



CLOSE UP

Into the Indian Wild

Amoghavarsha, a software engineer-turned-wildlife photographer, shares his love for nature and wildlife with Alok Brahmhatt.



Amoghavarsha

- This 25-year old was born in Chitradurga, 200km north of Bengaluru.
- He has a degree in Computer Science Engineering.
- His photographs have been used by the WWF, *National Geographic* and many other conservation organisations.
- At present, he freelances for magazines and does assignments for various wildlife and tourism organisations.

Amoghavarsha grew up around books. He developed a deep interest in nature and wildlife at an early age, when he began to read Dr Shivarama Karanth's *Adbhuta Jagathu* (Wonderful World) and jungle stories of Jim Corbett and Kenneth Anderson. Renowned naturalist, David Attenborough also inspired Amoghavarsha to learn more about wildlife and visit forests frequently. He picked up photography simultaneously. Borrowing his friend's Nikon Coolpix, he would look around and grab every good opportunity, for a great photograph.

Amoghavarsha's real travels started only when he began his first job at Amazon.com. During his time there, he began visiting forests more frequently. He eventually bought himself a brand new DSLR and honed his skills in nature and wildlife photography.

Following the Call of His Heart

Today, Amoghavarsha works part-time with a startup venture called Asklaila.com. Thankfully for him, his employers have been supportive of his passion. "But I've always felt that I just cannot get enough of being in jungles", he explains.



"And following my heart is something I've always done—which of course leaves me with a great deal of satisfaction."

Apart from wildlife, he also pursues portraiture, people and cultural photography. "I shoot anything that catches my eye and what I think should be seen by a larger audience", he justifies.

When a Photographer Thinks 'Wild'

Amoghavarsha always keeps his equipment and luggage ready, so that he is prepared to go into the wild anytime. "In my head, I am always in the wild", this photographer says. "It's only when I

⚠ This was one of the camp elephants at the Kabini forest office. The elephants here are very peaceful. However, it is not recommended to get so close to any wild elephant.

⚠ Everyday, during hot summers, elephants form groups and walk many kilometres towards the Kabini backwaters.



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Forest Galotes, found mostly in the Western Ghats, are a little smaller than the Garden Lizard. The pleasant background and afternoon rain made the light quite subtle for this shot.



Tips by Amoghavarsha

- Understand the animal before you photograph it. That is one thing I constantly kept learning—to be a naturalist before being a wildlife photographer.
- Try to experiment with different angles and views. Make sure of the sunrise and sunset directions while shooting landscapes.
- Always keep your equipment ready, so that you are prepared to shoot any spontaneous action.
- Keep adjusting your equipment as the light changes. For example, increase ISO as dusk sets in.
- Always try to frame your shot. Think how the beauty of the subject can be enhanced by your view.

📍 Nilgiri Tahrs are endemic to the high altitude grasslands of Western Ghats. The best place to shoot them is the Eravikulam National Park, though they are also found in the Thekkady forest ranges.

sniff the ground for some insects or salt, so I started to photograph it. Suddenly, the bear started walking towards me. I didn't realise how close it was to me, as I was immersed in photographing it. Then my guide clapped at once. The bear immediately turned and ran away. It was a lucky day as he could have changed his course and charged at us. Bears are known to be dangerous animals—more dangerous than tigers and leopards, if you stand too close.”

belief—that understanding the natural habitat and its precious inhabitants is fundamental. He ensures that he never harms wildlife, while photographing them.

Amoghavarsha would like people to eliminate their fear of wild animals and admire them instead, through his photographs. To sum it up, he quotes Baba Dioum, “In the end we will conserve only what we love. We will love only what we understand. We will understand only what we are taught.” 📷

Bringing Human Beings Closer to Nature

Despite the adventure and life-threatening moments, Amoghavarsha maintains a firm

To see more of Amoghavarsha's work, visit www.amoghavarsha.com

📍 I saw this lone Sambar Stag on a rock, gazing into the sunset. I waited for a long time till the sun went down, and tried to find the right angle to get the sun between the antlers.

Gadgets & Gear

- Amoghavarsha calls the Nikon D80 his workhorse.
- He has a Sigma 105mm f/2.8 macro lens and a range of Nikon lenses: 70-200mm f/2.8 VR, 50mm f/1.8, 12-24mm f/4, and 18-55mm f/4-5.6.
- His accessories include a Nikon 2x teleconverter, a Nikon SB-800 Speedlight, Manfrotto tripod and an IR remote.
- He uses a Lowepro bag that is useful in all weather conditions.

have to come back to the city that I have to mentally prepare myself.”

But when it comes to capturing wildlife, he believes in the art that is good composition. “You shoot several frames in burst mode and experiment with various angles and shots”, he elaborates. “The Sambar deer looking towards the sunset is a classic example. I got the composition in just one shot for which I had to lie down on the ground, at the right distance.” Sometimes when the animal is in motion it is difficult to compose the frame. In such cases, he frames in a way that there is scope to crop later.

Every Trip is an Adventure

Every wildlife photographer will have his share of wild and adventurous stories. Amoghavarsha is no exception. “A wildlife photographer friend and I had been driving up and down a wildlife sanctuary in South India. We had to drop a forest officer to his quarters and return to our room on the top of the hill in the night, and it was an hour's drive up. Wildlife photography can be very strenuous, as one needs to strain the eyes constantly for spotting animals, so we were quite tired after almost 12 hours of driving. We were too sleepy and I was

finding it hard to drive. Our room was just ten minutes away, when we saw something cross the road. My friend announced that it must be a tiger. I didn't believe him, since it is easy to mistake a spotted deer, or even a tree trunk, for a tiger. But a few metres ahead, we did see a tiger, burning bright at midnight (it was just about to turn 12).

We followed it for two minutes. After that, he leaped and disappeared into a thicket.”

Sometimes a wildlife photographer needs to hold on tight to his lucky charms. Amoghavarsha relates another breathtaking incident. “When I was trekking in the forests of Tamil Nadu, I saw a bear. It was trying to

📍 These owls were shot in Bharatpur. Late mornings are a good time to catch these nocturnal birds.

📍 I captured this shot of a Scarlet Minivet at a coffee estate. The coffee beans seen around the bird invite a lot of insects—which is the staple diet for these birds.

