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BHARATPUR An Offbeat Perspective
by Sanjay Shukla

THE GHARIYAL

by Rupak De

VOLUME- 23



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Disclaimer

The views and opinions expressed in the articles published in this magazine are those of the authors and are not necessarily of the editorial team, PSI or the Managing Committee.



EDITORIAL

In this issue, Shri Rupak De has contributed with his photo essay of Gharials of the Chambal region. Being a former top-ranking forest officer, he is interested in natural history and he still works on many conservation projects in various parts of our country.

Our member Prasad Mantri recently visited Kullu in Himachal Pradesh to witness the world-famous Dussehra Festival. It really is a spectacular festival where thousands of locals gather with their colorful traditional attires. Their religious rituals and performances are the main attractions of the festival.

Another of our members, Sanjay Shukla once visited the Bharatpur Bird Sanctuary. On one day of his visit, he encountered bad weather. But without getting discouraged, he tried and captured good environmental images.

Here I would like to cordially invite all our members and photography lovers to visit our upcoming members' exhibition at the Jehangir Art Gallery, at Kalaghoda, Mumbai. The exhibition will open on the 24th of January and will be on till the 30th of January 2023.

Looking forward to seeing you all at the exhibition.



Rajendra Waghmare
Chief Editor

RESULT OF MONTHLY COMPETITION : NOVEMBER 2022

JUDGES : Shri. Vaibhav Jaguste & Shri. Prakash Revdekar

MEMBERS (COLOUR)



**UNDER
SAMAR KHAN**



**BURGER
MAHESH AMBARE**

MEMBERS (COLOUR)



**HELP
NIKHIL PANCHAL**

MEMBERS ACCEPTED ENTRIES (COLOUR)



**PRINCESS
VINITA SHAH**

MEMBERS ACCEPTED ENTRIES (COLOUR)



**BLUE WINDOW
PRASAD MANTRI**



**RED ROSES IN DAL LAKE
PRASAD MANTRI**

MEMBERS (MONOCHROME)



**TWO IN TENT
PRASAD MANTRI**



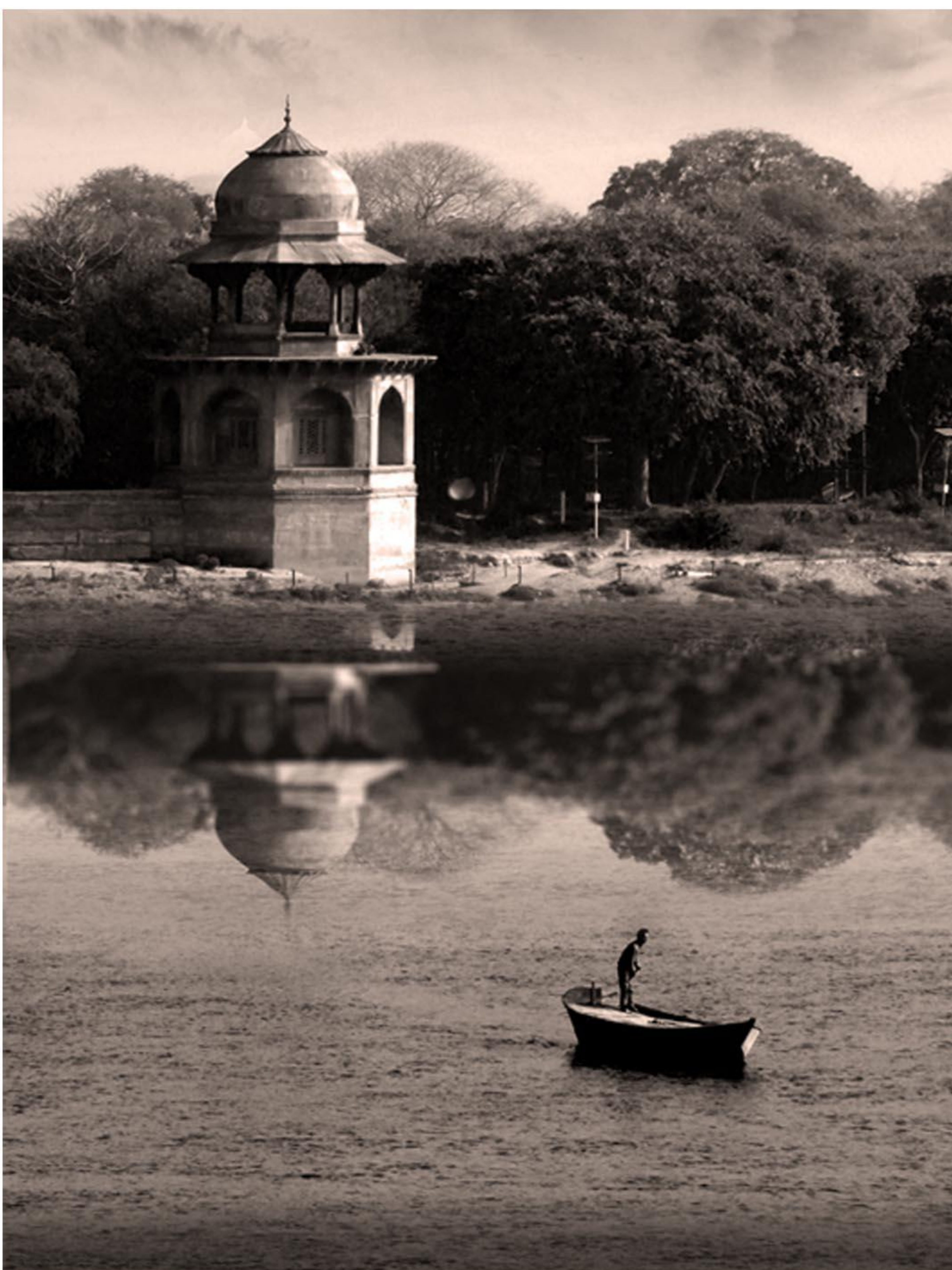
**CYCLONE
NIKHIL PANCHAL**



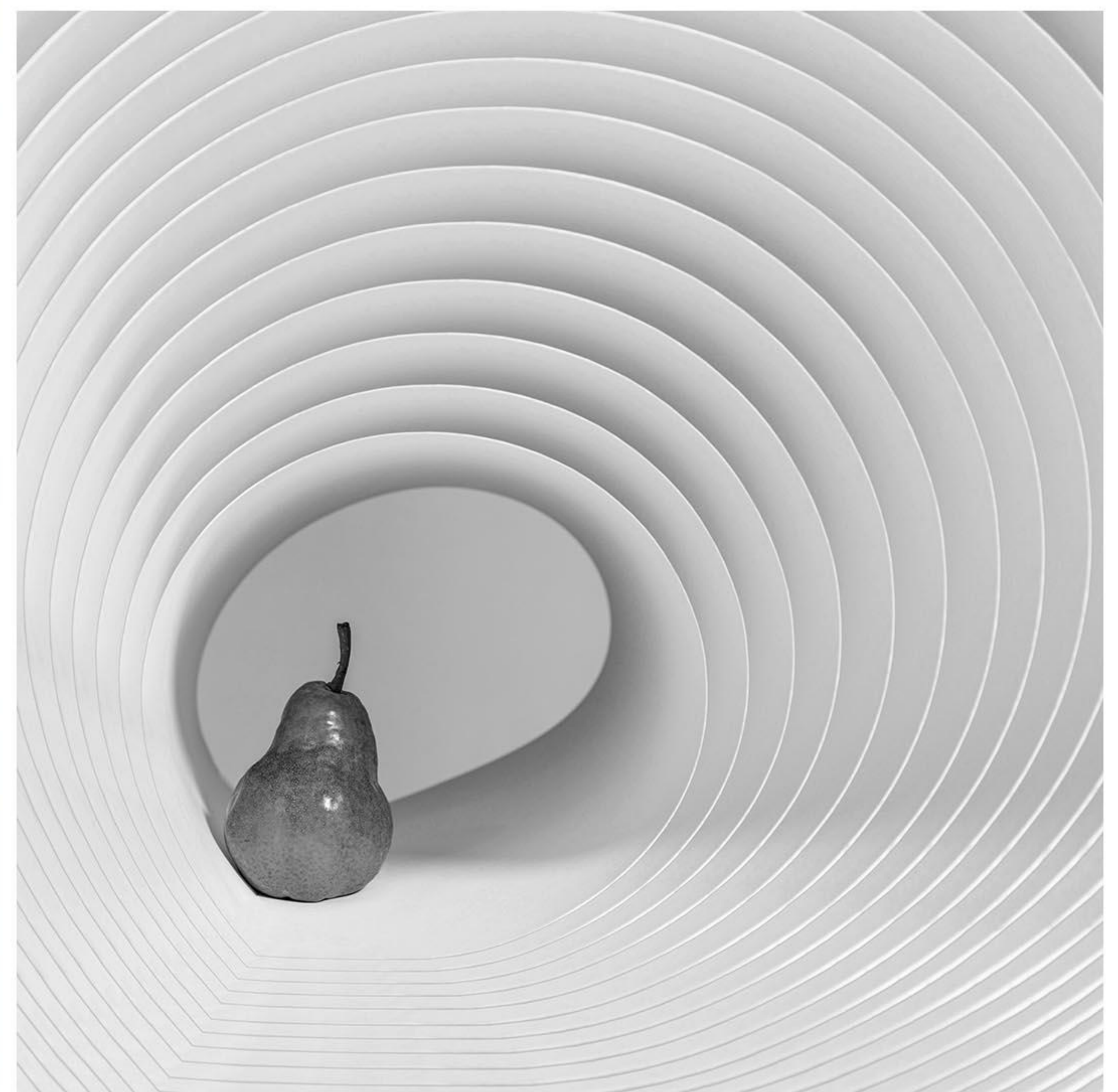
MEMBERS ACCEPTED ENTRIES (MONOCHROME)



**KAVADI
VINITA SHAH**



**CROSSING RIVER
SAMAR KHAN**



**CIRCLES
PRASAD MANTRI**

MEMBERS ACCEPTED ENTRIES (MONOCHROME)



**WAH TAJ
SAMAR KHAN**



**GOL GUMBAZ
SAMAR KHAN**

BEGINNERS ACCEPTED ENTRIES(COLOUR)



**PIED BUSHCHAT
PRADIP PATIL**

BEGINNERS (MONOCHROME)



**THE REFLECTION
SWAPNA KORDE PHATAK**



BEGINNERS (MONOCHROME)



**THE MIGHTIER SWORD
SWAPNA KORDE PHATAK**



BEGINNERS ACCEPTED ENTRIES (MONOCHROME)



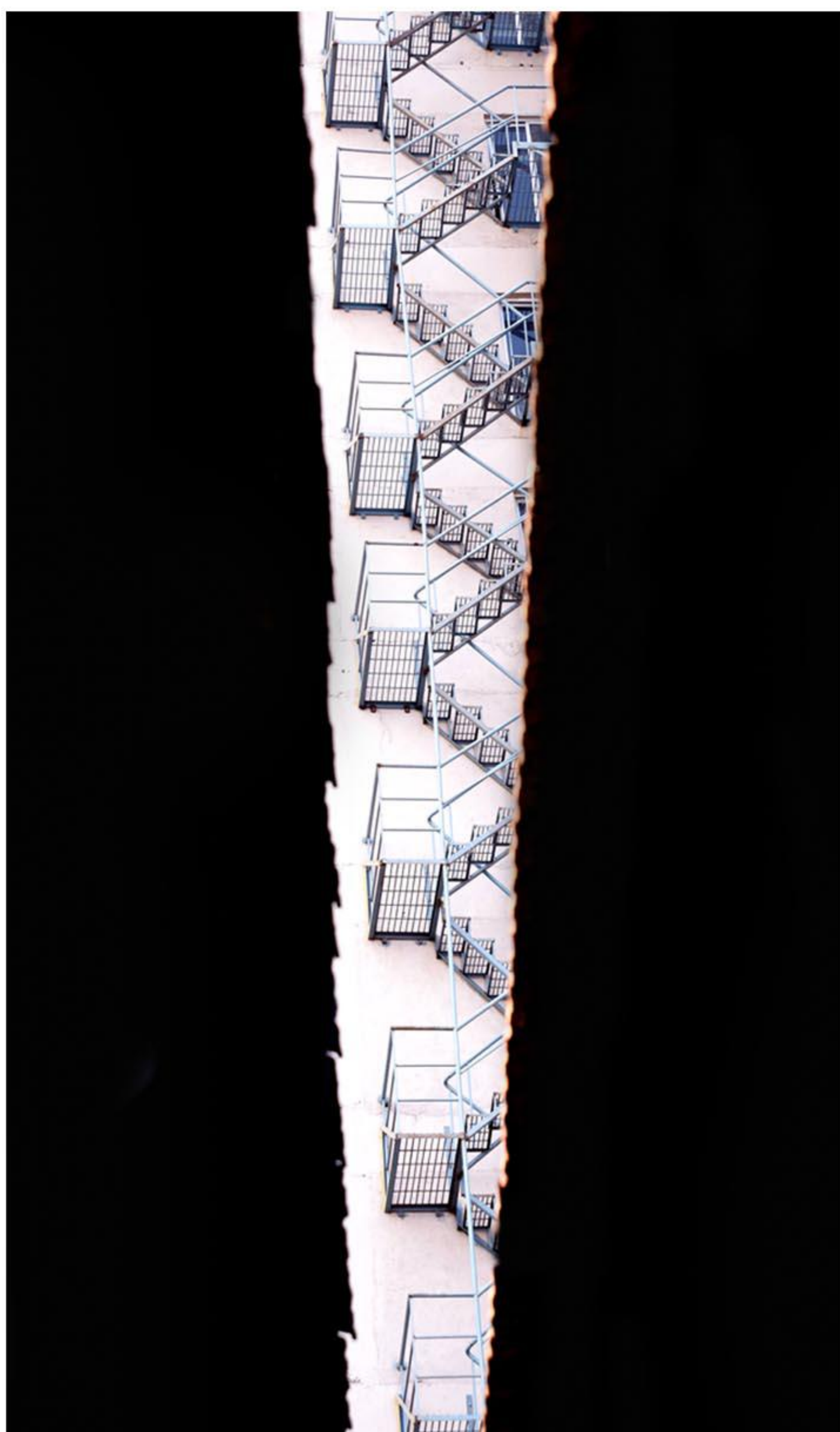
**THE HONEST EYES
SWAPNA KORDE PHATAK**

OUTING (MHATAR PAKHADI)

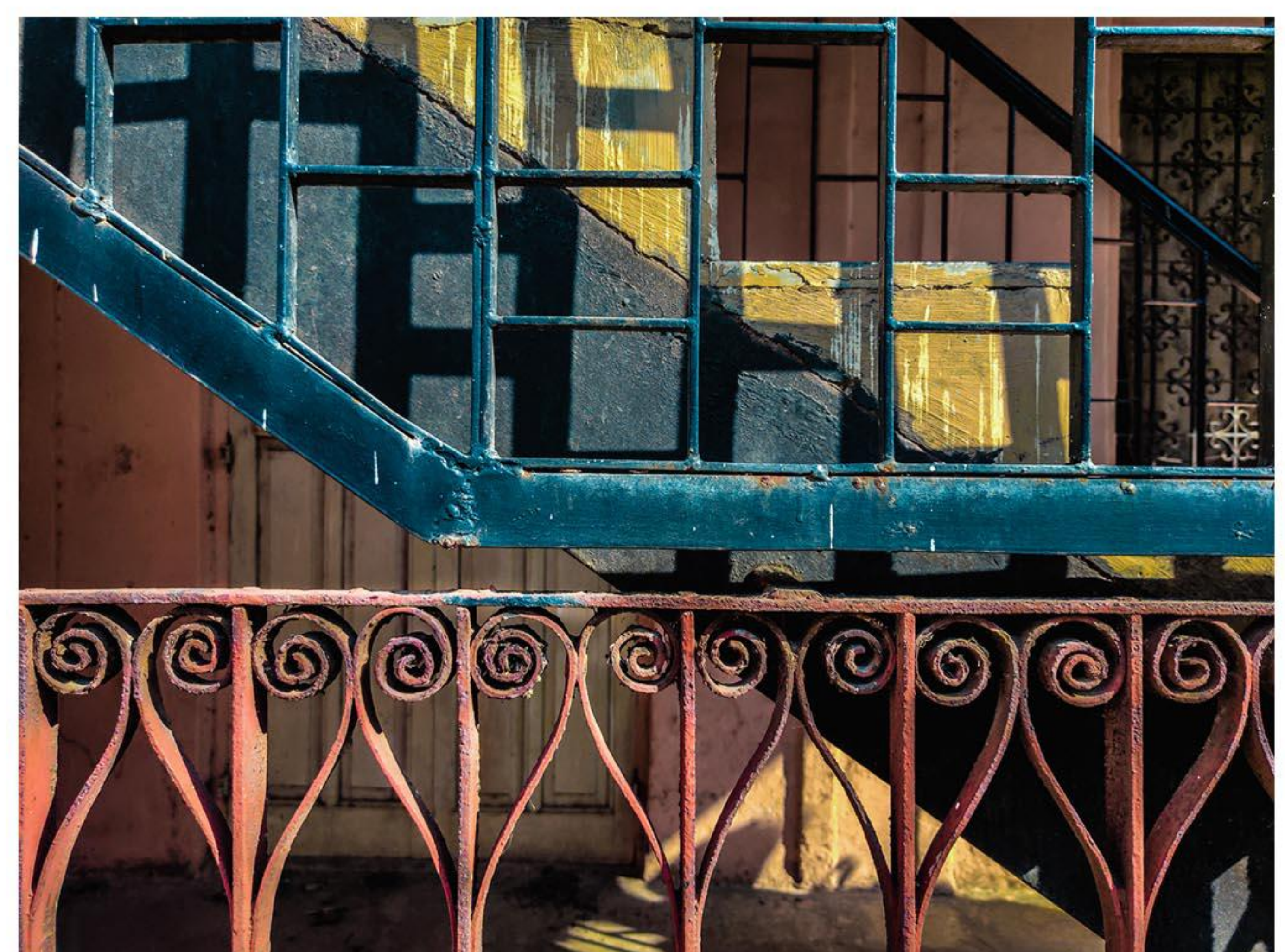


**ROUND
SHRIKANT AMBOKAR**

OUTING ACCEPTED ENTRIE



**ZIGZAG
PRAVIN JADHAV**



**GRILL PATTERN
NIKHIL PANCHAL**

BHARATPUR

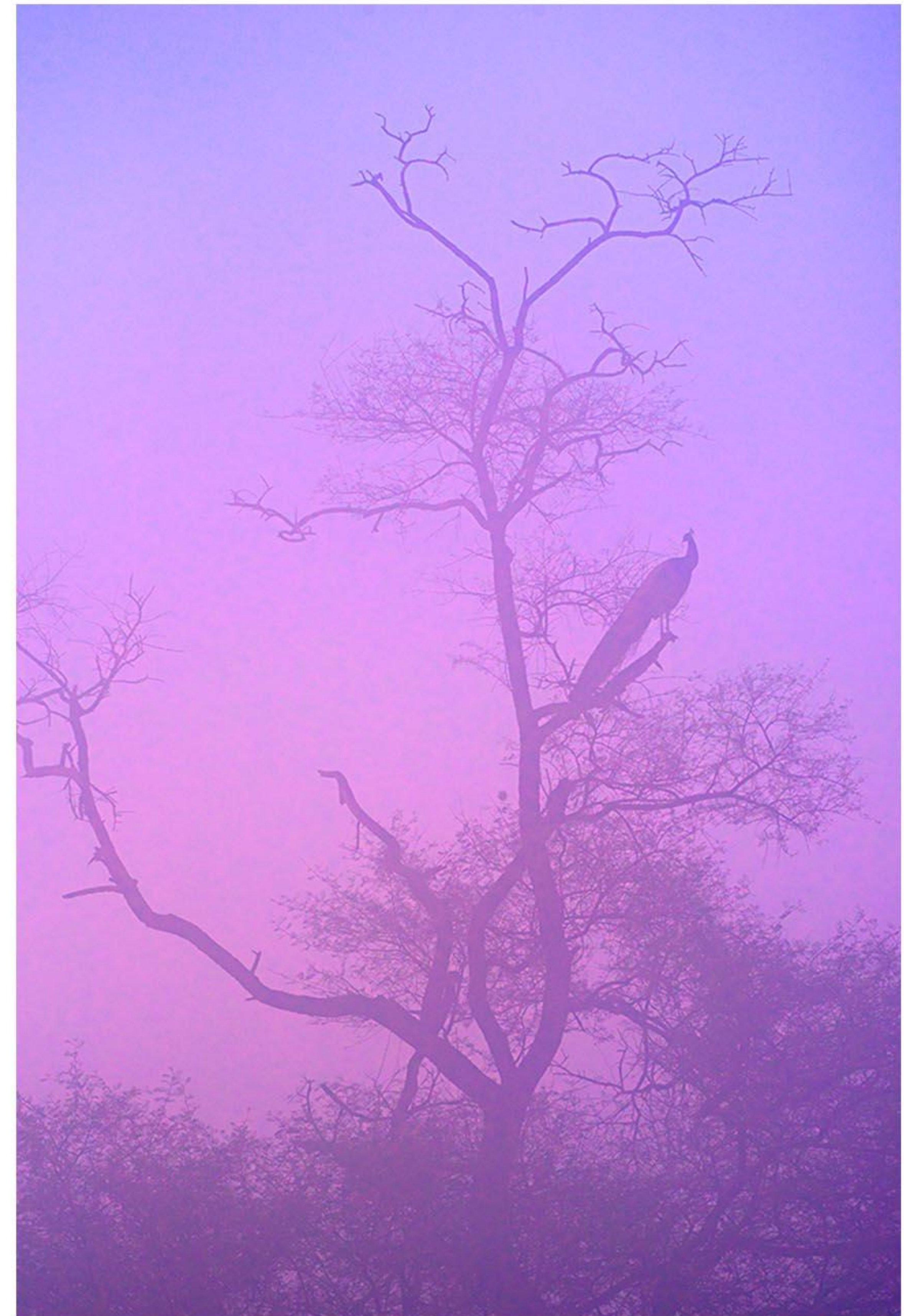
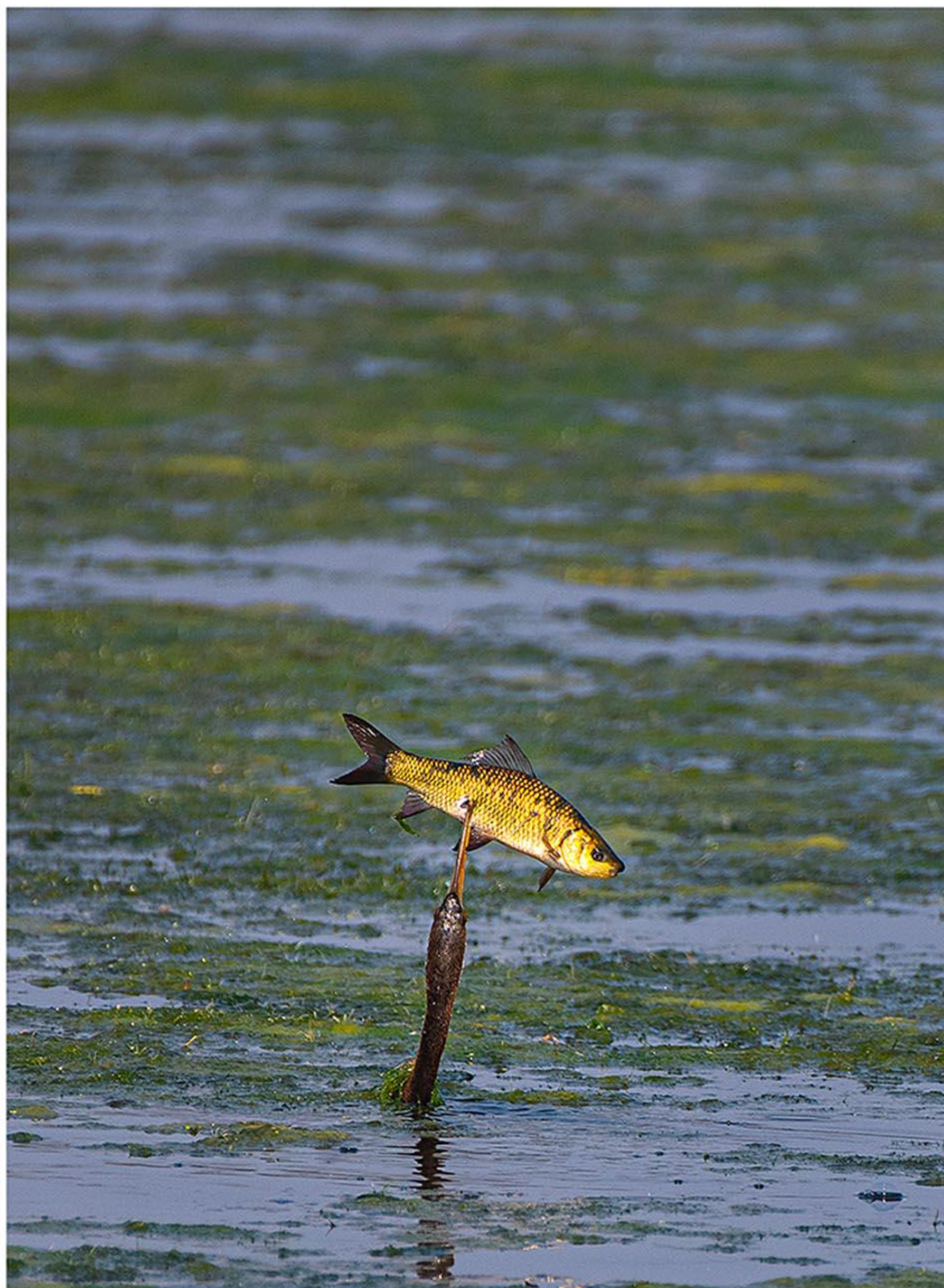
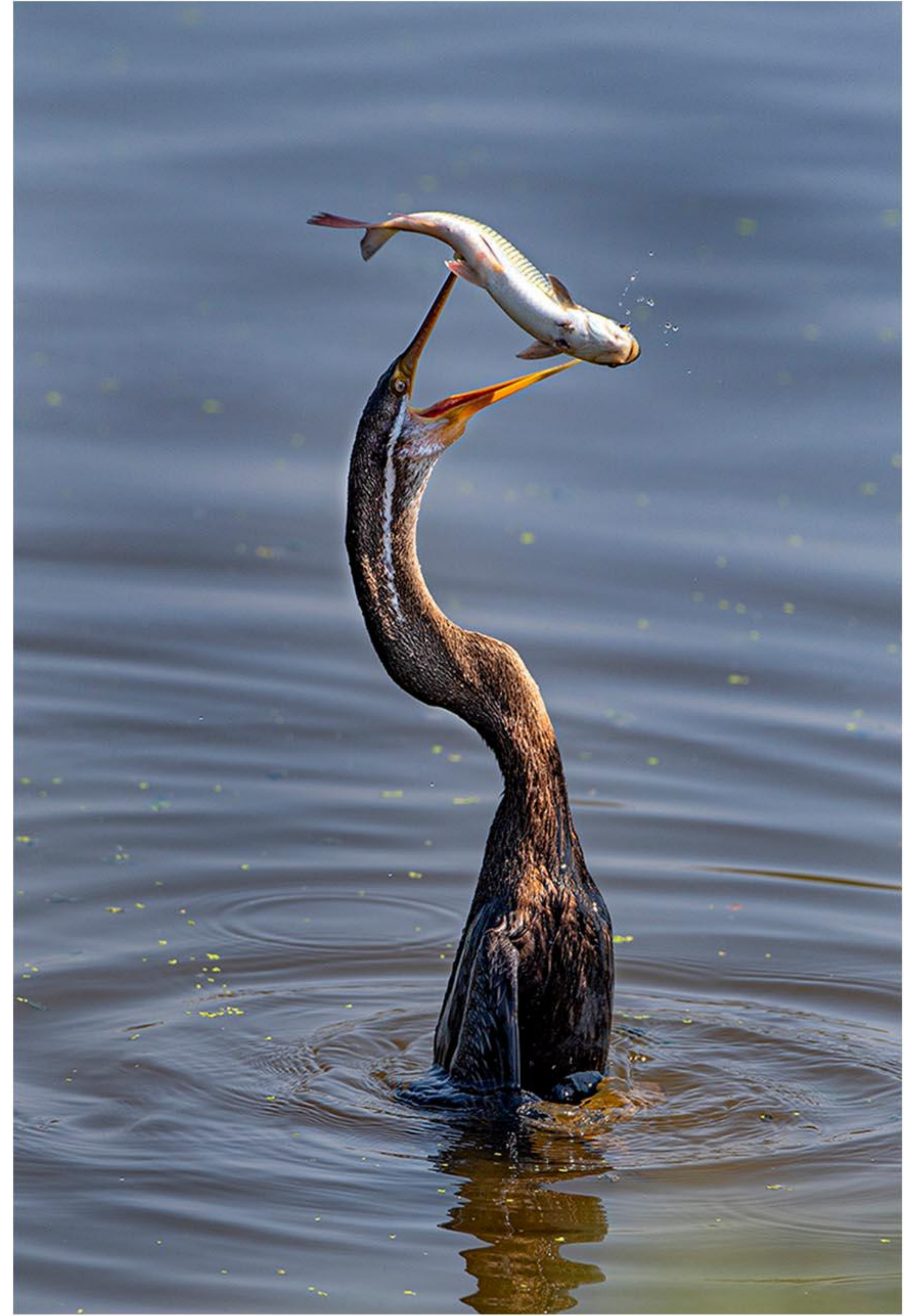
AN OFFBEAT PERSPECTIVE













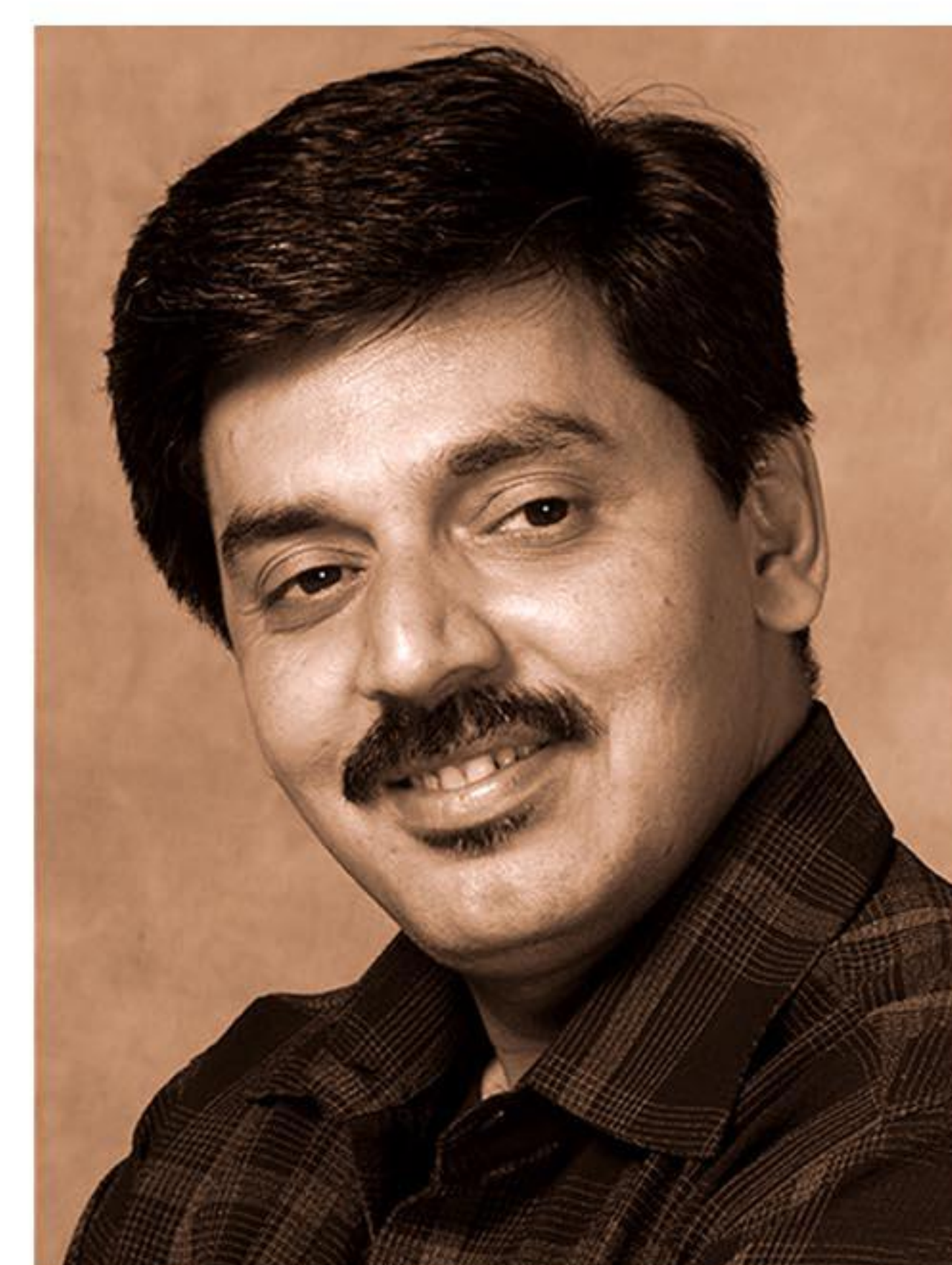
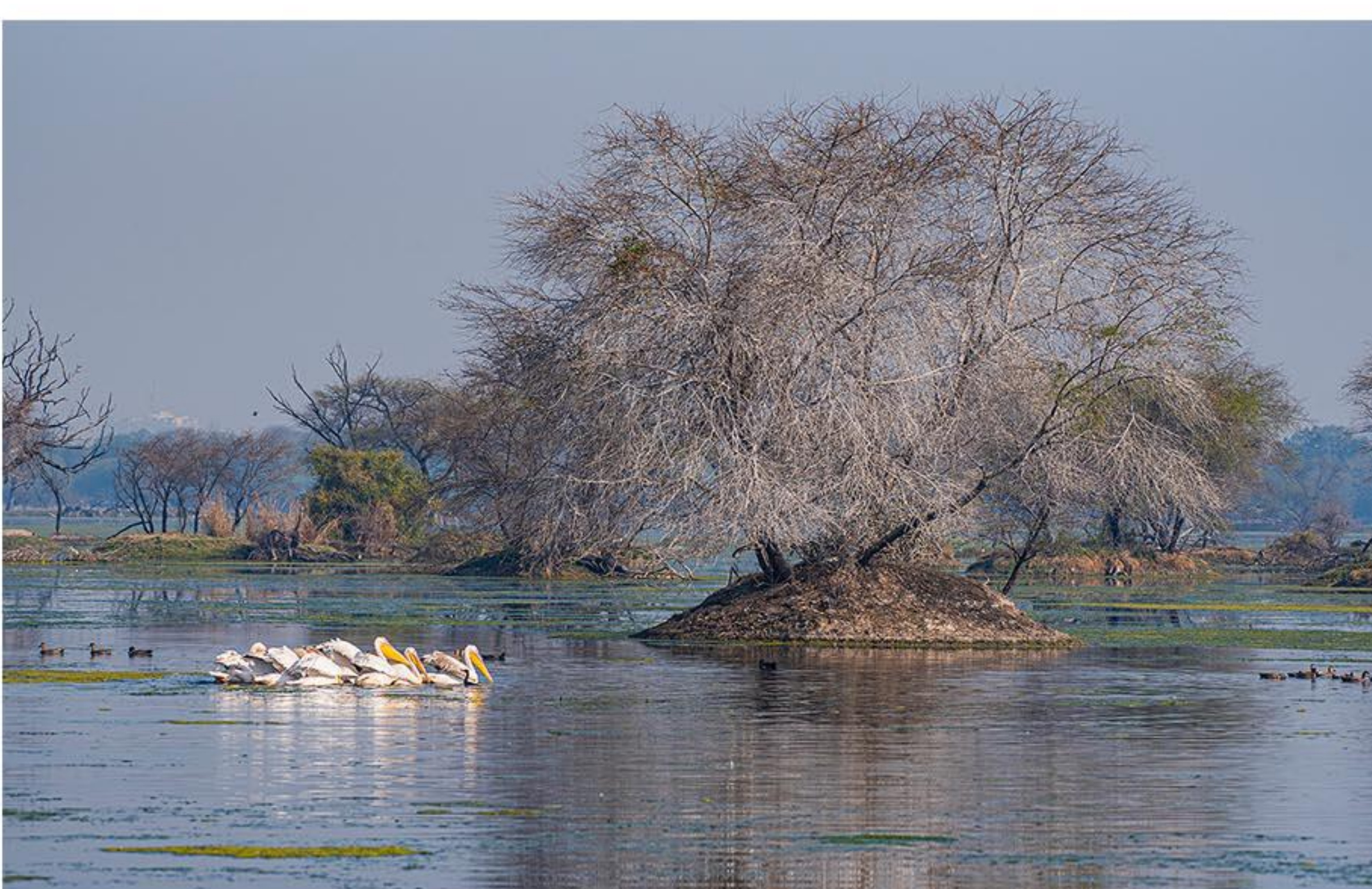
Bharatpur Bird sanctuary is at Bharatpur Rajasthan. It is on the border of Uttar Pradesh and Rajasthan. Agra is an hour's drive from Bharatpur.

Bharatpur Bird sanctuary means not only the birds but much more than that. You can see the beautiful landscape with beautiful flora and fauna. Along with different types of birds, there is wildlife as well.

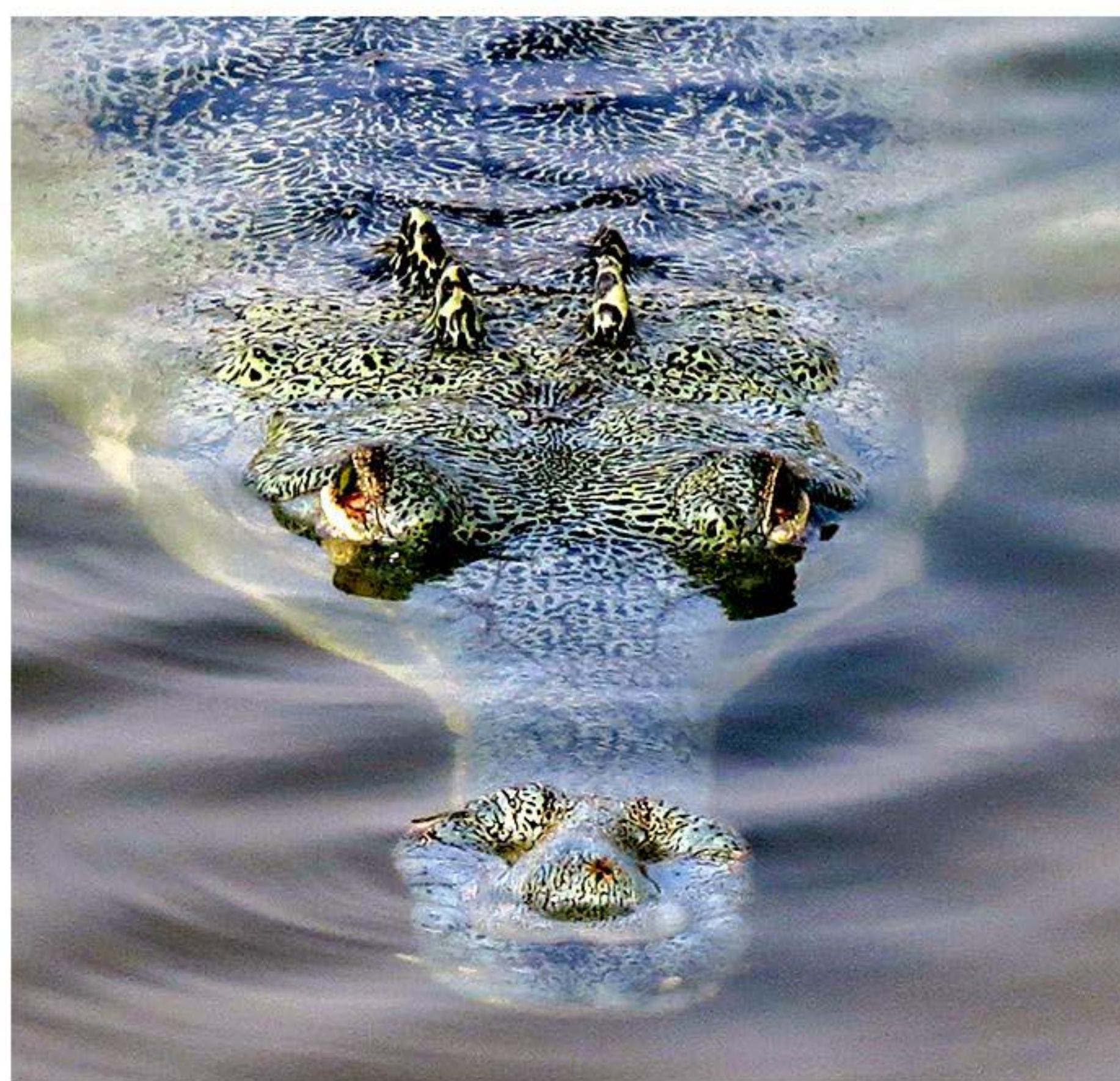
Once I was there, an early night was full of rain in the winter season. In the morning when we woke up, we saw a very dense fog in the sanctuary, because of which our team was very disappointed.

But in such conditions, a photographer should need not worry. He should just change the lens from telly to wide, and look for different kinds of nature pictures.

Bharatpur is a sanctuary where you definitely get beautiful pictures.



SANJAY SHUKLA



THE GHARIAL

(GAVIALIS GANGETICUS)

The Gharial (*Gavialis gangeticus*) is a river crocodile endemic to the Indian subcontinent. It was once found in Pakistan, Bangladesh, Burma, and Bhutan, but is now extinct in these countries. Today, it is seen in a few places in India and Nepal. In India, the major population of Gharials is found in the Chambal and Girwa rivers.

The Gharial is considered to be the most unique of crocodiles because it has evolved into a river-dwelling fish eater. It eats fish, crustaceans, frogs, and at times turtles. It is generally harmless to humans. It lives in calmer portions of deep fast-flowing rivers and is a champion swimmer. Adults do not have the ability to walk on land in the semi-upright stance as other crocodilians. Being a thoroughly aquatic crocodilian, it leaves the water only for basking and building nests on moist sandbanks. When basking on the beach, they often turn around so as to face the water. If disturbed they quietly slip into the water where they are masters of the environs.

It is called Gharial because of the bulbous 'ghara' on the tip of the male snout.

Traditionally, the gharial has been identified with water, the source of all existence and fertility. To some, it is the vahana or vehicle of the River Goddess Ganga, and others revere it as the vahana of Varuna, the God of Water. Some consider that Gharial is the essence of healthy river systems. So, entwined is the life of Gharial with clean rivers, that the fate of Gharial will decide what happens to other aquatic life and ultimately the rivers themselves. In its range, its presence or absence is a good indicator of the biological health of the river.

It faces many threats to its survival which include fishing, linking of rivers, large irrigation canals, etc.

The wild gharial population has declined drastically since the 1930s and is limited to only 2% of its historical range today. The Gharial population had plummeted to less than 200 in 1976. It was then that the Government of India brought it under Schedule I of the Wild Life (Protection) Act of 1972. Conservation programs initiated in India and Nepal focused on reintroducing captive-bred gharials since the early 1980s. Habitat protection and conservation have been implemented within the country. Loss of habitat because of sand mining and conversion to agriculture, depletion of fish resources, and detrimental fishing methods continue to threaten the population.

The gharial is olive-colored, with adults being darker than young, which have dark

brown cross bands and speckles. The back turns almost black at about 20 years of age, but the belly is yellowish-white. It has four transverse rows of two scales on the neck, which continue along the back. The body is covered with scutes.

The snout is very long and narrow, widened at the end, and with 27 to 29 upper teeth and 25 or 26 lower teeth on each side. In all, there are 106 -110 razor-sharp interlocking teeth that leave barely any scope for escape for the prey that gets caught between them. The front teeth are the largest. The first, second, and third lower jaw teeth fit into spaces in the upper jaw. The long snout is specially adapted to catching and eating fish. They effectively hunt fish underwater with sharp interlocking teeth and long narrow snout, which meets little resistance in the water. They do not chew the prey but swallow it whole.



Teeth and Snout with Ghara

Male gharials develop a hollow bulbous nasal protuberance (ghara) at the tip of the snout upon reaching sexual maturity. It enables the males to emit a hissing sound. The gharial is the only living crocodylian with such visible sexual dimorphism.

Female gharials reach sexual maturity at a body length of 2.6 m and grow up to 4.5 m. Males mature at a body length of 4 m (attained in 15-18 years) and the ghara is developed and continues to grow up to a length of 6 m. Adult males weigh about 160 kg on average.

Being cold-blooded, they need to cool down during hot times and warm up when the ambient temperature is cool. Gharials bask daily in the cold season, foremost in the mornings, and prefer sandy and moist beaches. Groups comprising an adult male, several females, and sub-adults can be seen basking together. The Chambal Wildlife Sanctuary and Katerniyaghat Wildlife Sanctuary in UP are wonderful places to see such basking gharials and magars. In fact, winter is the best time to visit these protected areas to see these magnificent creatures along with the migratory birds that join them in this season.



View of Chambal WLS



Gharial in Katerniyaghat WLS



Chambal landscape at Gharial breeding time

The gharial shares its riverine habitat with the Magar crocodile (*Crocodylus palustris*) in parts of its range. They use the same nesting grounds. Gharials bask close to the water on shallow, sandy beaches and lay eggs only in sandy soil near water. The Mager crocodile also basks on sandy beaches, but unlike the gharial climbs steep embankments and rocks, and moves farther away from beaches for both basking and nest building.

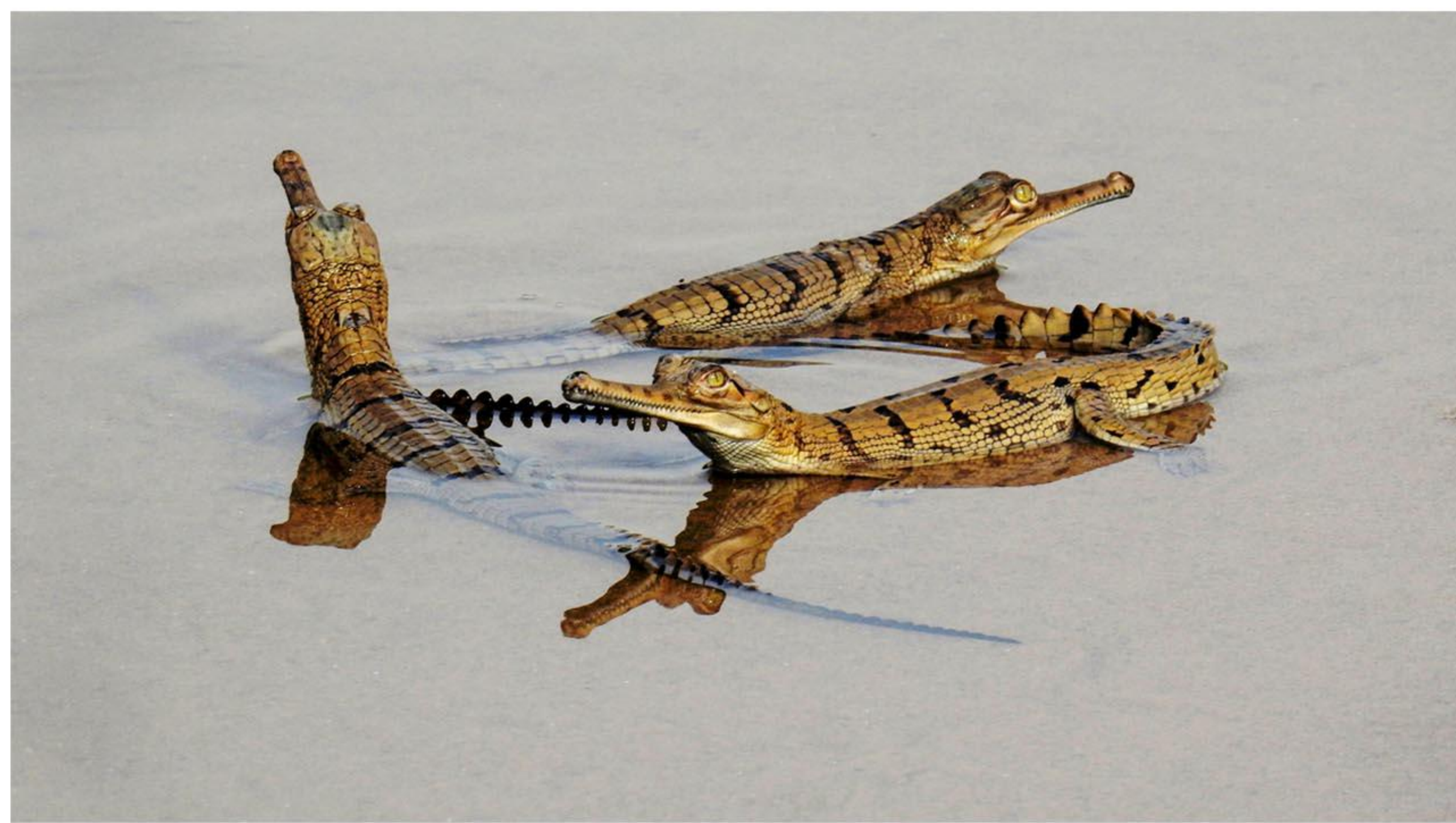
Courting and mating start by mid-February at the end of the cold

season. In the dry season, reproductive females observed in the Chambal River routinely move 80-120 km and join female breeding groups to dig nests together. They select sites in riverside sand or silt banks away from the water and above the water level.

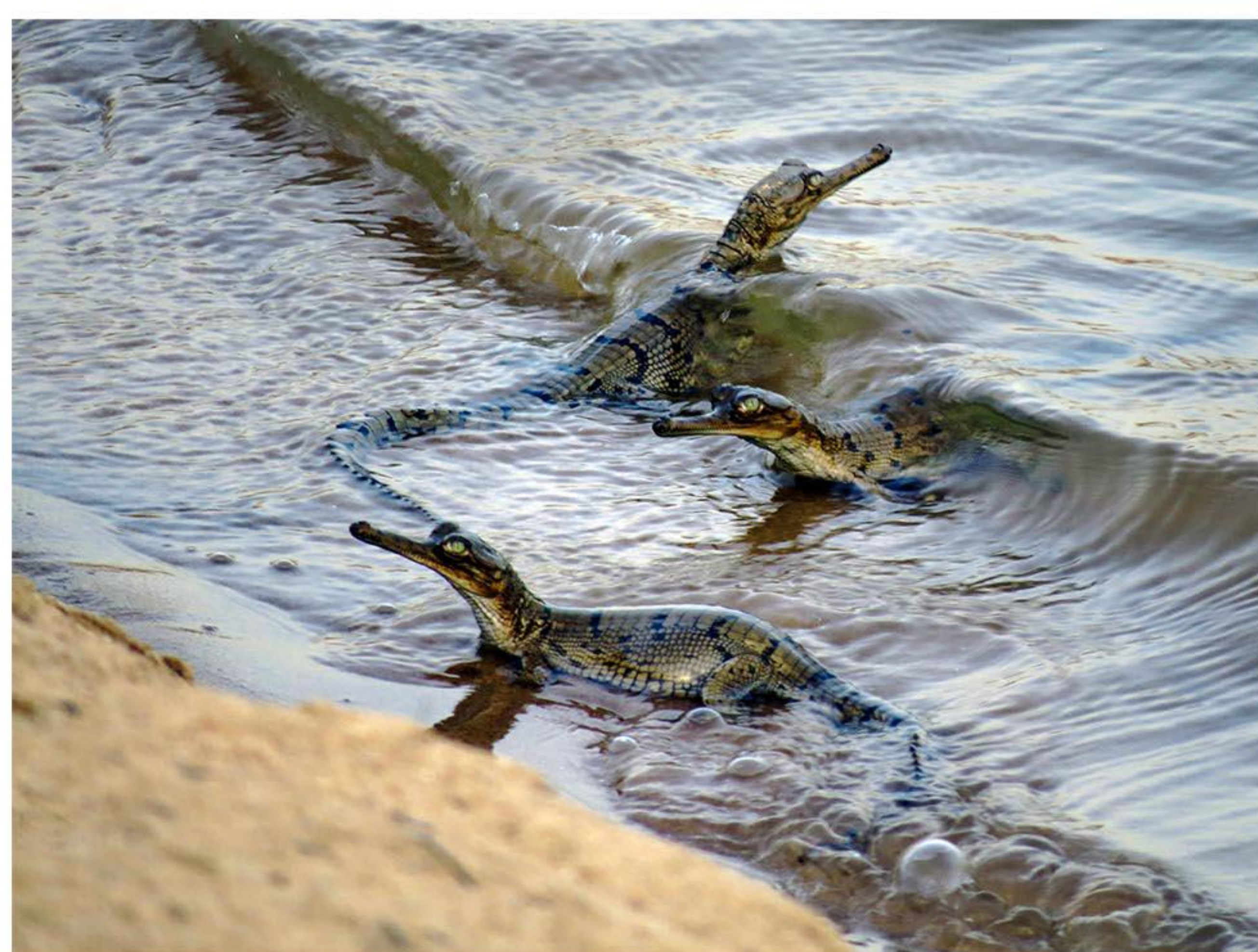
These nests are 20–55 cm deep with a diameter of about 50–60 cm. Between the end of March and early April, they lay 20–95 eggs. The eggs are the largest of all crocodilians and weigh an average of 160 g. Each egg is 85–90 mm long and 65–70 mm wide. After 70 to 90 days of incubation, young gharials hatch in the last week of June or early July just before the onset of the monsoon. Females dig up the hatchlings in response to hatching chirps but do not assist them to reach the water.



Just hatching



Hatchlings on the water's edge



1-2 week-old hatchlings riding the waves on the edge of the river

They stay at nesting sites until monsoon floods arrive and return after the monsoon.

The hatchlings have many enemies – feral dogs, foxes, monitor lizards, mongoose, predatory birds, etc. Females are generally seen to stay close to nest sites and guard young gharials until the shoreline is flooded. This is the general parental behavior of the species.

However, here is a male gharial of the Chambal that is adept at caring for the young ones. It remains in the water close to the hatchlings that are right on the edge of the water and guards them diligently.

Once the hatchlings start to enter the water and forage for food the big animal stays close by and if any threat is perceived it moves in rapidly placing itself between the source of the threat and the hatchlings. It issues warning signals and also charges toward the infiltrator. If the threat persists, the hatchlings clamber onto daddy's back. Those that do not get space on dad's back, remain very close to him in the water.

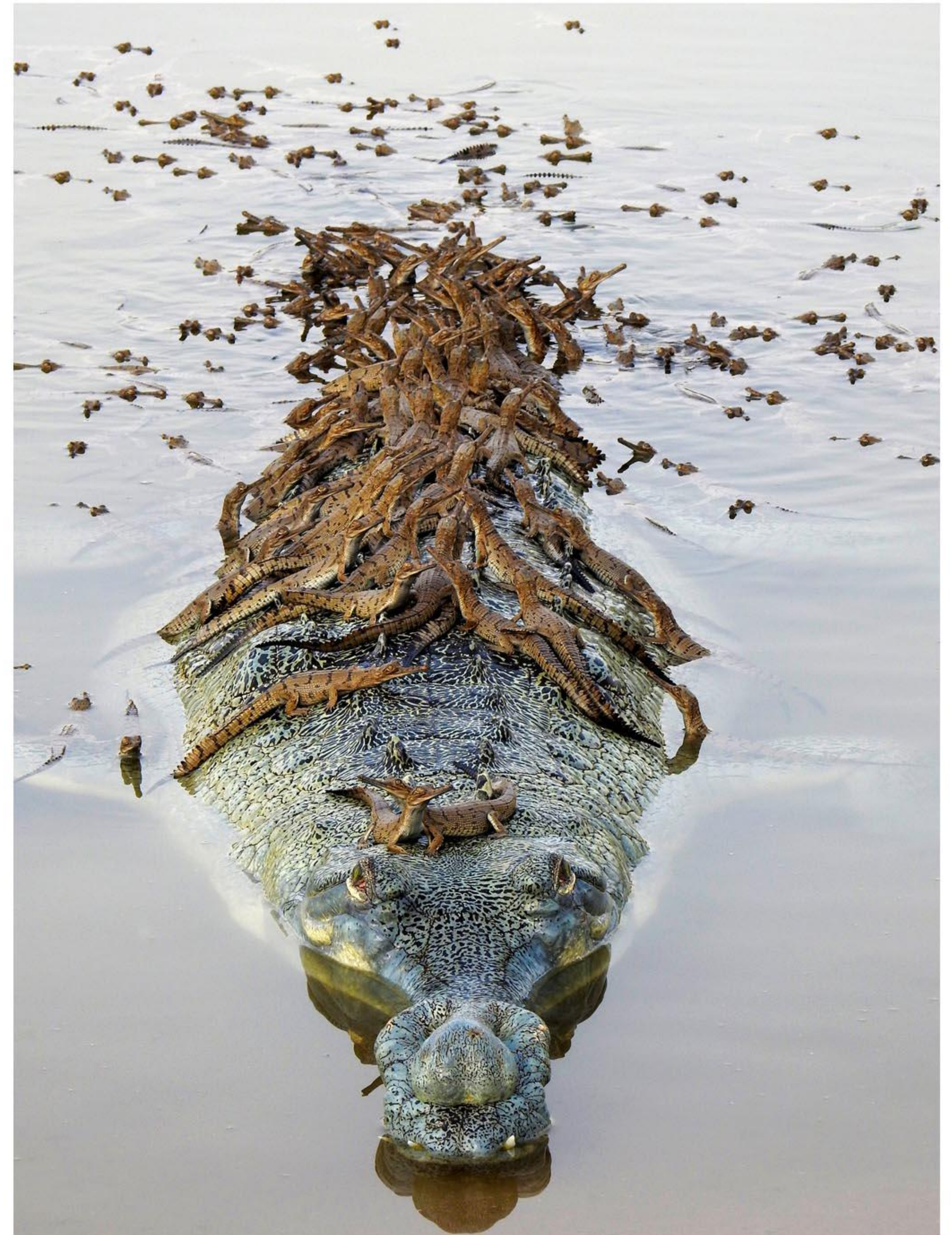


Parental care

This type of parental behavior by this male gharial is unique and a relatively rare occurrence as care of the progenies is a task usually performed by the females.

Of those that survive the initial few weeks (only a very small percentage) eventually become adults.

Efforts by the Government along with the participation of the people dwelling along the rivers that make the habitat of this



Riding on Dad's Back



unique species have contributed to the retrieval of species from the brink of extinction but continued efforts over the long term are needed to ensure its survival.



Feeling Safe



RUPAK DE
EFIAP/B, FFIP

KULLU INTERNATIONAL DUSSEHRA FESTIVAL



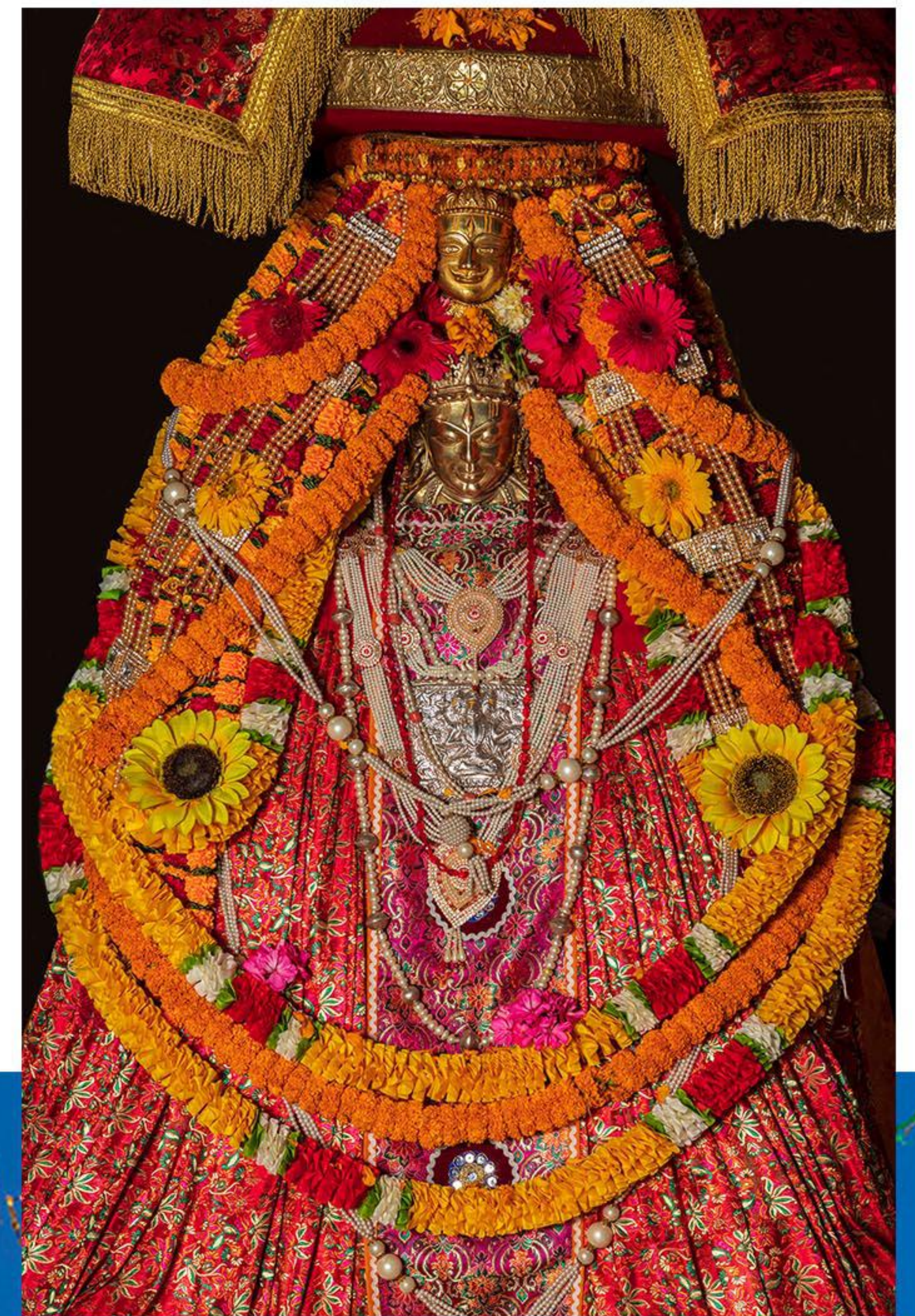
The Dussehra festival of the Kullu district of Himachal Pradesh dates back to the 16th century. In October 2022, we visited Rewalsar and Parashar Lake first and then reached Kullu on the eve of Dussehra. If you go to any village in this state and stay for four or five days, you get rejuvenated.

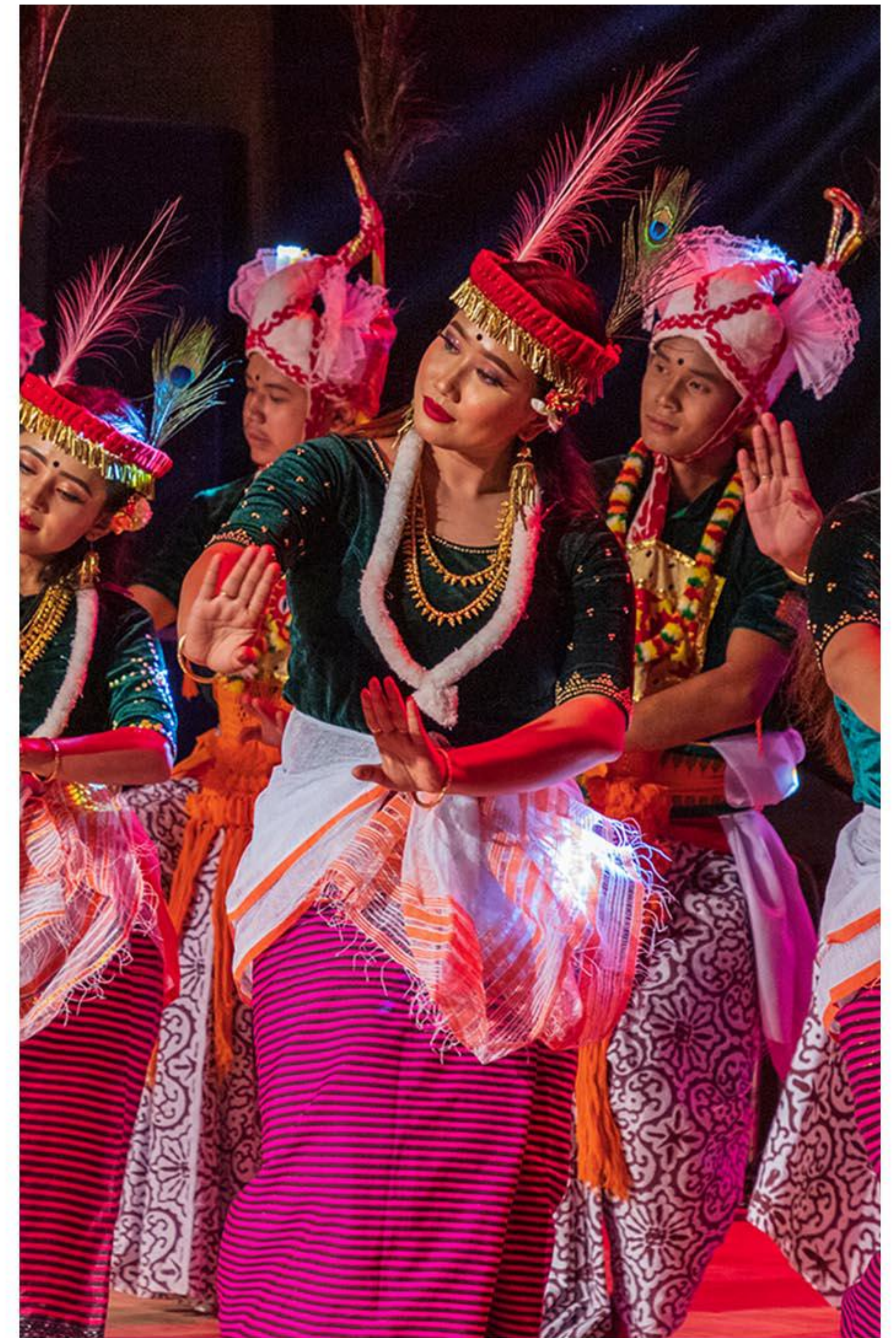
On the first day of the festival, a palanquin procession of around 322 deities of the Kullu district is brought from each village to Kullu 1-2 days before. Later, this palanquin is brought to the Atal Sadan ground on the day of Dussehra. This palanquin of deities is decorated with rich clothes, ornaments, and flowers. People walk for a distance of 55 km with this palanquin. They cover this distance in 3 days.

On the day of the festival, the palanquin of the King of Raghunath is taken out, followed by other palanquins. The king and his entire family are present in this procession. There is a huge crowd of those who are with this palanquin and those who watch it. This year the festival was celebrated from the 5th to the 11th of October. Villagers from surrounding villages bring shawls, sweaters, and other items like utensils, clothes, agricultural implements, and food for selling them.











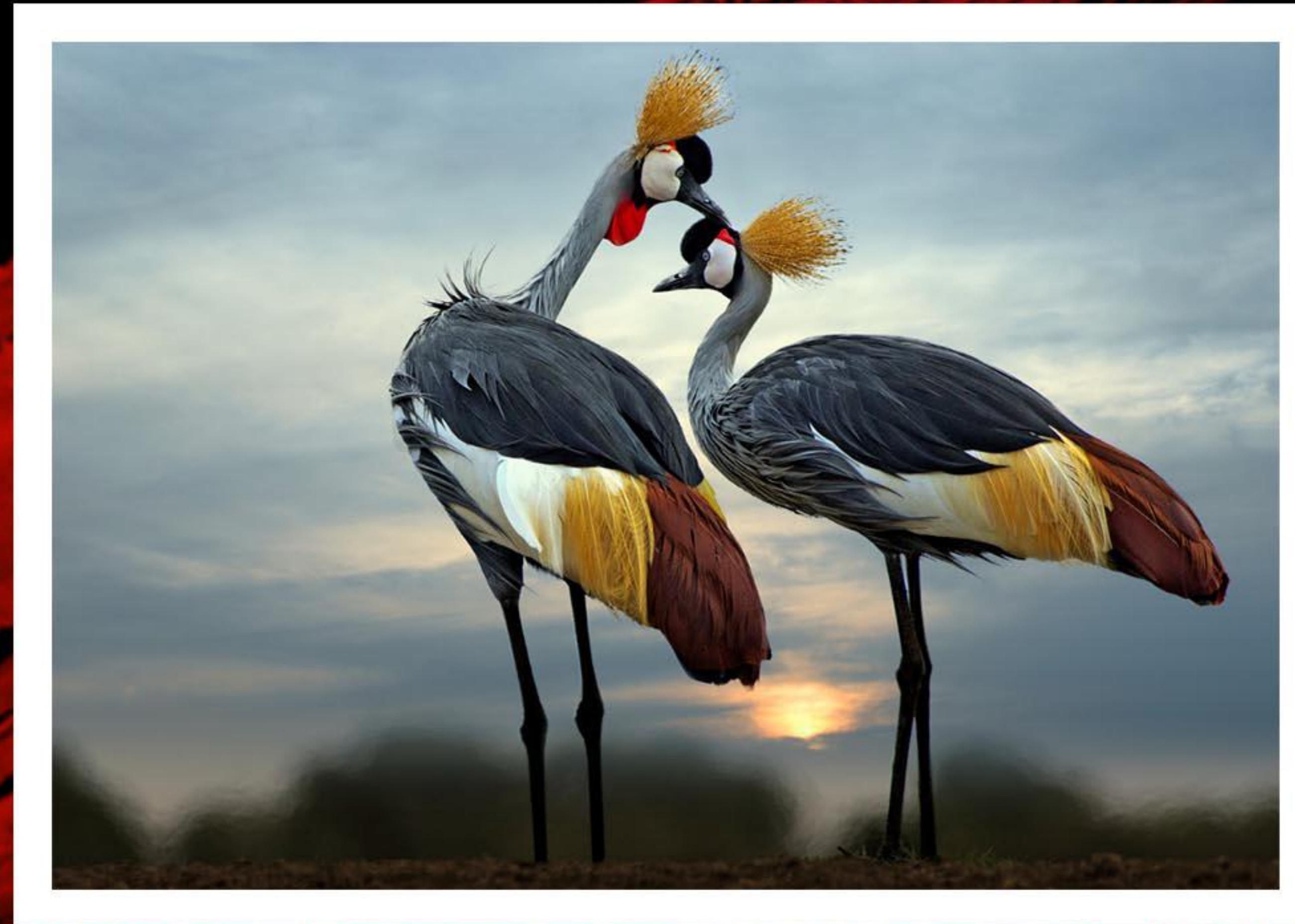
There is a small sports complex near the festival ground. Various songs and folk-dance programs are held on the stage from noon onwards during this period. This year the program was inaugurated by the Governor of Himachal Pradesh Shri Rajendra Vishwanath Arlekar.

On the second day, artists from Kulu and surrounding villages sang songs and performed local dances. At the same time, artists from Manipur, Bhutan also performed amazing dances. On the third day in the morning, women from different villages performed a dance called 'Nati'. A total of 7,000 women were present on this ground. All the women came to the festival wearing their traditional attire. Under the blue sky, on the plains at the foot of the picturesque verdant mountains, it was an extraordinary sight to see seven thousand Himachali women dressed in colorful costumes and dancing together.

One should visit this festival at least once in a lifetime.



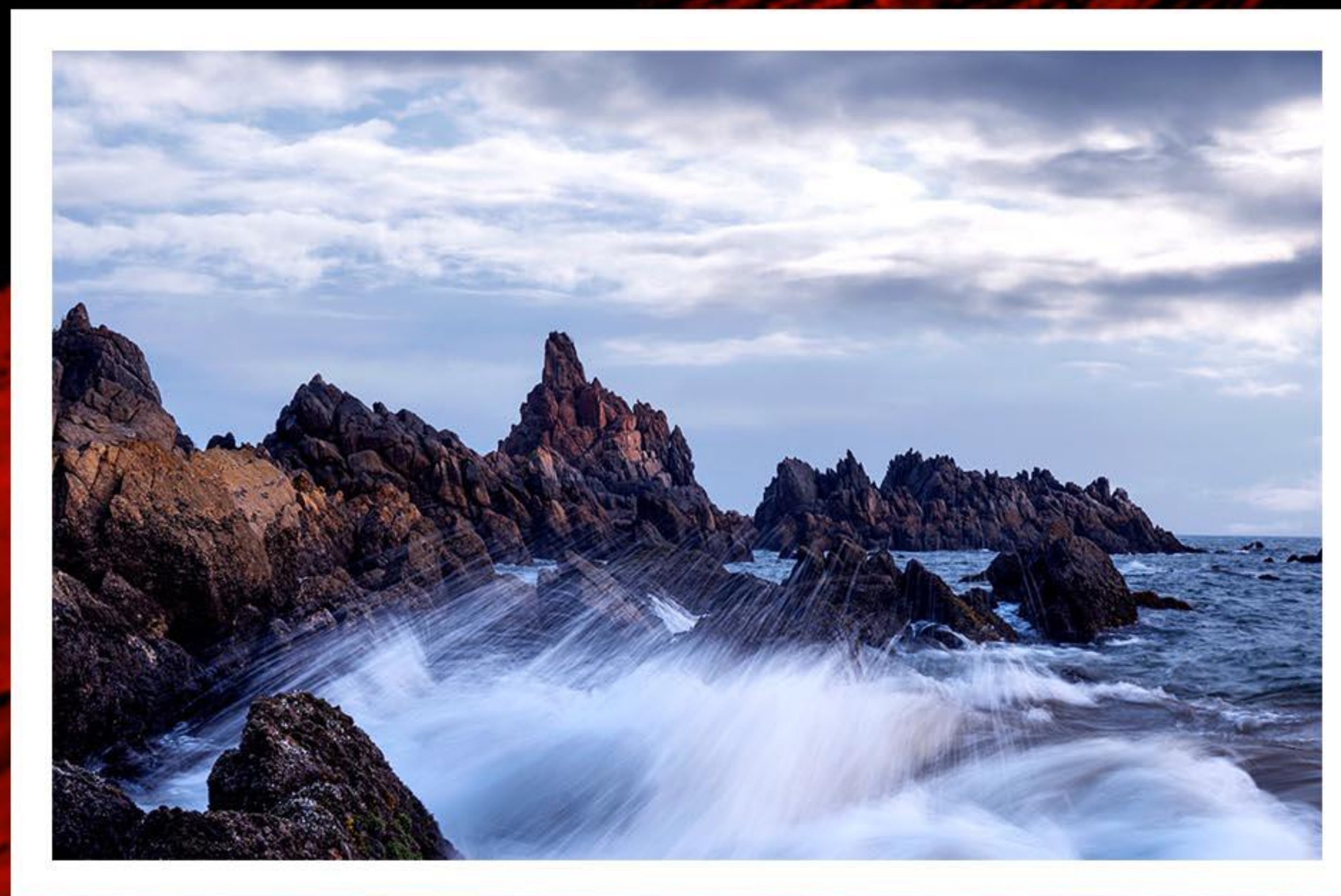
PRASAD MANTRI



**PHOTOGRAPH
OF THE YEAR-2022**

SURESH BANGERA

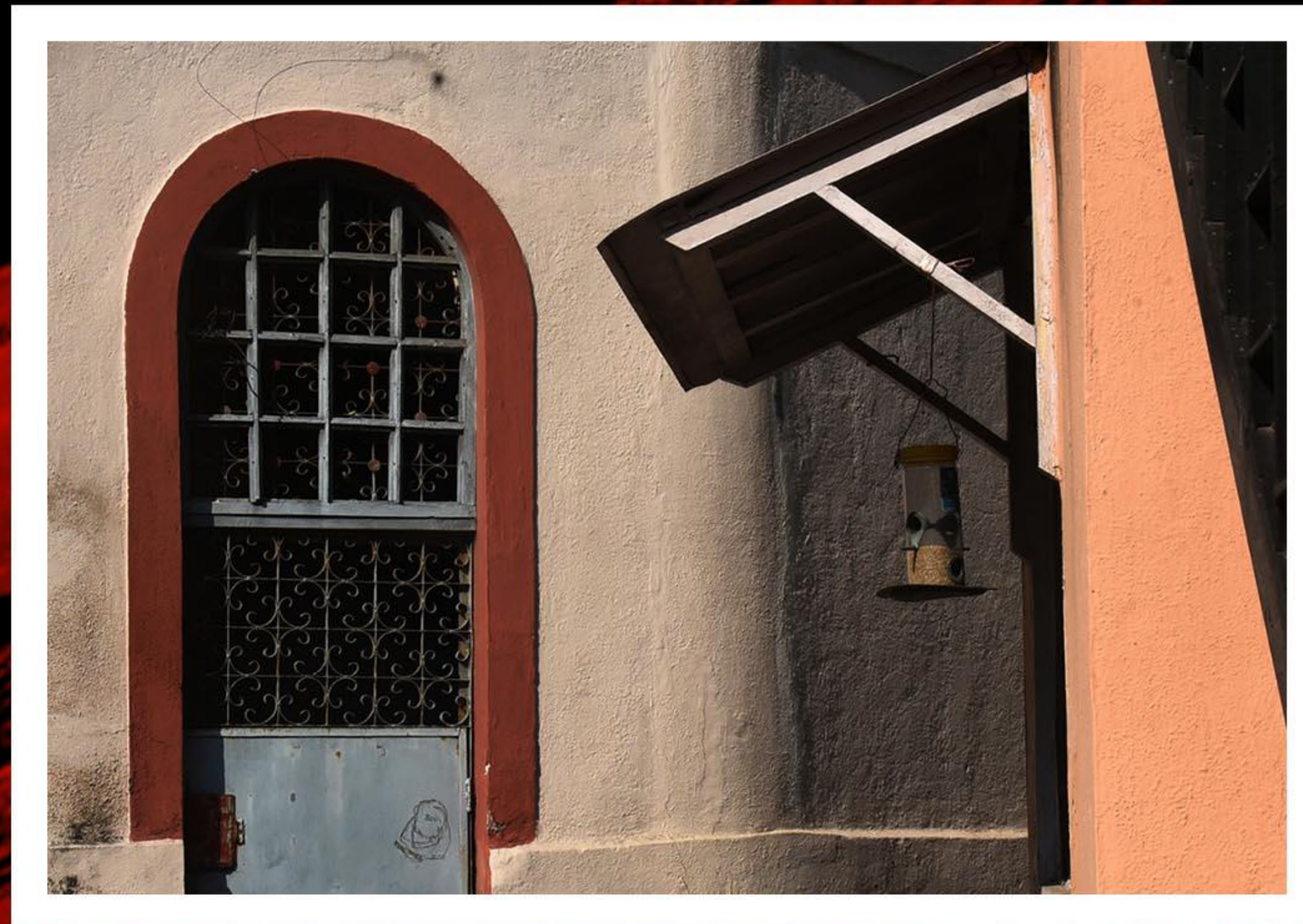
MEMBERS SECTION



**PHOTOGRAPH
OF THE YEAR-2022**

MEENA MADKAIKR

BEGINNERS SECTION



**PHOTOGRAPH
OF THE YEAR-2022**

SHRIKANT AMBOKAR

OUTING SECTION

**PHOTOGRAPHER
OF THE YEAR-2022**

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SURESH BANGERA

BEGINNERS SECTION

PRADEEP PATIL

OUTING SECTION

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