

## #FOOD-REVIEW

### Bhalo Khabo@ Howrah Express

One can be spoiled for choice as the main course at The Howrah Express has cyclical menu.



Sadhana Garg  
Journalist & social entrepreneur

If you are a foodie who lives and loves to eat, then the current Bengali food festival 'Howrah Express' being held at Crowne Plaza, Sitapura is just what you should check out.

A 15-day festival curated by a MasterChef flown in from Calcutta it has a cyclical Bengali menu - simply put each day has different dishes to offer. Challenging as it is since Bengali cuisine has been deemed one of the most aromatic and varied cuisine in the country "We have not only flown in spices, but even our cow's ghee is from Kolkata," points out Chef Vimal.

Why ghee? One may ask, "because the cows feed in green pastures with high water content in the fodder - imparting a different aroma to the ghee that cannot be had in Rajasthan." So the Moong Dal Bhaia is a treat nothing like what we make here. The moog dal is one of the most underper-

unlike the running one made in this part of the world. The green peas Puri and ghee Bhaat accompanied by saffron rice went well. Vegetarian and non-vegetarian Biryani of course is the offshoot of Mughal influence on Bengali cuisine.

For carnivorous beings there is fish Chingri malai curry and the Thakurbari mutton that need mention amongst the many more. The latter derives its name from a place in Kolkata famous for its mutton. Posto, fried cashew paste, add to this the meticulously prepared onion garlic paste - all give it the Thakurbari back and flavour. Typically the Bengali food is pungent but Chef Vimal says, "We toned it down keeping in mind the local taste and also because of the in house guests."

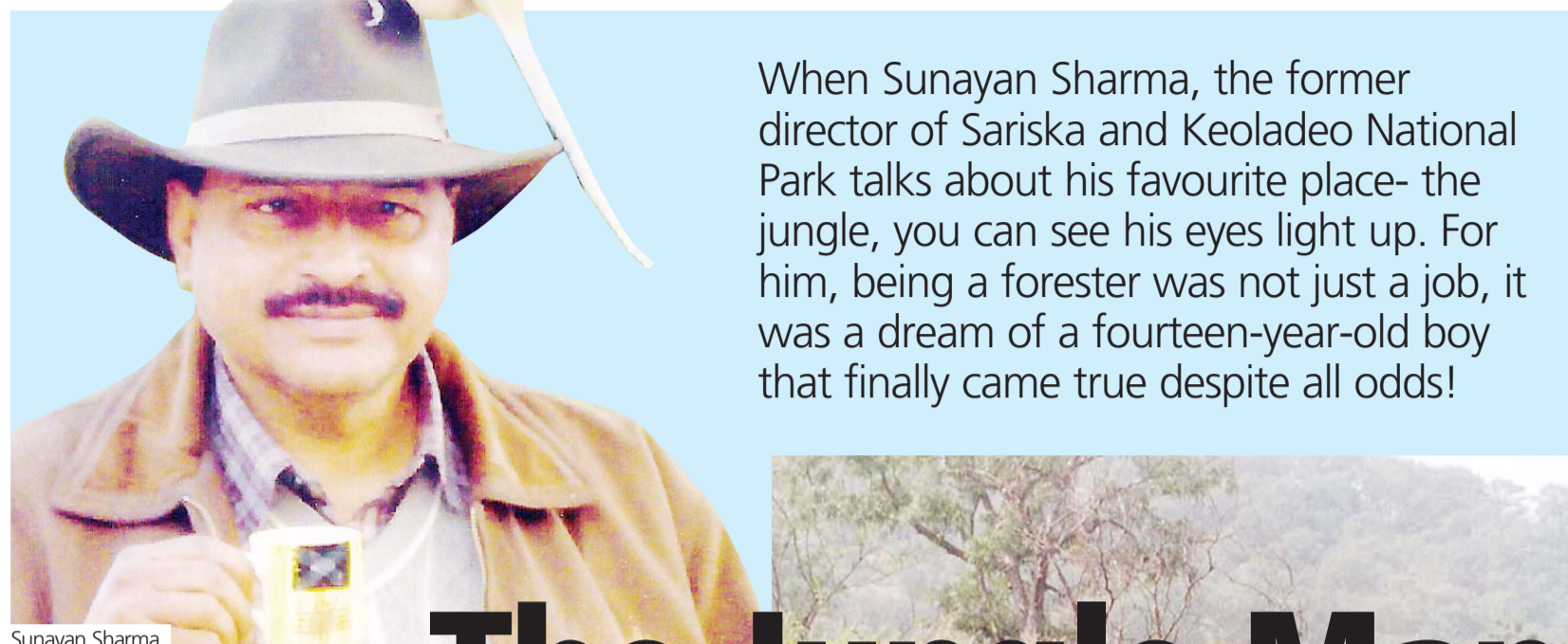
Kochi pathar mangsho jhol or khasir mangshor jhol was light yet delicious recipe of authentic Bengali mutton curry cooked with large chunks of jumbo potatoes. This red soupy mutton curry called Mangshor jhol (in Bengali) had a thick layer of oil on its top, and contained juicy tender mutton pieces with buttery soft potatoes. One can be spoiled for choice as the main course at the Howrah Express has cyclical



forming of all dals in the hospitality sector which is hugely besotted by whole black urad and Rajma. The flavoursome avatar of the dal must come from roasting it on slow fire and then cooking it in a heavy bottom Deg.

The Aloo Jhinga Posto, as is evident, is cooked in a creamy gravy of Posto or poppy seeds - both the combo and the taste is unique only to the Bengali cuisine. Jhinga in this case denotes Torai. The Chenna Daina or paneer with its rich gravy was reminiscent of Kashmiri gravly Palak Bhaia a medley of tarkari. One missed the distinct flavour of "Phul" Palak - round shaped Palak leaves somewhat thicker than our Palak and a native of the Bengal region.

The Mirchi Ka Salan, the jaggery and tamarind chutney - and kaccha ami Lauji were finger licking. The sweet chutney is thick and gooey-



Sunayan Sharma.



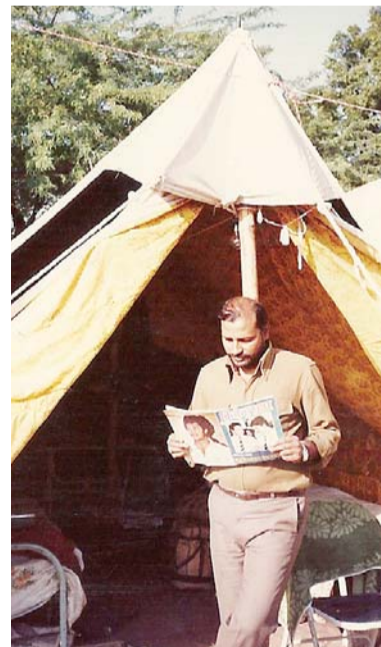
Shailaza Singh  
Published author, poet and a YouTuber

## The Jungle Man (...1)

Though he has officially retired as a forest officer a decade ago, you will always see him wearing a forester's hat. He loves talking about tigers, birds, cheetahs and anything that moves. For Sunayan Sharma, the former director of Sariska and Keoladeo National Park, even after years of retirement, the jungle is where his heart is.

However, in his early years, forestry was never a career choice for Sunayan Sharma. His maternal grandfather Pandit Shival Sharma and father Pandit Vachaspati Shastri were well known freedom fighters. He has five brothers and one sister who have either been scholars or freedom fighters. Sunayan himself chose to study mechanical engineering because he felt that was the right thing to do at the time since mechanical engineering was much in demand. However, that was not his dream. He says, "When I was about fourteen years of age, a distant cousin who was a forest ranger had come for a wedding in the family in Agra. I was fascinated by his bevy of hats and attire. The cousin also regaled all of us with stories of the jungle which left a deep impression on me. However, during my growing up years, I decided to take up engineering since my elder brother was studying to be a doctor.

**Serendipity**  
But destiny had something else in store for this engineer. After finishing his course, Sunayan was working with Kamal and Company for a



Staying in camp pursuing Sr Wildlife management Course at WII, Dehradun.



Jungle patrolling.

luggage carriage project in Jaipur. He was on a look out for a better job because he wasn't satisfied with the one, he had. He says, "I had chosen mechanical engineering because it is said to be the best and the most in demand. However, I soon realized the paucity of jobs in this field. My classmates who were civil engineers got jobs but I had not got a good job. Those days I was staying with a cousin who knew of my fascination for the forest. One day, he found that the forest department had taken out a vacancy and he got the form right away. I was overjoyed to see the form. All I knew was that it was a key to getting a job in the forest as an officer."

Didn't the family members object? "I didn't ask any one when I enrolled into the course at the Wildlife Institute of India at Dehradun. But when they found out about the course, they weren't happy. But they did not protest

## #AFORESTER'SDIARY

much. Soon, they saw how happy I was and that was the end of their reservations."

When his marriage was being arranged, he was very candid with his wife-to-be. "I told her that she should be prepared for anything and everything. Most of the times, I was posted in the jungle while my wife and children lived in the closest town.

**No Regrets**  
So, does he regret missing his children's growing up years? He says, "If you want to be a real forester, you have to pass a lot of time in the jungle, which is a non-family station. Your family stays away. For example, I kept my family at Alwar during my posting in Sariska. So, I used

to visit them once in a week or eight days. Once my children had an annual function and my wife insisted that I should come. It so happened that on that very day I got the mountain behind the Sariska Palace and see the other side of the mountain which nobody had seen so far. I thought I would make it in time for the annual function. However, when I went there, I saw it was a full-fledged village. I interacted with the villagers, understood the place and by the time I came down the mountain, it was 9 pm and the children had already come back home from the function. But then, this is what my life has always been and my family knows that. My wife has been a single parent for most of her life. Luckily, our neighbour was Shama Sharma, who was former president's Shankar Dayal Sharma's sister-in-law. I used to use her phone to communicate with my family.

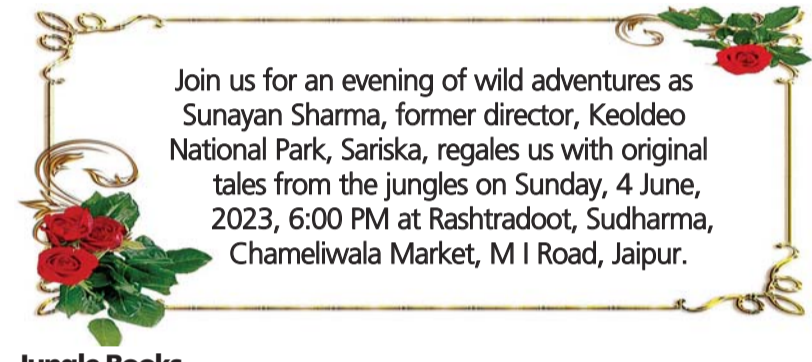


## World Cider Day

Made from crisp and juicy apples, cider is a beloved drink that has fans literally all over the world and, in some places, it has even developed a bit of a cult following. From the freshly pressed non-alcoholic variety to the hard-crafted hard ciders that offer a huge array of flavours, World Cider Day is meant to appreciate them all. A crisp, refreshing drink that embodies summers in a glass. Made from freshly pressed apples, it's the perfect companion for cosy evenings.



During Field Exercise in Jungles of Kullu in 1971.



## Jungle Books

What impressed me was that he had a philosophy about forests that they are a valuable piece of life literally snatched from the greedy eyes of builders or the pressure of the population where schools could be built and hospitals could be erected and dwellings in lakhs could be made to accommodate the burgeoning population.

He believed that it is the duty of the forest department to honour this sacrifice of the society and the people. He frankly admits that he did not join the forest services for this great philosophy but joined it for the glamour. The young lad struck by the glamour of his cousin who used to wear different hats.

He also explains how he came to write books about the wild life. He says, "the forests can be preserved only if the general public has a desire to protect it. Hence writing books now to activate the imagination of the masses again became essential to keep the interest of the public alive."

Most of them are about his experiences in the jungle. What's more is

He says that almost after 90 years of Jim Corbett there was almost a lull in writing about forests. The narrative of these books was exciting and involved the tiger and other animals. But with the ban on shikar those narratives disappeared. Almost after 50-60 years, Sunayan Sharma wrote these books to describe the beauty, uniqueness, mystique of the forests.

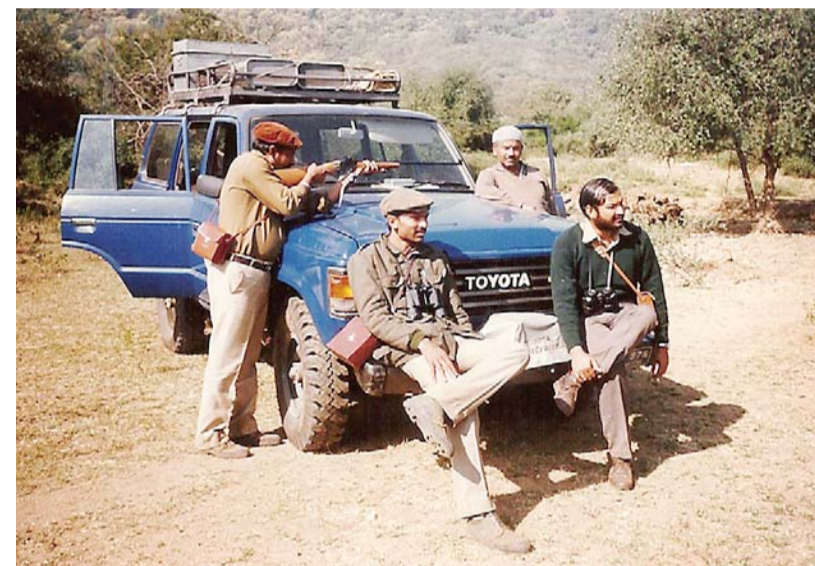
These books after his retirement in 2010 to describe the beauty, uniqueness, mystique of the forests. He says, "the forests can be preserved only if the general public has a desire to protect it. Hence writing books now to activate the imagination of the masses again became essential to keep the interest of the public alive."



During the annual wildlife census at Sariska.



Sunayan Sharma with his wife Dr Renu Sharma.



Field Exercise -Training at WII.

that before he decided to write, he enrolled for a master's course in English literature to fine tune his writing skills. Sunayan says, "I not only wanted to fine tune my English skills but also read the classics of English."

His stories about the jungle are fascinating. They are about his myriad experiences like how he and his team were surrounded by elephants or how he narrowly escaped a tiger or even how he almost saw a ghost in the jungle. How does he remember all these incidents? "From the time I became a forest officer, I used to keep a daily diary of all the events and happenings in the jungle. That was a mandate we

all had to follow. Over the years, I have recorded all these incidents in my diary and that is where my books come from."

## The Real Forests

What was the reason of putting these stories to paper? "I believe that most people don't even know what a forest feels like. At least, I didn't, till the time I actually started working as a forest officer. Forests have a stereotypical image in movies or media. I have spent thousands of nights in the jungle; most of the times in the chowkis where we had a non-descript charpoy to rest where my legs used to forever hang out. I believe spending nights like these have helped me to truly understand a jungle. Had I been one of those who just come like tourists and simply ask their staff about the happenings, who just nod their heads and go back to their merry lives, perhaps I wouldn't have ever gotten an idea of what a jungle is really like."

"I used to reach the chowki in the night, sit on my own, make a bonfire & have a couple of drinks. My driver would sit with the guard of the chowki and ask him about his society. Pedal cycles give even the poorest people in the world access to transport services. It's a chance for people to demand improvements to road safety and cycling mobility through a change in policies and measurable activity that protects and promotes the safety of riders and pedestrians."

"I have made chowkis in places which no one could dream of. I had my own design and style of making these chowkis. I used to build these two rooms on the ground floor and my room used to be on the first floor. That is where I spent most of my time in the course of my career."

To be continued...  
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## #FITNESS

### World Bicycle Day



The bicycle is one of the most beneficial inventions for your personal health and for the health of the environment. Get out and get some sustainable exercise.

The bicycle is one of the most important inventions in the history of the planet. It provides millions of people with a means of transport powered by nothing other than their bodies. It's practical, reliable, and helps one to stay fit. Many find that it's a fun and hassle-free way to get around and take care of daily tasks.

Investing in pedestrian and cycle routes in cities can help cut the rate of deaths while also taking traffic off the roads and investing in safer modes of intra-city travel. Promoting cycling can also help to reduce poverty.

The theme for this year is "Riding Together for a Sustainable Future." As we celebrate World Bicycle Day, here we look at some of the health benefits of cycling:

**Weight Control**  
Cycling raises metabolic rate, builds muscle and helps in burning body fat. When combined with a healthy eating regime, cycling can prove to be an effective way in reducing weight. Research has shown that a good hour of cycling can help in burning 400 to 1000 calories, subject to the intensity and the rider's metabolism.

## Improved Cardiovascular health

Cycling as a regular activity can help you deal with high blood pressure issues and might avert many heart-related issues. Cycling often helps in boosting your heart's health and many times minimizes the risk of cardiac arrest and other such issues.

**Boost Lungs' Health**  
Regular cycling can also increase the health and stamina of your lungs. During cycling, the lungs get a regular supply of fresh oxygen and the increased breathing rate allows the development of muscles around the lungs.

## Boosts Mental Health

Cycling can be helpful in easing feelings of stress, depression, or anxiety. Cycling is also helpful in social well-being and inculcates the feeling of personal mastery and solidarity.



## THE WALL



## BABY BLUES



By Rick Kirkman & Jerry Scott

## ZITS



By Jerry Scott & Jim Borgman