

The. Elusive Ganga

SHYAMLISINGH
VINODK. SHARMA



The.
Elusive
Ganga

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V I N O D K . S H A R M A

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Preface

As we pause and look back, IIPA's focus mirror images Namami Gange Programme, under the aegis of National Mission Clean Ganga (NMCG), Department of Water Resources, River Development & Ganga Rejuvenation, Ministry of Jal Shakti, a significant initiative aimed at abating pollution, conserving, and rejuvenating the sacred River Ganga.

Our involvement began after the successful completion of 'Blended Capacity Building Project for Stakeholders of River Ganga Phase-I.' The Indian Institute of Public Administration (IIPA) in New Delhi was entrusted with Phase-II of this monumental project. In this capacity, our team and we had the privilege of witnessing and documenting the transformation of the Ganga ecosystem, a task that holds immense significance for our Bharat.

As truly said, "Pictures speak a thousand words" validating it, our primary objective was to use photography to capture the tangible and intangible changes brought about by the Namami Gange Programme. We ventured into the heart of the Ganga basin, capturing moments that portrayed the collaborative efforts of various stakeholders - government agencies, NGOs, local communities, and religious bodies. These photos became powerful tools for raising awareness and advocacy, enabling people to connect with the cause at an emotional level.

Through the lens of our camera, we documented the reduction of industrial waste and sewage being discharged into the Ganga, the rejuvenation of the riverbanks, and the promotion of sustainable agricultural practices. We also portrayed the positive socio-economic changes within the riverine communities who depend on the Ganga for their livelihoods.

Working as project investigators, we had the privilege of interacting with passionate individuals dedicated to the Ganga's welfare. It was heartening to see the commitment and innovation within the teams working tirelessly to restore the river's purity. Our role required constant adaptability and creativity to ensure that we captured not just images but also the essence of this colossal effort.

Through photography, we've been able to photo-document the story of a nation's determination to protect its most sacred river. This humongous task goes beyond pictures; it encapsulates the hope, the resilience, and the collective efforts of a country striving to restore the Ganga to its pristine glory.



VINOD K. SHARMA



SHYAML SINGH

Travelogue

My incredible journey documenting the Ganga River was an adventure that took me from its origin at Gomukh to its merging point, with the Bay of Bengal in Gangasagar. Throughout this expedition, I was captivated by the tapestry of cultures and civilizations that have thrived along the banks of this river.

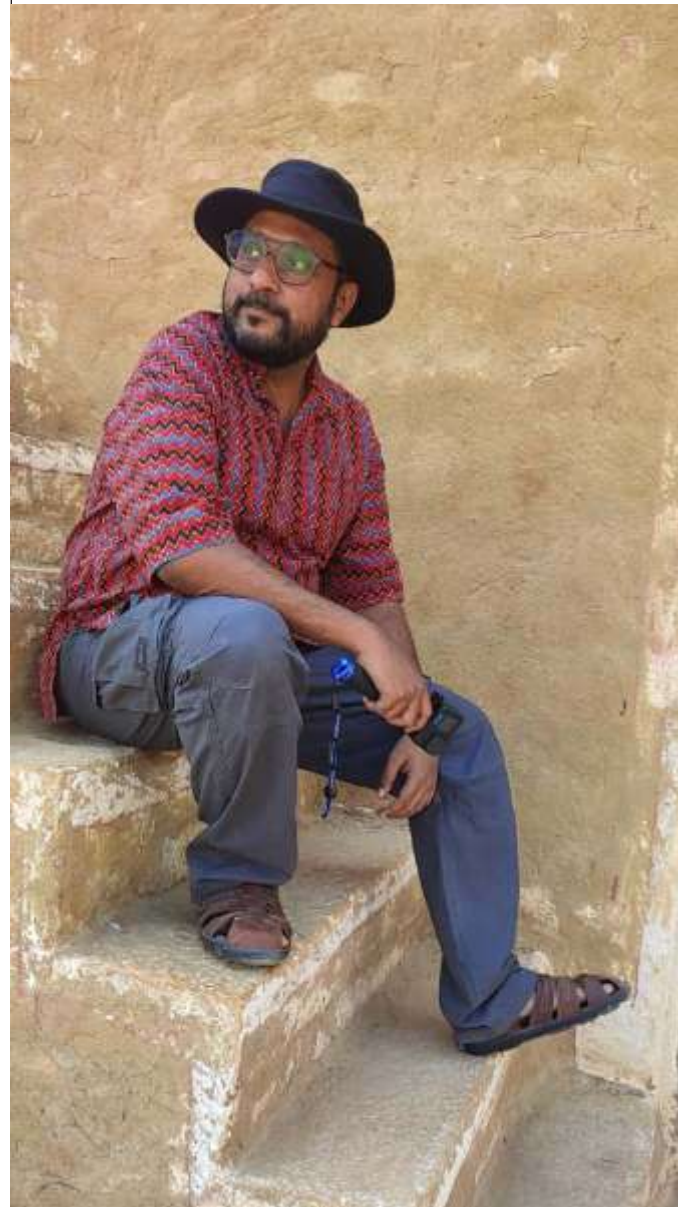
What struck me profoundly was the interdependence between the Ganga and the communities it supports. From those who have built their lives around its shores to the animals and ecosystems within its jungles this extraordinary river is their life force. It serves as a source of nourishment, a trade route, and forms an integral part of their religious beliefs.

The Ganga assumes roles. A nurturing mother, a life-sustaining water source, and an embodiment of millions in the world's largest floodplain. Its significance is unmatched as it provides sustenance in terms of food facilitates commerce through trade routes and acts as a cornerstone for rooted convictions.

Despite grappling with pollution, which poses challenges the resilience of the Ganga shines through. It employs a process involving bacteriophage to purify itself offering a glimmer of hope, amidst adversity.

Scaling up my journey along the course of the Ganga was no easy task; it often pushed me to my limits.

However, as I ventured forth I unraveled the essence of this river. It continues to be a puzzle embodying both fragility and strength yet, at its core it is the Ganga. A symbol of the intricate bond, between humanity and the natural world.



IMRAN AHMED

Ganga Re- An ode to River Ganga

गंगा रे



बादल बादल चलता जाये
चलता जाये जो परछायें
धरती पल पल चुने; सुने लोरियां
उड़ते हैं पंछी हमेशा
धुंआ चंदा छुंए जैसा
पानी पानी का यह रास्ते गलियां
गंगा रे
मइया रे

लाखों पाप की करारी
तेरो लहरों में सवारी
तू यो रूह की सुधारी
जमीं आस्मां सितारें
झुंके तेरे ही किनारे
गंगा रे

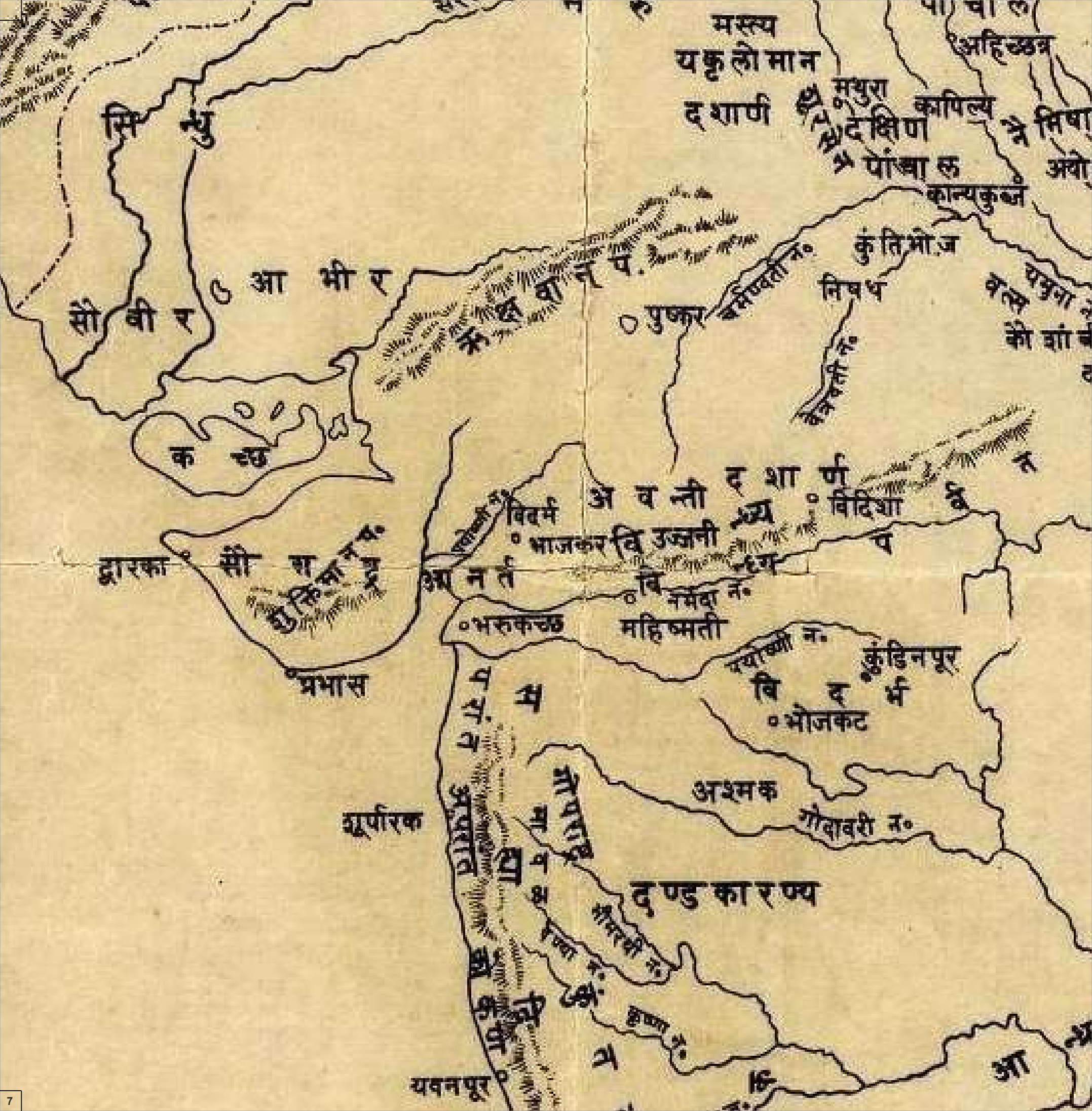
कोई मइया के गुण गावे
कोई नईया पार करावे
जीवन रे

धारा झर झर झर पधारे
नैना पल पल जग निहारे
टूटे भेद की दीवारे
कतरा कतरा मीठा पानी
खल खल देश की कहानी
गंगा रे

माया अनहोनी कर जावे
सुखी मिट्टी बुलबुलावे
कशती रिशतों से जुड़ जावे
मलमल धूप में निखारें
कल कल बहती है तू खारे
गंगा रे

नदिया थिरक थिरक बही जावे
आंसू मैल भी धो कर जावे
यह राहें

दिया अंधेरा ज्वालावे
काशी कलकत्ता पहुंचावे
पुरखों यादों में बुलावे
अंगना दरिया में मिलावे
गंगा रे



मस्य
यकृ लो मान
द शार्णी

अहिच्छत्र

मथुरा
दक्षिण
पांचाल
कान्यकुब्ज
कपिल्य

मिषा
अयो

सिंधु
सौवीर
आभीर

कुरुवाणप

पुष्कर

कुंतिभोज

मिषध

यमुना
कोवा

कच्छ

द्वारका

सौराष्ट्र

प्रभास

अनर्त

विदर्भ

अवन्ती

दशार्ण

विदिशा

भाजकरवि उज्जनी

विन्मदान

भरुकच्छ

महिष्मती

रयोष्णी न.

कुंडिनपूर

विदर्भ
भोजकट

शूर्पारक

अपुरात

अश्मक

गोदावरी न.

दण्डकारण्य

शोपराष्ट्र

मावक

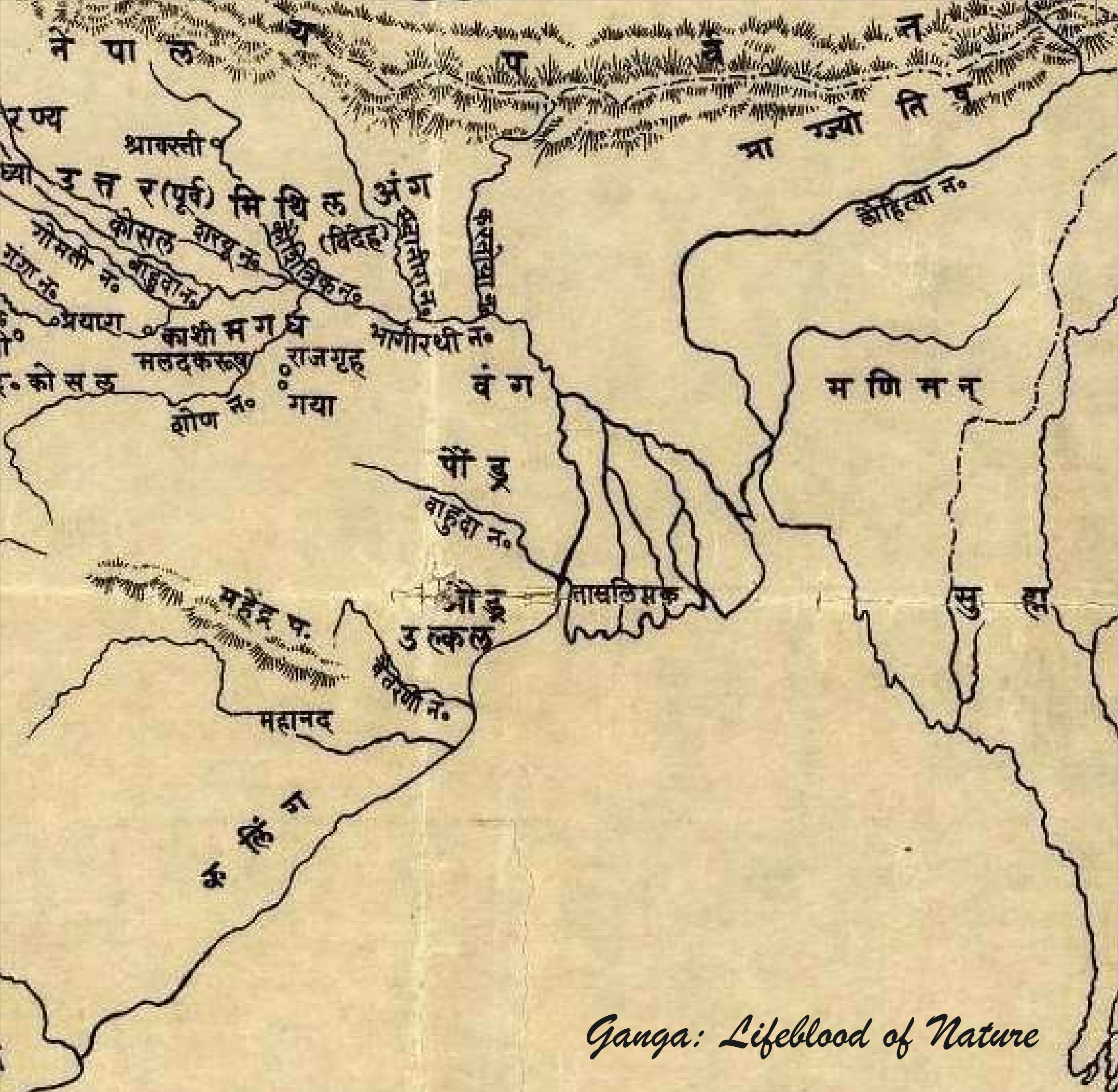
भीमवती न.

कुं

कुष्मा न.

यवनपूर

आ



Ganga: Lifeblood of Nature



The Upper Ganga originates from the Gangotri Glacier in the Uttarkashi district of Uttarakhand. This region is known for its breathtaking natural beauty, with snow-capped peaks, lush green valleys, and pristine rivers and streams. It attracts tourists and pilgrims from all over the world.

The
U P P E R G A N G A

G a u m u k h ~ H a r i d w a r
2 9 4 K m s



Gaumukh: The origin of Moksh Dayani

The "Gaumukh" is the source of the Bhagirathi River, which is one of the primary headstreams of the Ganges River in India. It is not only the geographical source but also the spiritual source of the Bhagirathi River. The Bhagirathi River, emerging from Gaumukh, is a major tributary of the Ganges River and a critical water source for millions of people in the Indian plains.







*Best view comes after
the hardest climb:
Bhagirathi Peaks*

Bhagirathi peaks are located in a remote and pristine mountain environment in the Garhwal Himalayas and are known for their technical climbing routes and challenging conditions.

This region is of great religious significance due to its association with the sacred Ganges River and attracts both climbers seeking adventure and pilgrims on their spiritual journeys.

Chirbasa: A Trekker's heaven



Nestled at an altitude of 3,580 metres above sea level, Chirbasa, the abode of Chir trees is a dense thicket of lofty blue pine or chir trees located about 9 km ahead of Gangotri.



Surya Kund: A Reverence to Sun God



Surya Kund, with its unique combination of natural beauty and religious significance, attracts devotees and tourists alike, making it an integral part of the religious and cultural landscape of Yamunotri and the Uttarakhand region.

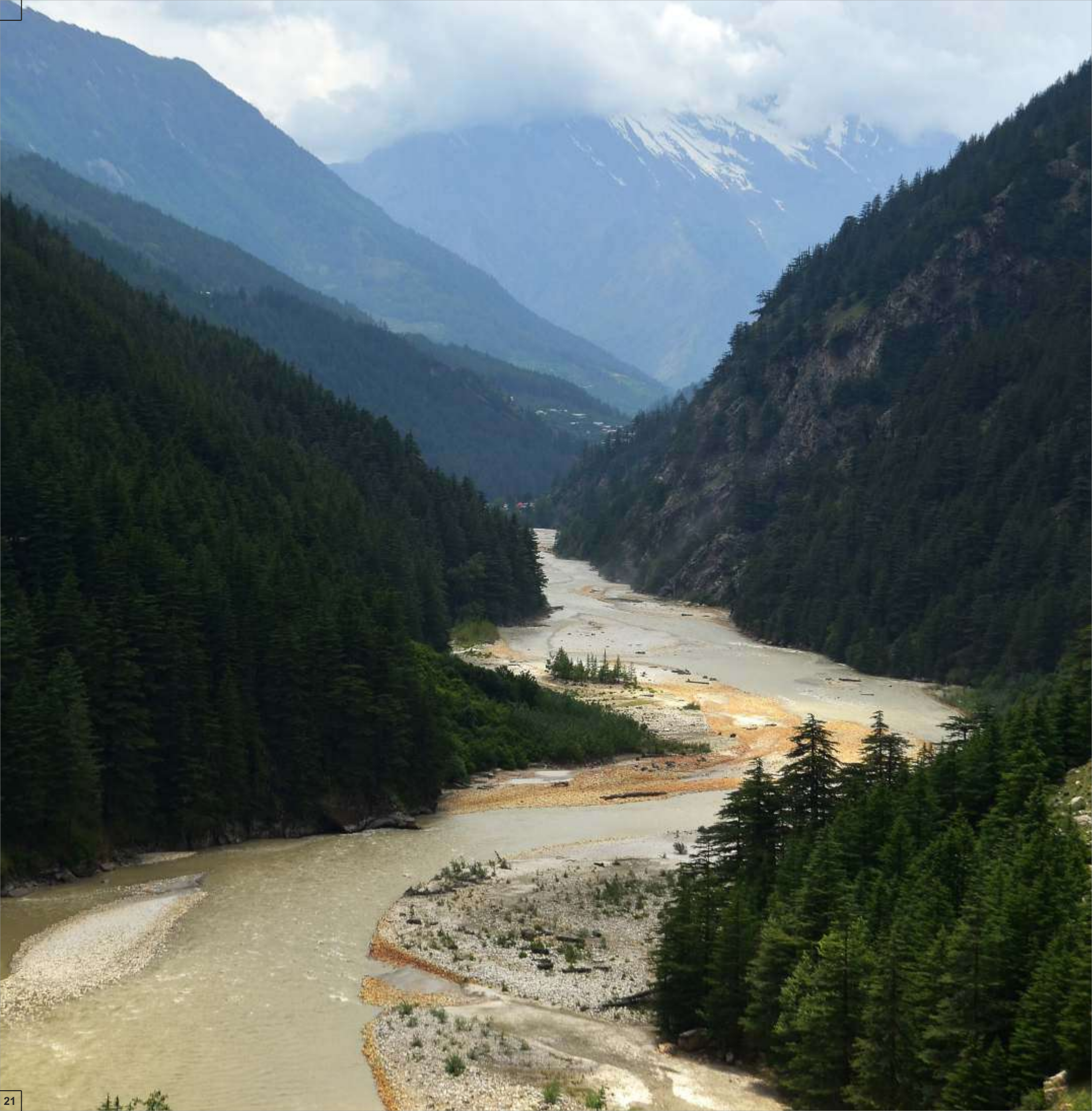


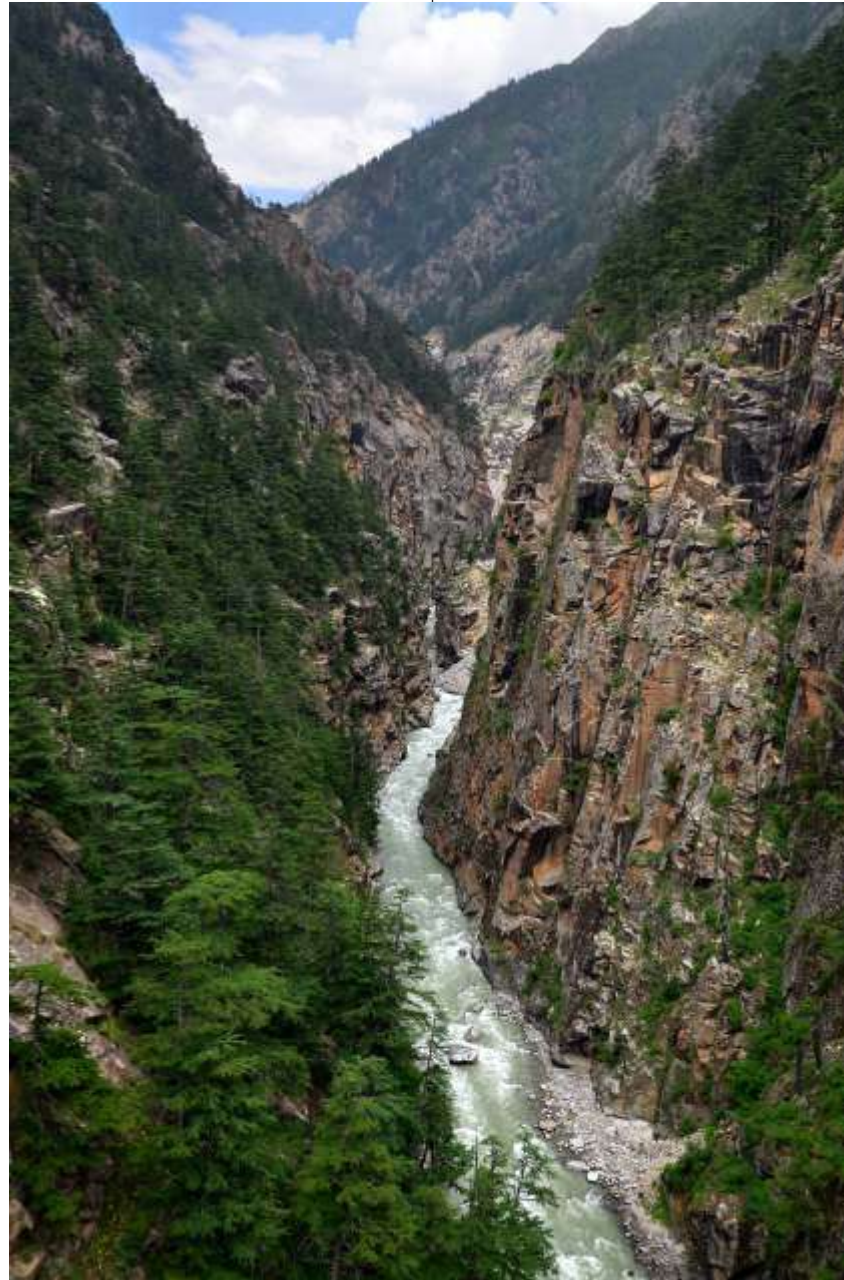
Gangotri Mandir; Height of Spirituality



Nestled in the Garhwal Himalayas at an altitude of approximately 3,100 metres (10,200 feet) above sea level. The Gangotri Mandir is one of the holiest Hindu shrines and pilgrimage sites located in the town of Gangotri in the Indian state of Uttarakhand. It holds immense religious significance in Hinduism as it is dedicated to the goddess Ganga, personifying the sacred Ganges River.







Ganga's Serpentine Himalayan Journey



Renowned for its breathtaking alpine meadows, vibrant floral diversity, and pristine natural beauty, the Valley of Flowers is a stunningly beautiful national park located at an elevation ranging from about 3,600 to 6,675 metres above sea level and spread over an area of 87 sq km.

Declared a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 2005 in recognition of its outstanding natural beauty and unique ecosystem, it is also a part of the Nanda Devi Biosphere Reserve.

Valley of Flowers... where Nature Blooms!!





The Valley of Flowers is famous for its rich floral diversity, including numerous species of wildflowers, alpine plants, and medicinal herbs. The valley comes alive with a riot of colors during the blooming season, typically from July to September.

Exotic flowers (over 600 species) like orchids, poppies, primulas, marigold, daisies and anemones are an eye-catching spectacle. Sub-alpine forests birch and rhododendron cover parts of the park's area. The trek to the valley offers eye-catching spectacles like cascading waterfalls and wild streams.

Valley of Flowers: A visual treat



Gartang Gali: A trail of Trade !!



Gartang Gali is a wooden stairway about 150 years old, which was reconstructed and opened after 59 years in 2021. This route was traditionally used by merchants trading between India and Tibet and was a part of the Silk Route.

The trail leading to Gartang Gali is a challenging one and spans over a length of 2.5 km at a whopping altitude of 11,000 ft.





Alpine branches filter sunlight's gentle, dappled embrace





Devprayag: The mystic confluence

Devprayag is the sacred place of merging of two visible heavenly rivers, Alaknanda and Bhagirathi, to form the holy Ganges.



Terai: A lowland taking to new highs!!



The Terai region is a lowland belt in the southern part of the Himalayan foothills, stretching across the northern parts of India, Nepal, and Bhutan. It is characterized by its lush forests, grasslands, and wetlands.

The Terai is home to a rich diversity of wildlife, including several endangered species.

Rajaji National Park; A gamechanger for preserving Ecological Health



Rajaji National Park's unique position along the Ganga River makes it a significant area for conservation efforts aimed at preserving the ecological health of the river and its surrounding landscapes.



*Rajaji National Park:
A home for Flora and Fauna!!*





Rajaji National Park is renowned for its diverse flora and fauna. It is home to a wide range of wildlife species, including elephants, tigers, leopards, deers, and numerous bird species.



शिवरात्रि चरण परीक्षा
विशेषतः
शिवरात्रि परीक्षा
विशेषतः
शिवरात्रि परीक्षा
विशेषतः

*Indian Myths and Legends:
Artistry Unveiling Cultural Marvels*





*Indian Music:
Instruments, Artists,
& Inspiring Workshop Melodies*



Bhagirathi Dam: A Majestic Landscape by the River



Tehri Dam stands tall, a marvel amidst Bhagirathi's serene flow, embraced by nature's lush landscapes and captivating tranquility.

*Haridwar:
A doorstep to salvation!*



Haridwar's location at the point where the Ganges River enters the plains makes it a place of immense spiritual and cultural importance. The city's connection to the Ganga and its religious traditions have contributed to its reputation as a prominent pilgrimage site and a center of spirituality in India.



Haridwar: Where Culture Flows in Sacred Rhythms



Haridwar is a city of great cultural, religious, and economic significance. It is known for its diverse range of activities and attractions that draw people from all over India and the world.





Coins Collected from Sacred River Beds Sustain Livelihoods



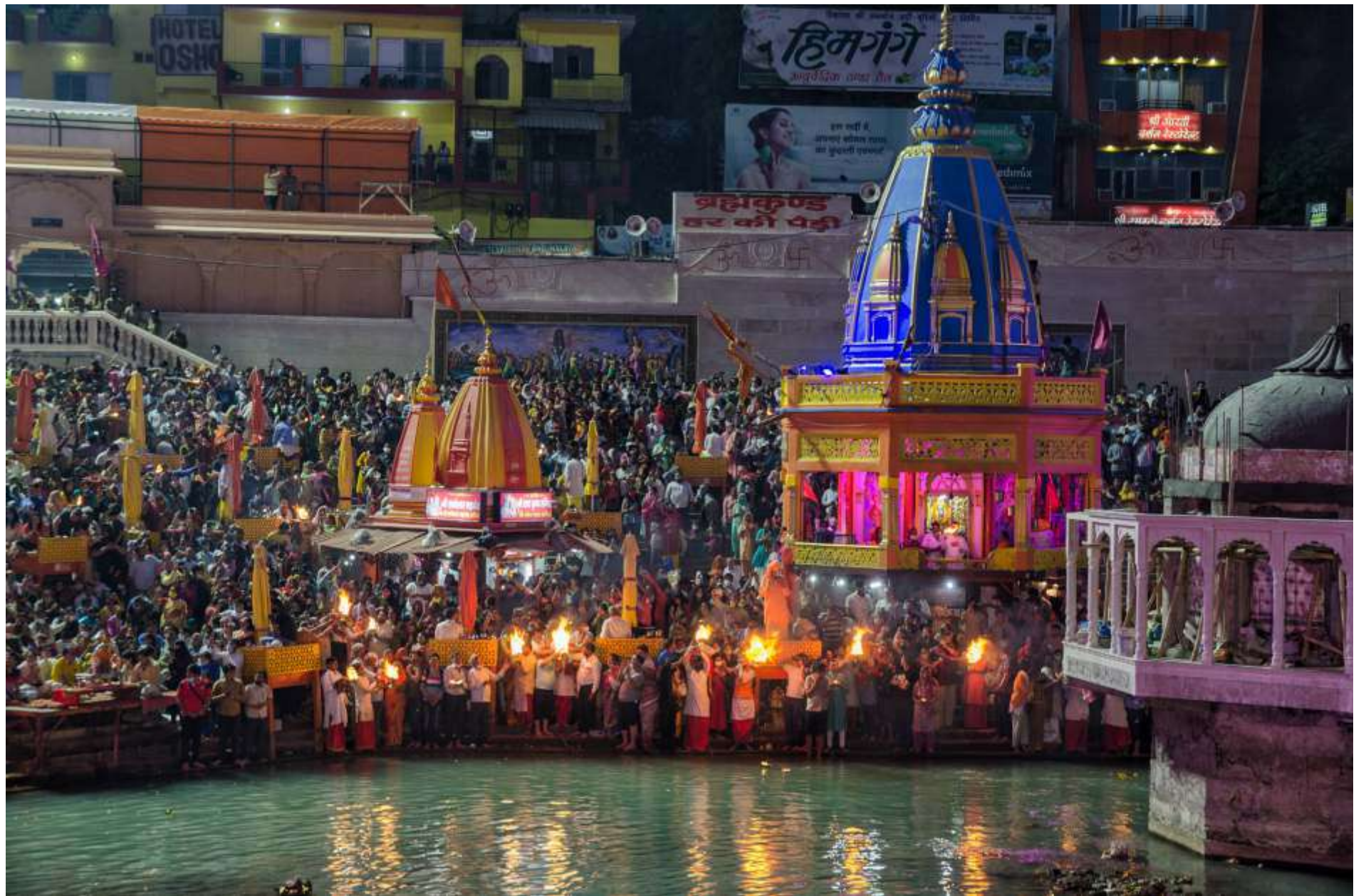
Traditional livelihoods in Haridwar involve collecting coins and jewellery from the ashes of the deceased during cremation ceremonies.

*Haridwar: Blending Culture, Serenity,
and Spiritual Bliss*

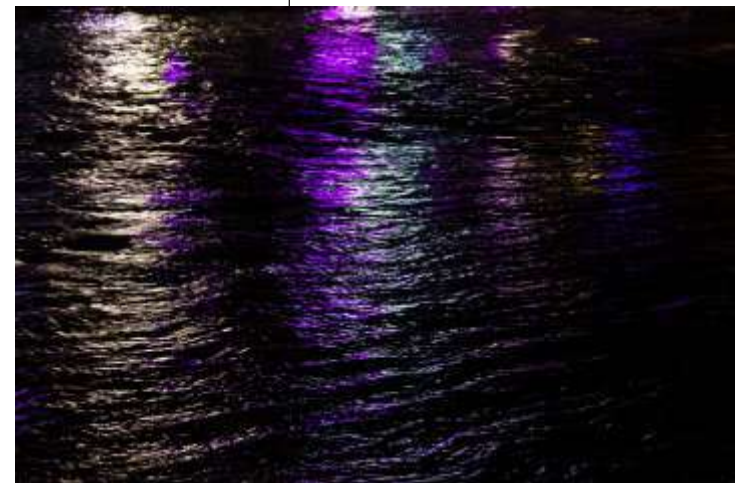


*Haridwar's blend of spirituality, economic activity,
and cultural heritage, makes it a dynamic and vibrant city
that attracts people with diverse interests and backgrounds.*

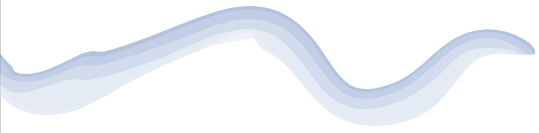




Ganga Aarti: Traditional Saga



The Ganga Aarti in Haridwar is a beautiful and soul-stirring ritual that showcases the deep spiritual connection between the people and the sacred Ganges River. It is performed twice daily at the Har Ki Pauri ghat and attracts the largest number of devotees and tourists.



The river Alaknanda meets the river Bhagirathi at Devprayag, and the combined flow is known as the river Ganga. The stretch of the river from its source upto Haridwar is known as its upper course.

The

M I D D L E G A N G A

H a r i d w a r ~ V a r a n a s i
1 0 8 2 K m s



*Fatehpur Sikri:
A Timeless Mughal Architectural Marvel*



Known for its stunning architectural heritage and its connection to Mughal culture, Fatehpur Sikri is a UNESCO World Heritage Site.





Taj Mahal: An Iconic Symbol

The Taj Mahal represents a romantic and artistic expression of love, while the Ganga symbolizes spirituality, purification, and the enduring cultural and religious traditions of India. Each, in its way, contributes to the rich tapestry of India's heritage and identity.

*A Masterpiece of
Architectural Grandeur & Artistry*

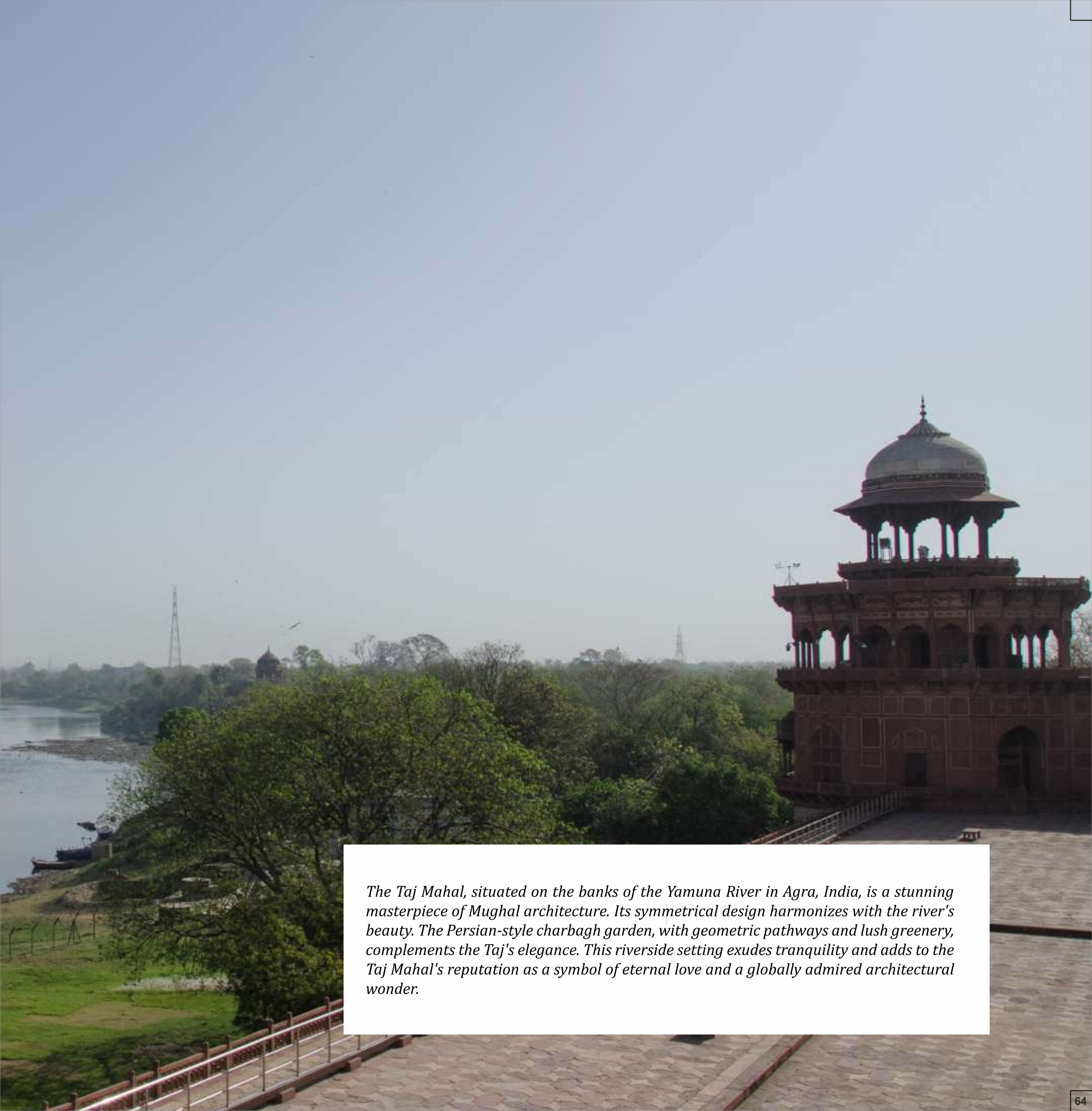


The Taj Mahal's pristine white marble and symmetrical layout are renowned for their beauty, while Agra Fort's red sandstone structures exhibit a unique blend of military and palace architecture. They feature intricate marble inlay work, geometric designs, and Persian and Mughal architectural elements.





*Taj Mahal: Graceful Splendor Amidst
Riverside Serenity on Yamuna*



The Taj Mahal, situated on the banks of the Yamuna River in Agra, India, is a stunning masterpiece of Mughal architecture. Its symmetrical design harmonizes with the river's beauty. The Persian-style charbagh garden, with geometric pathways and lush greenery, complements the Taj's elegance. This riverside setting exudes tranquility and adds to the Taj Mahal's reputation as a symbol of eternal love and a globally admired architectural wonder.



A land of Divine love!



Holi in Braj is not just a festival of colors; it is a celebration of divine love between Lord Krishna and his devotees.



Holi in its true colors...



The town's unique cultural and spiritual significance makes it a must-visit destination for those wanting to experience the exuberance and devotion of Holi in its most authentic form.



Sri Krishna and Balram Deities at ISKCON Vrindavan: A Divine Abode for Bhog (Offerings) and Darshan (Worship), Radiating Spiritual Bliss.

Dev Darshan: A bliss!!

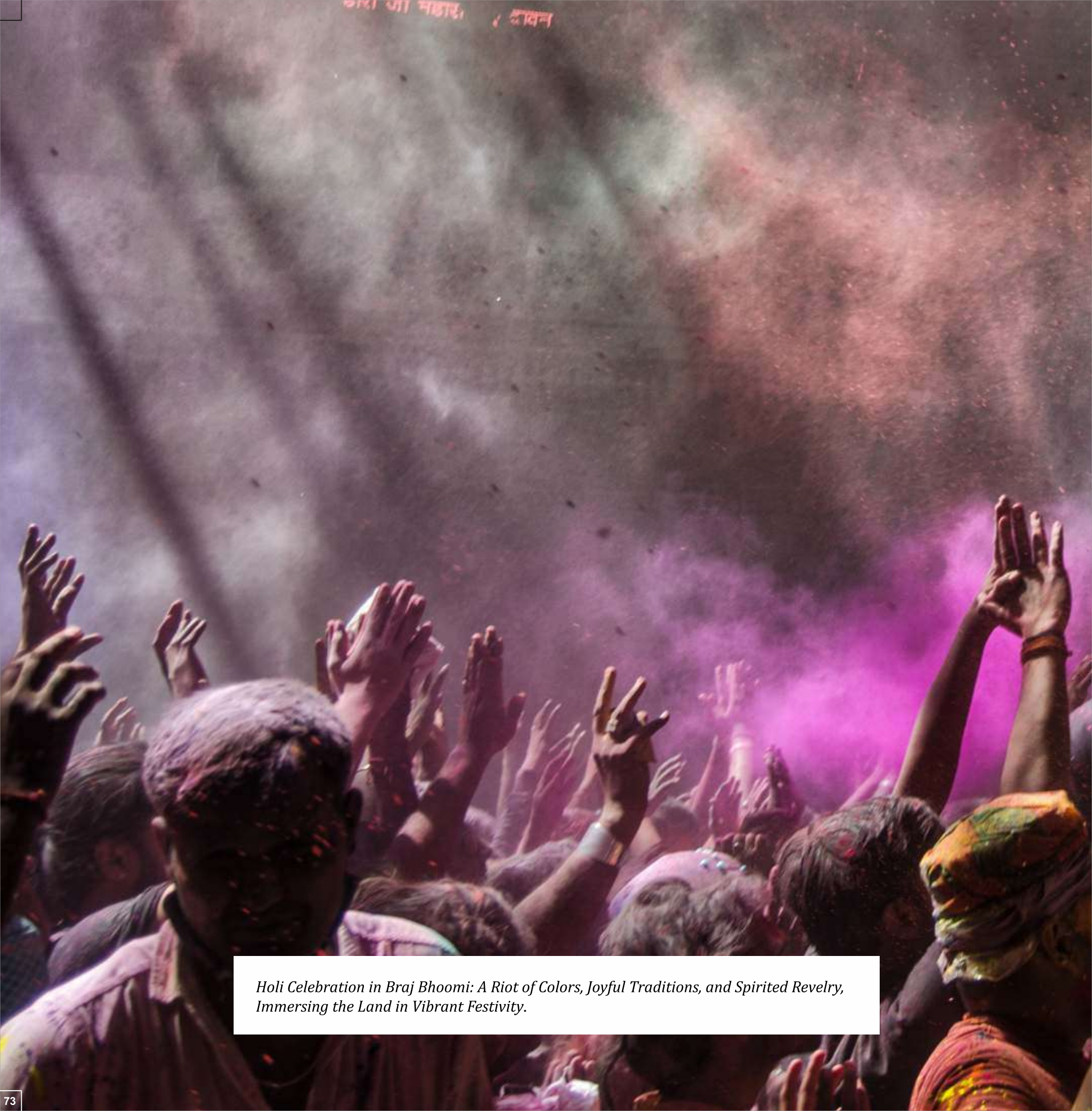




Holika Dahan: Triumph of Good over Evil



Holika Dahan sets the stage for the vibrant and colorful festival of Holi. It serves as a reminder of the triumph of good over evil, the importance of purity, and the joyous celebration of life and love. The bonfire's glow and the cultural performances create an enchanting and spiritually uplifting atmosphere in Mathura



Holi Celebration in Braj Bhoomi: A Riot of Colors, Joyful Traditions, and Spirited Revelry, Immersing the Land in Vibrant Festivity.

Embraced in the colors of Holi...



Ganga: Lifeline for Farmers, Livestock, Sustaining Communities



The Ganga: A Lifeline for Farmers and Livestock. This majestic river not only nourishes the agricultural lands with its fertile waters but also provides essential fodder for the livelihood of countless farmers, reinforcing the deep-rooted connection between the river and the communities it sustains.



Daily Life around Ganga: Local Routines, Vibrant Culture





On the Banks of the Ganga: Daily Rituals and Activities. Locals engage in a multitude of daily tasks along the river, from prayer and washing clothes to fishing and trading, creating a vibrant tapestry of life woven with the Ganga's waters as a backdrop.



Prayagraj: Where Heritage and Spirituality Converge. This ancient city on the banks of the sacred Ganga and Yamuna rivers is a cradle of tradition, marked by the grand Kumbh Mela and historic sites, bridging the past and the present with spiritual reverence.

Prayagraj's Bridges: Connecting Past and Future



The Saviour!



Ram Vilas Yadav, a member of the Water Police, is posted under the newly made Yamuna River Bridge. His main job is to rescue suicidal people those who jumps off the bridge.





Ganga Aarti: *A melody of devotion and blessings*



The Ganga Aarti at Prayagraj is a captivating and spiritually uplifting experience that exemplifies the deep reverence and devotion that Hindus hold for the Ganges River. It is a beautiful expression of faith and tradition, and it continues to attract people from all walks of life who seek spiritual solace and blessings.

The Ganga Aarti is conducted at the Sangam, and is a beautifully choreographed ceremony that involves the rhythmic chanting of prayers and the waving of oil lamps or diyas by a group of priests.

Kumbh Mela: A unique Assemblage



The Kumbh Mela is one of the largest and most significant religious gatherings in India, attracting millions of pilgrims and tourists. The Kumbh Mela typically spans several weeks or months and is organized based on astrological and religious considerations.

The last days of the Kumbh Mela are marked by a mix of spirituality, cultural celebrations, and a sense of fulfillment among pilgrims.



Wastewater collected from various areas of the city undergoes treatment at Sewage Treatment Plants (STPs) before being discharged into the Ganga River.

The treated wastewater, rich in nutrients, is subsequently utilized by local farmers as an organic source of manure and fertilizer in their rose cultivation.

Md. Murtuza, 50 years Gulab Kishan, use water from Naini STP, Prayagraj.



Rose Farmer: embracing circularity...



Chunar Fort ; Fortifying legacy



Chunar Fort is situated along the banks of the Ganges River and have a strategic location that historically allowed whoever controlled the fort to have a degree of influence and control over the Ganges River and its trade routes.

The fort's strategic location allowed those who held it to exert influence over local trade and military activities along the river, but it did not provide control over the entire Ganges River.





Serenity on the Banks of the Ganga. This quaint city, nestled along the Ganga's tranquil shores, boasts a landscape where nature's beauty mingles with history and culture. Chunar's picturesque vistas and ancient fortresses create an enchanting canvas that captures the essence of Uttar Pradesh's heritage.

Chunar's Riverside Charm





Carpet hub



Carpets were first created as early as 2000 or 3000 B.C. and can be traced back to the Middle East. The art of carpet making was introduced by the great sultan Akbar (1556-1605), who brought in Persian weavers and experienced pattern painters to India. Mirzapur is renowned for its rich tradition of carpet weaving. Mirzapur carpets, often referred to as Mirzapur rugs or dhurries are highly regarded for their aesthetic appeal, quality, and craftsmanship.

Bhadohi, also known as the carpet city, is a small hamlet about 16 km away from the city of Varanasi. Known for its colourful, handmade carpets, Bhadohi is home to the one of the largest hand-knit and handwoven carpet industries in South Asia.

Mirzapur: The Carpet City... Weaving Elegance





Saikh Mohommed Razi's family was one of the first few carpet makers from Mirzapur. Till date, they are one of the biggest manufacturers of various types of carpets from Mirzapur.



Mirzapur was once famous for its brass industry, which used to employ lakhs of people in this district. Different people belonging to different castes like Kaseras, Bind, Kurmi, Teli, Vishwakarma, Yadav, Muslims, etc who work in this industry.



The situation is changing. There is struggle to upkeep the industry. The efforts of GoI are heading towards making it resilient.

Mirzapur's Artistry in Brass: Crafting Brilliance



Subah-e-Benaras: Defining the soul of Varanasi



'Subah-e-Benaras' encapsulates the unique blend of spirituality, culture, and tradition that defines Varanasi. It is a time when the city awakens to its timeless rituals and offers a profound and immersive experience for those seeking a deeper connection to India's spiritual and cultural heritage.



Ganga's Tranquil Wisdom



Aged Souls Share Lifetimes of Experience. Along the sacred river's banks, the elderly find solace and purpose, sharing their reservoir of wisdom. The Ganga becomes a conduit for generational narratives, where stories of a lifetime flow as gently as the river's sacred waters.



As the sun sets over the Ganga, the city's 80 ghats come alive with fervent devotion and tranquil beauty. Each ghat has its own unique essence, echoing the centuries-old spiritual legacy of Varanasi, where the sacred river meets the divine.

*Varanasi's 80 Ghats:
A Spectacle of Spiritual Serenity*



*Life in the Ganga:
A Tapestry of Resilience and Reverence*





Benaras' Avian Guests: Migratory Birds Grace the Ganga. Each year, the Ganga river in Varanasi becomes a temporary home for a myriad of migratory birds. Their graceful presence adds to the city's natural allure, transforming the river into a harmonious sanctuary for these winged travelers



*Boatmen's Daily Chore:
Guiding Graceful Ganga Journeys*



With unwavering dedication, these skilled oarsmen navigate the ever flowing Ganga, ferrying passengers and carrying traditions. Their rhythmic rowing transforms mundane tasks into poetic motions, as they steer their boats through the timeless waters of life along the river's meandering course.



Benaras Evenings: Boats and Meditative Serenity




As the sun dips below the horizon, boats on the Ganga become vessels of tranquility. Passengers seek spiritual solace, meditating on the sacred river's timeless flow. The merging of twilight, water, and meditation creates a serene and ethereal spectacle in Varanasi.

Boats at Rest, Preparing for Renewed Journeys





Lined up along the Ganga's ancient steps, boats find respite at nightfall. Their weary frames rest, anticipating the dawn's call to carry pilgrims and seekers on another day of spiritual and serene exploration in the timeless city of Varanasi.

A young priest in traditional orange and white attire is performing Ganga Aarti at night. He is holding a glowing lamp, and a shower of golden and pink petals is falling around him. The background is dark, with a faint blue light source visible. The scene is set at Dashashwamedh Ghat in Varanasi.

Igniting Ganga Aarti at Dashashwamedh Ghat, Varanasi. With unwavering devotion, a youthful priest kindles the sacred flames, illuminating the night's darkness. The age-old tradition of Ganga Aarti symbolizes the eternal connection between the river, spirituality, and the city of Varanasi.

Young Priest's Reverence





Divine Spectacle on Ghats



The Ganga Aarti at Dashashwamedh Ghat in Varanasi is a powerful and moving ritual that captures the essence of devotion, spirituality, and the deep reverence that Hindus hold for the sacred Ganges River. It is a must-see event for visitors in Varanasi and is an integral part of the city's cultural and religious heritage.



Amongst the treasures, a remarkable wooden marvel reveals 19 divine faces of Lord Vishnu, echoing the city's rich spiritual heritage. This shop is a portal to the sacred, offering seekers a glimpse into the profound traditions of Varanasi.

*Varanasi's Spiritual Emporium:
A Haven for Rites and Rituals*





Manikarnika Ghat: The Final Destination



Manikarnika Ghat is one of the most famous and revered cremation ghats along the Ganges River in Varanasi, India. It holds immense religious and cultural significance in Hinduism. While it is widely believed among Hindus that cremation at Manikarnika Ghat can lead to salvation (moksha) and direct passage to heaven, it's important to understand the religious and spiritual beliefs associated with this ghat. The ghat holds a unique place in the hearts of millions of Hindus who come to Varanasi seeking spiritual solace and salvation for their departed loved ones.

Eternal Flame of Spiritual Liberation



Amid the ancient rituals and sacred cremations at Manikarnika Ghat, the eternal flames illuminate the passage of souls, where life and death meet on the banks of the Ganges.



Pind Daan: Appeasing ancestors



Pind Daan is a deeply rooted tradition in Hinduism, and it reflects the importance of honoring and remembering one's ancestors. It is believed that by performing these rituals, the souls of the departed can find peace and progress in their spiritual journey in the afterlife. The specific customs and practices related to Pinda Daan may vary among different Hindu communities and regions.



Varanasi's Shopkeepers: Guardians of Heritage and Tradition



Bangali Tola in Varanasi is known for its diverse population and vibrant markets, where you can find various shops and vendors offering a wide range of products. Varanasi is famous for its delectable sweets and desserts, and Bangali Tola is no exception.



One may come across small shops or street vendors selling bidis. Bidis are a traditional form of smoking tobacco in India and are often handmade and wrapped in tendu or temburni leaves.

Kashi... Oldest Known Living City



'Benaras is older than history, older than tradition, older ever than legend and looks twice as old as all of them put together.'
- **Mark Twain**

Mr. Priyotosh Chowdhury, aged 65 years, runs a 'Dashakarma Bhandar' is one of the few Bengalis who is a resident of Varanasi.



As per historical documents, Bengalis started settling in Varanasi during the Pala empire around 800 CE. The Palas had a strong hold on Bengal and eastern Bihar, hence many Bengalis emigrated to this region and settled here. The city has a maximum population of Bengalis outside Bengal thus earning the name of Mini-Bengal.



Varanasi's timeless charm



Varanasi, a city steeped in tradition and spirituality, is renowned for its labyrinthine streets, mystical ghats along the Ganges, exquisite sarees, and a multitude of ancient temples. A sensory journey through India's cultural heart.

Guaranteeing liberation before & after...



In cities like Varanasi, it is not uncommon for individuals to earn their livelihood by working with the ashes of the deceased. This practice is deeply rooted in local traditions and is associated with various cultural and religious beliefs. Earning a livelihood from ashes is a reflection of the diverse ways in which culture, tradition, and spirituality intersect in different parts of India.





The National Mission for Clean Ganga (NMCG) is dedicated to preserving the holiness of the Ganga. They are actively raising awareness and investing in the upkeep of the riverbanks and ghats, ensuring a cleaner and more sacred Ganga for generations to come.

Let's Pledge for a green future

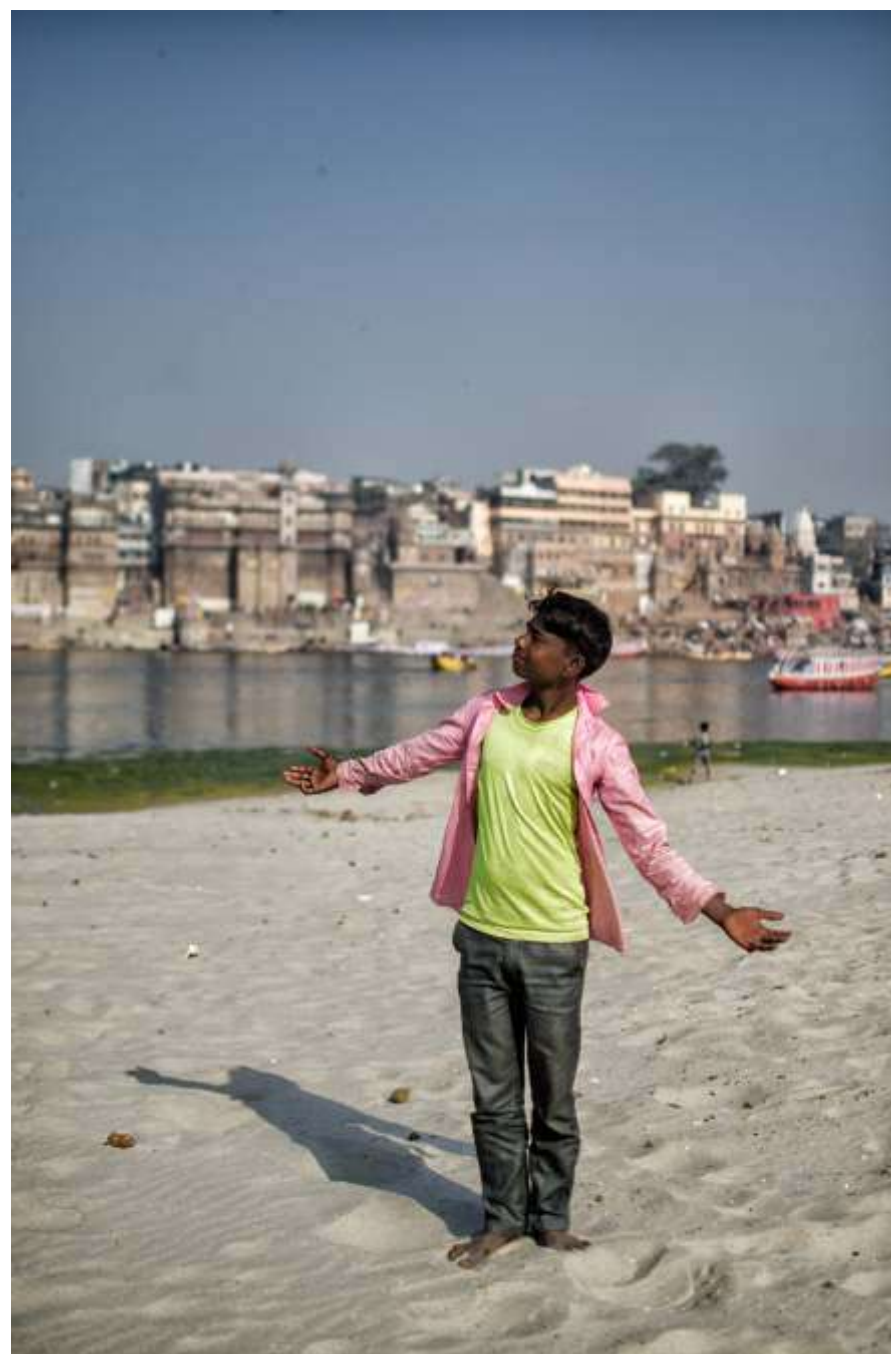




Humans of Ganga from the alleys of Varanasi

Varanasi with a rich cultural heritage, has a deep connection to music and the performing arts. The city has been a center for classical Indian music for centuries and has produced many renowned musicians and music teachers.

In the gentle whisper of the river's flow, the boy weaves a poignant tale of his timeless connection with the Ganga, a narrative of sacred moments, whispered dreams, and endless inspiration.





Elegance Woven with Tradition



Benarasi sarees are a testament to the artistry and skills of Indian weavers and artisans. They continue to be a symbol of elegance, tradition, and timeless beauty, making them an integral part of India's textile heritage. The origins of Benarasi sarees can be traced to the Mughal era, around the 14th century, when the art of weaving silk was introduced to the region. Benarasi sarees are not just garments; they are exquisite pieces of art that represent India's rich textile heritage and craftsmanship originating from the city of Varanasi. In recognition of their cultural and artistic significance, Benarasi sarees have been granted Geographical Indication (GI) status, highlighting their connection to the Varanasi region.

Wali Afzal, one of the very few Benarasi saree weaver, remains one of the few artisans who continue to practice the traditional hand-weaving techniques, thus preserving this timeless craft for generations to come.



Varanasi, the city of Benarasi sarees, is home to numerous saree shops and showrooms where one can explore and purchase these exquisite garments.

Knowledge Hub




Spread over approximately 1,300 acres, BHU is one of the largest residential campuses in Asia. It is a prestigious and renowned public university located in Varanasi, Uttar Pradesh, India. It is one of the oldest and most prominent universities in the country, known for its rich history, academic excellence, and cultural significance and is deeply connected to the cultural and spiritual heritage of the region.



Sarnath... in search of ultimate truth!!



Sarnath holds immense importance in Buddhist culture and history and is associated with the Ganges River. It houses a vast collection of sculptures, artifacts, and relics from various periods of Buddhist history and provides valuable insights into the art and culture of ancient India and Buddhism.



The Lower Ganga region, with its combination of economic activity, cultural richness, and ecological importance, remains a vital part of India and the Indian subcontinent. It continues to be a dynamic and evolving region with both opportunities and challenges.

The

LOWER GANGA

Varanasi ~ Ganga Sagar
1134 Kms



Capturing the Spirit of Chhath Puja



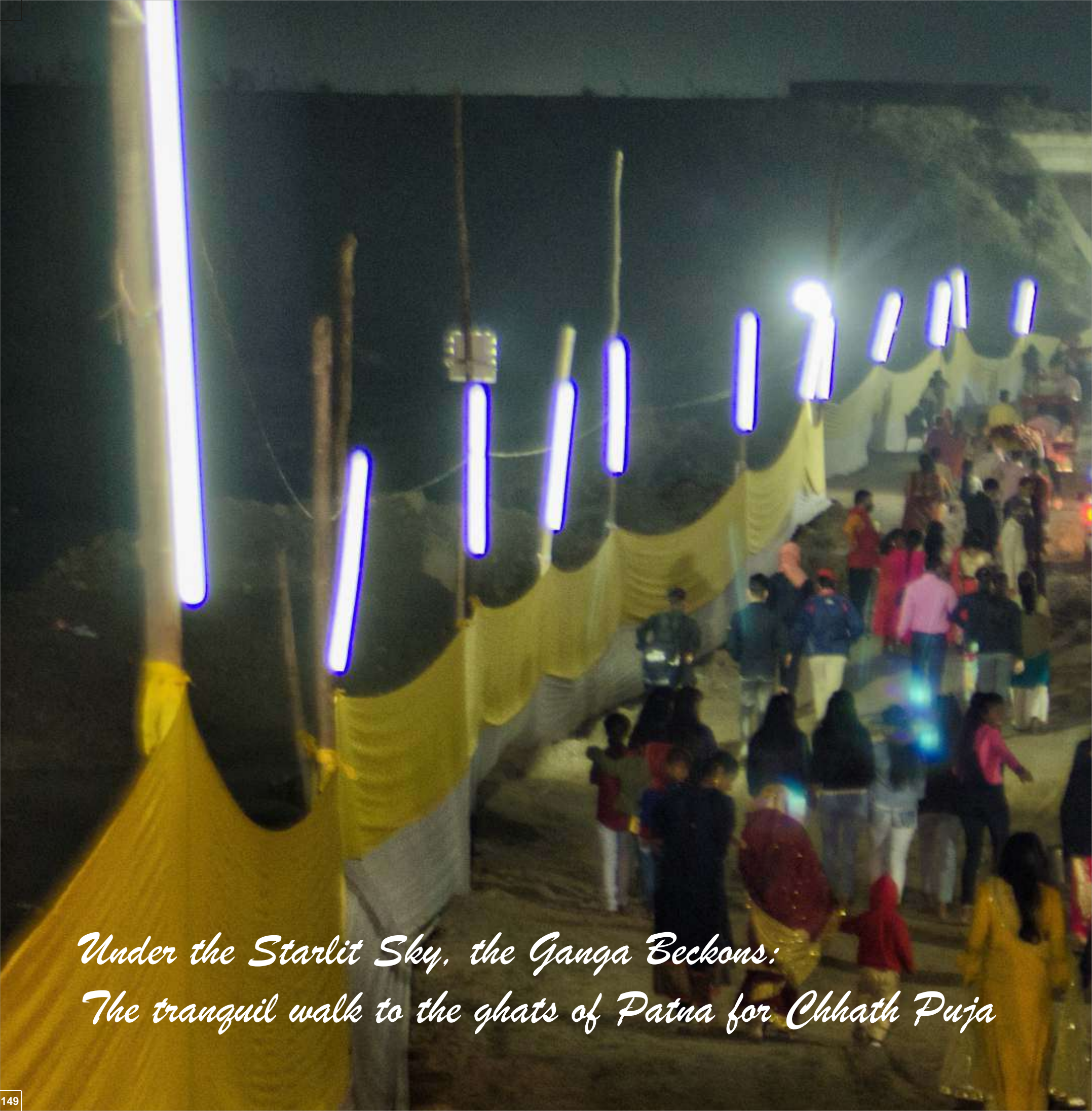
Chhath Puja is a deeply spiritual and culturally significant festival that reflects the reverence for nature and the Sun, which is considered the source of life and energy. It is celebrated with devotion, purity, and a sense of community, making it a unique and cherished tradition in the regions where it is observed. This festival is predominantly celebrated in the Indian states of Bihar, Jharkhand, eastern Uttar Pradesh, and some parts of Nepal.



Chhath Puja is a significant Hindu festival dedicated to the worship of the Sun, god, Lord Surya, and Chhathi Maiya. It involves elaborate rituals, fasting, and offerings to the Sun. Patna, the capital of Bihar, observes Chhath Puja with great enthusiasm, and it is one of the most prominent festivals in the region. Chhath Puja is a deeply spiritual and culturally significant festival that reflects the reverence for nature and the Sun, which is considered the source of life and energy.

Sacred Offerings and Divine Prasad





*Under the Starlit Sky, the Ganga Beckons:
The tranquil walk to the ghats of Patna for Chhath Puja*





Recognized Masters of Their Craft



Madhubani and Tikuli are both traditional Indian art forms known for their intricate and colorful designs. They are often created by skilled artisans, and each has its unique characteristics. These art forms are celebrated for their intricate designs and cultural significance.

Madhubani: National Padam shri Awardee **Bahua Devi** - Madhubani Painting. Making this art was an intrinsic part of a woman's household chores: tend the hearth, sweep the yard, paint the walls. A mother-in-law would welcome the bride marrying into her home with precisely drawn geometric patterns on the walls of her new bed chambers.

Tikuli: Tikulia Painting by State Awardee **Ashok Kumar Biswas**. Ashok Kumar Biswas is one of the pioneers among Tikuli artisans. He has worked hard to revive this ancient art of Tikuli painting which was almost forgotten. Tikuli Art originated in Patna and is believed to be 800 years old art.

Breathing Life into Deities...



Pathar Katti or black stones and marbles are valued for their aesthetic appeal, versatility, and durability. They continue to be an integral part of India's architectural and artistic traditions and are appreciated for their timeless beauty and utility in various applications.



Serene Landscapes and Lush Wetlands



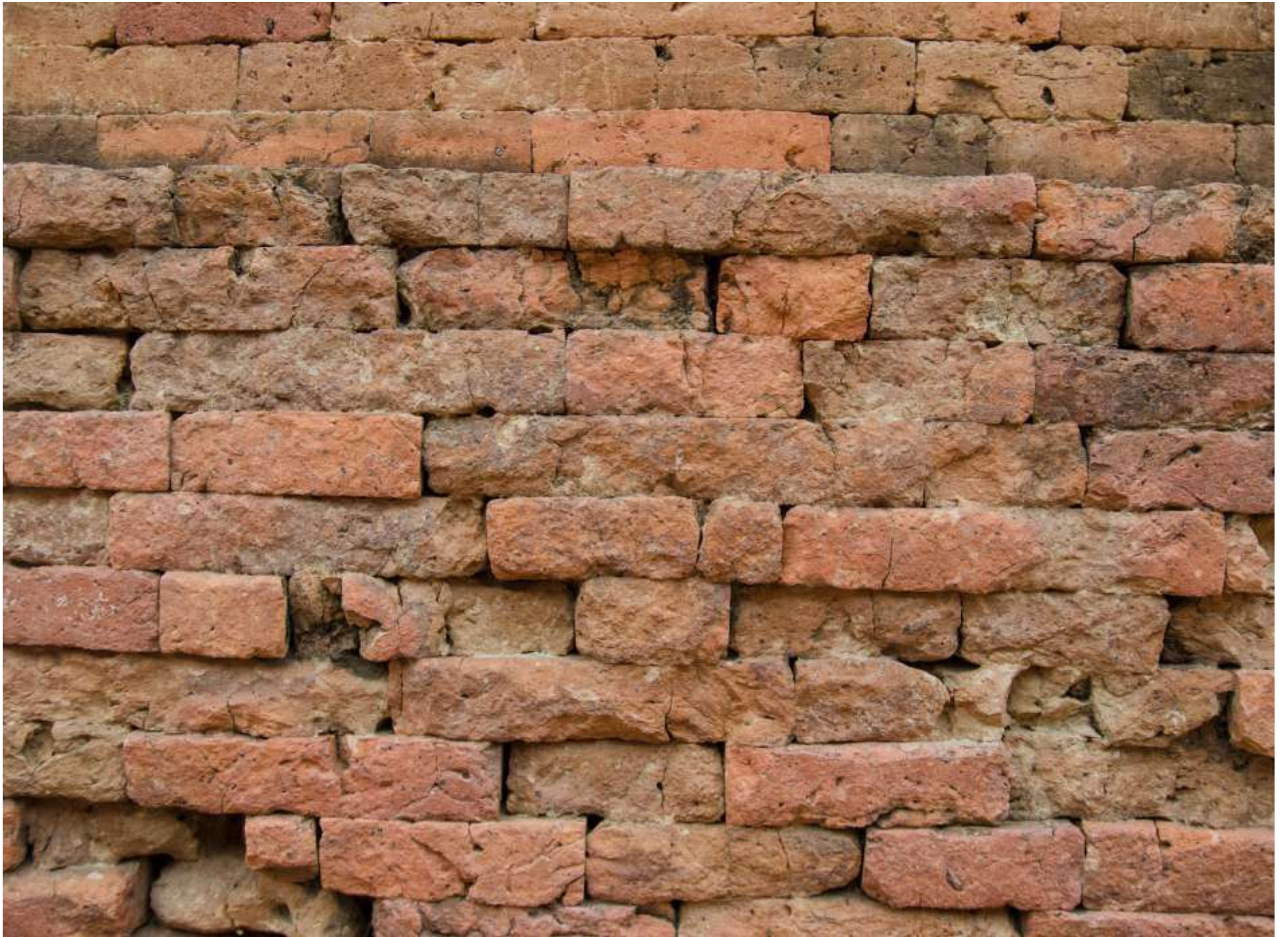
Patna's beauty lies beyond its cityscape – vast wetlands and picturesque landscapes create an oasis of tranquility. These natural wonders serve as a haven for wildlife and offer respite from urban hustle, painting a serene canvas where the city meets nature.





Nalanda University is an ancient seat of learning located in the state of Bihar, India. It is one of the most renowned and historic universities in the world and holds a special place in the history of education and Buddhism. Its rich history, significance in the world of academia, and the revival of its modern incarnation make it a unique institution with a global mission to promote education and cross-cultural understanding. Often considered the world's first residential university and flourished as a center of learning for several centuries and attracted scholars and students from various parts of the world.

Ancient seat of learning - Nalanda University





Where Knowledge Glistens

The awe-inspiring gold foil wall, a testament to the rich history and intellectual heritage of this ancient institution. A radiant symbol of wisdom and enlightenment.





In Search of Eternal Bliss - Bodh Gaya



Bodh Gaya is one of the most sacred pilgrimage sites for Buddhists and holds great significance in Buddhism. It is the place where Siddhartha Gautama, who later became known as Buddha, attained enlightenment under the Bodhi Tree. The main temple in Bodh Gaya is known as the Mahabodhi Temple, and it marks the location of this profound event.

Discovering Tranquility



The serene and tranquil atmosphere in and around the temple complex makes it a place of contemplation and inner peace.





Harnessing the Sacred Ganges for Reservoir Replenishment



The Ganga water is lifted from Hathidah in Patna district, transported in a special pipeline to 151 km, stored in huge reservoirs, treated in state-of-the-art water treatment plants, and finally supplied as potable water to households and institutions in these cities.



Liberation...



It is believed to be a way of ensuring peace and salvation for the souls of deceased ancestors. It is based on the belief that performing this ritual in Gaya, particularly at the Akshaya Vat or Vishnupad Temple, can free the souls of ancestors from the cycle of rebirth and help them attain moksha (liberation).

Pind Daan in Gaya is not only a religious practice but also an important cultural tradition that connects generations and strengthens family bonds. It reflects the belief in the continuity of life and the importance of showing reverence to one's ancestors.



Sacred embrace of the Ganga Ghats



In the sacred embrace of the Ganga ghats, generations partake in age-old rites. Mundan, the head-shaving ceremony, symbolizes purity and renewal. Pind Daan, offering prayers and remembrance for departed souls, honors the river's divine connection to life and death, a timeless tradition along the holy Ganges.



Honoring ancestors at Gaya's riverside



Amidst the tranquil environs of Gaya, multitudes gather to perform Pind Daan, a sacred ritual to honor their ancestors. The banks of the Falgu River bear witness to a profound connection between the living and the departed, as generations come together to seek blessings and offer gratitude.

Bountifulicious... feeding millions!!





The floodplains of the Ganga River are not just fertile lands; they are the lifeblood of daily livelihood, providing a source of sustenance through bountiful crop cultivation and an abundant source of fish, ensuring a consistent food supply for the people. This leads to a huge density of population residing in and around the fertile plains of Ganga.



Charming Chandannagar Beauty



Renowned for its colonial past as a French settlement, Chandan Nagar was a French colony from 1673 to 1952. The French established a trading post here during the 17th century, and the town grew under French influence. Chandan Nagar's colonial history, French influence, and cultural diversity make it a unique and historically significant destination for tourists and history enthusiasts. The town's architecture, museums, and festivals continue to attract visitors who want to explore its rich heritage. Chandan Nagar stand built during the settlement of French India along the River which is about 700 m in length. It is a popular spot for local people and tourist who love to stroll around. Chandannagar is a city in the Hooghly District of West Bengal, located on the banks of Hooghly River. The town was one of the 5 settlements of French India. Indo-French architect is seen in the colonial bungalows and other monuments.

Majestic Imambara



The Hooghly Imambara stands as a symbol of the rich cultural and historical heritage of the region. Its architectural beauty and cultural importance make it an intriguing destination for history enthusiasts and tourists interested in exploring the diverse cultural landscape of West Bengal. Known for its impressive Mughal and Indo-Islamic architecture, Imambara exquisite details, including intricate designs, arches, and domes. The building's grandeur is a testament to the architectural skills of that era.



Kolkata's Coastal Life: Fisherfolks





Known as the 'Green Belt of India' due to its rich soil and extensive agricultural activity. The Ganga Plains is not only a hub of agricultural and economic activities but also a region deeply rooted in culture and traditions. The daily life of the people here reflects the interplay of tradition and modernity in a densely populated and dynamic environment.



Ganga: The Carrier



The Ganges River (Ganga) is one of the major rivers in India and plays a significant role in the daily lives of millions of people who live in its vicinity. In certain areas, especially in rural and semi-rural regions along the Ganges, the river serves as a means of daily commute for local residents.

It's important to note that the river can be subject to seasonal fluctuations, monsoon flooding, and other challenges that affect daily commuting and transportation. While jute mills have played a significant role in the region's economy, it's important to note that labour conditions and worker rights have been areas of concern, leading to labor movements and reforms aimed at improving the lives of jute mill workers in the Ganga Plains.

Blossoms Galore: Kolkata's Flower Market



Amidst the bustling streets of Kolkata lies a vibrant paradise of colors and fragrances, the city's beloved flower market. Here, the heart of the city beats with the rhythms of trade, as vendors and buyers engage in a lively dance of blooms, offering a kaleidoscope of nature's beauty.





Goddess in Making!!



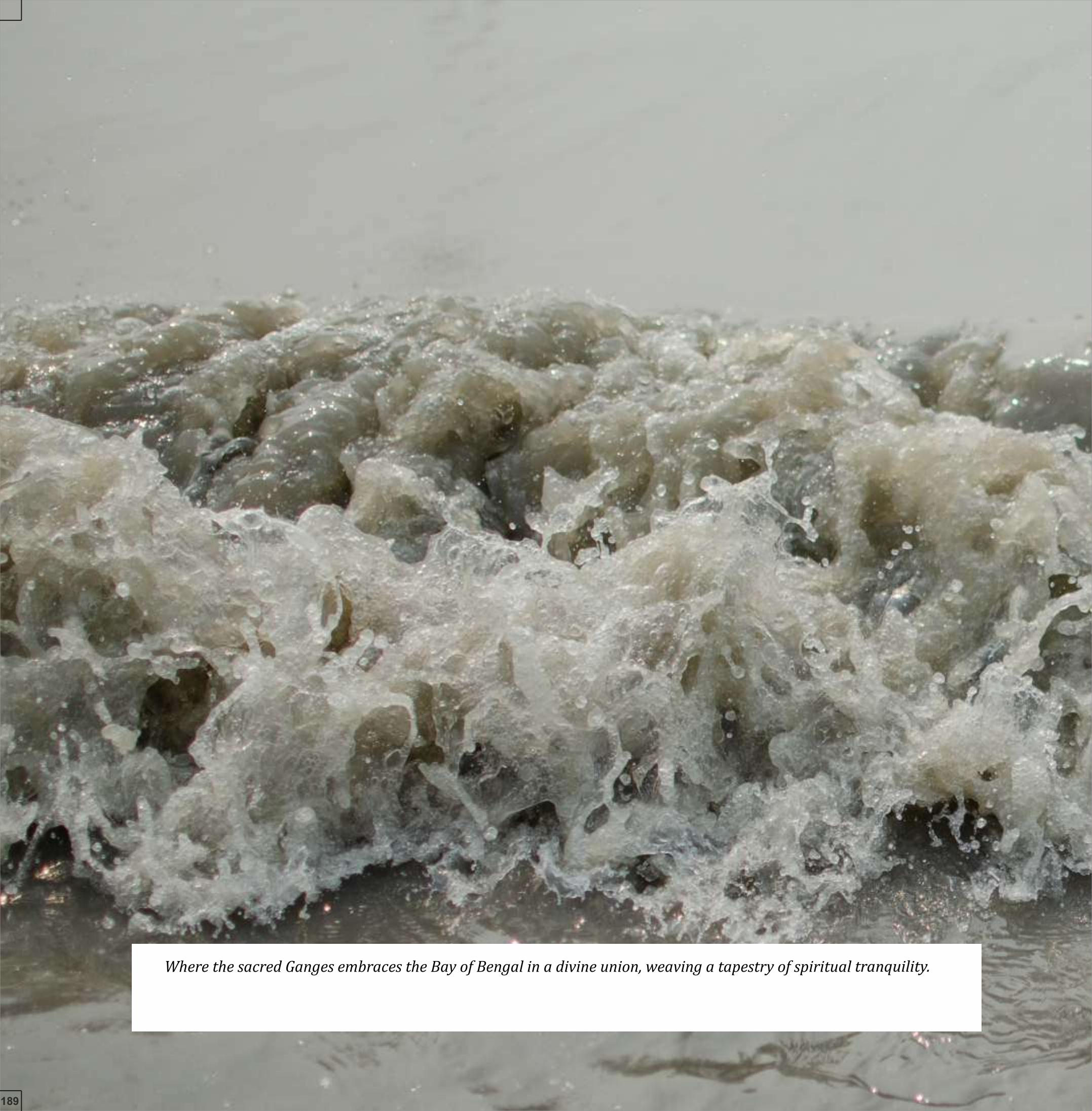
Kumartuli is home to a thriving community of skilled artisans. It is a vibrant and culturally significant neighborhood that plays a pivotal role in the religious and artistic life of Kolkata and the broader region. It is a well-known neighborhood located in the city of Kolkata, West Bengal. These artisans are primarily involved in the art of sculpting clay idols, with a particular emphasis on idols of deities such as Durga, Kali, Saraswati, Ganesha, and others.

Melange of Culture & Society



Bonedi Bari Durga Puja is a reflection of the rich cultural and social fabric of Kolkata and West Bengal. It combines religious devotion, artistic expression, and a sense of heritage, making it a unique and cherished tradition among the aristocratic families of the region. These families have a long-standing tradition of observing Durga Puja in their ancestral homes, which often have historical and architectural significance. These homes are often characterized by classic Bengali architecture and are considered cultural and historical treasures.





Where the sacred Ganges embraces the Bay of Bengal in a divine union, weaving a tapestry of spiritual tranquility.

Serene Sanctity at Ganga Sagar



Ganga Sagar... A sea of Faith



Ganga Sagar represents the fusion of spirituality, culture, and nature. It is a place of pilgrimage where devotees seek spiritual purification, and it also highlights the importance of environmental conservation in preserving its unique ecosystem.



In search of Spirituality...





Sadhus and ascetics travel extensively to holy sites as part of their spiritual quest. They lead a simple, ascetic life and often live in temporary shelters near sacred rivers or temples. Their pilgrimage is a continuous journey in search of enlightenment.



Caregiving all the way...





Some individuals come not only to seek blessings but also to serve others. They volunteer their time and effort at temples, ashrams, or during large religious gatherings.



From the windows of Faith...



These individuals are drawn to these sacred destinations for a variety of reasons, and their journeys reflect their faith, devotion, and the importance of these places in their lives.

*Admiring
the Vast Expanse*





Connecting India.....



Many pilgrims come from different parts of India and the world to Ganga Sagar to fulfill a lifelong dream of taking a dip in the holy waters of the Ganges. India's spiritual richness attracts people from around the world. International pilgrims come to experience India's diverse religious and cultural landscape.



Living the essence of Vasudhaiiva Kutumbakam



Repeating the divine journey to Sab Teerth, but Ganga Sagar is a once-in-a-lifetime experience – each visit a pilgrimage, every moment a reflection of eternal spirituality





A testament to devotion



Known for its cultural and spiritual significance, and it is primarily associated with the confluence of the Ganges River (known as the Ganga) and the Bay of Bengal. The annual pilgrimage to Ganga Sagar is a testament to the deep-rooted religious traditions of India.

A profound spiritual journey



They represent a unique and revered segment of India's spiritual landscape. Their ascetic lifestyle, strong religious convictions, and participation in major religious gatherings make them a significant and intriguing aspect of Hinduism and Indian culture.



*Unveiling the mystical
hues of Ganga Sagar:
Naga Sadhus*

Considered protectors of Hindu dharma and are sometimes involved in social and cultural issues. They are often associated with the worship of Lord Shiva and are frequently seen during major religious gatherings and festivals in India.











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गंगे



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