THE HARGILA DESK

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Volume 4

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Editor in Chief
Sanskriti Barman

Cover Image by Anupam Nath

The Hargila Desk is a Wildlife Conservation Magazine.
The magazine has been specially crafted by students inspired by the rare Hargila (Greater Adjutant Stork) Conservation movement in Assam, India and aims to highlight the significance of community led conservation to the world. The importance of students for climate action and wildlife conservation is emphasized.

The views and opinions expressed in the magazine are the Authors' own and the facts are as reported by them, which have been verified to the fullest extent possible.

The Hargila Desk team is not in any way liable to the same.

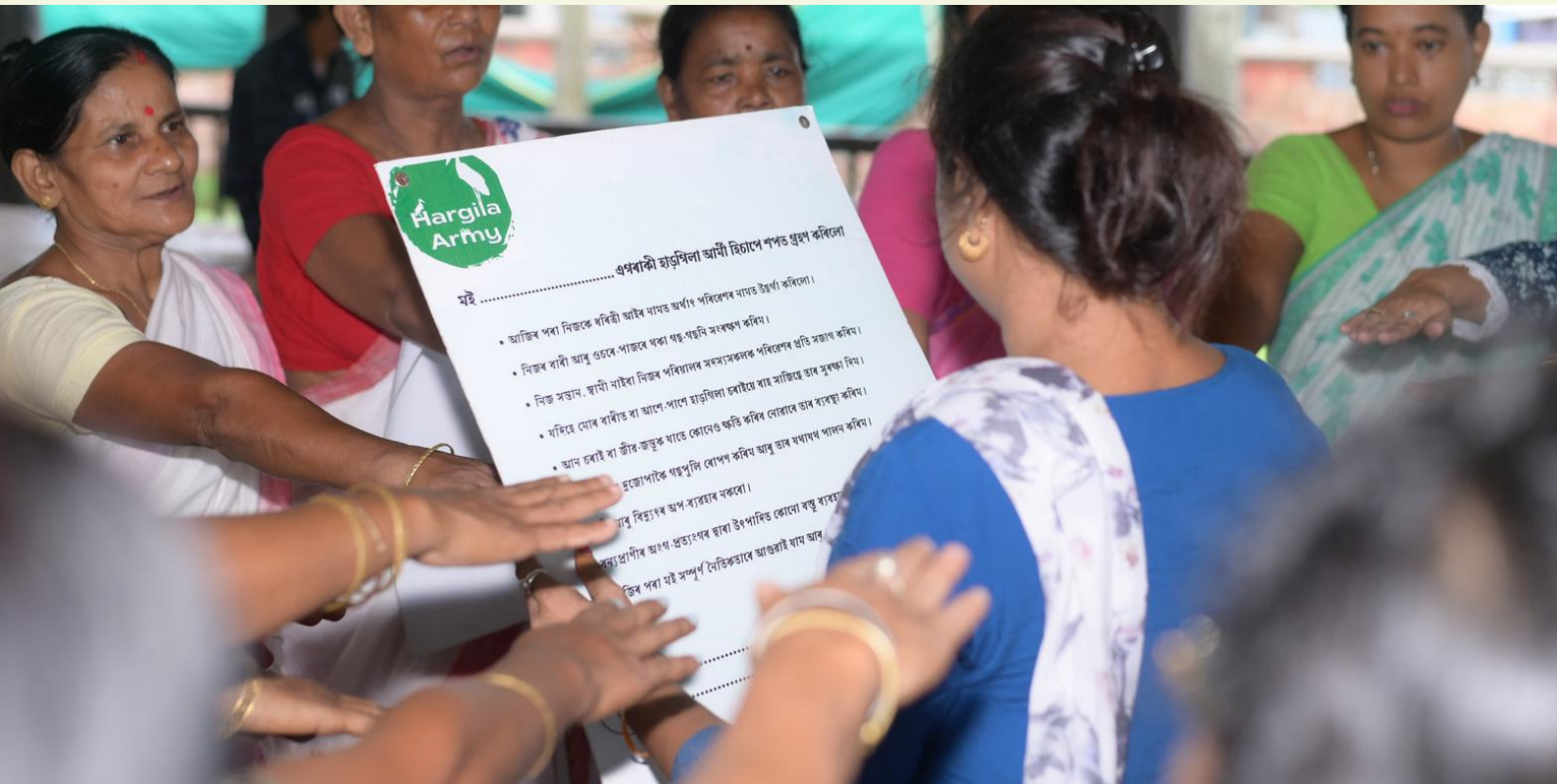
Fortunately, nature is amazingly resilient: places we have destroyed, given time and help, can once again support life, and endangered species can be given a second chance. And there is a growing number of people, especially young people, who are aware of these problems and are fighting for the survival of our only home, planet Earth. We must all join that fight before it is too late.

- Jane Goodall

THE HARGILA DESK

This magazine is dedicated to the women of the Hargila Army, their family and also to the team who is constantly working for the conservation of a species who was once deemed 'Ugly'. Thank you for creating a change, and for inspiring students like us. By highlighting the events that are happening in real time in Assam for the Hargila, we hope we are able to encapsulate your tireless efforts through our words.

Hargilar joiei, amar joi.



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Editorial Note

Sanskriti Barman
Editor-in-Chief

"What you have to do is to get into the heart. And how do you get into the heart? With stories." - Jane Goodall

The fourth edition of *The Hargila Desk* has finally arrived, bringing with it countless stories of hope, resilience, and optimism to change the world. Time and again, we've seen that when people come together, they can truly make a difference. Today, as the effects of climate change become ever more tangible in our daily lives, the window to reverse our fate is closing fast. But it hasn't closed yet. We must work hard, and we must work now.

Before I briefly explain the themes and articles of this edition, I would like to extend my heartfelt gratitude to all our readers who have stood by us through the past three issues, and to warmly welcome our new readers with a glimpse of what The Hargila Desk stands for.

The Hargila Desk is, and will continue to be, a youth-led magazine that strives to connect people with nature. With community conservation being one of the most effective solutions to safeguard biodiversity, our aim is not only to highlight successful community efforts but also to inspire our readers to take up initiatives of their own. Whether in your institute, your locality, or even among your friends, we urge you to come together and raise your voices for our species, our landscapes, and our Mother Earth.

This platform seeks to create a close-knit community of future conservation leaders while giving us all the opportunity to learn from both local and global communities. I am deeply grateful to the authors, poets, artists, and photographers who share their stories and vision with us in every edition. I am also thankful to our advisors and well-wishers, whose constant support has guided us along the way.

As a student-led team, we strive to bring out quality content every two months. However, after our last edition, we decided to take a short hiatus due to our shared exam schedules, choosing to prioritize quality over speed. Now, we are back with even more passion, grit, and optimism!

The magazine continues with its usual *"Updates from the Field"* section, highlighting the everyday efforts of communities in the villages of Assam, led by the Hargila Army, to conserve the Greater Adjutant Stork.
This is followed by a special feature, *"Learning to Fly with Nature: The Hargila Nest Workshop,"* on our collaboration with the Hargila Army. Through fun games and activities, children discovered the joy of environmental education and their beaming smiles from those two days remain engraved in my heart.

Next, we have our featured article titled *"Shadows of Ecofeminism in Grassroot Strata: A Fight for Green Visibility from Wangari Muta Maathai to Purnima Devi Barman"* by Amrita Sarma. It reflects on women's participation in conservation and emphasizes that, despite persisting stigma and challenges, their involvement can drive change from the grassroots to the policy level.

We then move to our second featured article, *"Ink, Color and Conservation,"* an interview with the illustrators of *The Hargila Desk*. They share their journey with art and how their creations become a voice for nature, spreading awareness and inspiring conservation through every stroke of ink and splash of color.

Our first theme, *'Culture, Folklore, and Ecological Imagination'*, highlights how cultural traditions - especially oral stories passed down through generations, nurture a deep sense of ecological memory and connection. I encourage our readers to explore the articles in this theme, remember the tales your grandparents once told you, trace your own ecological memory, and realize your role in conserving what is left of that memory.

The subsequent theme titled *'Conflict, Loss and resistance'* tries to explore ecological loss caused by oppression, war and human negligence and the enduring resilience of communities and ecosystems that continue to resist, adapt, and restore balance. There are some really soul touching articles in this theme and I strongly urge our readers to go through each one of them!

The next theme *'Women, Ecology and Power'* highlights how women embody resistance, leadership, and healing, showing that conserving nature is deeply intertwined with women's power and solidarity. From the Hargila Army to the Fulleshwari Dutta - the silent guardian of the vultures, this theme brings to you stories from rural villages of assam and the dedication of their women to stand up for nature despite the stigma and challenges!

In last theme '*Roots and Memories'* dives into the stories of fragile plants and animals that hold vital places in our ecosystem - species whose disappearance has already altered, and will continue to alter, the world around us. Here, we even have a research conducted by one authors in his own locality, documenting the disappearance of local plants and birds which were once common but now a seldom sight to the eyes.

Finally, we come to the last section of the magazine - *Vibes and Views*! The theme for this edition was "Can development and ecological sensitivity walk the same path?" and we got some really interesting responses from different students across India. I strongly recommend our readers to check out their opinions!

With the fourth edition officially out, we look forward to meeting our readers in our next edition where we will be sure to bring a whole set of new stories - stories that will convince you to step up and become the change if you haven't already! In hopes of seeing our readers become our next authors and the next conservation leaders I end my note by quoting Jane Goodall once again (one of my favorite things to do) :

"What you do makes a difference, and you have to decide what kind of difference you want to make."

Anyone who thinks they're too small to make a difference has never met the Honey Bee.

Photography by Muralidharan S.

Updates from the Field

Skill-Building for Women Through Tailoring

Free tailoring training workshops empowering rural women with skills to craft garments and accessories such as blouses and bags has been organised. Led by community women Pratima Rajbongshi, Saroda Das, and Labhita Baishya, the sessions are held thrice a week, with 45–60 women actively participating. The ongoing program has also provided tailoring equipment, further supporting their development. Women have expressed enthusiasm for the initiative, which is steadily enhancing their skills, confidence, and livelihood opportunities.

Hargila Army Leads Meditation for Harmony!

Weekly meditation classes have been started with community women, focusing on cultivating inner peace and promoting spiritual and global harmony. Many women are actively participating in these sessions, which aim to improve their mental and physical well-being.

Awareness at New Nesting Colony

A conservation awareness campaign was held at Kulhati, where local women organized *na'am*. The event aimed to promote conservation efforts and educate the community on important environmental issues.

Rescue and Rehabilitaton at Ketekijar!

A 5-month-old Greater Adjutant Stork chick was found disoriented in Ketekijar, Kamrup, likely due to the recent rain and storms. After prompt reporting by locals, the team was able to rescue and rehabilitate the chick back into the wild.

WORLD ENVIRONMENT DAY

On 5th June, 180 community women joined the Hargila Army celebration. Beginning with a powerful speech by Dr. Purnima Devi Barman, who urged them to adopt eco-friendly practices and avoid single-use plastic. The women along with new Hargila Army members took the Hargila Army pledge to honor their responsibility towards Mother Earth. There was powerful rally led by Dr. Barman, with local women spreading awareness on sustainability and conservation.

Plant distribution at different parts of the states including Palashbari, Dadara and Morigaon.

International Yoga Day

The Hargila Army marked International Yoga Day with local children and youth, highlighting the importance of mental and physical well-being. The sessions were met with enthusiasm, spreading positivity and inspiring the community to embrace a healthier, more mindful lifestyle.

Yoga sessions were held amongst women and children in Villages of Dadara and Pub Majirgaon to strengthen their body and minds!

Hargila Calendar Introduced at Sarupetia High School

Sarupetia High School has launched an environmental initiative by introducing the Hargila Calendar to its students. Teachers educated them on its significance, fostering awareness, responsibility, and eco-friendly values. By incorporating the calendar into their curriculum, the school is promoting a culture of conservation and sustainability, empowering the next generation to contribute to a greener future.

MEETING THE HONOURABLE CHIEF MINISTER OF ASSAM

The Hargila Desk Team, together with renowned conservationist Dr. Purnima Devi Barman, had the honor of meeting the Hon'ble Chief Minister, Dr. Himanta Biswa Sarma. Dr. Barman put forth her visionary plans for the conservation of the Greater Adjutant Stork and the strengthening of the Hargila Army, a movement that continues to inspire communities across Assam and beyond. On this occasion, the team also launched and presented the previous three issues of The Hargila Desk to the Hon'ble Chief Minister, sharing their journey, present activities, and aspirations for the future. With his blessings and encouragement, Dr. Barman and Team Hargila Desk are further strengthened to carry forward their mission with humility and renewed resolve!

EVERY DAY IS VANMAHOTSAV!

On 5th July, a field visit to Ketekijhar engaged the Bodo community in Hargila conservation, biodiversity awareness, and women's empowerment. The team introduced the Hargila calendar and traditional headdress, held interactive sessions with children, and organized a tree plantation to mark Van Mahotsav. Women also expressed keen interest in livelihood opportunities, especially tailoring. The visit concluded with the Hargila Army Oath, reinforcing collective commitment to protecting nature and wildlife

Creation of New local conservation chapters

The movement has recently expanded its reach to a new community, where a group of dedicated women in Pubmajir gaon, Palasbari village, have come together to initiate a local chapter of the conservation effort. They have taken the lead in starting their own activities, and an education session was conducted with children and women to highlight the importance of nature conservation.

Village to Village Awareness : Community Teaching Communities

"Village-to-village outreach programs were conducted across Athiaboi, Kolakuchi, Malang, Bongsor, Sualkuchi, and Bamundi to raise awareness on Hargila conservation and promote community-based livelihoods. Sessions engaged women and children through interactive tools like motifs, headdresses, and calendars, while livelihood discussions on tailoring, weaving, and farming drew strong interest. Each event concluded with the Hargila Army Oath, reinforcing collective commitment to protecting nature and wildlife.

HARGILA NEST WORKSHOPS

The two-day Hargila Nest Workshop concluded on a joyful note, blending creativity, curiosity, and care for nature. Over 80 students participated in art and craft sessions, drama performances, and Hargila-themed Zumba dances. Guided by youth volunteers from Gauhati and Delhi University, the workshop encouraged storytelling, art, and meaningful engagement with nature. The energy and openness of the children created an inspiring atmosphere, making the experience both memorable and impactful!

After the successful completion of the first Hargila Nest Workshop, the second edition was organized at Pachariyar Milanpur with 35 enthusiastic students. Over two days, participants explored bird monitoring, wildlife photography, and Hargila-themed crafts. The workshop further strengthened biodiversity awareness while inspiring young learners to connect with nature through creativity and storytelling.

Meghna Knowledge Forum by IUCN

Dr. Purnima Devi Barman attended the IUCN Meghna Knowledge Forum 2025, held from 23–25 July at AIT, Bangkok. A booth on her work and the Hargila Army's success was set up emphasizing the strength of community-led conservation The forum provided a platform to engage with conservationists and stakeholders from Assam, the Northeast, and the Barak-Meghna basin, fostering collaboration and knowledge exchange for environmental stewardship

Brothers and Sisters of Hargila Launched with community women and rangers from Prek Toal, Cambodia

CROSS BORDER COLLABORATION IN CAMBODIA

In July 2025, Dr. Purnima Devi Barman led a community conservation training at Prek Toal Bird Sanctuary, Cambodia, hosted by WCS. Twenty women conservationists and park rangers took part in sessions on Assam's 'Stork Model,' with activities including leadership exercises, cultural mapping, biodiversity awareness games, and the launch of educational posters on Greater Adjutant behaviors. The program was a milestone in South-South cooperation and advanced women's leadership in conservation

INDEPENDENCE DAY CELEBRATIONS

The 79th Independence Day witnessed a spirited celebration by the Hargila Army as women proudly took to the streets. Beginning with the hoisting of the Tricolour and the national anthem, the event transformed into a powerful rally led by the women, joined by a life-sized Hargila mascot. With hymns for protecting the stork and safeguarding nature, the march blended patriotism with conservation, showcasing the women's strength and unwavering commitment to both nation and environment.

'Hargilar Joi, Raijor Joi'

'The win of Hargila is a win for the mass'

The streets echoed with the familiar slogan of the Hargila Army as they marched from house to house and street to street urging people to protect the storks and to safeguard mother nature. The day united conservation, minds and the spirt of the nation!

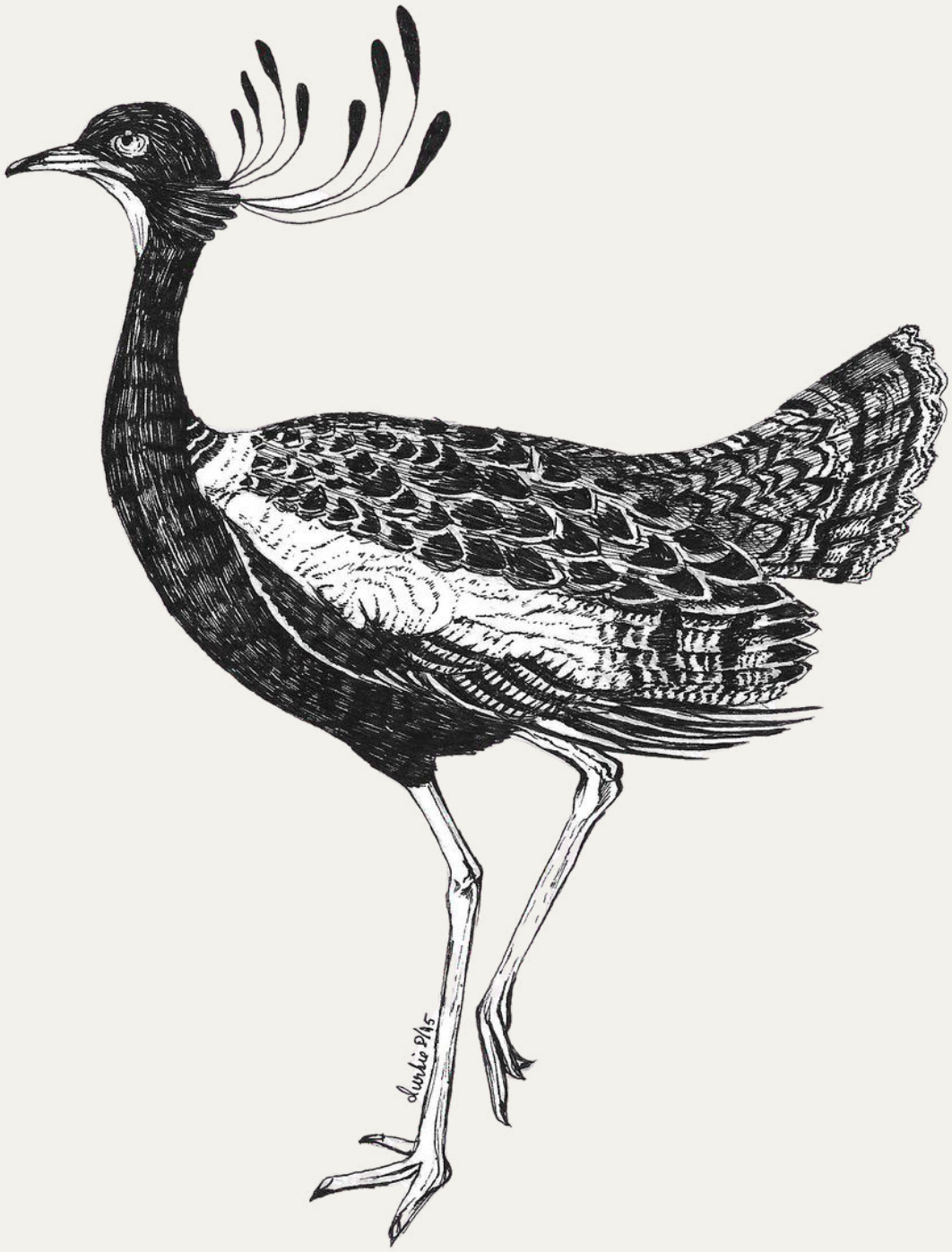
Independence Day Fancy Dress Competition

A fancy dress competion amongst children and women was organised with attractive prizes and certificates and it saw children and women dressing up as freedom fighters, Gods and Goddesses, birds and more! The day buzzed with excitement and patriotism as more and more women and children took part in the competiton!

Love in Leaps.

Lesser Florican

Sypheotides indicus



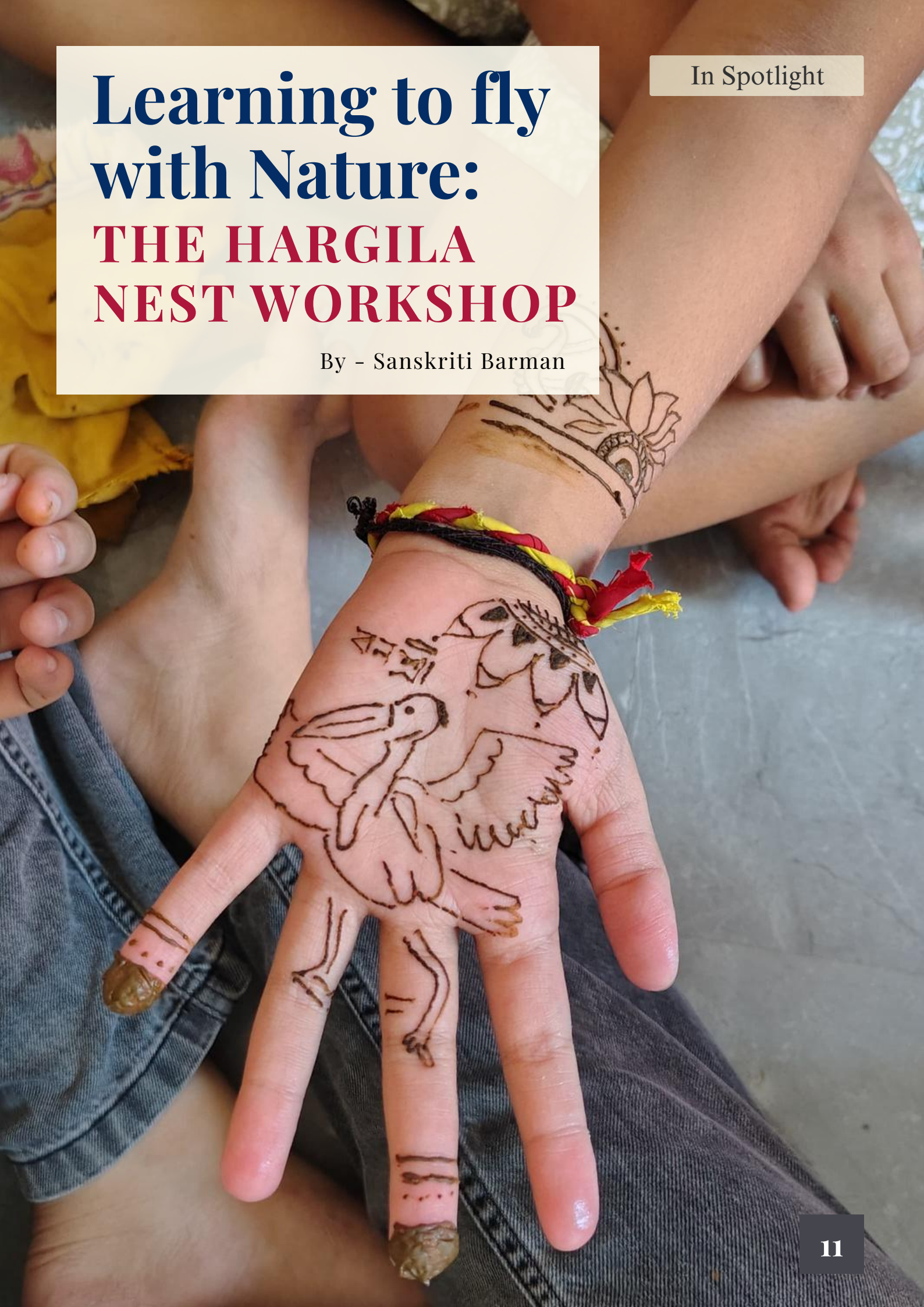
IUCN Status - Critically Endangered

by Dewan Durbie Shyam

Learning to fly with Nature:

THE HARGILA NEST WORKSHOP

By - Sanskriti Barman



A child's first lessons are like the first flutter of a bird's wings, delicate yet powerful enough to shape their entire flight. If environmental education becomes part of this early nurturing, it grows into a lifelong bond with Mother Earth. Children raised with this awareness don't just take flight into their own futures; they rise as guardians of nature, carrying forward compassion and responsibility with every step of their journey.

With this exact spirit, we launched the first Hargila Nest Workshop – a two-day celebration of learning and fun, where more than 80 young students participated. Held on 12th and 13th July at the Hargila Army Paretol Office, Dadara, the event was coordinated by Team Hargila Desk and The Hargila Army under the guidance of Dr. Purnima Devi Barman.

Volunteers joined from different universities and institutions including Gauhati University and Delhi University. A big shout out to all our hardworking volunteers - Darshita, Vrishank, Tanmoy, Dibyajoti, Pritom and Oditi!

Across the two days, the children immersed themselves in activities designed to blend fun with learning. From environmental education games like the Web of Life, interactive sessions, and drama, to Hargila Jumba, art and craft, mehendi, and hand painting, each activity gave them the space to express their creativity, understand the importance of nature and engage in a collective journey.

The workshop began with drama sessions, an ice-breaking activity where children were divided into two groups, each guided by our experienced volunteers. Through classic drama games, they could freely explored their own emotions and connected with several natural elements around them.

The first group led by Darshita and Sampriti played a game modified out of the bill clattering 'tak-tak 'sound of the Hargila bird! After a whole lot of giggles and laughs, the students learned and played this fun game. The second group was led by me (Sanskriti) and Vrishank. We played a musical game made of animal sounds and behaviors, where the children made animated sounds of animals they frequently see around them and on television! We even sang traditional bihu songs and danced in a circle mimicking birds and animals. Our volunteers interacted with the children and we encouraged them to dream high and to express themselves through different exercises.

Later, the students were divided by their age groups. The youngest group created thrilling nature-inspired art, tracing insects with fallen leaves and making sceneries with fingerprints. The older groups made bird beaks out of colored paper and drew the Hargila birds that they see on their neighborhood trees!

Day two kicked off with a calm and soothing meditation session. The children sat quietly, chanting Om, eyes closed, trying to picture their inner selves. Soon after came the super fun “Web of Life” game, which had everyone buzzing with energy! The students formed a big circle and began exploring how everything around us is connected - from the tiniest grain of unboiled rice (yes, that was their own hilarious example!) to the mighty elephant, from the blazing sun and moon to the little fish swimming in their village ponds.
As the white threads crisscrossed between their hands, a giant web began to take shape. They quickly realized that if even one thread slipped, the whole web weakened. Its just like nature, where one missing piece can throw everything off balance. They promised that they would always keep the ‘web of life’ in mind while making every decision!

The game was followed by an energetic round of Hargila Jumba - dancing for nature! With fun music and enthusiasm children moved together and danced their hearts out!

This activity helped the children experience nature not as something distant, but as something alive within them. For many, it was the first time they realized that conservation can be fun, playful, and full of energy. The session gave them the space to feel confident, let go of their inhibitions, and embrace the joy of movement. It leaft them with the memory that learning about nature can be as lively as a dance itself. And yes, we all had a lot of fun!

In the afternoon, the children broke into groups of their choice to explore mehendi and face painting. With excitement, they sketched Hargila, along with other animals, flowers, and plants, proudly wearing their love for nature on their hands. The activity was so engaging that even the Hargila Army women and the children's guardians joined in, staying back to draw their own Hargila mehendi!

We closed the workshop on a cheerful yet lingering note, as many children wished it could continue even after lunch. We promised them we'd return very soon, with many more fun and exciting activities to share together!

All the children and participants received their certificates, marking the conclusion of the two-day workshop.

The success of this first Nest Workshop was made possible through the collaboration of the Hargila Army women and the volunteers. The volunteers and the children formed unforgettable bonds, and we strongly believe this workshop is one of many that will happen in the future, giving young children a 'nest' to grow their wings and mould their path with nature.

Shadows of Ecofeminism in Grassroot Strata: A Fight for Green Visibility from Wangari Muta Maathai to Purnima Devi Barman

By Amrita Sarmah

Amrita Sarmah is a freshly graduated scholar with a Master's degree in Political Science from Cotton University, where she also completed her Bachelor's studies. She is currently pursuing her research journey as an intern at OKDISCD. Inspired by Leonardo da Vinci's words, "Nature is the source of all true knowledge," Amrita's academic interests lie at the intersection of environmental politics, women's empowerment, and civic engagement.

Passionate about the relationship between people and nature, her work reflects themes of justice, sustainability, and collective responsibility. Beyond academics, she finds balance in sunsets and moonlight, and as a self-taught mandala artist, she channels creativity into patterns that bring her patience and peace.

Blending research with artistry, Amrita strives to weave together knowledge and creativity, hoping her words and art can inspire others to look at the world with empathy, curiosity, and a sense of wonder.

Shadows of Ecofeminism in Grassroot Strata: A Fight for Green Visibility from Wangari Muta Maathai to Purnima Devi Barman

By- Amrita Sarmah

Patriarchal superstructure of a society is a timeless product that continues to haunt almost every aspect of our daily lives including our environment. Environmental crises uphold the need for major attention and active mobilization towards the cause. Uprooting the planet's sustainability and ecological integrity, loss of forest cover, rise in the number of endangered species, soil erosion, and artificial flooding has changed the aerial view of the planet over the years. Yet, when we dig deeper into sustainability and environmental policies, apart from sheer negligence, shackles of corruption, and nexus play; what is evident to us is the lack of women representation in decision-making and failed attempts to include the ground suffers of reality.

Let me put forward a different picture to this vision; a picture that speaks of courage, slams patriarchal society, empowers women socially and economically, and stands firm against all the hurdles, vowing and fiercely standing for our "Mother Earth". Wangari Muta Maathai from Kenya, Africa and Purnima Devi Barman from Assam, India stand as a story of stigma alteration, where women have no longer been limited to the private sphere but their inherent ability to nurture and care have been turned from "tradition to power".

Ecofeminists have variations in their claims, but they mostly assert an intrinsic link between women and nature. The traditional female values of nurture, care, compassion, cooperation and reciprocity are believed to have ecological character. On one hand, patriarchy assumes nature as having instrumental value, while on the other hand, ecofeminists consider nature as possessing intrinsic value in itself. Ecofeminists' challenge to patriarchy and realization of the intrinsic connection of women to nature is replicated in the socio-economic empowerment of the Hargila Programme. It challenged the traditional dependence of women on the male members as breadwinners, and lifted women to a position through which they could support the family income and stand independent. Indigenous tradition and culture manifest the Earth as "Mother Goddess" and this idea is revived in the Gaia Hypothesis[1]. However, it is evident in the Hargila Army programme that there is no reliance on essentialist principles. Primary data in fact supports contribution and active intervention from the male members of the family with no hindrance in the women's socio-economic development and in conservation of the Greater Adjutant stork. What began as a drive to save the Hargila and its habitat with a handful of women, has now turned into a group of 20,000 women under the tag of 'Hargila Army'. The word 'Army' stands as a strong alteration to the concise, narrow and weaker view associated with women otherwise. The success story[2] of this initiative, after a decade, requires another chapter to be noted.

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[1]Andrew Heywood, Political Ideologies: An Introduction. 3rd ed. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003. 221-222pp

[2]Purnima Devi Barman et al., "Saving the Greater Adjutant Stork by Changing Perceptions and Linking to Assamese Traditions in India," *Journal of Ethnobiology* 11, no. 2 (2020): 20- 29, https://www.jstor.org/stable/26973335.

Going back in time, Wangari Maathai has been an epitome of courage and strength, in a society dominated by patriarchy in the 1960s. Nobel laureate Maathai's strong advocacy in mobilizing women in Kenya and her fight against the Kenyan government and corporates for saving the greens, stands as an inspiration both in and out of Africa. The 'Green Belt Movement' had been an initiative against the capitalist and patriarchal structures of society. The GBM as a women-led initiative promoted environmental justice through plantation drives and protests against concrete construction over green zones. Deconstructing the patriarchal norms, Maathai didn't step back even after arrests, violence and threats of female genital mutilation[3].

Both the stories highlight how the ecofeminist paradigm has taken up environmental issues; with women continuing to showcase an intrinsic connection with nature and standing tall in the fight for their green visibility in grassroots, decentralized level turning awareness to replicable sets of example for ecological citizenship[4]. From 'local to global' these women-led movements have attained recognition. Purnima Devi Barman's success through the Hargila Army is not just limited to the numerous awards, but how the traditional wears of Assam (*Mekhela Sador*), woven with Hargila Motifs by the members of Hargila Army, received a global platform at London and other places.

Environmental participation and fight for user access by women have liberated them from shackles of patriarchy, bringing dual benefit of environmental protection and conservation along with women empowerment and voice in decision-making. Small beginnings can have big impacts. The famous line of Julia Abigail Carney "little drops of water make the mighty ocean" rightly fits as an immortal saying in environmental activism. Decentralized activity can bring big waves of change in the crisis era. Stigma alteration is necessitated from top-down green governance to bottom-up green governance, which is gender inclusive.

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[3]Janet Muthuki, "Challenging Patriarchal Structures: Wangari Maathai and the Green Belt Movement in Kenya," *Agenda* 20, no. 69 (2006): 83–91, https://doi.org/10.1080/10130950.2006.9674752.

[4]Andrew Dobson, "Ecological Citizenship: A Disruptive Influence?" *Environmental Politics* 12, no. 1 (2003): 1–22

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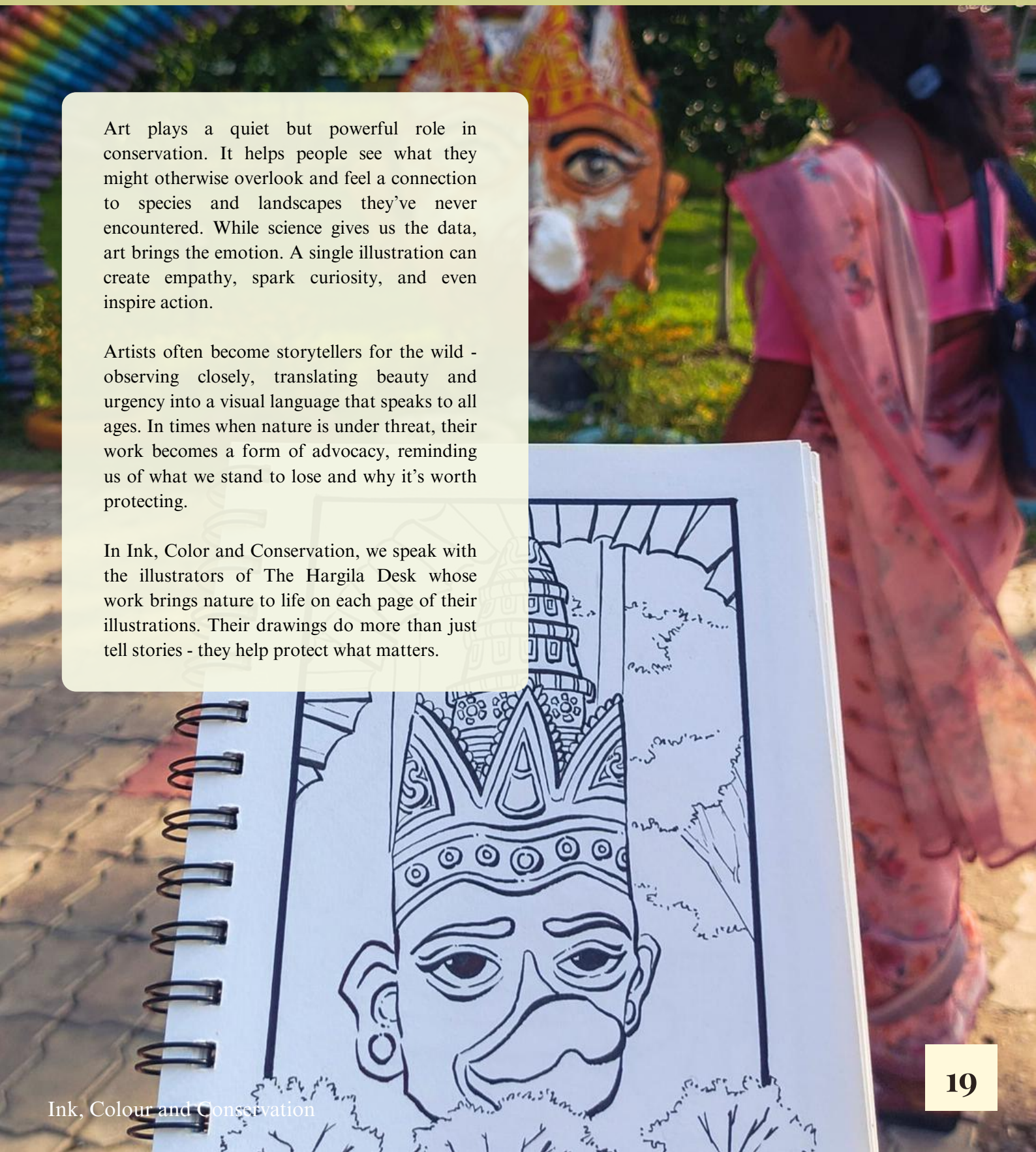
Purnima Devi Barman et al., "Saving the Greater Adjutant Stork by Changing Perceptions and Linking to Assamese Traditions in India," *Journal of Ethnobiology* 11, no. 2(2020): 20 29. https://www.jstor.org/stable/26973335

Ink, Color and Conservation

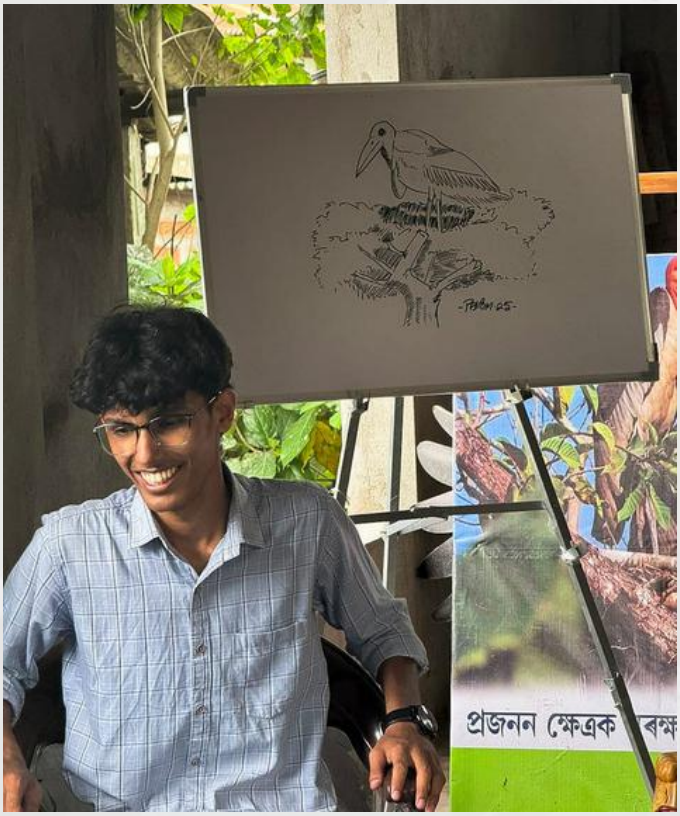
In conversation with the Illustrators of The Hargila Desk



Art plays a quiet but powerful role in conservation. It helps people see what they might otherwise overlook and feel a connection to species and landscapes they've never encountered. While science gives us the data, art brings the emotion. A single illustration can create empathy, spark curiosity, and even inspire action.

Artists often become storytellers for the wild - observing closely, translating beauty and urgency into a visual language that speaks to all ages. In times when nature is under threat, their work becomes a form of advocacy, reminding us of what we stand to lose and why it's worth protecting.

In Ink, Color and Conservation, we speak with the illustrators of The Hargila Desk whose work brings nature to life on each page of their illustrations. Their drawings do more than just tell stories - they help protect what matters.



Pritom Sarma

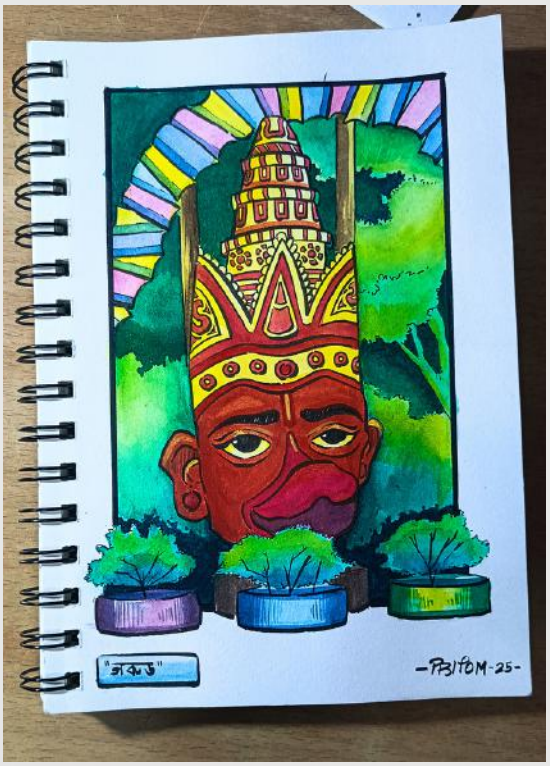
- **Name** - Pritom Sarma
- **Age** - 19 yrs
- **Style** - Digital/traditional/mixed media, etc.
- **Based in** - Guwahati, Assam
- **Nature Niche** - I love capturing fleeting moments from everyday life and turning them into illustrations - from nature to the emotions of animals
- **Likes**: Sleeping, Rainy evenings, long walks, late-night doodling, tasty food and my sketchbook that pulls me into other worlds
- **Dislikes**: Forced creativity, overly rigid rules, vegetables and creative artblock

When you look back, how do you think your art has shaped the way you connect with nature?

Pritom: Through my art, my relationship with nature has grown more mindful and intimate. Observing and illustrating natural elements has deepened my appreciation for their complexity and beauty. It has taught me to see details I once overlooked and to respect the balance and fragility of the ecosystems I depict.

Could you walk us through your creative process a bit - like the materials you enjoy using, the way you work, or how nature finds its way into your workspace?

Pritom: Certainly. I usually work with ink pens, watercolors, and mixed media on paper. My process begins with observing nature closely - textures, forms and patterns often guide my compositions. I draw inspiration from natural surroundings and traditional art, combining freehand sketches with structured motifs. Nature's calm and unpredictability shape both my workspace and creativity.

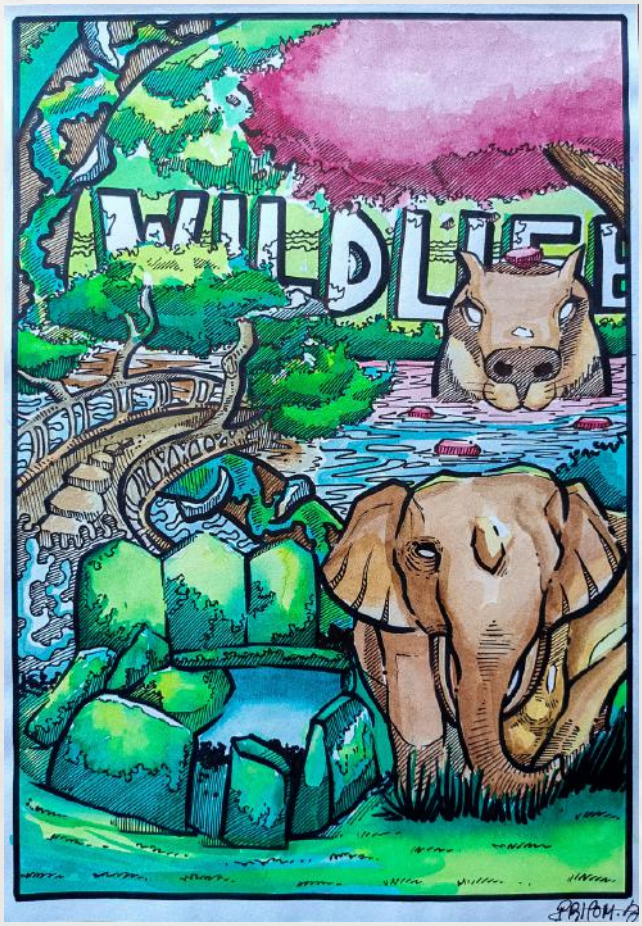


Do you like bringing in any traditional or local art styles or motifs into your work? What draws you to them?

Pritom: Yes, I actively incorporate traditional and local art forms in my work, as they serve as a source of inspiration and cultural depth. I often blend the Madhubani art style with a modern touch in my mixed media paintings, creating a bridge between tradition and contemporary expression. Additionally, I draw elements from Bhil and Mandana art, which enrich my visual language and storytelling. Engaging with these traditional styles not only keeps me motivated to explore more but also allows me to honor and reinterpret India's rich artistic heritage in a personal and meaningful way.

Can you describe deeply a particular artwork or project of yours that directly engages with nature or wildlife?

Pritom: This artwork is a vivid tribute to nature's diversity, combining elements like the Asian elephant, boa constrictor, capybara, and Sakura trees to represent global wildlife. Inspired by the sacred Mawphlangf forests and the Living Root Bridges of Meghalaya, it merges cultural and ecological symbolism. The painting uses bold lines and layered colours to depict harmony between flora and fauna, with "WILDLIFE" embedded in the backdrop as a central theme. It reflects my intent to showcase nature's richness and the need to preserve its delicate balance through visual storytelling.



Pritom Sarma, a 19-year-old illustrator from Guwahati, Assam, is pursuing Electronics & Communication Engineering. He creates nature-inspired drawings that aim to spread awareness and celebrate the environment.

- **Name** - Dewan Durbie Shyam
- **Style -** Traditional
- **Based in -** Delhi
- **Nature Niche -** Flamboyant birds, barren trees with their crooked posture for some reason, the sky when it's evening
- **Likes -** Warm ambient lighting, Ghee roast dosa (Sagar Ratna the GOAT), walkable places, chicken dumplings from Timber, and Tiramisu
- **Dislikes -** Flowers that wilt too fast, sweets that are too sweet, Colleen Hoover, spiders, humidity, Valorant, Parwal

Dewan Durbie Shyam

What role do you think art plays in the larger conversation around conservation and climate awareness?

Durbie: Art isn't just a form of expression, it's also a medium of communication and any conversation is incomplete without communication. So the role of art lies in the fact that it has been able to overcome the many social and cultural boundaries to deliver the message of a planetary crisis and to invite empathy, which is where real change happens.That sense of empathy is often the missing link between awareness and action. Art invites people in, stirs their emotions, and nudges them to reflect on their own relationship with the planet.

What kind of impact do you hope your art has on how people view often-overlooked species?

Durbie: I really hope that my art makes people slow down a bit and really look into the quiet details of nature. I want to shift what people think is worth noticing.These things often live in the periphery of our attention. If someone starts looking differently at a bird they see every day, or feels tenderness for a creature they'd otherwise ignore, I'd consider that impact meaningful.

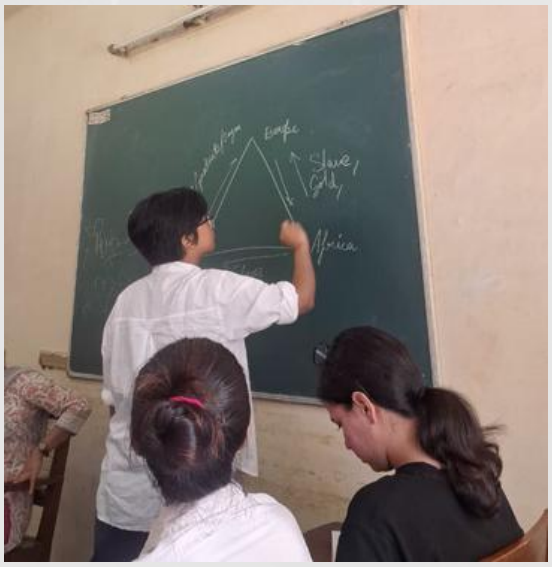
How has your relationship with nature changed since you started illustrating it?

Durbie: Nature, for me too, was more of a background noise when I first started illustrating. I used to be a passive admirer but I've become more of an active observer now. Over time, as I tried to capture it on paper, I realised that to draw something well, you have to truly see it. I feel more present when I'm outdoors now, more grounded. Nature is no longer just scenery; it's become an endless source of curiosity and connection.

Is there a subject in nature you find yourself coming back to again and again in your work?

Durbie: Birds happen to catch my attention time and again. They're everywhere yet easy to miss. It's a cherry on top if it's too intricate to capture on a piece of paper because I love a good challenge. Every attempt to sketch a bird feels like an exercise in patience and humility, because no two are ever the same. It keeps me on my toes as an artist, but also keeps me intrigued as an observer.

Dewan Durbie Shyam is a third year B.A. (Hons.) History student at Indraprastha College for Women, University of Delhi, who brings her love for the natural world to life through bird and nature-inspired sketches that blend observation with imagination.



Anushuwa Biswas

- **Name** - Anushuwa Biswas
- **Age** - 20
- **Style** - Traditional and Digital
- **Based in** - Guwahati/Kolkata
- **Nature Niche** - Landscapes in a tragic indie film, all kinds of animals, fruits that betray me, gods drawn like washed-up rockstars, and anything my brain deems artsy.
- **Likes** - Murder mysteries, books that make me question whether reading is a hobby or suffering, crime documentaries, One Direction, and the rare divine blessing when my tree sketch looks like a tree instead of steamed broccoli cosplay.
- **Dislikes** - Cliffhangers (another one and I yeet that book), unfinished tasks, the 400 not-so-useful tabs in my brain, and those dear authors who keep characters alive just to end them in the last chapter—it's a personal attack.

What role do you feel artists can play in conservation movements?

Anushuwa: Art makes the invisible visible- it gives nature a voice that doesn't need words. Artists help people feel. That's our power. You can scroll past facts, but a single image can stay in your head all day. Through art, we give nature a voice people can actually hear- one that hits the heart, not just the mind.

What advice would you give to young artists who want to start using their work to speak about nature and wildlife?

Anushuwa: Don't wait for some perfect idea or big platform. Start small. Start with what you see around you- a bird on a wire, a flower growing through concrete.

Just observe, sketch, and speak from the heart. Your connection to what you create matters more than technique. Nature isn't perfect, and your art doesn't have to be either.

How has your own relationship with nature changed through your art?

Anushuwa: It's grown personal. I used to just admire nature- now I observe it. I notice textures, movement, quiet rhythms. I feel more present in nature. Art taught me to pay attention, and that changed everything.

What message do you hope your art leaves behind for future generations?

Anushuwa: That we were paying attention. That someone cared enough to capture this beauty, this loss, this moment in time- and hopefully inspire others to care too. I hope it quietly reminds people to be gentler with the Earth.

Do you have any parting comments that you would like to share with the readers?

Anushuwa: I think people are more likely to protect what they feel emotionally connected to. That's where artists come in- we build that emotional bridge.

Anushuwa Biswas is currently a 3rd year B.Com student in Goenka College, Kolkata. She sketches nature, gods, and animals with the same curiosity that draws her to books and thrillers.

- **Name** - Ambalika Bharadwaj
- **Age** - 20
- **Style -** Mix-media, acrylic paintings are my comfort
- **Based in -** Guwahati
- **Nature Niche - D**rawing birds, skies, landscapes and topic based compositions
- **Likes -** Journaling, scribbling sketches, designing, creating my own earrings, henna designing, making everything my canvas (boards, walls, mugs, bottles, sea-shells, stones, anything and everything)
- **Dislikes -** Portraits of human faces may be my weakness and pencil shading (find them dull)

Ambalika Bharadwaj

When it comes to your art, how do you decide what to focus on - whether it's a particular animal, ecosystem, or theme?

Ambalika: I am someone who draws out of emotions, I start scribbling sketches when I feel sad or too happy or excited. And my subjects get influenced by it. If I catch a glimpse of a beautiful bird, it brings a smile to me and I take it as a subject. It may be a simple drawing of the bird or some other designs. But, if I see somewhere trees are being chopped, it brings out the activist in me and I go with drawing a poster on it that will raise awareness.

What inspired you to start creating art that focuses on conservation or the environment?

Ambalika: Art is a medium that can speak without words, it is not limited to languages but associated with emotions. The only medium where the message is understood with miscommunication. It is an attractive form to influence everyone, no matter what age group they belong to or what region they belong. Art in environmental concerns may look simple but once one sees, one cannot ignore. This feature inspires me to draw on environment based art, to share my feelings and views for a better tomorrow.

Has your art ever led to unexpected conversations about the environment in your community?

Ambalika: If not directly, may be indirectly. Although my art hasn't yet got a wider reach but within its reach it has influenced some of my observers. Some of my observers got influenced to atleast look into the matter and be aware of what's happening.

In your view, what's the biggest strength of art when it comes to raising awareness about nature?

Ambalika: Like I said, art is the only medium that needs no language. It can be understood by anyone and everyone, no matter where they belong. And when it comes to raising awareness about nature, it can be the simplest tool to do so. Even a child can be made understood by art about what is happening and what should be the steps taken. There is no need of formal education to understand art, this attractive medium takes everyone's attention to share the massage. Even in social media, long articles or videos might be scrolled up, but when it comes to art, everyone at least takes a glimpse of it, be it in the conscious or unconscious state, that glimpse is enough to take the person's attention and deliver the message raising awareness about nature.

Ambalika Bharadwaj, a third-year Sociology (Hons.) student at Cotton University, channels her passion for art by turning every surface into her canvas.

by Pritom Sarma

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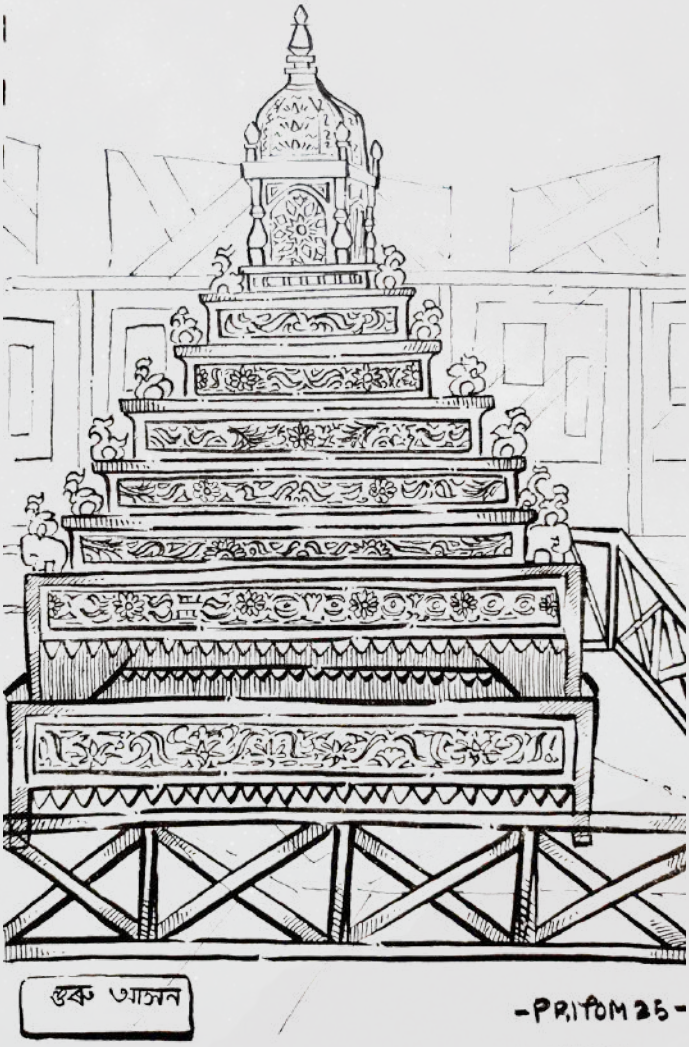
Culture, Folklore & Ecological Imagination

Stories, songs, and traditions have long carried memories of how humans and nature have lived side by side. Passed down through generations, these expressions are more than folklore – they are vessels of ecological memory. They imagine rivers as mothers, animals as kin, and forests as protectors, shaping how communities understand and coexist with the natural world. Revisiting them not only preserves culture but also reveals timeless wisdom for living in harmony with nature today.

These oral traditions bridge past and present, reminding us that conservation is not new but rooted in memory, emotion, and everyday life. To listen to them is to hear nature's own voice, teaching respect, belonging, and balance. Above all, they remind us that we are not apart from nature but a part of it, and our survival depends on coexistence with the rivers, forests, and creatures of Earth. In this theme, we will explore ecological connections in Assamese memory, looking at how hymns and songs strengthen identity and how fragile yet vital these memories remain.



by Pritom Sarma

Folklore as Ecological Resistance in Assamese Memory

By-Dareen Hannash

Long before conservationists arrived with spreadsheets, biodiversity indices and satellite telemetry, there were stories – stories of weeping trees and blessing birds, of girls who turned into gourds and of crabs who bit back. In Assam, these stories were collected in *Burhi Aair Xadhu (*1911) – the "Grandmother's Tales" – by Laxminath Bezbaruah, a foundational act of cultural preservation that simultaneously functioned as ecological conservation. This article argues that Assamese folktales, particularly those curated by Bezbaruah, encode deep ecological sensibilities and traditional ecological knowledge (TEK), thereby acting as vessels for inter-generational environmental memory and resistance.

Assamese folklore is not simply entertainment; it is a repository of environmental ethics. In one of my previous papers, *Reading the State into Folklore: A Political Anthropology of Burhi Aair Xadhu* (Hannash, 2025), I had explored the political implications of Bezbaruah's tales, particularly how motifs such as opposition, justice and legitimate authority reflect broader tensions between subaltern voices and colonial hegemony. Yet beneath these narrative structures lies a rich undercurrent of ecological consciousness. The tales do not merely reflect relationships between human characters and state power, but between human communities and the more-than-human world – animals, plants, rivers and spirits. Laxminath Bezbaruah, often remembered as a nationalist cultural revivalist, was also (whether intentionally or not) an ecological conservationist. In *Burhi Aair Xadhu*, he preserved not just narratives but entire ecological worlds.

Stories such as *Tejimola* – where a young girl metamorphoses into a gourd, a citrus tree, a lotus and finally a mynah bird after her death at the hands of her stepmother – symbolise both resilience and eco-spirituality. As I had argued in my earlier analysis, Tejimola's bodily transformations function as political dissent. But they also underscore an intrinsic belief in the continuity between human life and nature (Hannash, 2025). Her pain is not only human but botanical and avian, a rebuke that echoes through soil and sky. Similarly, the tale *Bagh aru Kekora* (The Tiger and the Crab) offers a narrative of justice enacted through animals. The crab, using intelligence and communal strategy, overcomes the brute force of the tiger: a parable about survival, interspecies ethics, and cooperation. Such fables are not arbitrary; they reflect indigenous cosmologies where animals are moral agents and ecological balance is central to communal well-being (Patgiri, 2024). These narratives transmit TEK without abstraction, embedding ecological values in the rhythms of oral tradition.

Folklore, then, becomes an ecological archive – one that does not fossilise but fertilises. In Assamese storytelling traditions, nature is not merely a setting but an active participant. Rivers are witnesses. Trees bleed. Birds sing prophecies. This aesthetic worldview dissolves the rigid binaries between animate and inanimate, human and non-human, subject and object. In this way, folklore anticipates and enacts what environmental humanities today call "more-than-human" consciousness. This ecological dimension of folklore is not confined to textual analysis. Contemporary conservation movements in Assam are

increasingly grounded in traditional knowledge systems. The Hargila Army, a community-based initiative led by women to protect the endangered Greater Adjutant stork stork (*Leptoptilos dubius*), employs folktales by weaving motifs and local songs to foster ecological awareness. Rather than relying solely on technocratic models, these women root their conservation ethics in the cultural memory of their communities (Choudhury & Das, 2024). Folklore becomes not just metaphor but method: a pedagogy of place. Bezbaruah's work is thus more radical than it initially appears. His editorial decision to preserve tales that centre animals, plants and animated objects reveals a curatorial instinct grounded in ecological imagination. In committing oral memory to print, he created a literary sanctuary – each tale a tree, each motif a seedling of consciousness. As my previous research suggests, the structure of these stories – motifs of resistance, transformation and restoration – mirrors the principles of ecological resilience (Hannash, 2025).

Nature in these tales is not passive; it intervenes, punishes, protects. To conserve a story is, in this context, to conserve a worldview. Storytelling becomes an act of environmental preservation, not merely of language but of landscape. The folktales' imaginative geographies offer not only cultural survival but ecological renewal. In this light, it is fruitful to recall A. K. Ramanujan's *A Flowering Tree: A Woman's Tale* – a Kannada folktale he translated and repeatedly returned to – which narrates the story of Kumudha, a young woman who transforms into a flowering tree to sustain her family. Ramanujan, ever attuned to the symbolic grammar of the South Asian tale, draws out the ecofeminist resonances embedded in Kumudha's metamorphosis: the flowering is not merely botanical, but menstrual, maternal, sacrificial (Karanjai, 2021). Her mutilation by greedy onlookers, eager to pluck her blossoms without consent, becomes an allegory for the violence inflicted upon both women's bodies and natural ecosystems. Like Tejimola in Assamese memory, Kumudha's transformation and suffering evoke a profound entanglement between gender, grief and the more-than-human world. Ramanujan's rendering offers a parallel ecology of folklore in which the feminine body becomes terrain: blooming, broken and ultimately reclaimed. Such stories, drawn from different linguistic and cultural soils, nonetheless articulate a shared ethical grammar: one in which human dignity is inseparable from ecological reverence. When read alongside Bezbarauah's anthology, Ramanujan's work invites us to see folklore not merely as cultural ornament, but as a trans-regional archive of ecological resistance: where the river sings, the flower weeps, and the girl becomes tree to teach us how to live.

In conclusion, Assamese folklore, particularly through the archival intervention of Laxminath Bezbaruah, carries forward a deep ecological wisdom that predates and often surpasses modern environmental discourses. The tales of metamorphosing girls, cunning crabs and sentient trees are not just cultural artefacts – they are blueprints for coexistence. In them, we find not only myths but methods: pedagogies of interdependence, resistance and renewal. Folklore, in its most vital form, becomes a living archive of ecological ethics: a sacred text of the soil.

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"পোবামাটি"

by Pritom Sarma

Is it Mozart? Or is it a Moran?

By- Dawar Diganta J. Kashyap

The song ***Holo Lolo Lai***, released by Coke Studios, has garnered an astonishing 16.82 million views nationwide. Although many considered it as a delightful song, beneath its rhythmic façade might lie a poignant narrative - the reality lies in the original local folk music that inspired the popular song, in its most unvarnished form, a testament to the Moran community's unwavering resolve to survive.

Under the murmuring expanse of Assam's ancient forests, the world unfolds differently: the cacophony of city life recedes, supplanted by the deep hum of rivers and the percussions of elephant feet.

Following one such elephant in Torani, in the district of Tinisukia, may lead you to a local *phandi* (ফাণ্ডী) named Sharat Moran. Sharat lives a life many only glimpse in storybooks. An elephant trainer - a phandi by heritage. As a member of Assam's marginalised Moran tribe, his journeys is not just through tangled undergrowth, but across the shifting frontiers of cultural identity.

As Sharat sings the Phandi Geet - those archaic folk ballads bequeathed through generations of elephant trainers or Phandis - the Holo Lolo Lai, perhaps the most evocative among them, transcends mere melody. It's a map of longing, resilience, and devotion, reverberating through the forests with the heartbeat-like rhythm of the dhol and gogona. It tells of journeys on muddy paths, the solitude of the hills, and the bittersweet taste of jackfruit and bamboo shoots under a mother's gaze.

"*E Porbototo Asili Goi Bor Kako Khai*"
You lived in the hills, eating big kako bamboo.
"*Bhoiyamoloi Ahili Toi Phandi Sepa Pai O Holo Lolo Lai*"
Then you came down to the valley, caught in the trainer's trap. Holo lolo lai.

Sharat associates each stanza with memory: the river, the lost partner, the prospect of another dawn.

Today, the legacy of Holo Lolo Lai lives anew - rejuvenated for a contemporary audience by the eminent Assamese singer-composer Shankuraj Konwar. "Holo Lolo", as reimagined for Coke Studio Bharat, gathers up ancestral motifs and weaves them with modern sonics, introducing the song to millions while retaining its haunting lyricism. Drawing profound inspiration from Sharat's narrative and the primordial Phandi Geet, Konwar's version pulsates with nostalgia - yet it also carries the weight of questions: What constitutes belonging? And what becomes of heritage when it is relentlessly uprooted by the inexorable forces of progress?

Through the song, the world of the Moran community slowly unfolds around you. Once fierce warriors of Tibeto-Burman descent with their own dynasty, the Morans now stand at a fragile crossroads between extinction and cultural revival. Their language, a close relative of Dimasa, waned under the pressures of colonial history. Today, Moran children grow up speaking Assamese, celebrating Bohag Bihu and observing age-old folk rituals. Yet, traditions remain strong: a married woman seen dancing risks social exile, and eating sour food before fishing is avoided to prevent misfortune.

Their taboos run deep: suicide is not viewed merely as a personal tragedy but as a rupture within the entire community, prompting altered funeral rites to maintain spiritual purity. Every superstition and festival acts as a vital shield against the relentless tide

of modernity.

The journey of their elephant trainers, the Phandis, is both intimate and dangerous. Often detached from mainstream Indian society, these mahouts live on society's margins - belonging nowhere fully, yet remaining indispensable to the very essence of the wild.

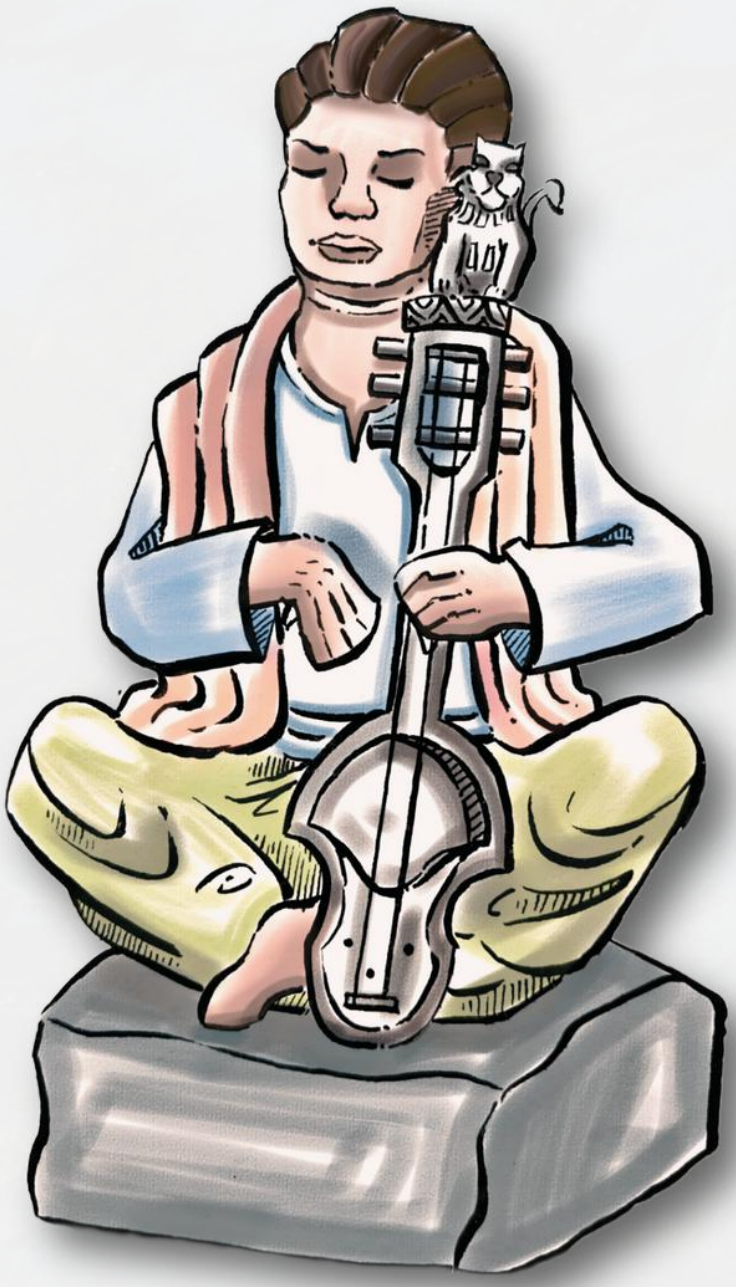
In their lives, the bond between man and elephant is nuanced - far from mere captivity, it's a shared journey, an earthly alliance. Outside debates over taming fade inside the forest, where trust, love, and respect are negotiated daily. The mahout sings, feeds, comforts, and mourns his companion, sometimes seeing in the elephant a reflection of loneliness, displacement, and beauty.

With Coke Studio Bharat shining its light, the Moran community watched Holo Lolo Lai's revival with both pride and unease. Some subgroups feared the sacred song turning pop might dilute its authenticity and overlook ancestors' unseen efforts. Still, the song's energy spreads far and wide, allowing Sharat's legacy to evolve and reach new ears.

Step deeper into the forest, and the details sharpen. The Moran homes, their shawls, their superstitions, their quiet resistance. Chilli, garlic, and knives as wards against demons; the hush that falls if bak (the fish-eating demon) is near the riverbank. Festivals bright as fire, punishments solemn and public. Margins, always margins. If you're a visitor—perhaps for just a single song—these realities rush over you: pride, grief, survival.

"Holo Lolo" is not only a bridge between ages, but also a reflection - a story of exile and belonging that resonates for anyone who has known uprooting or the longing for familiar music in unfamiliar places. In the end, the adventure belongs to the courageous: to Sharat, the Phandi, the mahout, the elephant, and to every member of the tribe who dares to keep singing, no matter how thick the forest gets.

"An elephant never forgets its Phandi," Sarat Moran reminds us, just as a true Moran can never lose sight of their roots, no matter where life leads.



by Pritom Sarma

by Pritom Sarma

When the Earth Breathes Through Us

By- Sanjeevan Bhuyan

I still remember the sting of envy in my young heart whenever Diwali arrived each year. While the night sky above my neigh -borhood sparkled with rockets and my friends twirled in the glow of chakris, I stood behind the iron gate of our modest home in Guwahati, clutching a sparkler, one I wasn't allowed to light. My father, an officer at the Pollution Control Board, was a strict man in many respects, especially so when it came to protecting the environment. "The Earth is already coughing," he would say, as if the planet were an old friend suffering quietly in a corner. But I didn't understand his reasons then. All I saw were children laughing and fireworks blooming like wildflowers, illuminating the sky, while I stood in the shadow of a silence that felt unfair.

But just like the mighty Brahmaputra that snakes through the plains, life flows, and understanding deepens with time. Today, I am thankful for those quiet Diwalis. I've come to realize that they planted a seed of awareness in me, a seed that sowed within me not just empathy for the Earth, but also a fierce love for the natural world and all its marvels, especially the ones slowly fading away.

In Assam, we grow up hearing stories that bind us to the Earth. My grandmother used to speak of the Ban, a forest spirit who would vanish from sight whenever trees were felled unjustly. She told us about Urvashi Pakhi, the mythical bird that sang only when the forest thrived. The elders believed that when a rhino cried, the skies echoed with sorrow. These tales may not appear in textbooks, but they are etched into the soul of every Assamese child who grows up hearing the rustle of bamboo groves or the hush of ancient Sal forests.

Our folklore teaches what science affirms; every living creature, from the smallest firefly to the one-horned rhinoceros, has a role in the grand orchestra of life. The extinction of even one species disturbs this harmony. And yet, we humans continue to plunder Earth for its limited resources, take it all mindlessly for our own selfish reasons, and destroy nature to build concrete structures, all the while treating Earth as if it were nothing more than a hotel room with fresh towels, someone else's responsibility to maintain.

So much of what we call "progress" today is just a polite word for forgetting. Forgetting the scent of the wet earth after the first monsoon shower, or the way cicadas sing at dusk in July; forgetting that we too are a part of nature and not something separate, neither mere spectators, nor its masters. We have bulldozed the tranquility of the forest, choked the rivers of their songs, and then we get surprised when our children face difficulties breathing in polluted cities, and we no longer see stars in the sky.

I'm no saint. I enjoy my share of conveniences. I've sat in air-conditioned rooms and complained about the heat and I've definitely used plastic for my own convenience. But each time I do so, somewhere deep inside me, I remember the small boy with the unlit sparkler and the father who spoke for a planet that few cared to listen to.

We often talk about "Saving the Earth" as if we are noble saviors, swooping in to rescue a weak and helpless mother. But the reality is, Mother Earth doesn't depend on us. She has existed for billions of years without our approval. If anything, it is us humans, who need saving. We are the 'endangered' species now. Not because predators are hunting us, but because we've forgotten how to live without extracting, consuming, and eventually drowning in

our waste.

We should protect the environment not because it's fashionable or woke, not because it earns us likes on Instagram, and certainly not because we're doing Earth some grand favour. We must do it because survival is not optional. There is no Plan(et) B. If the trees fall, if the oceans rise, if the air and soil turn toxic, we will be the ones gasping, fleeing, weeping, dying. The planet will go on, scarred but breathing, long after we're gone. But the world we love, the one with monsoons, mangoes, rivers that sing and birds that remember their way back home; that world might not.

We need to stop treating environmentalism like it's a luxury of the privileged. Clean air is not a premium product; it's a birthright. Forests are not obstacles to development, they are a part of development in itself, in the truest sense of the word. Our ancestors understood this, and somewhere along the way, we've forgotten the same.

But maybe, just maybe, it's not too late. Maybe a child today, holding a sparkler and standing behind an iron gate, will grow up to remember the silence and the reasons behind it. Maybe they will listen to it, understand it, and maybe they will convert the rage, the ache, into understanding and love, for nature and for Mother Earth.

Because when the Earth breathes through us, we do not just hear her, we become her voice.

And perhaps that is what we were meant to be all along.

Photography by Muralidharan S.

Photography by Nawang Rinchen

Conflict, Loss & Resistance

The delicate ties between people and their environment are often strained under forces of disruption. Colonial interventions, wars, and imposed systems of control have reshaped landscapes and fractured the knowledge systems that once sustained coexistence with nature. What was once rooted in balance and reciprocity became entangled in moral dilemmas, displacement, and ecological loss. Yet, even in the midst of exploitation and violence - whether through the imposition of rigid conservation laws or the devastations of war-threads of resistance endure, several struggles reflect not only a fight for survival and justice, but also a defense of ecological wisdom and the right to live in harmony with the natural world. This theme tries to explore ecological loss caused by oppression, war and human negligence and the enduring resilience of communities and ecosystems that continue to resist, adapt, and restore balance.

Death of a Hunter: An Ecocritical Reading of Temsula Ao's Fiction

By- Darshita Mahanta

Growing up in a household where *phokora jujona* (Assamese proverbs) are deeply embedded in daily speech, I find enduring resonance in one that says, *"Exo goru marile bhagoru moron"* — "Even the fiercest tiger dies after a hundred cows are killed." This adage, layered with moral ambiguity, evokes not only the inevitability of retribution but also the idea that nature who is patient and invincible does not forget. I find hope in this conviction even as it carries an unsettling weight.

Temsula Ao's *Death of a Hunte*r, part of her evocative anthology *Laburnum for My Head*, captures this tension masterfully. Set against the backdrop of Naga socio-political landscape of the 1950s, the story follows Imchanok, a respected hunter whose encounters with animals become a reflection of his inner turmoil. His story not just weaves into the tapestry of guilt but also taps at ecological justice, and the moral consequences of violence — inflicted by humans and on humans.

Imchanok, who once served as a schoolteacher, is better known for his hunting prowess. While his skills bring him much acclaim, his dauntless ventures also feed a dangerous vanity. The story opens with him polishing his gun, as he plans to hunt down a notorious boar ravaging the village's paddy fields. Despite numerous claims of sightings, Imchanok has yet to catch a fleeting glimpse of the beast. This absence feels almost symbolic: is it mere coincidence, or is his blindness to the boar the result of an inner burden — something simmering beneath the surface that clouds his vision?

Traditionally, hunting holds both cultural and spiritual value in Naga life. It is a socially sanctioned practice, integral to both subsistence and initiation into adulthood. The Naga world-view, grounded in animism, envisions a harmonious co-existence with nature – where animals, spirits, and humans are part of the same continuum. This equilibrium however was largely destabilized by colonial interference. The arrival of the British, with their civilizing missions and legalistic approach to environmental conservation, introduced a rift in traditional ways of life. Indigenous hunting was criminalized, even as colonial narratives cast Nagas as "primitive" for engaging in it. The very act that once signified honour and responsibility was now painted as barbarism.

This double bind: appeasing colonial norms while preserving tradition produced a deep cultural conflict. The imposition of Western conservation laws, despite their ostensible concern for nature, had exposed a selective environmentalism which ignored the ecological ethics of indigenous communities. Such irony is not completely unexpected since Environmentalism, after all, has long carried an elitist image. The Brundtland Report for instance, famously cited poverty as a cause of environmental degradation, suggesting that only affluent societies are capable of environmental concern. However, such a superficial understanding erases the lived reality of what Ramachandra Guha terms the **"environmentalism of the poor"**– where ecological care is rooted in survival and tradition, not academic discourse or political posturing.

In the story, Imchanok's growing disquiet stems from an earlier incident: the state had enlisted him for a government-sanctioned hunt. His target is an elephant accused of trampling homes and crops. For a hand that wouldn't flinch at taking down his game, this task however felt unusual. It was no longer about protecting his own folks but rather serving an abstract order, an impersonal "duty". Fuming to himself Imchanok mutters: *"What do these sahibs know about the jungle? Do they think*

that the elephant will be waiting at a convenient place for me to go and shoot him? Don't they know how intelligent these animals are, that they can almost think like human beings? And the area that they can cover when they decide to run". In this instance, we see how Imchanok considers his prey as not one inferior being but rather a tactful creature who is capable of navigating grave dangers through its survival instincts. Such a pattern of thinking rooted in indigenous knowledge system however surfaces in stark contrast with the Orientalist viewpoint. In the Western outlook, humans are put at the center of phallogocentrism, having been attributed with the capacity of thought, speech, self-improvement, possibility of liberty and fear of death. The belief in any other animal's capacity of sensing danger is therefore criminally negligible.

On the other end, Imchanok, who has a far better understanding of the jungle, finds himself on the horns of a dilemma. A subtle threat disguised as an offer means that his refusal to carry out the order could even mean his hunting license being revoked. So, in order to retain his position in the socio-linguistics framework, Imchanok sets out with his crew of trusted and skilled huntsmen to capture the rogue elephant. The initial terror that had lurked in their hearts on facing the majestic creature, however, begins to subside as they find it within the range of their gun. Temsula Ao's choice of words such as 'calm' and 'serene' to describe the activities of the animal here seems rather deliberate; as if to signify something other than a human-animal conflict. The image of a seemingly harmless animal being rebranded as a menace becomes a metaphor for a broader historical reality: a community pushed to the margins first by the colonial incursion and later by the mainland attitude and state policies, all under the pretext of serving for a greater good.

When the bullet finally tears through the animal's thick hide, Imchanok feels as if he is taken over by a chilling sense of remorse: *"...as though the dying animal were trying to convey some message to his destroyer which remained frozen in time."*

Thus, begins growing a shroud of guilt, under whose massive weight Imchanok would find himself struggling for the longest time.

Yet, his guilt is not rooted in an isolated act. It builds across time, culminates in a memory and catapults him into a state of moral confusion. In yet another episode, Imchanok meticulously plans the murder of a monkey: not just any other regular monkey but one who was once the patriarch of his clan. This monkey would lead his pack, destroy the grains in the barn and scare off Imchanok's children and womenfolk. Unable to do his destructive antics, the hunter decided that his gun must go off if he were to protect his own family and their interests. So even when the monkey had surrendered with his hands up above the air, his death became certain as if to impart a lesson to the rest. It was slain, gutted and cut into pieces but most importantly, before being a scrumptious affair, it was propped up against a bamboo, slapped and humiliated. Rejoicing the feat, the other members of the family too pulled in orchestrating a desecration: they placed a hat, a cigarette and later goggles on the monkey, giving him the appearance of a human.

The humiliation of the monkey is largely symbolic. The use of western elements on the dead monkey is a dig at the colonizer's attempt at forceful civilization. On the other hand, this cruel behaviour exhibited by Imchanok reflects a corrugation of his inner moral compass and possibly his own internalization of colonial violence. His act mirrors the cultural degradation he has witnessed around him—where customs are mocked, belief systems belittled, and dignity stripped away. He refuses to eat the monkey's meat, nor does he use the grain it had touched. Perhaps this is not mere guilt, but recognition that the act had gone beyond necessity, it had crossed into vengeance, and plummeted into power-play. In both cases, the animals seem to reflect the scale of horrors faced by the indigenous Naga community at the hands of colonization.

Here, Ao forces us to confront a critical question: What happens when violence against nature stops being a matter of survival and becomes a reflection

of internalized histories of oppression? The colonized, in some moments, become mirror images of the colonizer. The line between resistance and repetition begins to blur.

In the story's final act, nature begins to assert its agency. When the infamous boar finally appears before Imchanok, he is overwhelmed by a fear unlike anything he has known. He fires, but is left unsure whether the beast is even dead. His hands tremble, and he breaks down in his wife's arms: a stark departure from the man who once strode confidently through the forest. Even more curiously, no one else in the village sees the carcass. Only Imchanok claims to have found a tuft of hair and bones deep in the forest's silence. Was the boar real? Or was it nature itself, confronting him in a form only he could recognize? What Imchanok knew, however, was that his gun now must rest in the crevices of the earth.

This moment collapses the boundary between myth and memory, between nature as passive background and nature as agent. Imchanok's story is not just about ecological guilt, it is the story of a man who finds himself at the crossroads of history, collective memory, and violence. He is not the villain of this story but rather a pawn in a game of cultural and structural shifts brought by the Westerners. In this sense, only his death as a hunter could revive his wilting valour. It echoes the *phokora jujona* again. Perhaps this time asking us not to count how many cows were killed, but to interrogate why they were. When violence accumulates without reckoning, even the fiercest must fall.

by Pritom Sarma

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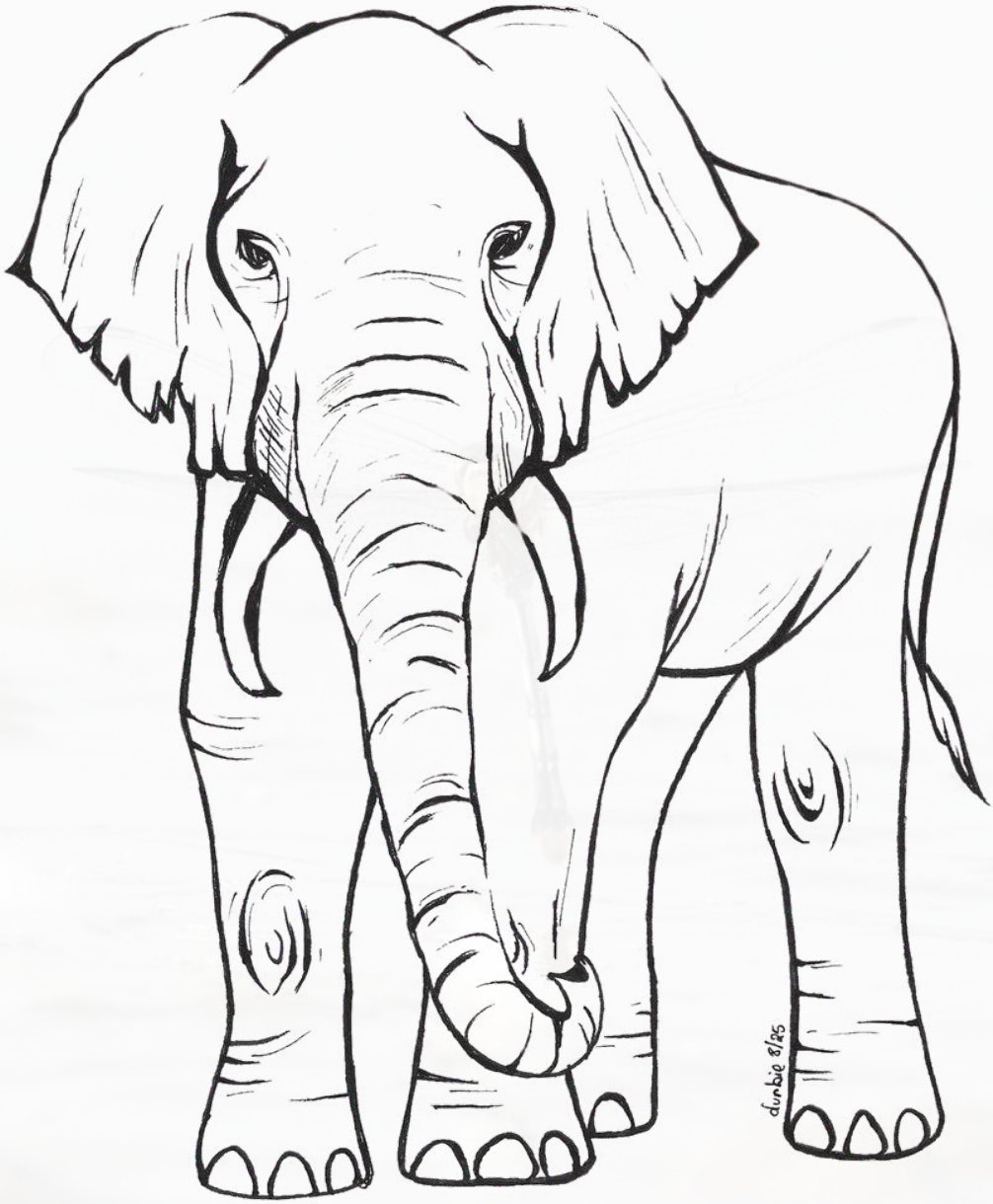
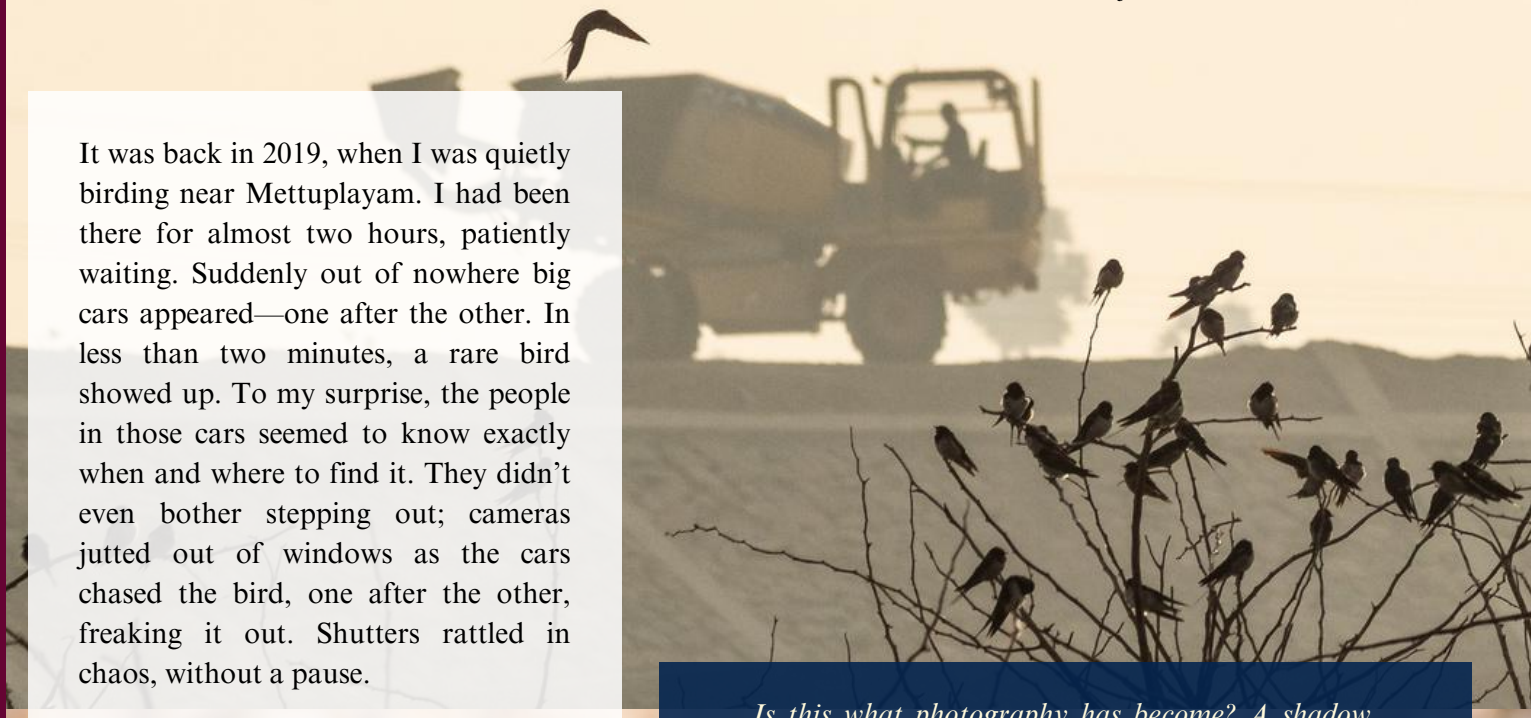


by Dewan Durbie Shyam

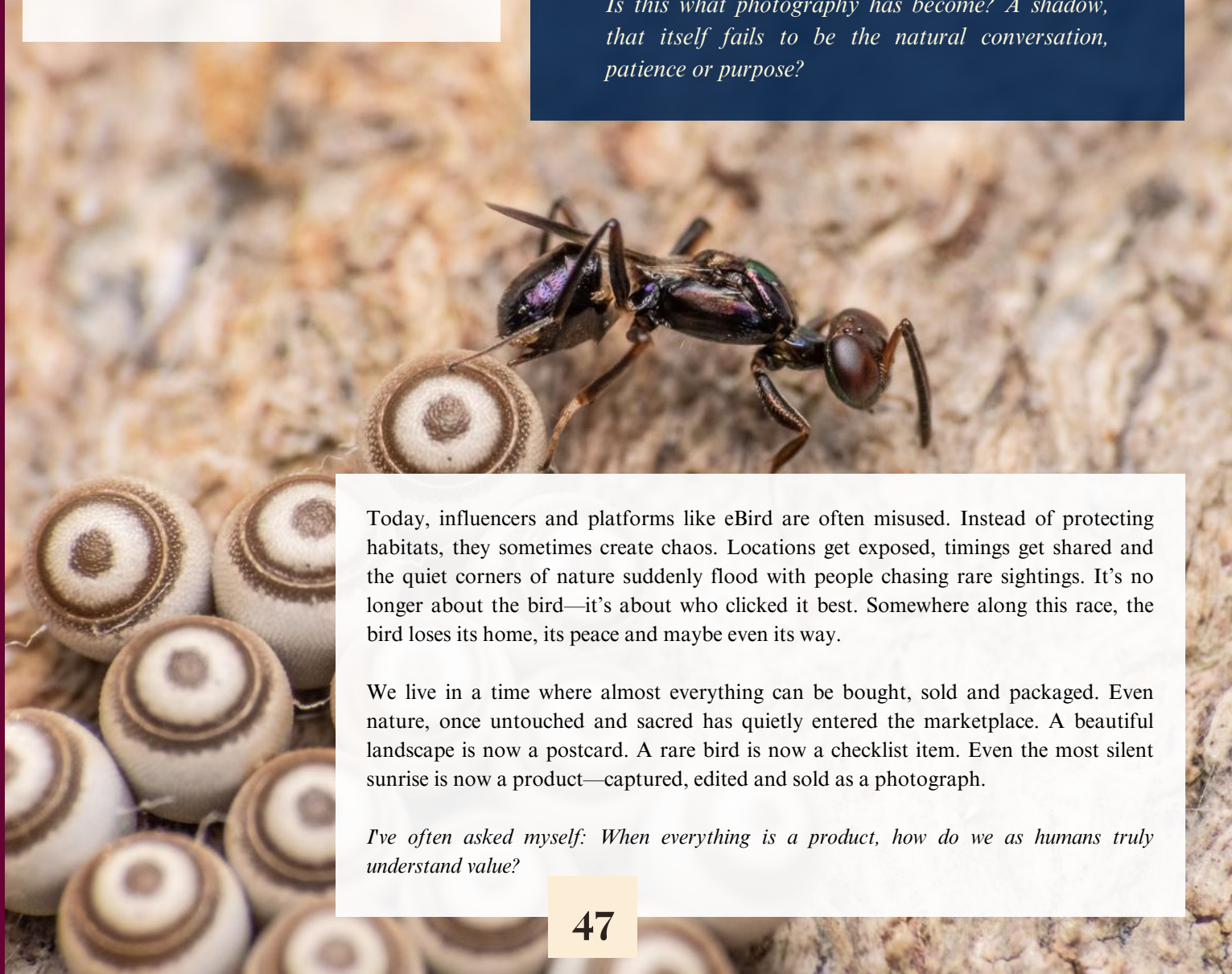
THE COST OF SEEING LESS

By Muralidharan S.



It was back in 2019, when I was quietly birding near Mettuplayam. I had been there for almost two hours, patiently waiting. Suddenly out of nowhere big cars appeared—one after the other. In less than two minutes, a rare bird showed up. To my surprise, the people in those cars seemed to know exactly when and where to find it. They didn't even bother stepping out; cameras jutted out of windows as the cars chased the bird, one after the other, freaking it out. Shutters rattled in chaos, without a pause.

Is this what photography has become? A shadow, that itself fails to be the natural conversation, patience or purpose?



Today, influencers and platforms like eBird are often misused. Instead of protecting habitats, they sometimes create chaos. Locations get exposed, timings get shared and the quiet corners of nature suddenly flood with people chasing rare sightings. It's no longer about the bird—it's about who clicked it best. Somewhere along this race, the bird loses its home, its peace and maybe even its way.

We live in a time where almost everything can be bought, sold and packaged. Even nature, once untouched and sacred has quietly entered the marketplace. A beautiful landscape is now a postcard. A rare bird is now a checklist item. Even the most silent sunrise is now a product—captured, edited and sold as a photograph.

I've often asked myself: When everything is a product, how do we as humans truly understand value?

The Illusion of Transactional Value

Today we're trained to believe that value comes from price tags, views, likes and ownership. If you can sell it, it must be valuable. If you can buy it, it becomes yours. But nature doesn't work this way. A forest doesn't care if you photograph it. A bird doesn't know if it's rare. A river keeps flowing with or without an audience.

When we only see nature as a product, we start to believe that it exists for us—to consume, to capture, to show.

But real value is silent.
Photography has become a question are we preserving its beauty or packaging it for the next scroll?
Photography when mindful can be a form of gratitude. A way to show others what's worth protecting. But it can also become a way to consume nature without ever truly connecting to it.

To experience or extract?

I am not against photography. I am not against platforms. I am against the rush. Against the noise. Against the idea that a bird is valuable only when it's captured.

Maybe it's time to remember that some moments don't need to be posted. Some sightings don't need to be shared. Some birds need silence more than clicks.

Maybe it's time to ask ourselves: Are we truly protecting nature, or just running after numbers and awards? Have we fallen into a "trophy culture" again - where spotting a rare animal becomes more important than making sure it has enough space, food and safety to survive?

War and Trees: The Ecological Aftermath of Conflict

By- Ruchita Nandy

'The axe forgets but the tree remembers'
- Anonymous

Bereaved parents and orphaned children; wars treat the old and young alike. In 2025 alone, the world witnessed more than 20 international armed conflicts. But what is the benefit of wars and what is the cost? While the human cost of war is widely documented, its silent, enduring victim is often the natural world. Warfare disrupts the delicate balance of nature disrupting ecosystems, depleting natural resources, polluting the environment, and jeopardizing the overall health of our planet. The environmental impact of wars begins long before fighting. Building and maintaining of militaries consume large amounts of natural resources such as metals, critical minerals, water or hydrocarbons. It is estimated that the CO2 emissions of large militaries are greater than many countries combined accounting for 5.5% of all greenhouse gas emissions globally

The Russia-Ukraine war, for example, has included the destruction of agricultural infrastructure like canals, wells and pumps as well as the burning of crops. This threatens food security and livelihoods, increasing the vulnerability of rural communities. In Gaza, sewage, wastewater and solid waste management systems and facilities have collapsed, leading to a complete degradation of the soil, water, land, and agriculture. To highlight the irony, more often than not, natural resources fuel armed conflicts but these very conflicts deplete or render these resources polluted and unusable.

Armed conflicts also inadvertently affect the flora and fauna of an ecosystem. Certain forms of weaponry, such as mines and explosives, can kill animals while war materials may linger in the environment and have lasting effects on wildlife. This occurred after Iraqi military forces deliberately set fire to hundreds of oil wells in the Persian Gulf region, devastating marine fauna. At times, wildlife habitats may be intentionally destroyed to gain battlefield advantages, exemplified by the deforestation of Turkey's Kurdistan region. Wars lead to the proliferation and easy access of weaponry as a result of which the prevalence of hunting for meat and other wildlife products increases. In Ethiopia's civil war, for instance, guns circulating on the black market were used to hunt wildlife throughout the country. Weapons used in wildlife crime are usually sourced from countries affected by conflict.

To add to this, the displacement of humans is common in wartime. Refugee camps can have large environmental footprints, particularly where they are unplanned or lack proper water, sanitation or waste management. At times, refugees may also over-utilise local resources and swell urban populations, placing local environmental services under strain. It has been found that displacement camps are frequently located in Key Biodiversity Areas. In 2017, for example, Rohingya refugees settled in a region of non-protected forests in Bangladesh causing a sharp decline in forest cover.

It would be terribly naïve to consider that people would stop going to war anytime soon or to appeal to the conscience of stakeholders who profit from such a danse macabre. We must also recognise that environmental concerns are not secondary to the loss of human lives, as ecological destruction often leads to further human suffering in the form of food insecurity, disease and displacement. This dialogue must take on a holistic approach in the sense that humans, plants and animals all suffer in times of

war.

Recognizing the impact of such violence is thus the first step towards mitigating further harm and promoting ecological conservation. Further steps must be to defund militaries, enshrine international conventions (like ENMOD or the Geneva Conventions' environmental protocols), support international monitoring, promote peace talks and demand accountability. Until the day all wars finally end, we must fight; not with weapons, but with policies and peaceful protests . For the freedom to live, to be safe, to breathe clean air, to drink clean water and for mother nature to return to its purest form, without any blood spilt in vain.

Bringing Lost and Forgotten Flora and Fauna in Spotlight

By- Nishita Das

In Guwahati's quiet dawn,
you slipped through the mist
White bellied heron,
ghost at the Brahmaputra's edge.

I was just a child then,
watching your shadow dance
where river met sky.
I didn't know your name.
You were only a flicker,
a quiet visitor,
lost somewhere between the city's hum
and the market's sprawl.

Now, the wetlands shrink,
the rivers heavy with silt,
and your kind
fewer than fifty
fade like old songs.

It was God who showed me your story,
women standing by the river,
guarding your nests,
their hands tracing the old paths

where you once waded,
their songs calling you
back from the silence.

I've never walked Nameri's banks,
never seen your wings in flight,
but still -
your whisper hums in pixels,
in the stories we share,
in the sketches my friends and I pass
from phone to phone,
hoping people remember.

Because you're not a myth.
You're still out there,
carving dawn open with your wings,
lifted by those
who refuse to forget you.

My mother once told me
the rivers held songs.
Now they're silent.
Like you.
Buried beneath concrete and noise.

But maybe…
maybe if we all learned your name,
maybe if young girls wove your shadow
into their stories,
into their futures,
you'd find your way back.

White bellied heron,
you rise where voices dare-
a soft hymn
on Guwahati's morning air.

by Ambalika Bharadwaj

Photography by Pallavi Rathore

Women, Ecology & Power

At the heart of ecological resilience lies the strength and vision of women. Across cultures, women have been the keepers of seeds, protectors of water, and storytellers of the land, weaving together care, sustenance, and continuity. Ecofeminism reminds us that the struggles against environmental degradation and the struggles against patriarchy are deeply intertwined, both born of systems that exploit and control. To nurture the land is to nurture life itself, and in empowering women, we also empower the very foundations of ecological balance. This theme celebrates the ways women embody resistance, leadership, and healing. It shows that the act of conserving nature is inseparable from the act of affirming women's power and solidarity.

Ecofeminism: Intertwining Nature and Women's Empowerment

By- Nishita Das

As a child in Guwahati, I'd sit on our balcony, watching the skies weave quiet stories. Greater Adjutant Storks—tall, ungainly, their wings heavy against the monsoon haze—sometimes perched on rooftops near our home. We didn't know their name, Hargila, back then. They were just part of the city's pulse, mingling with the Brahmaputra's hum and the chatter of street vendors and neighbours. Their silhouettes faded into the dusk, fleeting yet familiar, like a memory you don't realize you're losing. As Guwahati grew, wetlands swallowed by concrete, traffic drowning birdsong, those storks vanished. Their absence left a quiet ache, a piece of my childhood buried under the city's sprawl.

Last year, as a first year B.Tech. CSE student, I rediscovered the Hargila through a magazine and newsletter. I remember watching a video that changed everything. It was Dr. Purnima Devi Barman, a conservationist with a fierce heart, speaking about the Greater Adjutant Stork endangered, with fewer than 3,000 left worldwide. Once shunned as a filthy scavenger, this bird was being brought back from the brink by a group of rural women called the Hargila Army. Their story didn't just inspire me—it ignited a flame within me.

Dr. Barman didn't wait for policies or funding. In villages like Dadara and Pacharia, she sat with mothers and grandmothers, transforming a maligned bird into a beacon of hope. The Hargila Army, a sisterhood of women in *mekhela sador*, paints storks on village walls, weaves their elegance into *gamusas*, and sings their stories to children during Bihu festivals. They've constructed over 10,000 artificial nesting platforms and protected wetlands in Kamrup, where the Hargila nests. Their "*Hargila Mela*" fairs bring communities together—kids dance to stork songs, women sell handicrafts to sustain conservation, and the bird's population flourishes. It's not a government initiative; it's a people's movement, led by women who see beauty where others saw ugliness. Their work is a testament to how collective will can rewrite the fate of a species.

This is ecofeminism, alive in Assam's muddy fields. The forces that dismiss women's voices—relegating them to the margins—also scar our earth, draining wetlands for markets, pushing species like the Hargila towards extinction. These women are fighting both battles, showing that nurturing the land and empowering each other is one and the same. I see my mother in them, hauling water during Guwahati's dry spells, her strength as steady as the Brahmaputra's flow. I see my grandmother, laughing through floods as fish swam into our kitchen, adapting to nature's chaos with grace. And I see myself, a student who loves the environment but never knew where to begin, now learning that change starts with noticing– the simple act of truly seeing what is around you.

I've never been to Dadara or held a stork's nest. My connection to the Hargila comes from videos, articles. I realized, conservation isn't just for rangers or scientists. It starts in conversations, in art, in mindful observations.

Ecofeminism is about seeing connections—between the wetlands we lose and the voices we suppress, between the Hargila's survival and the girls who learn to name it. The Hargila Army teaches children to love this bird, to fight for it. They're teaching me, too, that I don't need a degree in ecology to make a difference. Their work—painting, singing, protecting -shows that love, when practiced fiercely, can heal what's been broken.

Guwahati's skies feel smaller now, crowded by

buildings, but the Hargila Army reminds me that we're not powerless. Their story has changed how I perceive my city, my role, my future. I'm not out there building nests, but I'm sharing, writing and learning.

I'm Nishita, a daughter of Assam, a believer in a world where women lead and nature heals. So I ask: What if we all paid attention? What if every girl understood she could protect something sacred? What if every community trusted women to guide us back to balance? In their rising, wings unfurl, women speak, and nature finds her voice again. It echoes like birdsong. It feels like home.

Fuleshwari Dutta: The Silent Guardian of Endangered Vultures

How one woman's backyard became a safe haven for nature's misunderunderstood scavengers

By- Arunav Kalita

In 1989 Dhakuakhana, a town located in Lakhimpur District in Assam, became the home of a pair of vultures. Since then, Fuleshwari Dutta has been able to transform not only her backyard, but her whole home into an unexpected sanctuary for such endangered vultures. The tale of this extraordinary woman is a proof of what one can accomplish if they are determined.

A Home Turned Sanctuary

It all began when Fuleshwari Dutta started observing vultures circling near her home, struggling to find safe nesting spots. Moved by their plight, she took it upon herself to offer them shelter. Over time, slowly her coming to aid these birds transformed her backyard into a place where these birds could recuperate and nest without fear of habitat loss and poisoning or any other dangers.

Her dedication was not without challenges. The locals tended to be skeptical of vultures, often perceiving them as a sign of death and destruction. Still Fuleshwari Dutta's dedication led her community people to believe that these birds made an important contribution to the ecosystem.

Fuleshwari's efforts gradually won the hearts of her community. Slowly, the rest of the community understood her perspective. The locals veterinarians teamed up with the villagers to help provide food, monitor the vultures' health and conducted awareness programs on the significance vultures hold in the ecosystem.

Although vulture conservation in Assam is particularly noteworthy because of people like Fuleshwari Dutta's efforts, she is not alone leading the charge. Assam is home to crucial vulture conservation projects, like the Rani Vulture Conservation Breeding Centre, which has been critical to the region's growing vulture population.

To mitigate the rapid decline in vulture due to the loss of habitat and the impact of Diclofenac, a veterinary drug fatal to vultures, the centre put in place measures to capture, rehabilitate and release them into the wild. This together with the work of grassroots advocates like Fuleshwari Dutta, is essential for guaranteeing the ongoing existence of these vultures.

In a separate initiative, a group of villagers in Assam rescued poisoned vultures, nursing them back to the life with the support of wildlife experts. Their combined efforts reflect a growing grassroots movement, where ordinary people become environmental protectors.

Why Vultures Matters?

Despite their negative reputation, vultures play an important role in preserving the ecosystem's health. These birds are nature's janitors for a reason. Vultures reduce the population of

harmful bacteria by consuming the dead bodies, thus preventing the spread of any kind of disease in both animals and humans. On the other side of India, a tiny wooded valley claimed by Fuleshwari Dutta is more than a bird sanctuary. It is also a battle ground to conserve a vanishing wintering site, and more importantly, a piece of Assam's biodiversity.

Let me finish my comments on the life of Fuleshwari Dutta: She is a great example of how one person's motivation can drive enviromental change. You don't need the right background and resources to pursue what you're passionate about, as it's never too late to create change. With the slower disappearance of the vultures of Assam comes change. You can now accompany those vultures with the undying spirit and determination of a woman who fought so valiantly to preserve the species.

As assam's vultures soar once more, they carry with them the quiet but unwavering spirit of a woman who refused to let them disappear.

"One woman's determination became a lifeline for Assam's dwindling vulture population."
– **Fuleshwari Dutta** in frame

by Yunthecrookedpainter

My Mother, The Earth, and Me

By- Rakhee Biswas Deb

I remember my mother - hands in the soil,
Planting dreams between grains and toil.
With every seed, she'd softly say,
"Nurture the Earth, she'll show the way."

Our village well was her morning prayer,
She'd walk for miles with strength to spare.
Not just for water, but dignity too,
In her rhythm, the forest grew.

She taught me how the river bends,
How trees are sisters, soil our friends.
"When they are hurt, so are we -
The Earth and woman both fight silently."

I watched her stand as trees were felled,
Her voice was small, but oh, it swelled.
She faced men twice her size and might,
Yet stood like mountains - calm and right.

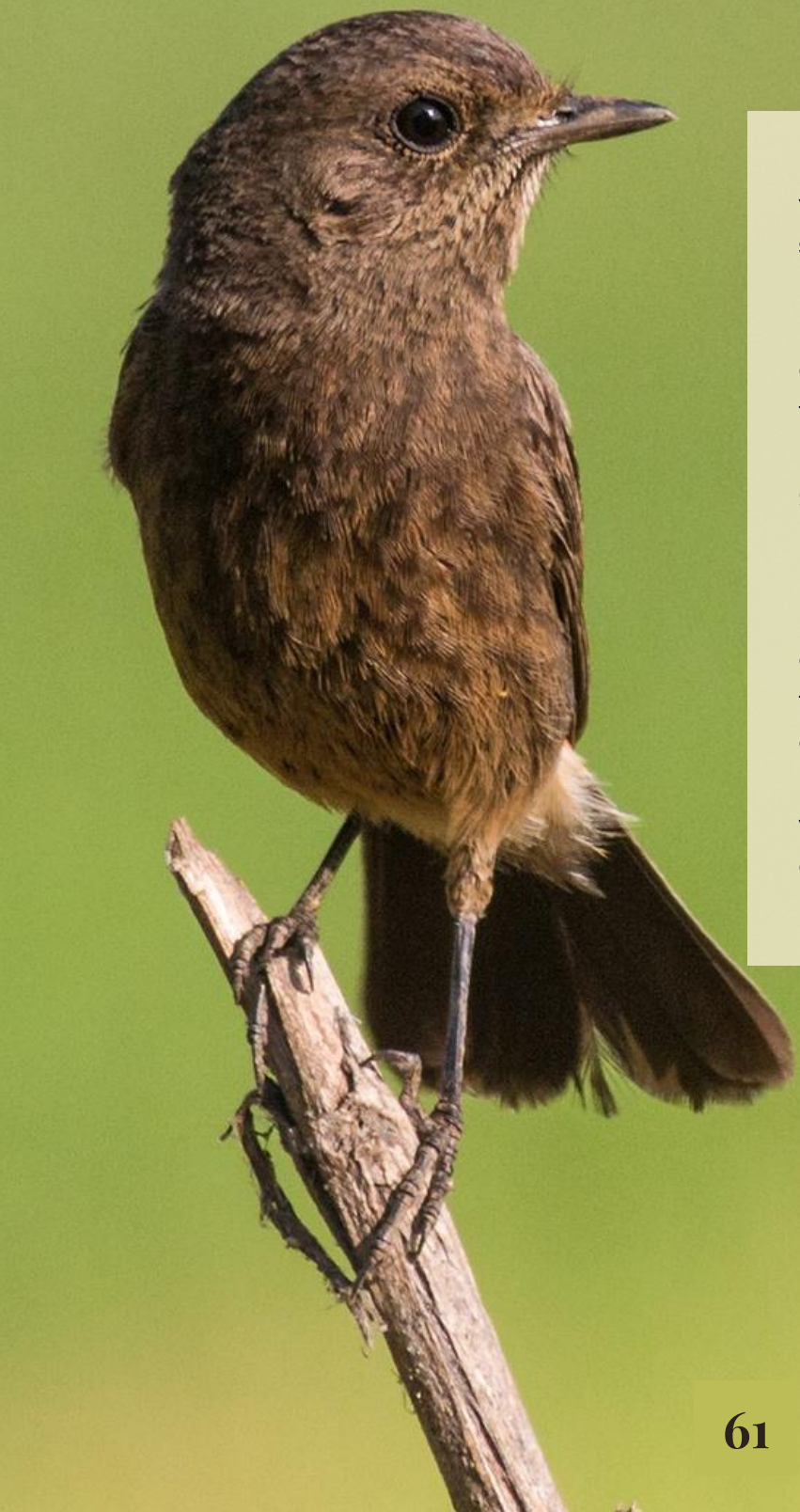
Now I teach my daughter the same,
That nature and woman are not to tame.
We rise with roots, with storms we dance,
Both born of care, not of chance.

In every leaf, I see her face,
In every protest, her quiet grace.
Ecofeminism, they call it today -
But for me, it's just Ma's way.

She was Earth, fierce and free -
And now that fire burns in me.

by Anushuwa Biswas

Roots & Memories



Forests, rivers, and wetlands are intricate worlds of their own, where countless species interact in quiet harmony. Preserving eco-sensitive landscapes means protecting these delicate networks of life - from the smallest insect in the soil to the great canopies that shelter them. Every river bend, every stretch of grassland, every fragment of wilderness holds a balance shaped over centuries, a balance that once broken cannot easily return. To care for these places is to keep alive the wild continuity of nature itself. In this theme we will explore the stories of delicate flora and fauna that play a pivotal role in our ecosystem, species whose loss has already changed, and will continue to change, the world as we know it.

Photography by Muralidharan S.

The Vanishing Green Heritage of No. 2 Mazgaon

By- Prachurjya Kalita

Twenty years ago, the morning air in No. 2 Mazgaon carried the scent of tulsi from kitchen gardens and the calls of house sparrow birds nesting in Crape Jasmine trees. Today, these sights and sounds are fading. This monograph documents these losses through the memories of our elders and my own observations.

Research Objectives:

• Catalog traditional plants/birds no longer common.
• Analyze causes of disappearance (water, urbanization, etc.)
• To understand local people's perceptions of biodiversity loss.

Methodology:

• **Google Forms Survey:** A structured questionnaire was circulated among villagers of different age groups to understand their perceptions on disappearing plants, trees, and birds.
• **Personal Interviews:** In-depth interviews were conducted with village elders, including my grandmother, to document traditional ecological knowledge and changes over time.
• **Field Observation:** Direct observation of the current state of vegetation and bird life in the village was carried out.

Tools Used:

• Digital surveys (Google Forms), voice recordings, mobile photography, and handwritten field notes.

Innovative Element:

• A voice recording of my grandmother, sharing her memories of the rich biodiversity that once thrived in the village, has been added to the study. A QR code linking to this audio is included in the appendix for interactive engagement.

The Shrinking Kitchen Garden:

A Golden Era of Homegrown Abundance

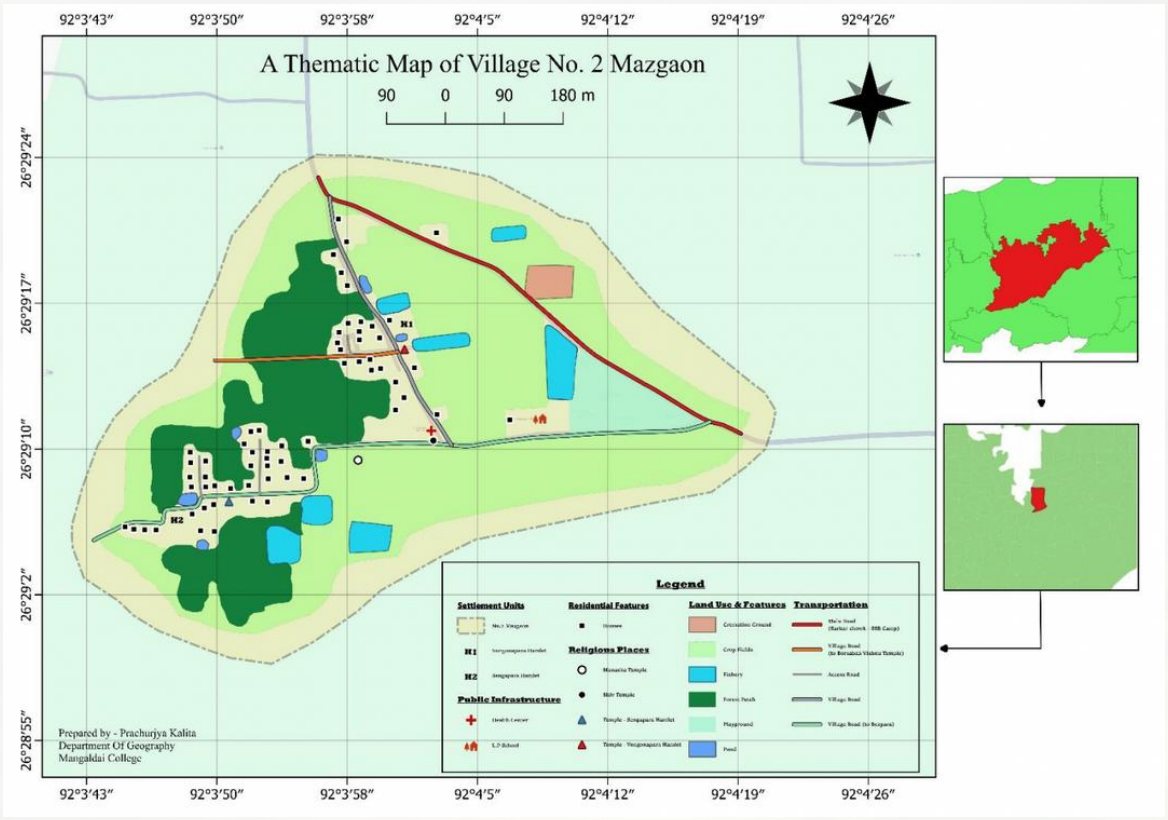
In the 1990s, 90% of households grew 10+ plant varieties, according to interviewees. My grandmother recalls, We never bought vegetables—our backyard had *Outenga* (Elephant Apple), Vedailota (Stink Vine), and medicinal *Manimuni* (Indian Pennywort).

Scan the QR code to listen to her story.

Study Area:

Our village No. 2 Mazgaon, Darrang, Assam is located in a semi-rural setting. Traditionally an agricultural community, it used to have a variety of native trees, herbs, shrubs, and bird species. Include maps or satellite images if available.

Map Of Village No. 2 Mazgaon:



Past Vegetation and Bird Life:

A. Disappearing and Declining Plant/Tree Species

Scientific Name	Common/Local Name	Traditional Uses	Current Status
Azadirachta indica	Neem	Medicinal, pest control	Rarely found
Artocarpus heterophyllus	Kothal	Fruit, shade	Present in fewer numbers
Hibiscus rosasinesis	Joba (Hibiscus)	Ritual use, ornamental	Almost disappeared

Bambusa vulgaris	Jati Baanh (Bamboo)	Construction, fencing	Decreasing
Ocimum tenuiflorum	Tulsi	Medicinal, religious	Still present, less
Syzygium cumini	Jam	Fruit, shade	Declined
Paederia foetida	Vedailota	Medicinal	Almost disappeared
Centella asiatica	Manimuni	Medicinal	Present in fewer numbers
Dillenia indica	Outenga	Tenga Curry	Almost disappeared
Garcinia pendunculata	Thekera Tenga	Tenga Curry	Rarely found
Dendrocalamus hamiltonii	Kota Baanh (Bamboo)	Construction, fencing	Almost disappeared
Calamus rotang	Bet Gos	Crafting furniture, baskets, handicrafts	Rarely found

Here are some of the pictures of the Disappearing and Declining Plant:

Azadirachta indica

Dillenia indica

Calamus rotang

Indian Pennywort

Garcinia pedunculata

Paederia foetida

B. Disappearing and Declining Bird Species

Bird Species	Common/Local Name	Status Around 2000	Status in 2025
Asian Koel	Keteki	Very common	Rare sighting
House Sparrow	Ghor Sirika	Common in every house	Almost extinct locally
Rose-ringed Parakeet	Tia	Frequently seen	Very rare
Barn Owl	Hudu	Occasionally visible	Very rare
Common Myna	Salika	Abundant	Still seen but fewer
Hoopoe	Kakoisira	Frequently seen	Very rare
Kingfisher	Masrooka	Very common	Still seen but fewer
Swan	Raj-haah	Abundant	Still seen but fewer
Weaver	Xipinee	Occasionally visible	Very rare
Rook	Dura Kauree	Very common	Still seen but fewer
Wagtail	Blimahee	Frequently seen	Very rare

Here are Some of the Pictures of Disappearing and Declining Bird Species:

Asian Koel

Barn Owl

Hoopoe

House Sparrow

Wagtail

Kingfisher

Causes of Disappearance:
• Urbanization and construction
• Deforestation and tree felling
• Use of chemical pesticides in agriculture
• Climate change and seasonal shifts
• Loss of traditional gardening and planting culture
• Mobile towers and noise pollution (impacting birds)

Findings and Analysis:
• 80% of medicinal and fruit plants once common are now missing.
• Bird calls that were once part of daily life are now absent.
• Youth are largely unaware of the names and uses of local plants.
• Kitchen gardens have declined significantly in the past 5 years.

Conclusion:
This study has brought to light the rapid disappearance of native plants, trees, and bird species in our village. The data collected through surveys and interviews reveals not only ecological changes but also a decline in traditional knowledge and awareness among the younger generation. From the fading of kitchen gardens to the silence left behind by missing birds, the changes are both physical and cultural.

The voices of elders, especially my grandmother, speak volumes about the deep connection our people once had with nature.

Photography by Pallavi Rathore

Memoirs of Linh Hi

By- Dawar Diganta Kashyap

The roof was a spine, cracked in its sleep -
Each tile a tooth, each creek a weep.
The dawn came limping, raw and unstitched,
The sun a wound that will not itch.

Linh Hi sipped her tea from a shattered cup,
As she watched Muông den bloom where bombs once blew up.
The thing arrives when the street forgets,
It's beak's a needle, threaded with regrets.

It swayed, it leaned - a broken prayer,
dragging a child's sock through the rueful air.
Not a bird, not ghost - it casts no shade,
yet feeds on shame like rust on a blade.

It brought me a ring once - bent with heat,
a finger still curled in it's curled defeat.
It brought me news in the form of skin:
a soldier's badge, a father's sin.

Children once feared it, now they sing,
they braid forgotten myths into it's wings.
It's eyes remain as soft as burnt out stars,
Reflecting god who lost their wars.

I know what it is! I've seen it bleed.
Watched it pull life from limbs and reed.
It eats what we leave - bone, belt, braid -
But never forgets where the bodies were laid.

They said it's vile - they do not see,
The cradle it weaves from all that debris.
I watch it kneel to kiss the dirt,
It's beak full of memory, mercy and hurt.

by Ambalika Bharadwaj

Giving Voice to the Vanished

By- Toshika Jain

In the big drama of life on Earth, plants perform the silent but most crucial role. From giving us oxygen and feeding us, to stabilizing the climate and maintaining diversity, plants are the lifeblood of ecosystems. And in the shadows of human development, thousands of plant species have disappeared or been lost to the world. Today, when the planet is confronting its ecological retribution, there is a movement to revive these lost and forgotten flora in the public eye — not simply for their survival, but for ours.

Some plants are designated as "Lost Flora" meaning species that have become extinct, threatened, or regionally extinct due to habitat destruction, climate change, overharvesting, or invasive species. Some are scientifically certified extinct in the wild, while others just disappear without notice, wiped from the forests, wetlands, or fields they once inhabited. The tragedy is that many of the plants are known to science but not to society.

However in the era of mass extinction and ecological crises, stories of survival stand out like beacons of hope. Two remarkable examples from the plant kingdom, *Takaia* and *Gloriosa superba*, show how science, conservation, and community action can work together to reclaim what was once feared lost.

Takakia belongs to a genus of ancient mosses and is considered a living relic of Earth's evolutionary past. It traces its origins back to 400 million years and represents one of the earliest forms of land plants; found in high-altitude regions of the Himalayas, Tibet, and parts of North America. For many years, the plant remained unnoticed. This was partly because it grows in remote, hard-to-reach places like the Eastern Himalayas, and partly because it looks very different from most other plants. Scientists weren't even sure what kind of plant it was, so it didn't get much attention. But thanks to new scientific tools, including better DNA testing and plant surveys, *Takakia* has been rediscovered. It gives us clues about how early plants looked and survived.

Another interesting thing is that *Takakia* can thrive in very tough environments. It can survive freezing cold temperatures, strong sunlight, and thin air in the mountains. Studying *Takakia* can help scientists understand how to protect other plants or even help farmers grow crops that can survive harsh weather. Its story also shows how important it is to protect wild places like the Himalayas, where rare and ancient species still exist.

Takakia conservation depends on 'ecosystem-level protection'. Scientists have emphasized minimal steps for additional preservation such as strict protection of alpine habitats by eco-sensitive zoning, climate observation programs to monitor temperature effects on populations of mosses, cross-country collaboration to exchange information and establish genetic databases.

The colorful *Gloriosa superba*, or Flame Lily, is a cultural icon and a horticultural gem. It is indigenous to tropical Asia and Africa and it is highly valued for both its beauty and medicinal properties, most notably for its dense colchicine content, which is useful in the treatment of gout and some cancers. However due to the overharvesting of its subterranean tubers, habitat destruction, and uncontrolled trade the species has been pushed to the edge in most parts of India. In order to put efforts for its revival, some crucial steps have been followed- tissue culture propagation to cultivate plants within sterile laboratories, community-based farming projects

in Tamil Nadu and Odisha, public awareness campaigns regarding sustainable harvesting, and government incentives for cultivation versus wild collection.

As we see today, *Gloriosa* is not only being re-established in the wild but also being commercially raised, lessening the burden on natural stocks.

The revival of *Takakia* and *Gloriosa superba* shows how with the help of science, policy, and public participation and through their combined efforts, we can give the most threatened flora species a second chance to thrive. It is important that conservation should begin with animals, but it should also extend to plants which are silent, vital, and often the "forgotten guardians of the earth".

by Dewan Durbie Shyam

by Dhritee Tapati Dey

We, the global citizens.

We run on vibes, We change the world with our views. Welcome to Vibes and Views, the student opinion board of The Hargila Desk, where students from around the globe share their views for Climate Action. Share yours with us to be a part of the revolution.

Theme for AUGUST

VIBES AND VIEWS

Can development and ecological sensitivity walk the same path?

Rani Barman
Bhattadev University
Geography Major
UG 3rd sem

I sincerely believe development and ecology can go hand in hand, provided we change our attitudes. Progress need not involve the destruction of forests or contamination of rivers; it can be smarter, greener, and more equitable. We already have clean energy, green designs, and green policies; what we lack is the determination to implement them. Civic sense should be at the heart of any development and ecological discussion. We often blame industries or governments but everyday actions like littering, wasting water, noise pollution also harm our environment. We need to develop our determination to implement eco-friendly policies. For me, true progress is when both humanity and nature prosper side by side.

A question that has plagued us since the times of the industrial revolution, and is something that concerns us even more now, with the associated climate change. Can development and ecological sensitivity happen together, harmoniously? I believe it can. But that would require us ditching the existing neoliberal school of economic thought and moving to a more inclusive (both for the people and the environment) form of economy. We can't live in an underdeveloped place, neither is the concept of economic degrowth viable. But what we need is a sustainable form of development, protecting the endangered species, focusing on cleaner energy, reforestation for every tree that has to be cut for development etc. What we require is a balance, and with the right attitude, it is certainly possible.

Aakhyaan Mahanta
3rd Year, MBBS
Gauhati Medical College

Jyotishman Kumar
2nd year
Information Technology
GUIST

What we call ‘development’ is often just a human-only upgrade : roads, cities, dams- sidelining forests, rivers, and animals as expendable. That’s not progress, it’s anthropocentrism in disguise. Until we stop viewing non-humans as collateral damage and start designing growth for all creatures, ‘development’ will remain a self-serving myth.

Mrigakshi Bhuyan
Kirori Mal College
B. A.(H) Political Science

Yes, without a doubt. It has been proven time and again that when development integrates ecological sensitivity, it brings about the most sustainable and enduring outcomes, and for all. However, the more pressing question is- even after knowing full well that sustainable development is possible, are governments and corporations, driven by their goals of profit, really willing to undertake it?

Chaitanya Bakshi
Hindu College
B.A.(H) History

I believe that development and the concept of ecological sensitivity can co-exist as long as the development takes place out of necessity instead of taking place out of consumerism. Housing societies and factories set up to support the ever-growing population are a necessity but there is no point in cutting down trees just so that a mine can be set up which supplies the batteries for someone's new iPhone.

Sabiha
Indraprastha College For Women
B. A.(H) Geography

Ecological sensitivity and development can coexist, but it requires careful thought, balance, and preparation. When these elements work together, they create a better human society while maintaining environmental balance. Sustainable development ensures that the needs of the present are met without compromising the ability of future generations to meet theirs. Environmental Impact Assessments help identify ecological hazards in projects, such as dam construction in Uttarakhand, and guide the implementation of mitigation plans. Incorporating natural or nature-based solutions in initiatives, often referred to as green infrastructure, further supports balance between growth and ecology. At the same time, eco-friendly technologies provide cutting-edge ways to reduce environmental damage. These approaches highlight the advantages of harmonizing ecology with development and remind us of the principles we must keep in mind to achieve progress responsibly.

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We thank all the artists, poets, writers and photographers who sent us their valuable works.

Wishing a very happy reading time to our kind readers!

LOOKING TO DISCOVER MORE?

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