajasthani pithod ki sabzi the first time and getting it right was my happiest moment!

Q You've baked millet bread and made pasta from scratch — what first drew you to cooking with millets?

I have made millet bread and also pasta from scratch using buckwheat flour. I've made many more dishes but not bajra noodles. What first drew me to millets was definitely the overall health aspect, and keeping me fuller and energetic for a longer time.

> **"Making a dish colourful is the first step towards making it appetizing."**
>
> BRINDA KUMAR



KODO MILLET FRUIT PUDDING

SIGNATURE A vegan pudding, decorated with edible flowers.

HER FIRST LOVE

Bread making — now with millets.

Guided along the way by Millet Chef Mr Vikas Chawla's shares on Instagram.

WHERE IT BEGAN

Q How did your love for food begin — was there a dish or a moment at home that first made you want to be the one doing the cooking?

My love for food began not as a sudden flash of inspiration, but as a quiet sensory memory tied to my mom's cooking since childhood. Sitting quietly in the kitchen, watching her cook and going into a trance with all the flavours surrounding me, is an experience I can never forget. At one particular quiet sitting, I was so lost that I did not realize I had sat on a floor oven which had been switched on to bake a cake. The rest is history. I got away with a few burns, yet I never gave up, even though I was shooed away. As my interest grew, I started helping my mom by beating cake batters. She was constantly baking cakes for family. Married into a strict vegetarian family and watching my mother-in-law cook delicious food even without onion and garlic left me in awe. I joined a few cooking classes along the way. Slowly I discovered that my true love was for baking breads, though I enjoy cooking all kinds of food. Recently my focus has shifted toward cooking with millets and creating recipes that are flavourful as well as easy and enjoyable to cook at home. As millets offer so many health benefits, incorporating them into our daily meals has become the norm. Since bread making is my first love, baking with millets was something I started studying a while ago and finally managed to give it shape. Millet Chef Mr Vikas Chawla has been a guiding factor with his shares on his Instagram handle. I will keep working on healthier recipes without compromising on taste. Making India the millet capital of the world, with more people incorporating millets in their diet in the correct way, would be my ultimate happy journey.

Q Your bio sums your food up as vegetarian, nutritious, colourful and low on fat. Where did that way of thinking about food come from?

Married into a strict vegetarian family, I turned vegetarian too. Nutritious food has been on my menu since childhood and is deeply ingrained in my thinking. As awareness via study about how food affects our body grew, I started trying to cut down on fat using healthier fats along with more colours in vegetables. Making a dish colourful is the first step towards making it appetizing by making it more appealing to the eye.



MILLET CREATIONS

MILLETS The creations she was most excited to show.

FUSION FEASTS



FUSION FEAST

Q Your Moroccan-Mediterranean feast wove different cuisines together — how do you decide which flavours from separate kitchens belong on one plate?

Travelling to a few countries, enjoying the local cuisine, asking or reading about it and somehow just being able to connect the flavours with the fresh produce available is my passion. I also love to pick up local herbs and spice mixes which I could use later, without any particular plan in mind.

FROM HER MOTHER'S KITCHEN

Q Your mom's layered vegetable stew sounded full of love — which family recipe will you always keep making?

The layered vegetable stew is our favourite as it's nourishing and not very difficult to make, even though you have to cut quite a few vegetables.

Q You've described bread-making as therapeutic — what do you love about the slow, hands-on side of baking?

The finally baked loaf, the flavour and slicing the first slice. Of course the kneading and punching the dough after the rise, bringing it together again to place in the loaf tin, waiting for the second rise and baking. Almost the entire process is therapeutic and exciting.



A FAMILY RECIPE

FESTIVALS



MOTI BOONDI LADOOS



Q What does festive cooking — like your moti boondi ladoos for Ganesh Chaturthi — mean to you?

Moti boondi ladoos have deep historical roots in Rajasthan, where I was born. All of my growing up years I have heard my parents say that only moti boondi ladoos are the real boondi ladoos. They were made in the royal kitchens and the traditional halwais still make them. I thoroughly enjoy eating them and making them is a labour of love. I do enjoy making halwas as well.

AT A GLANCE

FIRST LOVE	Baking breads
FOCUS	Cooking and baking with millets

SCAN TO WATCH

Festive kitchen

The video she shared with her festival dishes

BAKED & PROUD



SOMETHING SHE IS PROUD OF

Q What's the next kitchen adventure you can't wait to try?

There are a few ideas on my mind. I haven't decided yet what I will go ahead with first.

Q When someone cooks one of your recipes and it turns out beautifully, what do you hope they feel?

I feel happy and I hope they enjoy it too!

CONNECT WITH BRINDA KUMAR

INSTAGRAM @brinda.kumar.bom

MUSIC · BASS & PRODUCTION

The Energy That Holds



LIVE · ON BASS

SOUNDCHECK

ARNAV BACHOSPATI CHAKRABORTY
GUNZOOLOO RECORDS · @BASSBACHOSPATI

Bass player, producer and self-described "vibe curator," he has spent his life in the space between rhythm and emotion — from spool-tape recorders as a child to a 30,000-strong satsang crowd with The White Band.

AT A GLANCE

PLAYS	**Bass · producer · "vibe curator"**
LABEL	**Founder, Gunzooloo Records**
BANDS	**Founder-bassist, The White Band · bassist, Parashpathar**
STUDIED	**Apple-certified, Logic Pro · Music Business, Berklee**

Q How did your journey in music begin, and what inspired you to become a music producer and fusion bass player?

Music honestly started as a feeling — an instinctive connection to rhythm, melody, and emotional storytelling through sound — before it became a profession for me. Growing up, I was always surrounded by different kinds of sounds: Indian music, film songs, rock bands, live instruments, recording studios and live concerts. I got obsessed with how music could instantly change your mood or make you feel connected to something bigger without saying a single word.

My journey with music actually started way before I even understood what music production was. When I was around 2–3 years old, I used to sit near my window setting up old analog voltmeters, switches, wires and mechanical gears, imagining I was controlling an entirely different world with those tools, flying like a pilot. Looking back now, I think that curiosity for sound, systems and creation was always inside me.

Later, my father introduced me to music lessons with a keyboard player, arranger and recording artist named Mr. Nitu, and that changed everything. I became fascinated watching him create music using rhythm sequencers, drum machines, vintage keyboards and analog recording gear. While teaching me, he also showed me how songs were made and recorded on spool tapes in the old-school way. I was exposed to that world from a very early age until I was around 10, and it honestly felt magical.

That experience opened up a completely different universe for me. I didn't just fall in love with music — I fell in love with the process behind creating sound.

Today, whether I'm playing bass or producing records, I still carry that same excitement I had as a kid experimenting with machines and sound — just now with the ability to turn those ideas into music that connects with people across different cultures and generations.

FROM SPOOL TAPE TO THE DAW

Years later, around 2018, when digital music production completely took over the scene, that childhood fascination came back stronger than ever. Around the same time, a producer friend from the USA, Mr. Sayanesh Mitra, really sparked my passion for music production. I remember being blown away by his studio setup and the world around it. For someone who grew up fascinated by analog gear, it felt like stepping into a dream.

What really amazed me was seeing legendary studio equipment like the Pultec EQ, Manley VOXBOX, J37 Tape Machine, TASCAM consoles and GENELEC monitors — not just as physical hardware, but also recreated inside modern DAWs through software plugins. It was crazy to realize that the classic analog sound I grew up admiring could now exist inside a computer while still carrying similar character and emotion.

That inspired me to take production seriously. I wanted full control over my sound, arrangements, textures and mixes, so I started learning music production through Apple Logic Pro. Eventually, I became officially certified by Apple and fully dedicated myself to music production, recording and mixing.

I loved how the bass sits in the middle of rhythm and emotion at the same time. It's not always the loudest instrument, but it's the energy that holds everything together. That really matched my personality as a musician.



ARNAV BACHOSPATI CHAKRABORTY

ARNAV BACHOSPATI CHAKRABORTY

Q When was the first time you realized you could make a career out of music?

I think I realized music could truly become my career long before I officially accepted it myself. I was already performing professionally while I was still in school. Back then, I used to participate in a lot of inter-school music competitions, and over time our performances started getting attention. Later in college, we continued competing in festivals against other bands and kept winning consistently.

Interestingly, I also completed Hotel Management from IHM Kolkata and worked as a chef in a five-star property for a while. That phase taught me discipline and professionalism, but the job was extremely demanding — almost 15 hours a day — and for nearly six months I had to step away from music completely. That was the moment everything became clear to me.

When I couldn't play music, I realized how empty I felt without it. It wasn't just a hobby anymore, or even just a profession. Music had become a core part of my identity and personality. Music is my lifeline. It's the one thing that has stayed constant through every phase of my life, and I honestly can't imagine myself existing without it.

BLACK GOLD

Q Tell us about "Black Gold" — the track and the inspiration behind it.

"Black Gold" is a high-energy fusion track that blends the warmth of raw, human-recorded analog music with the futuristic visual language of AI cinematography. The song combines cinematic string arrangements, heavy hybrid synths, deep funky basslines and soulful RnB-inspired vocals to create a sound that feels both emotionally organic and sonically modern.

The inspiration behind the track came from the idea of merging two worlds I deeply connect with — classic analog musicality and next-generation digital creativity. Having grown up around old-school recording culture while also embracing modern production technology and AI-driven visual tools, I wanted "Black Gold" to represent that crossover artistically.

This project is especially personal for me because it also marks my first AI-generated and AI-edited music video. Instead of using AI as just a gimmick, I approached it like a creative extension of the music itself — shaping visuals that move with the vibe, energy and cinematic atmosphere of the song. Collaborating with Grammy-nominated artist Mishell Ivon brought another powerful layer to the record. Her soulful vocal delivery and emotional songwriting added depth, character and an international sonic appeal that perfectly matched the vision of the track.

At its core, "Black Gold" is about evolution — respecting the soul of live musicianship while exploring the limitless possibilities of modern technology, independent artistry and visual storytelling.



ON STAGE

> **"It's not always the loudest instrument, but it's the energy that holds everything together."**
>
> ARNAV BACHOSPATI CHAKRABORTY



Q What makes your bass performance unique to your style?

The balance between groove, emotion and atmosphere. I've never looked at the bass as just a supporting instrument playing root notes in the background. For me, the bass is a storyteller — a certain role you play in a musical situation. It controls movement, energy, tension and feel within a track.

My playing style comes from a mix of influences: Bangla band culture, Indian classical and folk fusion, funk, jazz harmony, cinematic music, RnB and modern electronic production. Because of that, I naturally approach bass lines in a very hybrid way.

Sometimes the bass is rhythmic and aggressive, sometimes melodic and emotional, and sometimes it works almost like a cinematic layer inside the arrangement. Another thing that shapes my sound is my background as a producer and mix engineer. I don't just think like a bass player while recording — I think about how the bass will interact with the kick, vocals, synths, strings and the overall emotional space of the track.

I also grew up during both the analog and digital eras of music, so I love combining the warmth and imperfections of old-school live playing with modern sound design and processing techniques. That combination gives my bass performances a very organic but contemporary feel.

In tracks like "Black Gold," for example, the bass is not just holding the rhythm — it becomes part of the cinematic energy of the song. It adds movement, attitude, sensuality and emotional depth at the same time.

At the end of the day, I think my style is less about playing fast or flashy and more about making people feel something through groove and texture.

VIBE CURATOR

Q How has your experience in the music industry grown over the years, especially as a vibe curator — and how do you approach fusion?

I realized that music is much more than just playing notes correctly. What really stayed with me was the ability to create a feeling — an atmosphere people could emotionally connect with. That's how I slowly grew into the role of a vibe curator.

I've worked on projects where Rabindrasangeet was blended with modern production, jazz harmony and classical interpretations. I've also explored Indian classical fusion, Bengal and Indian folk fusion, live band culture, college festival circuits, and collaborations with electronic music producers, as well as setting the mood for film BGM. One thing I've always believed is that music should evolve with time while still respecting its roots.

A major part of my understanding of fusion came from performing and collaborating with legendary musicians and influential bands over the years. I've had the honor of working alongside Grammy-winning artists like Pt. Vishwa Mohan Bhatt and Grammy-nominated percussion maestro Subhen Chatterjee through his iconic band KARMA, which has been one of India's pioneering fusion bands for more than four decades. I was also associated with legendary Bangla bands like Parashpathar and Mohiner Ghoraguli, and artists like Bonnie Chakraborty and Rathijit Bhattacharjee, who are individually respected names in the world of film music and composition.

So for me, fusion is not just cultural — it's also a fusion of generations, technologies, emotions and artistic philosophies.

Q What music business strategies have you found most effective for promoting your work?

One of the biggest strategies that helped me grow was building my own identity and boutique record label, Gunzooloo Records. Creating the brand gave me creative independence and helped me think beyond just being a musician. I've completed courses in Music Business from Berklee, composition studies inspired by creators like Amit Trivedi, and AI visual generation and prompting through Microsoft programs. It allowed me to approach music more strategically — from artist development and collaborations to branding, release planning and long-term catalog building.

Registering with organizations like IPRS and learning about publishing rights, royalties, licensing and sync deals became very important for me as I grew in the industry. Today, sync opportunities for films, ads, OTT platforms, gaming and digital content are huge for independent artists and producers, and I think musicians should understand the value of their intellectual property from the very beginning. Playlist pitching is another major strategy I believe in. Getting your music into the right playlists can organically introduce your sound to completely new listeners across different countries and demographics. Collaborations and partnerships have played a massive role in my journey.

For me, the most effective strategy has always been balancing artistry with adaptability — staying emotionally real while evolving with technology, platforms and changing listener behavior.

THE WHITE BAND · WHERE THE BASS HAS TAKEN HIM



THE WHITE BAND

Q Describe your creative workspace and how it influences your music.

One of the most powerful influences on my creativity recently has been joining India's unique spiritual bhakti rock band from Deoghar, The White Band. We have toured extensively across India, and more than 40 original compositions are already prepared. It reminded me that music can heal, elevate and connect people on a much deeper level beyond entertainment. Playing this music has changed me not only as a musician but also as a human being.

Q You've shared the stage with some remarkable names. Where has the bass taken you?

One of the film tracks I've played on has crossed over 200 million views. I've performed at the Zee Bangla Saregama finale with K.K. and the live band, played a concert with Zubeen Garg to a sea of people, and recorded on a Salim–Sulaiman Sprite ad as well as an Akriti Kakkar song. I've also played the NH7 Weekender festival with Zoo. I'm the founder-bassist of The White Band, a very popular spiritual bhakti rock band from Deoghar Satsang, where we perform for audiences and satsangis numbering over 30,000. And I'm the bassist of the legendary Bangla band Parashpathar.

CONNECT WITH ARNAV BACHOSPATI CHAKRABORTY · GUNZOOLOO RECORDS

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PRANAY KADUSKAR

PHOTOGRAPHY · LIGHT & STORY

Half Full of Silence

PRANAY VILAS KADUSKAR
PHOTOGRAPHER · @PRANAYPICTURES

A film-school director and editor who found his true expression in 2015, with the Nikon D3300 his father gifted him. Now he works in light, shadow and silence — images made with a cinematic eye.



PRANAY VILAS KADUSKAR

HALF FULL OF SILENCE

Q What conceptual work challenges viewers' perspectives, and what message were you exploring?

This photograph was created as an exploration of light, shadow, and silence. Instead of focusing on the cup itself, I wanted to create a visual metaphor where light reveals only a part of the subject while the rest remains hidden in darkness.

To me, it reflects how our thoughts and emotions are often only partially visible, with much more remaining unspoken. The empty space is just as important as the subject, inviting the viewer to slow down and interpret the image through their own experiences.

I believe conceptual photography is most meaningful when it encourages questions rather than providing answers. With Half Full of Silence, my intention was not to tell a single story, but to create a quiet moment where every viewer can discover a different one.

BECOMING A PHOTOGRAPHER

Q What was the first photo you ever took that made you feel like a photographer?

To be completely honest, I don't remember the very first photograph I ever took. In the beginning, I photographed landscapes, nature, and portraits simply because I enjoyed exploring the world through my camera.

The first moment that truly made me feel like a photographer came when I captured sunlight falling on a power station. I shared the image on Facebook, and one of my friends said, "You should get out of your hometown and move to Pune or Mumbai because you have a great future ahead." Those words stayed with me. For the first time, I felt that someone genuinely saw potential in my work.

Another defining moment came when I photographed a group of grey langurs early one morning. During post-processing, I transformed the image into a dramatic night-like scene with beautiful rim light highlighting the animals. A friend called it the best photograph I had ever created. Years later, I entered that same image into a GuruShots competition, where it received a Guru's Pick award. That recognition gave me even more confidence and reinforced my belief that I was on the right creative path.

Looking back, it wasn't a single photograph that made me feel like a photographer—it was the encouragement, belief, and recognition those photographs received that gave me the confidence to truly see myself as one.

Q How has your style evolved since you started photography?

When I first started photography, I was focused on capturing beautiful scenes and learning the technical side of the camera. I enjoyed photographing landscapes, nature, portraits, and everyday moments, using each photograph as an opportunity to improve my skills.

As my experience grew, so did my perspective. My background in filmmaking and editing naturally influenced the way I see photographs. Instead of simply documenting a scene, I began looking at every frame with a more cinematic perspective—paying close attention to light, shadows, composition, mood, and the emotions a single image can convey.

Today, I enjoy exploring a variety of genres, including landscapes, nature, architecture, portraits, conceptual photography, toy photography, and black-and-white imagery. Rather than limiting myself to one style, I enjoy experimenting and discovering new ways to tell visual stories.

My photography has evolved from simply taking pictures to creating images with intention. Every photograph I make is an attempt to tell a story, evoke an emotion, and invite the viewer to pause, imagine, and experience the scene beyond what is immediately visible. Photography is not just about what I see—it is about how I choose to tell that story through a single frame.

Q Who or what are your biggest photographic influences?

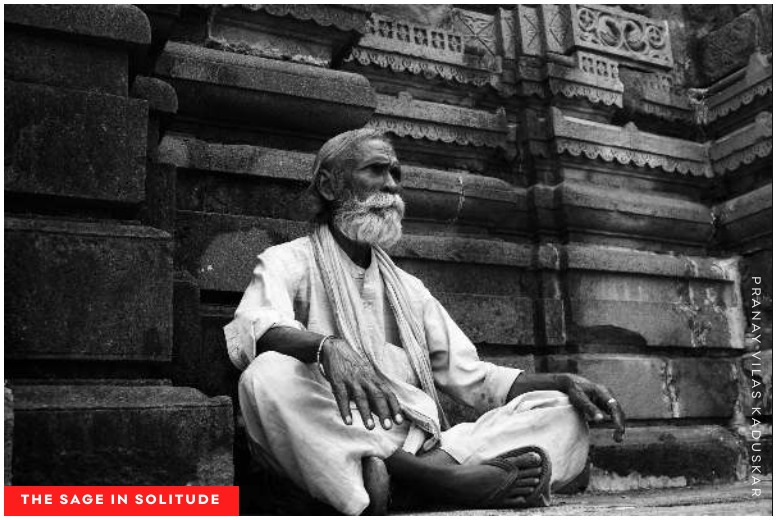
It would be unfair to name just one photographer because I have been inspired by the work of many remarkable artists over the years. Photographers such as Rudy Boyer, Daniel Antunes, Stefan Zimmer, Milinnd Taari, and many others have influenced me in different ways through their creativity, vision, and unique approach to visual storytelling.

Interestingly, many of the photographers who inspire me are street photographers. I explored street photography myself for a period of time, and although my creative journey eventually led me toward other genres, that experience taught me the importance of observation, patience, timing, and finding meaningful stories in ordinary moments. I continue to admire street photographers because of the courage, awareness, and human connection their work demands.

Beyond individual photographers, I draw constant inspiration from light, shadows, cinema, and the emotions that a single frame can communicate. My background in filmmaking and editing has also shaped the way I approach photography, encouraging me to think with a cinematic perspective rather than simply capturing a scene.

Rather than trying to imitate any one photographer, I prefer to learn from many different artists while gradually developing my own visual identity. Every photographer has a unique way of seeing the world, and I believe there is always something valuable to learn from each of them.

LIGHT & STORY



THE SAGE IN SOLITUDE

Q What portrait best represents your style, and what's the story behind it?

This portrait was created completely by chance. I had travelled with my mother and grandmother to attend a family ceremony. Since we had some time before it began, I searched for the Anandeshwar Temple in Lasur on Google because I wanted to photograph its architecture.

After spending some time photographing the beautiful interiors of the temple, we walked outside. That's when I noticed an elderly man sitting quietly. There was something about his calm presence, expression, and the atmosphere around him that immediately caught my attention. Without disturbing the moment, I captured the photograph.

When I later reviewed the image, I realized that it was much more than a portrait. The combination of the temple surroundings, the subject's quiet dignity, and the black-and-white treatment transformed it into a story about peace, character, and timelessness. For me, this photograph perfectly represents the kind of portraits I love creating—images that capture genuine moments and reveal the story of a person within their natural environment.



ECHOES OF CHILDHOOD

Q Can you share a fine art piece that holds personal meaning, and explain its concept?

Although I don't have a strong personal childhood memory attached to marbles, this photograph is deeply meaningful to me because of the idea behind it.

I wanted to experiment with light, shadows, and simple everyday objects to create something conceptual. Marbles became my subject because they carry a universal sense of nostalgia. My hope was to create an image that would encourage viewers to pause for a moment and reconnect with memories of their own childhood.

For me, fine art photography is not only about documenting reality—it is about creating an emotion or an idea. If this photograph reminds someone of a forgotten moment from their childhood, then I feel it has fulfilled its purpose. That emotional connection is far more important to me than the object itself.



GOLDEN FAREWELL

Q Tell us about a landscape or nature photo that captured a special moment for you.

This photograph was captured during a family trip to the Konkan region. Although I don't remember the exact location, I clearly remember the peaceful atmosphere and the beautiful sunset that inspired me to pause and capture the moment.

What caught my attention was not just the view itself, but the way the golden light reflected across the sea, creating a sense of calm and stillness. I wanted to keep the composition simple and let the light tell the story.

For me, landscape photography is about preserving emotions as much as places. Whenever I look at this photograph, it reminds me that some of the most meaningful images are often found unexpectedly during life's ordinary journeys.

Q How did your photography journey begin?

My creative journey began with a passion for filmmaking. I was deeply interested in direction and editing, which led me to study Film & Television Direction and Editing. I wanted to understand visual storytelling and how every cut, frame, and sequence could shape an emotion or tell a meaningful story.

Early in my career, I worked as a trainee on the Marathi television serial Pudhcha Paul and later explored editing opportunities in Nagpur. Although these experiences taught me a great deal, I gradually realized that my true creative expression lay elsewhere.

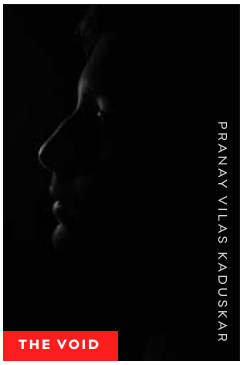
Everything changed in 2015 when my father gifted me a Nikon D3300. I started capturing photographs and shooting documentaries, discovering a completely new way of seeing the world. What began as curiosity soon grew into a genuine passion.

As I continued learning, I started participating in both online and offline photography competitions. Receiving recognition for my work encouraged me to keep growing and exploring different genres of photography as a hobbyist photographer.

Today, photography is much more than a creative pursuit—it is my peace of mind. It allows me to slow down, observe the world with greater attention, and express emotions and stories through images. Looking back, I never imagined that the camera my father gifted me would become the beginning of such a meaningful creative journey.

Q What's one piece of gear you can't live without, and why?

Without a doubt, my Nikon D3300 is the one piece of gear I can't live without.



THE VOID

It was my first DSLR and has been with me throughout my entire photography journey. From landscapes and portraits to conceptual photography and competitions, it has helped me capture some of my most meaningful images.

For me, this camera is more than just a piece of equipment—it represents learning, patience, growth, and countless memories. It constantly reminds me that great photographs come from observation, creativity, and emotion rather than the latest gear.

As my skills continue to evolve, I may upgrade my equipment in the future, but my Nikon D3300 will always hold a special place in my journey as a photographer.



MY TRUSTED COMPANION



AFTER THE EDIT

Q Walk us through your editing workflow for a typical image.

I prefer to keep my editing simple and natural rather than heavily manipulated. For this image, I adjusted the exposure and contrast to create a stronger visual impact while maintaining the original mood. I also fine-tuned the highlights and shadows to improve detail, then made minor adjustments for clarity and composition. Most of my edits are done using the Photos app, as I believe strong photography begins with the image itself, and editing should enhance the photograph rather than transform it.

Q What project are you currently working on, and what stage is it at?

At the moment, I am not working on a formal long-term photography project. Instead, I am continuously exploring personal ideas through conceptual still-life photography, portraits, landscapes, and visual storytelling. My current focus is on experimenting with light, shadow, and cinematic compositions to develop a stronger and more consistent visual style. While this exploration is still evolving, it is gradually shaping into a more defined body of work.

> **"Today, photography is much more than a creative pursuit—it is my peace of mind."**
>
> PRANAY VILAS KADUSKAR

CONNECT WITH PRANAY VILAS KADUSKAR

INSTAGRAM @pranaypictures GURUSHOTS pranaypictures



LA VENTANA · "AN OPEN WINDOW" PRAJNA DUTTA

MUSIC · SINGER-SONGWRITER

An Open Window

PRAJNA DUTTA

SINGER · COMPOSER · BARITONE UKULELE

Music began as the only safe room in a very loud house. Now it is an album of seven styles on the baritone ukulele, a raga-led Urban Bandish, and a song still waiting in the half-hour before dawn.

Q Take us back to the very beginning — what first pulled you toward music and singing? Was there a song, a voice, or a moment at home that started it all?

Before there were stages or audiences, music was the only safe room in a very loud house. Growing up amidst childhood mental trauma and psychological abuse teaches you to shrink yourself—to swallow your words and hold your breath just to survive. For a long time, I wasn't trying to be heard; I was just trying to stay invisible. My pull toward music started as a desperate need for an escape hatch. It wasn't just the human voice that captivated me—it was anything that could make a sound. From an old radio crackling with an afternoon alaap to the resonant hum of a harmonium or the percussive tap of everyday objects, I became obsessed with how vibration could fill an empty, heavy room. To me, instruments were magic: they had no fear of taking up space. Whether I was tentatively touching keys, plucking a string, or humming barely above a whisper, creating sound felt like physically pushing back against the silence trauma had forced upon me. Singing and playing taught me how to breathe again when fear had taught me to freeze. In a world where I had no control over how I was treated, rhythm and melody were entirely mine. Nobody could tell me my pain wasn't real when I could hear it echoing back through a note. What began as survival became my resurrection. The very voice and expression that abuse tried to silence became the instruments that set me free—turning pain into something beautiful, and giving me my life's purpose.

Q Do you remember the first time you sang or performed something of your own in front of people? What stayed with you from that day?

The first time I ever sang an original composition in front of a crowd was during the auditions for a reality show called Airtel Bandwagon. I was performing with my band, La Ventana—which means "an open window" in Spanish. The song itself was deeply personal and collaborative: my mother, Saswati Bandyopadhyay, wrote the lyrics, I composed the music, and my friend Dr. Vishnu Mishra—an accomplished Indian classical vocalist and educator—created a beautiful tarana interlude for it. What stayed with me most from that day was how immediately the music connected with both the audience and the judges. That connection carried us straight into the top ten bands of the competition. I still vividly remember the judges and mentors praising the piece, especially highlighting the composition, the arrangements, and the way I delivered the performance.

THE GURUS

Q Is there a teacher, guru, or mentor who shaped how you sing and compose? Tell us a little about what they taught you.

I have been deeply blessed to learn from a host of extraordinary gurus, though three in particular have profoundly shaped my musical voice and style. My journey began with my first violin guru, the legendary Pandit V.G. Jog, who truly initiated me into the world of music. Later, I had the privilege of learning guitar from Amyt Datta—an absolute icon in his own right—who opened my ears to the nuances of harmony and phrasing. On the vocal front, my Indian classical guru, Vidushi Barnali Chattopadhyay, was instrumental in refining my performance techniques and deepening my understanding of musical aesthetics. While I have had the immense good fortune of training under several other musical stalwarts over the years, the foundational lessons from these three masters remain at the very core of how I sing and compose today.

INTERSECTION SEVEN



THE ALBUM Intersection Seven, on all audio platforms.

Q What did you want to communicate through your latest instrumental album, "Intersection Seven"?

In Intersection Seven, I wanted to dive headfirst into the true expressive potential of the baritone ukulele. This album is a collection of seven original compositions, each rooted in a distinct musical style but seamlessly weaving together elements from multiple traditions that have shaped me as a musician. For me, these tracks are a personal journey across very different musical landscapes:

1. **Prelude to Prose** — My take on the structure and elegance of Western Classical.
2. **Ole** — An exploration of the fiery passion of Flamenco.
3. **Folklore** — A nod to the raw, storytelling power of World Folk.
4. **Bossaball** — A groove-driven dive into Bossa and Latin rhythms.
5. **Devi** — A deeply spiritual connection to my roots in Indian Classical.
6. **En Garde** — A playful, high-energy venture into Gypsy Jazz.
7. **Devil's Own Blues** — A return to the grit and soul of Blues and Roots.

Through these intricate arrangements and genre-fluid compositions, my goal was to completely reimagine what the baritone ukulele can do. I wanted to take it far beyond its conventional identity and show you just how vast, versatile, and powerful its voice can really be.

URBAN BANDISH · MISHRA KHAMAJ

Q Urban Bandish grew out of Raga Khamaj - what is it about a raga like this that draws you in, and how does it shape the mood of a piece?

Urban Bandish: Mishra Khamaj" is not just a composition, but an experience that invites you to immerse yourself in the rich tapestry of Indian music. It breaks the confines of traditional boundaries, embracing the diverse influences of contemporary genres while honoring the essence of Hindustani music. Prepare to be transported to a world where the classical and the modern coexist, where the familiar meets the unexplored in the notes of Khamaj in a deeply personal space.

> **"Nobody could tell me my pain wasn't real when I could hear it echoing back through a note."**
>
> PRAJNA DUTTA



THE SINGLE "An Urban Bandish: Mishra Khamaj", 2023.

ON THE SPOT

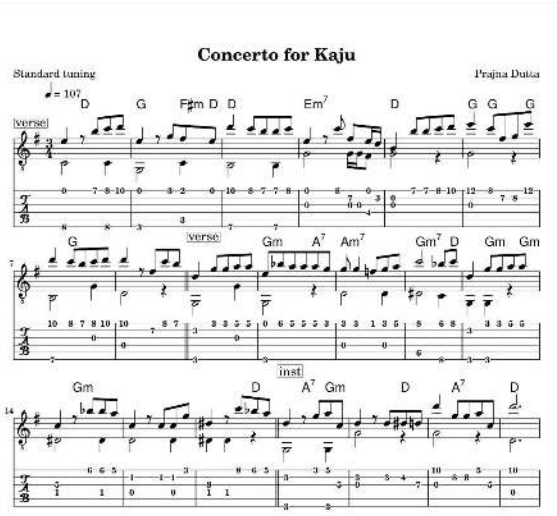
Q What is it like to shape a melody on the spot, with an audience right there in the room with you?

Shaping a melody live in front of an audience is a tightrope walk between muscle memory and pure surrender—a simultaneous act of listening, committing, and letting go. In the studio or practice room, you have the luxury of the undo button, the second take, and the safety net of your own habits. On stage, every note you play is carved in stone the millisecond it leaves your instrument or voice. There is no draft; the draft is the performance.



LIVE On stage, microphone in hand.

WORDS OR TUNE



ON PAPER "Concerto for Kaju", a score by Prajna Dutta.

Q When a new song arrives, how does it usually take shape for you — do the words come first, or the tune?

There's really no fixed formula. Sometimes the tune and the words show up at the exact same time; other times, one leads and the other follows. What matters most to me is giving each piece enough time so nothing feels forced—letting the music and the lyrics slowly find their way to each other.

AT A GLANCE

BAND	La Ventana — "an open window"
FIRST ORIGINAL	Airtel Bandwagon auditions — into the top ten bands
GURUS	Pandit V.G. Jog (violin) · Amyt Datta (guitar) · Vidushi Barnali Chattopadhyay (vocal)
ALBUM	Intersection Seven — seven originals for baritone ukulele
TEACHES	The language of music and scoring for screen

IN THE CLASSROOM

Q You've taught the language of music and scoring for screen to students — what's the one thing you most hope they carry away from your classes?

Above all, I want them to walk away with a rock-solid grasp of the fundamentals. Trends, software, and sample libraries are going to change constantly throughout their careers, so chasing the latest technical tricks only gets you so far. When you truly understand the core language of music—how harmony creates tension, how rhythm drives pacing, and how silence holds weight—those fundamentals become the anchor for your aesthetic vision. My goal is to give them that foundation so they aren't just putting sound under a picture, but thinking holistically as true audiovisual artists who know why a creative choice serves the story.







TEACHING In the room with students.

THE SONG STILL TO COME

Q Is there a song you still dream of writing, or a moment you hope your music gives someone who's listening? Tell us what that would mean to you.

There is a song that doesn't have a title yet, because it only exists in the quiet half-hour before dawn—when the city outside has finally stopped insisting on itself, and the only sound left is the faint hum of a room holding its breath. I still dream of writing something that feels less like a composition and more like an open window. Not a wall of sound demanding to be admired, not a clever arrangement trying to prove what it knows—just a handful of notes spaced wide enough for a stranger to step inside and put down whatever they've been carrying all day. Maybe it's built around the warm, woody ache of low strings vibrating against wood, or a melody that borrows the unhurried phrasing of an old raga at twilight and lets it dissolve into open, resonant chords that hang in the air a second longer than expected. The moment I hope it gives someone is very intrinsic, unlike a crowd singing back a chorus it's more felt not heard. I hope it finds someone alone on a late train, watching rain streak sideways across the glass, or sitting on the edge of a bed at two in the morning with a mind that refuses to quiet down. And somewhere between the second verse and a note that lingers just a fraction too long, their shoulders drop an inch. Their breathing slows to match the tempo without them even realizing it. For three or four minutes, the past stops pulling at their sleeve and tomorrow stops knocking at the door. They just are—unjudged, unhurried, and unexpectedly less alone. If a piece of music can do that—if something born out of a quiet room can travel across distance and time to become a small, safe shelter inside someone else's life—then every late night, every erased lyric, and every solitary hour spent chasing the right resonance was worth it. That's the only applause that really stays.

CONNECT WITH PRAJNA DUTTA **INSTAGRAM** @prajnaduttaofficial **SPOTIFY** Playlist

DANCE CREATOR AWARDS 2026 · HEELS

Truly Free

SHRAVYA VERMA
HEELS DANCER · DELHI

A heels dancer on the class that showed her a version of herself she didn't know existed, the teacher who taught her to stop trying to be perfect, and the workshop she is about to lead.

▶ PLAYING IN THAT 2022 CLASS · "WIDE OPEN", WAFIA

Q Take us back to the very first time dancing made you forget everything else around you — where were you, and what were you moving to?

The first time I felt dance made me forget everything around me was back in 2022, during a heels class. We were dancing to the song Wide Open by Wafia, and I absolutely loved the song and choreography. I think what made that moment so special was that for the first time, I wasn't dancing to get somewhere or to be someone. I was just being myself, without holding back. I found a version of myself I didn't even know existed. It wasn't just about falling in love with dance; it made me discover a part of myself that felt free.



SHRAVYA VERMA Dance Creator Awards 2026.

Q What do you remember most about the first time you performed in front of a real crowd — the nerves before, the music, the way it felt once it was over?

I remember feeling a mix of nervousness and excitement right before stepping on stage. My heart was racing, and I kept going over the steps in my head. But the moment the music started, the nerves slowly faded. I remember feeling how quickly those two minutes flew by. It felt like I had just started dancing, and suddenly it was already over. All I could think about was how badly I wanted to do it all over again.

AT A GLANCE

DANCES	Heels · Delhi	FIRST HEELS	2020	TEACHER	Gunika Sanan
CO-CREATED	Ecstasy, with Gunika	NOW WORKING ON	Housewife, Tate McRae	NEXT	Teaching her own heels workshop

THE TEACHER & THE PIECES

Q Every heels dancer has someone whose choreography shaped them. Who's the choreographer or teacher in Delhi you've learned the most from, and what's the biggest thing dancing their pieces taught you?

For me, it has to be Gunika Sanan. I've learned so much from her, not just in terms of technique and movement, but also in the way I approach dance and life. Her choreography has always pushed me to step outside my comfort zone, explore different sides of myself, and move with more intention. There have been times when her choreography felt challenging or completely outside my comfort zone, but those are the pieces that have stayed with me the most. She's taught me to pay attention to the little things, to really listen to the music, and to bring my own personality into every movement. I think the biggest thing dancing with her has taught me is that heels isn't just about confidence, it's about vulnerability too. It's about allowing yourself to be soft, strong, expressive, and unapologetically yourself, all at once. It's about how you feel when you move, the confidence you carry, and the story you tell through your body. She's taught me that sometimes the most powerful thing you can do as a dancer is to stop trying to be perfect and just be yourself and never give up. And that's something I'll always carry with me.

> **"Heels isn't just about confidence, it's about vulnerability too."**
>
> SHRAVYA VERMA

Q What was it like the day you filmed 'Worst Behaviour' — the studio, the people you were dancing alongside, and the moment it all clicked?

We filmed Worst Behaviour during a workshop. Worst Behaviour was actually a choreography I had done before, so the workshop felt more like revisiting something familiar rather than learning it from scratch. It was interesting to come back to the same piece and see how differently I approached it this time. I felt more comfortable with the movements, which gave me the freedom to focus on the musicality, the little details, and just enjoying the choreography. Being surrounded by other amazing and supportive dancers brought a whole different energy to it as well. I think the moment it all clicked was when I stopped thinking about how I'd danced it before and just let myself enjoy it in the moment. It reminded me that even when the choreography stays the same, you don't.

Q Where did the idea for 'Ecstasy' begin, and how did you build it from the first count to the final move?

Gunika and I choreographed Ecstasy together, and it was such a fun process. We started by just listening to the song, playing around with movements, and seeing what felt right. We'd come up with ideas, try them out, change things here and there, and slowly put the piece together. Some parts came together really quickly, while others took a few tries. I think what made it special was how our ideas came together.

Q How did 'Breaking Dishes' come together in class, and which part of the choreography was the hardest to land?

Breaking Dishes was such a high-energy choreography, and I remember how much fun we had learning it in class. But the musicality was definitely the trickiest part. It wasn't just about hitting the beats, but catching the accents and changes in the music that gave the choreography its character. Even when I knew the steps, getting the timing and feel right took some work. And I think that was my favourite part of the challenge.

IN MOTION · SCAN TO WATCH

SCAN TO WATCH — Performance 01

SCAN TO WATCH — Performance 02

SCAN TO WATCH — Performance 03

SCAN TO WATCH — Performance 04

SCAN TO WATCH — Performance 05

FIVE FILMS Her performances and class choreographies, including the pieces discussed above. Scan any code with a phone camera to watch.

SECOND NATURE

Q What's the story behind that pair of heels, and how long was it before dancing in them felt like second nature?

I got my first pair of dance heels when I started heels in 2020, and I remember how excited I was to finally have a pair of my own. Initially, even the simplest movements felt a little awkward, and I was constantly thinking about my balance. But with every class, I slowly started feeling more comfortable and confident in them. I can't really pinpoint when it happened, but somewhere along the way, I stopped thinking about the heels altogether. They just started feeling like a natural extension of how I move. I've had several pairs of heels since then, I bought the most current pair 4 months ago.



Q You're now stepping into teaching your own heels workshop — what's it like being the one leading the room, and what do you most hope people carry out the door with them?

I'm really excited to take my workshop, but there's definitely a part of me that's nervous too. I've learned so much from the people who've taught me, and I hope to bring a little bit of that into my own workshop while making it my own. I'm looking forward to sharing my choreography and creating a space where everyone feels comfortable enough to let go, have fun, and express themselves. I want people to enjoy the experience and feel good about themselves. If someone walks out feeling a little more confident, or discovers the same love for heels that I did, that would mean everything to me.

Q What are you reaching for in this next piece that you haven't quite pulled off before?

I'm currently working on a choreography on Housewife by Tate McRae, and with this piece, I really want to break away from the kind of movement I'm usually drawn to. I'm experimenting with a different style, playing with textures, transitions, and ways of interpreting the music that feel a little unfamiliar to me. It's challenging because I naturally tend to fall back into movements I'm comfortable with, but that's exactly what I'm trying to push past.

THE CURRENT PAIR Her dance heels, bought four months ago.

Q When you picture where you want your dancing to take you next, what's the one stage, city, or room you most want to perform in?

I don't have any one particular stage or city in mind. In the future, I'd love to take my dancing beyond the studios I'm familiar with, meet dancers from different places, and experience the energy of dancing with new people. I think the dream is to keep finding myself in rooms I once only imagined being a part of.

CONNECT WITH SHRAVYA VERMA

INSTAGRAM @shravyayaa_ **YOUTUBE** @ShravyaVerma02



PHOTOGRAPH © SAI KUMAR T · THE VOW VINE

WEDDING STORIES · THE VOW VINE

Between the Big Moments

SAI KUMAR T · THE VOW VINE · WEDDING & STREET PHOTOGRAPHER

He began in 2018 with a mobile phone and a hobby. Today weddings are his profession and the streets his passion — and his banner, The Vow Vine, is built to help couples remember not how their day looked, but how it felt.

WEEKDAYS FOR WORK, WEEKENDS FOR THE STREETS

Q You describe yourself as capturing weddings and street stories — how did photography first find its way into your life, and what pulled you specifically toward weddings?

I started my photography journey in 2018, capturing moments on a mobile phone just as a hobby. Slowly, that curiosity turned into a passion, leading me to learn photography professionally. Weekdays were for work, weekends were for exploring the streets and capturing life. Wedding photography became my profession, while street photography remained my passion. Years later, I'm still walking the same path — working, exploring, and capturing stories.

Q Your early days include time with the team at Zero Gravity Photography. What is the biggest thing that chapter taught you that you still carry into every wedding you shoot today?

Zero Gravity was an important chapter in my journey. It taught me to look beyond the frame—to notice the quiet emotions, the little gestures, and the moments that happen between the big moments. I still carry that lesson with me: every wedding has its own story, and my job is simply to be there when it unfolds.

Q Now you're building your own banner, The Vow Vine. What made you want to step out and create something that's fully yours?

The Vow Vine is my vision of documenting weddings in a way that feels honest, timeless, and personal. I want every couple to look back at their photographs years later and not just see how their wedding looked, but remember exactly how it felt. That feeling is what I want The Vow Vine to preserve.

AT A GLANCE

BEGAN	2018, on a mobile phone
FORMERLY	Zero Gravity Photography
FOUNDER	The Vow Vine
SHOOTS	Weddings (profession) · street (passion)

Q Tell us about the very first wedding you ever photographed — what do you remember most about that day?

I still remember my first wedding because it was more than just my first assignment—it was the moment I realised that photography could become my life. I was excited, nervous, and honestly, a little scared. I was still learning, and there was a lot of pressure to get everything right. Every moment felt important, and I was constantly questioning myself whether I had captured enough, whether I had missed something, whether I was good enough. But somewhere between the chaos, the emotions, and the long hours, I understood something: a wedding is not about getting the perfect photograph every time. It is about being present when real emotions happen. That first wedding may not have been perfect, but it gave me something far more valuable—confidence to keep going. I walked away tired, unsure, but deeply inspired. Looking back, that difficult first step became one of the most important frames in my journey as a photographer.



THE BRIDE



THE SIGNATURE FRAME

Q Which wedding photograph feels most like you — and what's happening in that frame?

Tears of sadness, tears of happiness, and the quiet anticipation of a new beginning. For me, the beauty lies in that perspective: one frame holding so many feelings, especially the emotional journey of bringing a new life into the world. That honesty and emotion is what feels most like my signature.





TEARS A bridal moment, The Vow Vine.

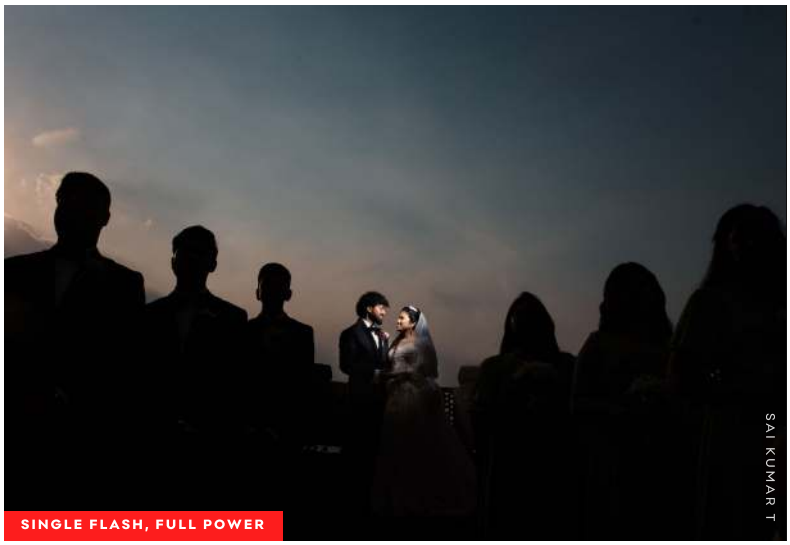


Q Tell us about a candid, unposed moment where real emotion took over — what was unfolding when you pressed the shutter?

When I pressed the shutter, there were tears, happiness, and a sense of a beautiful new beginning. I wasn't just capturing a photograph—I was preserving the feeling of a moment that could never be recreated.

> **"A wedding is not about getting the perfect photograph every time. It is about being present when real emotions happen."**
>
> SAI KUMAR T

EMBRACE THE LIGHT



SINGLE FLASH, FULL POWER

Q Walk us through a wedding photo where the conditions fought you — and how you got the shot anyway.

It was a summer, midday outdoor shoot at a Christian wedding, with harsh light and very little time. Instead of fighting the conditions, I decided to embrace them and create a silhouette composition, placing the bride, groom, bridesmaids, and groomsmen within one frame. I used a single flash at full power, with one of my team member holding it close to the couple. Later, we removed the person in post-production, leaving only the couple beautifully illuminated while everyone else faded into darkness. It was a challenging moment, but trusting the idea turned it into one of my favourite photographs of my entire journey.

PORTRAITS & DETAILS



MONOCHROME A couple, The Vow Vine.

Q Which portrait of a couple are you especially proud of — and how did you get them to be themselves?

I didn't really direct them into a traditional, posed portrait. What I loved was simply allowing them to be themselves and letting their love unfold naturally. The monochromatic frame captured that connection so honestly—their expressions, closeness, and quiet emotion. For me, it wasn't about creating a proud portrait; it was about preserving a genuine feeling.

Q Show us a close detail from a wedding — and why did it matter enough to capture?

For me, close details are never just details. The smallest expressions and gestures can hold so much emotion, and sometimes they tell the story more beautifully than a wide frame ever could.



THE STREETS



Q What draws you to shooting the streets, and how does it feed the way you see a wedding?

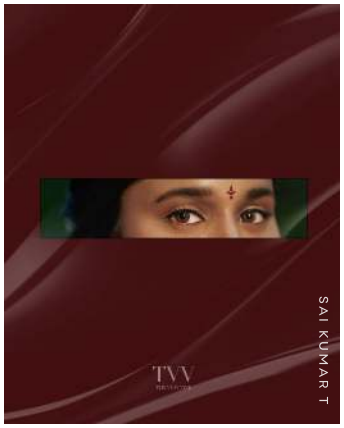
For me, street photography and wedding photography speak the same language—candid, unplanned, and real. The observation I developed on the streets is the same instinct I carry into every wedding. I wait, watch, and capture the moment as it happens. Even today, I believe the strongest photographs are the ones you don't force—you simply have to be ready to see them.

Q As you grow The Vow Vine, what kind of wedding stories do you most want to be known for telling?

I want The Vow Vine to be known for stories that feel real—not just beautiful. I want to capture the emotions, the quiet moments, the chaos, the laughter, and everything in between that makes every wedding unique. My vision is simple: years later, when a couple looks back at their photographs, I want them to feel the day again—not just remember how it looked, but remember how it felt. That is the kind of storytelling I want The Vow Vine to stand for.

CONNECT WITH SAI KUMAR T

INSTAGRAM @nikhil__sy **BANNER** The Vow Vine



THE VOW VINE A bridal close-up.

HINDUSTANI CLASSICAL · SINGER-SONGWRITER

NAVIGATING THE HUMAN HEART

CAPT. VIRENDRA NATH MISHRA
@VIRENDRAMISHRA7799

After decades at sea and in the corporate world, a merchant-navy captain who runs a maritime company now begins each day with pranayam and riyaz — and writes songs about friendship, unsaid love and the India he sees today.



AT THE MIC · IN THE RECORDING STUDIO

AT A GLANCE

BEFORE	Merchant-navy captain
TRAINS UNDER	Shri Anik Thakurta, Artium Academy
STAGE	Artium Superstar Season 1 finalist
NEW SINGLE	"Tere Bina Sab Suna" · Spotify, 16 Oct 2026

Q You spent years commanding ships before you stepped up to a microphone. Take us back to the very first time singing felt like more than a pastime for you — where were you, and what were you singing?

I am learning music (singing) from Shri Anik Thakurta ji at Artium Academy. He constantly encouraged me. I participated in Artium Superstar Season 1. That was the time when I became really serious, and Shri Ananth Vaidyanathan ji also encouraged me a lot. I reached the finals in the contest and sang before some of the living legends like Sonu Nigam ji and Aruna Sairam ji. This was the turning point for me.

Q You train in Hindustani classical vocal under Shri Anik Thakurta. What is one thing he has taught you that changed the way you hear your own voice?

From the very first class, he advised me to practice every day. No matter even if I practice for only 30 minutes, continuity and discipline are a must.

Q Tell us about your practice routine — when and how do you fit riyaaz into days spent running a maritime company?

I start my day with pranayam followed by riyaz. Basic alankars and palta riyaz.

SONGS HE HAS WRITTEN

Q What made you want to write a song about friendship, and who were you thinking of as you sang it?

Life is very lonely without friends. Friends have always been my strength. Through thick and thin they have supported me. All my friends since childhood and school days are still in touch with me. They were very much in mind when I wrote this song.

Q Walk us through this piece — what were you feeling when these words first came to you?

Very often you find that some very good friends (boy and girl) eventually fall in love but are unable to express. Those hidden emotions are a real treasure for a writer and singer to express the unsaid emotions.

Q You wrote, sang and produced this one entirely yourself. What was the spark behind it?

Today's India is very different from what it was 20 years ago. Beautiful highways, expressways, new airports, world-class infrastructure, India's achievements in space science, Make in India... all these are the contributing factors. Also, we Indians love India no matter in which part of the world we live. I have written and expressed these things in my song.



THE UNSAID His handwritten lyrics.

SCAN TO WATCH · TWO SONGS

SCAN TO WATCH

The friendship song

Written for the friends who have stood by him since school

SCAN TO WATCH

The India song

Written, sung and produced by him

THE GRAND FINALE



Q From practice rooms to the Artium Superstar Grand Finale stage, you've sung in front of all kinds of audiences. What was running through your mind during this particular performance?

I was a bit nervous. So many legends in front and I had never been in this situation before.

Q Was there a particular song or singer from your younger days that first pulled you toward music and never let go? Tell us about it.

Yes, I have been a great fan of Mukesh ji. Since childhood I literally worshipped him. I draw inspiration from his style of singing.

TERE BINA SAB SUNA



IN THE STUDIO



Q What can you tell us about this next song, and when do we get to hear it?

Tere Bina Sab Suna is a song about love and dealing with grief. It's being released on Spotify on 16th October 2026.

A NEW VOYAGE

Q After a full life at sea, you've given yourself over to music. What would it mean to you to have your songs reach and move people?

For me, it would mean that I have been able to touch a human heart through my music. After spending decades at sea and in the corporate world, I have experienced many dimensions of life. Music has given me a different way to express the emotions, experiences and thoughts that words alone sometimes cannot convey.

I would feel truly fulfilled if my songs could bring a smile to someone's face, offer comfort to someone going through a difficult time, rekindle a beautiful memory, or inspire someone to look at life with renewed hope. If a person listens to one of my songs and feels, "This song speaks to me," then I would consider that a meaningful achievement.

Of course, I dream of performing before audiences in India and abroad and having people sing along to my songs. But beyond the applause and recognition, my greatest wish is to create music that connects people emotionally and stays with them long after the song has ended.

> **"The sea taught me to navigate the vastness of the oceans; music is now teaching me to navigate the vastness of the human heart. If my songs can make even a small, positive difference in someone's life, this new voyage of mine will have been truly worthwhile."**
>
> CAPT. VIRENDRA NATH MISHRA

CONNECT WITH CAPT. VIRENDRA NATH MISHRA

INSTAGRAM @virendramishra7799 **SPOTIFY** Tere Bina Sab Suna



HIS FAVOURITE TIGER FRAME Re-toned in red and black for this opening page.

WILDLIFE · TIGERS & LIGHT

The Half-Hour Follow

OMKAR JANARDAN DESHPANDE
WILDLIFE PHOTOGRAPHER

Twelve years after a wildlife photography exhibition made him fall for the Indian forest, a photographer on following a tiger for half an hour, two hours of waiting for light, and the frames that tested his patience.

Q Share the one photograph you'd want to introduce yourself with.

▶ HIS ANSWER: THE TIGER ABOVE

Q What's the story behind this frame — where was it taken, and why does it feel most like you?

~30 min FOLLOWING HIM

This is my most favorite click of a tiger that I have ever taken. We followed him for almost half an hour, and I got a chance to capture every small moment of his daily behaviour. That is exactly why this frame feels most like me — it holds the patience of the follow and the small, quiet moments I was lucky enough to witness.

Q Tell us about the first trek or trip where your photos truly captured what you'd seen with your own eyes. Where were you, and what made it finally click?

My first safari was in Ranathambor in 2013, and that trip remains the most memorable for me. What made it click was capturing head-on clicks of a tiger on my very first safari. It was truly a thrilling experience, and it showed me what it feels like when a photograph matches what you actually witnessed with your own eyes.

WHERE IT BEGAN

Q Let's start at the beginning — how did you first fall for photography? Was it the mountains and the road that pulled you toward a camera, or the camera that pulled you toward them?

I got attached to photography when I attended a wildlife photography exhibition 12 years ago. That experience is where it all began for me, and I fell in love with forests — especially the Indian forest. From that point on, the camera and the forest became linked in my mind, and that love has stayed with me ever since.

Q What is it about being out on the trail — the altitude, the quiet, the long walk — that keeps pulling you back with a camera in hand?

Wildlife photography is my passion, and it genuinely gives me stress relief from my daily routine. That is what keeps pulling me back out with a camera in hand. Being out there with my camera is how I step away from the everyday and recharge.

AMBOLI AT NIGHT · THE KIT



AMBOLI Gliding frogs, on a night trail — the frame that won him an award.

Q Upload a shot from a trek or place that has stayed with you long after you came home.

▶ HIS ANSWER: THE FROGS AT LEFT

Q Take us back to that day — where were you, and what was happening when you pressed the shutter?

This shot was taken in Amboli during a night trail of a micro photography session. I assumed it was a fully grown, big-size gliding frog, but actually the mating was going on. It turned out to be a lucky shot for me, as I got a winner award in one competition for the same.

Q Show us the gear you actually carry up the trail.

▶ HIS ANSWER: THE BAG AT RIGHT

Q Walk us through your kit — is there one piece you'd never leave behind on a trek, no matter how heavy the bag gets?

My camera kit family members are a Canon 80D camera with a Tamron 150-600 mm lens, a Tamron 90 mm micro lens, and a Canon 18-135 mm lens. Of all of these, the Tamron 90 mm micro is my most favorite, and it is the one I never leave behind during a safari or a trek, no matter how heavy the bag gets.



THE BAG The kit he carries.

THE PHOTOGRAPHER



ON THE RIDGE Omkar Janardan Deshpande.

AT A GLANCE

BEGAN	A wildlife photography exhibition, 12 years ago
FIRST SAFARI	Ranathambor, 2013 — head-on frames of a tiger
CAMERA	Canon 80D
LENSES	Tamron 150-600 mm · Tamron 90 mm micro · Canon 18-135 mm
NEVER LEFT BEHIND	The Tamron 90 mm micro
AWARD	Winner in a competition, for the Amboli gliding frogs

TOUGH CONDITIONS

Q Share a photo you managed to capture in tough conditions — rain, cold, thin air, fading light, or a hard climb.

▶ HIS ANSWER: THESE FRAMES







LEFT TO RIGHT The Bonnet Macaque family, shot from a running vehicle; a frame in near-darkness; the Egret and its reflection.

Q What made this moment difficult to shoot, and how did you work around it?

~1 hour FOR THE EGRET'S REFLECTION

The first shot was taken from a running vehicle when I saw a group of a Bonnet Macaque family sitting and holding tightly to each other to get rid of the extreme cold weather. The other challenge came with the Egret bird — I spent around one hour to get the perfect reflection of it. That one really tested my patience.

LIGHT · THE TREK



THE LIGHT The sun behind the branches, after the wait.

Q Upload a frame where the light did something unforgettable — first light on a ridge, golden hour, mist rolling in.

▶ HIS ANSWER: THE FRAME AT LEFT

Q What was the light doing here, and how long did you have to wait for it?

~2 hours WAITING FOR THE LIGHT

Me and my camera were waiting for around 2 hours to get this shot. That wait is what it took for the light to do what I was hoping to capture.

Q Is there a trail, region, or peak you're dreaming of photographing next — somewhere still waiting on your list?

Sundarban Forest and Spity Vally are my dream destinations. They are still waiting on my list, and I hope to photograph them next.



MAHULI FORT TREK With Mr. Vilas Vaidya (in blue) and Mr. Satam Sir.

Q Share a photo that has a person in it — a fellow trekker, a local you met, a quiet moment of company on the road.

▶ HIS ANSWER: THE FRAME AT LEFT

Q Who is in this frame, and what do you remember about that encounter?

This click was taken during the Mahuli fort Trek. I got a chance to take a photo with two giants of the trekking field. The person in blue is my friend Mr. Vilas Vaidya, who is a hard core trekker and professional cyclist, and the other person is Mr. Satam Sir, the great historian who is also a hard core trekker.

CONNECT WITH OMKAR **FACEBOOK** facebook.com/share/19pU866ZL8

IN CONVERSATION · MUSIC FOR THE AFTER-HOURS

3 aM



SHIRISH DIXIT
MAKES MUSIC AS DEADLYMAXIMUS

Fourteen years in business, then a decision on his 30th birthday: make the music he wanted to listen to. The self-taught producer writes, records, builds beats and edits alone — atmospheric hard beats with a hint of synth, made on an iPad.

Q Take us back to the start — what first pulled you toward making your own music?

I have been into business for about 14 years now, and during that time, I couldn't pursue any of my interests or hobbies because of it. Daily life felt monotonous, and to get away from that feeling, I used to create beats and write random lyrics—not with the intention of creating a track or anything, just out of my love for music since childhood. I also helped a couple of my musician/DJ friends with their music. So on my 30th birthday, I decided that I would start working on my music craft more seriously. I couldn't find many songs in recent years that matched my liking and taste, so I decided that I will make what I want to listen to and publish it for people, thinking that there must be thousands and millions like me who will feel connected after listening to my songs.

Q What was the very first song you recorded, and what do you remember about making it?

"Days" was the first song I made. It was a roller coaster ride for me, seriously! I only knew making beats and writing songs; I didn't give much attention to my singing. I work alone and do everything myself—be it writing, recording, making beats, editing, etc. Only social media functioning is not handled by me. So I had no clue how to better my vocals or be in tune with the song, but eventually I learned the skills of autotune and voice modulations. It took me a good amount of time to get it right, haha! I even thought about going back and keeping things as they were because of the failed results, but eventually I got the hang of the methods and finally got the result that is now streaming on all platforms.

THE SOUND & THE NAME

Q Who or what shaped the sound you chase today — an artist, a scene, or someone who believed in you early on?

I have been a sucker for melodies fused with atmospheric hard beats with some hint of synth, which I believe Indian music lacks. There have been a few tracks in the recent past, but we need more such music. The Weeknd and Kanye West are big influences in my life and the type of music I prefer. DHH in the past 4-5 years has been greatly influential as well.

Q Where did the name DeadlyMaximus come from?

It's a funny story. This has been my gaming name since school days, and it has been relevant and in use till now. So when I started my music path, I just posted things under this name as it was already registered as a channel on YouTube. To be honest, I will be changing it soon for my music persona. If anyone has any suggestions, hit me up.

ARRIVAL



HOUDINI

FAVOURITE VISUALS From the "Houdini" music video.

Q What's the story behind 'Houdini' — how did the idea for it come together?

It is a part of my debut Hindi album, "Arrival." In that album, I kept 4 songs, each with a theme covering different situations in life. Like: 1. "Bonita" – a love song, 2. "Gang of UP78" – a flex song, 3. "Palak" – a heartbreak song, 4. "Houdini" – a heartbreaker song. And "Houdini" was the first song of the album.

Q What's one moment from making 'Bonita' that has stuck with you?

When I had to act being in love passionately as the song part was setting that tempo, and my friend who co-starred with me was really pissed. I mean, for me it was the first time for everything—acting, facing the camera, etc. So yeah, there were numerous such moments, but I hope people liked how it all came out in the end.



BONITA





FRAMES FROM "BONITA" His first time acting and facing the camera.

3 AM



THE COVER ART "3 aM", his latest single.

Q Your world is 'music for the after-hours' — what headspace were you in when you made '3 aM'?

Well, I just wanted to reach out to someone and tell unsaid things before a certain occasion. So I wrote it thinking of that person in my mind.

Q What's one piece of gear or software you can't make a song without?

I think my iPad. If I have that, then it's like my portable studio.

AT A GLANCE

MAKES AS	DeadlyMaximus
DEBUT ALBUM	"Arrival"
LATEST SINGLE	"3 aM"
SOUND	Atmospheric hard beats, a hint of synth
INFLUENCES	The Weeknd · Kanye West · DHH

THE PORTABLE STUDIO



WHERE HE MAKES MUSIC

Q Tell us about the song those notes became — what's it about?

Those are the lyrics I wrote for my song "Days." I write songs with details of that particular part of the song so that I sing in a manner which fits my vision and later modulate my voice for the song accordingly.



THE NOTES Lyrics for "Days".

WHAT COMES AFTER ARRIVAL

Q What can you tell us about what's coming after Arrival?

Currently, video launches are lined up and "3 aM" got launched. But my next album is nearly ready. "No Love" is a tentative name for that album for now. I shared a snippet of my unreleased song called "Supernova," which is a part of that album. I will start with podcasts soon and will go live for the first time on my website and YouTube channel for GTA-VI streaming as I am going to get it earlier than the launch, so there's that.



SUPERNOVA Cover art for the unreleased song.

SCAN TO WATCH · HOUDINI & SUPERNOVA

SCAN TO WATCH

Houdini

The music video

SCAN TO WATCH

Supernova

Snippet of the unreleased song



Q When someone hears your music for the first time, what do you hope they walk away feeling?

Connected. Also, feeling at least 1% better than they did before hearing my music. If you notice, every song of mine has a section dedicated only to music and no vocals. My previous album, "SoLo," was an LP and all instrumental. I'll suggest you and everyone to hear "FullMoon" in that and do contact me after hearing as to how you or what you were feeling while hearing it. That track is really close and special to my heart. It also has "Game Sober" and "Mentalist," which you guys should definitely check out as well.

> **"I decided that I will make what I want to listen to and publish it for people."**
>
> SHIRISH DIXIT · DEADLYMAXIMUS

CONNECT WITH DEADLYMAXIMUS

INSTAGRAM @deadlymaximus YOUTUBE @deadlymaximus FACEBOOK deadlymaximus SPOTIFY DeadlyMaximus

APPLE MUSIC DeadlyMaximus WEBSITE DeadlyMaximus.com

MOBILE PHOTOGRAPHY · TRAVEL

Melted Gold

SUNIL NISHIKANT GODBOLE
MOBILE & TRAVEL PHOTOGRAPHER · 25+ COUNTRIES

More than 25 countries, photographed on his mobile phone for the joy of it — stopping the taxi whenever he sees something special.



BONFIRE, BHUTAN
It was a bonfire on 31/12/24 at a hotel in Bhutan. The flames looked like melted gold. All my friends were enjoying the special night, and I snapped this moment of the melted gold.



HALONG BAY
Halong Bay in Vietnam. Traveling by a cruise through the hills on both sides was a nature wonder.



THE BELL
The appearance! A big bell in a stupa in Bhutan, bright in color.

Q Mobile photography across many countries — that's a specific arc. What was the first country (or first phone) where you realized this was going to be your medium, not just a holiday habit?

Mauritius was my first country, and Qatar was my last. It is my hobby. I have traveled to more than 25 countries so far. Starting from the east, I have travelled to New Zealand, Australia, Japan, Russia, Malaysia, Thailand and Singapore, and all the way to Europe and France. Photography is my hobby, and it is a joyful experience.

Q When did your travels stop being 'travels with photos' and start being 'photo trips' — where the destination got chosen for the image you wanted to make?

I have always enjoyed photography within my travels. Whenever I see something special, I snap it. The shadow camel is an example of that.

AT A GLANCE

FIRST COUNTRY	Mauritius
LAST	Qatar
SO FAR	More than 25 countries
SHOOTS ON	His mobile phone
FAVOURITE	Australia — "always ready to help"

AFTERNOON LIGHT, RED STONE, ROCK



PISA

The Leaning Tower at Pisa. It was an excellent afternoon view, partly sunny and partly dark. We had just reached Pisa, and I captured this photo.

Q **Mobile cameras have changed enormously across the years you've been shooting. How has your style evolved alongside the hardware — what got easier, and what did you lose?**

I have my typical mobile phone that suits me and takes photos. I made things easier by stopping the taxi or my vehicle to shoot.

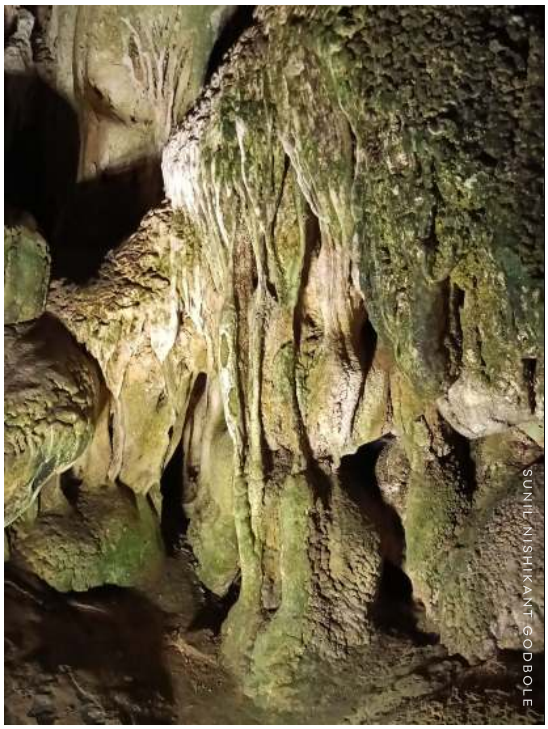
THE STUPA, BHUTAN

The biggest stupa in Bhutan, with a gold-plated statue. I had to climb like a hill to reach there. In the peaceful atmosphere, I captured this.



AHMEDABAD

I was traveling in a taxi when I saw this pillar in a temple in Ahmedabad, totally built in red stone.



THE CAVES

The caves in the rock, with natural light and total calmness.

ON FOOT



Q **Looking at the countries you've shot in, which one most reshaped your photographic sensibility — not because of dramatic landscapes but because of something you learned about light, people, or yourself there?**

Australia. I like the country and the people. They are always ready to help, and it was a joyful experience traveling across Australia.

> **"Whenever I see something special, I snap it."**
>
> SUNIL NISHIKANT GODBOLE

CONNECT WITH SUNIL NISHIKANT GODBOLE

FACEBOOK sungod1961 **INSTAGRAM** sungod1961

PHOTOGRAPHY · VISUAL STORYTELLING

Into the Light

ATANU CHAKRABARTY
@ATANUCHAKRABORTYSHOOTER

A simple curiosity about everyday life became a way of seeing. The visual storyteller looks past the beautiful frame for the emotion and the story beneath it — shaped by Steve McCurry and Raghu Rai.

Q How did your journey in photography begin?

My journey in photography began with a simple curiosity to capture the beauty of everyday life. Initially, I was fascinated by how a photograph could preserve not just a moment, but also the emotions, atmosphere, and story behind it. What started as a passion gradually became a deeper pursuit. I began experimenting with different genres, studying light, composition, perspective, and the art of storytelling through images. With every photograph, I learned something new—not only about photography, but also about observing people, places, and the world around me. Over time, photography became much more than a hobby for me. It became a way of seeing and expressing myself. The journey has been filled with experimentation, challenges, continuous learning, and countless memorable moments. Even today, I believe that there is always something new to discover through the lens, and that constant curiosity is what keeps my passion for photography alive.

AT A GLANCE

WORKS AS	**Visual storyteller · photographer**
INFLUENCES	**Steve McCurry · Raghu Rai**
SIGNATURE	**"Into the Light" · "Students of Varanasi"**
KIT	**Canon crop-sensor camera · Adobe Photoshop**

Q What was the first moment you felt truly proud of a photograph you took?

One of the first moments I felt truly proud of a photograph was when I realized that the image had captured something beyond just a beautiful frame—it had captured an emotion and told a story. Until then, I had mostly focused on getting the technical aspects right: composition, exposure, focus, and light. But that particular photograph made me understand that photography is not simply about creating a visually pleasing image; it is about making the viewer feel something. The response I received from people who saw the photograph made the moment even more special. It gave me the confidence to believe that my way of seeing the world through a camera could connect with others. That experience became an important milestone in my journey and motivated me to keep learning, experimenting, and developing my own photographic voice.

THE FRAME THAT REPRESENTS HIM



INTO THE LIGHT

Q **Which photograph do you feel best represents your work as a visual storyteller?**

WORK I

Into the Light

The first one is named "Into the Light." In this image, we see three mysterious women in a desolate, fog-filled space. At that very moment, rays of sunlight pierce through the dense mist to fall directly upon them, revealing their figures clearly amidst the haze. Similarly, the lives of many women in our society remain shrouded in the deep darkness of misery; society fails to see them until a light is cast upon their lives.

WORK II

Students of Varanasi

The second one is "Students of Varanasi." Benaras, or Varanasi, is one of the world's oldest and holiest cities, located in the Indian state of Uttar Pradesh. This image directly connects with the local people, their way of life, and their culture.



STUDENTS OF VARANASI

> **"Photography is not simply about creating a visually pleasing image; it is about making the viewer feel something."**
>
> ATANU CHAKRABARTY

WAYS OF SEEING

Q How has your experience as a visual storyteller grown over the years?

Over the years, my understanding of visual storytelling has evolved significantly. In the beginning, I was primarily focused on creating technically strong and visually appealing photographs. With experience, however, I gradually learned that a powerful image is not only about composition, light, or timing—it is about the story and emotion behind the frame. Today, I pay much more attention to the details that might otherwise go unnoticed—the expression in someone's eyes, the quality of light, the surrounding environment, a fleeting gesture, or a quiet moment. I try to anticipate and capture those decisive moments that allow a photograph to communicate without words. Photography has also taught me to be more patient and observant. I now approach every assignment with the intention of understanding the subject first and then finding the most honest and compelling way to present its story. For me, visual storytelling has become less about simply taking photographs and more about creating images that make people pause, feel, and connect.

Q What photographer or artist has influenced your work the most?

Two photographers who have had a particularly strong influence on my work are Steve McCurry and Raghu Rai. I admire Steve McCurry for his ability to combine powerful composition, colour, light, and human emotion to create photographs that tell compelling stories. His work has taught me to look beyond the obvious and to find meaning in expressions, environments, and fleeting moments. Raghu Rai has influenced me in a different but equally significant way. His distinctive approach to documenting India, its people, culture, and everyday life has deeply inspired me. I admire his ability to find extraordinary stories within ordinary moments and to capture the complexity, emotion, and character of a scene with remarkable sensitivity. Both photographers have taught me that great photography is not simply about creating a technically perfect image. It is about observation, timing, emotion, and having a unique way of seeing the world. Their work has encouraged me to develop my own visual language while remaining curious, patient, and deeply connected to the stories unfolding in front of my lens.

THE CRAFT





Q What techniques did you use in the uploaded video or image?

Nothing special, I used a Canon crop sensor camera for both of the photos. Then I used Adobe Photoshop for editing and colour grading.

Q What is your editing process like for the images you shared?

Just a simple process, maintaining the proper skin tone and balancing the white balance. And adjusting the proper balance of the light and shadows.

Q What was the most challenging part of that shoot?

The most difficult part of a shoot is finding the right angle for the subject. Sometimes, the positioning of the location makes the task extremely challenging; in this instance, the shoot had to be conducted on a narrow wall.

CONNECT WITH ATANU CHAKRABARTY

INSTAGRAM @atanuchakrabortyshooter

WALLMAG AWARDS 2026

The Finalists' Honour Roll

Across the two 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.

DANCE CREATOR AWARDS 2026

Aahna S
Aakhya Malviya
aarya trivedi
Abhishek Ahuja
Aishwarya Roy Choudhury
Anamika Hemraj
Anilkumar Singh
Anuja Goyal
Anurag shaw
Arpita Tripathy
Ashwini
Ayush Kotnala
Bhavna PATEL
C Likhitha Reddy
Chaitanya Kambala
Chiranth Kumar
Debjani Baral
Devangi Nishikant Chavan
Dipali Chackravarty
Diya Anil S
Dr. Nehal Sahay
G Manikarnika Prakash
Gargi Natta
Garnepudi Surya Sindhuja
Geetika Khatri
Hiral Rajdev
Hitarthi Darji
Ishika shukla
Janvi Muppana
Jayeeta Das
JEEVITHA .P
Jigisha Roy
K.Pallavi
Kaaav
Kashish Jairani
Kashish Tailor
Kriti Singh
Kumari DEVAYANI
LAASYA LAGADAPATI
Lohith Vishal M
lopa shashikant rajguru
lad
Manika Matta
Manish Kumar Rai
Meghana Iyengar
Nandita Bhatt
Navya
Neethu R
Neha s
Nehavarshini V
Niha Manoj C.M
Nimisha Kale
Nisha Satish
Nithya G
Nitika Aggarwal
Paarvi Jhamb
Palak Jaju
Pallabi Meher
Parmita Modak
Prachi Parekh
Pradhithi Sundareswar
Pratibha Kumari
Prisha Kolte
R. Dwaraka
Reshma Rajeev
RESHMA SAJITH
Reshma V
Riya Purohit
Ruchika
Sagar Baruah
Sampada kotwal
sangnach
Saranya Kiran
Sashmitha.M
Shailaja pillai
Shalini Haranahalli
Sharanya Bisht
Shivakshi Patra
Shravya Verma
Shreya Mankar
Smruthi Puskuru
Snehal Jambhekar
Snehal Kant
Snehashree Hegde
Soumyaa Shreeya Nayak
Sourav Chakrabortty
Sowbarnika Ramesh
sravya keerthana
Sreeja Jyothish
Srujana
Subhomita Basak
Sumi Tharayil
Swami Narayana Rao
Team Lights Camera
Dance
Triparna Ghosh
Trisha
Vamsi Prabhagiri
Vani Verma
Vedika Parmar
Vikki Kumar
Yash Raval

FOOD CREATOR OF THE YEAR AWARDS 2026

Aadi Kadam
Aarav Srivastava
Alena Tony Thomas
Alpana wadhwa
Amrita Baruah
Anil A
Anjali Luthra
Ankit Dasgupta
Ankita Biswal
Arti Srivastava
Asha Nanda Baapni
Asha S Rao
Ashna Gupta
BHARATHANV
BRINDA KUMAR
Daya Hadiya
Debashruti Aich
Devan Thuppali
Dhritistha Sarma
Dhruvi Jain
Diksha Sharma
Dinesh chandra
Divanshi Sethia
Diya Vijay
Dolly
Dr deeptii
Dr Sonam Jain
Gandhali Kulkarni
Gareth Rebeiro
Gazala Saiyed
Ghosh
Gowtham madeti
hafsa khatri
Hafsa Nasser Khatri
Hajira Taskeen
Hiba khan
Isha Bajaj
Jayati Khatri
Jisu Das
Jiya M Gaglani
Joyadrita Ragavendran
Chatterjee
Jyoti Chaudhary
Jyoti Kumari
Kartik Sharma
Khadija Hooda
Kinjan Sen
laxmi thakre
Lisa ROY
Manisha Jain
Maria Polovinkina
Mariya Peter
Mayuri Verma
Momi Mukherjee
Muskan Kapoor
Namrata Sarmah
Namrata Sutar

FOOD CREATOR OF THE YEAR AWARDS 2026 (CONTINUED)

Natasha Ganguly
Nicky
Nidhi Gupta
Noya
Pooja A
Prachi Navandar
Prachi Pareek
Prem Singh Rathore
Puja Darshan
Puja Ghosal
Rahul Sharma
Rainy R Krishnan
Rinkesh Gupta
Risti Kadahi
Rupali Yadav
Sadia M
Sakshi Agrawal
Sana Ghasura
Sana Ghasura
Sana Khuram
Sandhya Nair
Saubhagya Chauhan
Shaik Simran Banu
Sharanya Naresh
Shashikala Paul
Shilpi Priya
Shivani Gupta
Shloka nayan
Shrutika Raikar-Gathibandhe
Shubham Sharma
Sneha Kaul
Soni
Srizana Subba
SUMA P MATHEW
Swadhinata Gogoi
Tanya Verma
Tejashree Bhovad
Tripti Agarwal
Urvashi Bansal
Vaidehi Surotia
Vartika Gupta
Varun Bedi
Vidushi Singhania
Yasmin Ubaithulla

We are not over yet!



Volume 10 lands in December 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.*

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