

# SPAN

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International  
Appeal

Where Vegans  
Shop

Gandhi Institute  
in the U.S.

How Do  
We Share  
Our  
Planet?



A LETTER  
FROM THE  
PUBLISHER



How do we share our planet?" is the question on our cover, accompanied by a stunning photo of one of California's magnificent, ancient sequoia trees. My wife and I were fortunate to have a chance to see the sequoias firsthand, and were humbled by their majesty. Their survival and witness through the millennia make one realize our responsibility to nature and the environment, and give one hope for the future. These prehistoric trees are now protected and will remain part of the ecosystem for centuries more.

This hope, that there are steps we can take to preserve our environment, inspires a whole range of articles in this issue, beginning with Laurinda Keys Long's interview with Mike Pandey, a hero not only in India, but around the world. Pandey uses his talents to make films—films that have saved entire species, such as India's vultures and whale sharks, the world's largest fish, from probable extinction. His story shows that one person can make a difference. At the same time, he promotes the idea of allowing villagers to benefit from programs that protect wildlife habitats. We need to educate and involve each other in solutions.

That's what Bharati Chaturvedi has done as well. As Erica Lee Nelson tells us, Chaturvedi's NGO, Chintan, works directly with the ragpickers and rubbish collectors who are vital to a system of recycling and reuse that benefits our environment and that many other countries, including the United States, are relearning. Direct interaction with those who need clean water and sanitation is also the philosophy behind Water.org, an American nonprofit group that makes loans to local groups who install pipes and taps, Deepanjali Kakati tells us. Indians and Americans working together is also one key to the success of Wildlife SOS, as detailed by Lisa Swenarski de Herrera. Americans are donating their skills in media and information technology to raise funds for the work of their Indian partners who rescue sloth bears, peacocks, and all variety of wildlife.

You'll also find in this issue the inspiring story of Indian American artist Delna Dastur by Nelson. Dastur's recent solo art show in New Delhi conveyed the conflict and balance between nature and machinery.

Movements to preserve the environment—such as the establishment of national parks across the United States—have a long history in America. It's interesting to remember that Arbor Day, a commemoration in all 50 states, has been marked since 1872 by planting trees and teaching children about the need to care for the ecosystem. And the more recent Earth Day, also started in the United States, is 40 years old this year. We hope you will enjoy the beautiful images we've printed to commemorate these days.

There are also some exciting pictures to illustrate Steve Fox's article on how Harley-Davidson motorcycles became part of the American cultural tapestry, from movies to songs, to clothing, and how beautiful design, expert craftsmanship, and just plain fun, have made them popular throughout the world, most recently in India.

The connections between Indians and Americans in different endeavors just keep multiplying. Jane Varner Malhotra tells us about the Indian American professor who inspired James Madison University to create the student-run Mahatma Gandhi Center for Global Nonviolence in Virginia, and about two of the many Indian Americans working in the White House. Richa Varma profiles Dhaya Lakshminarayanan, a young woman of Indian heritage who has taken up the American-born profession of being a stand-up comedian. She and others like her are shaking up stereotypes.

Finally, as we continue our year-long celebration of SPAN's 50th anniversary, take a look at our new Web site design at <http://span.state.gov>. As always, we want to know what you think!

*Michael Pelletier*

# What We Understand, We Respect and Protect

By LAURINDA KEYS LONG

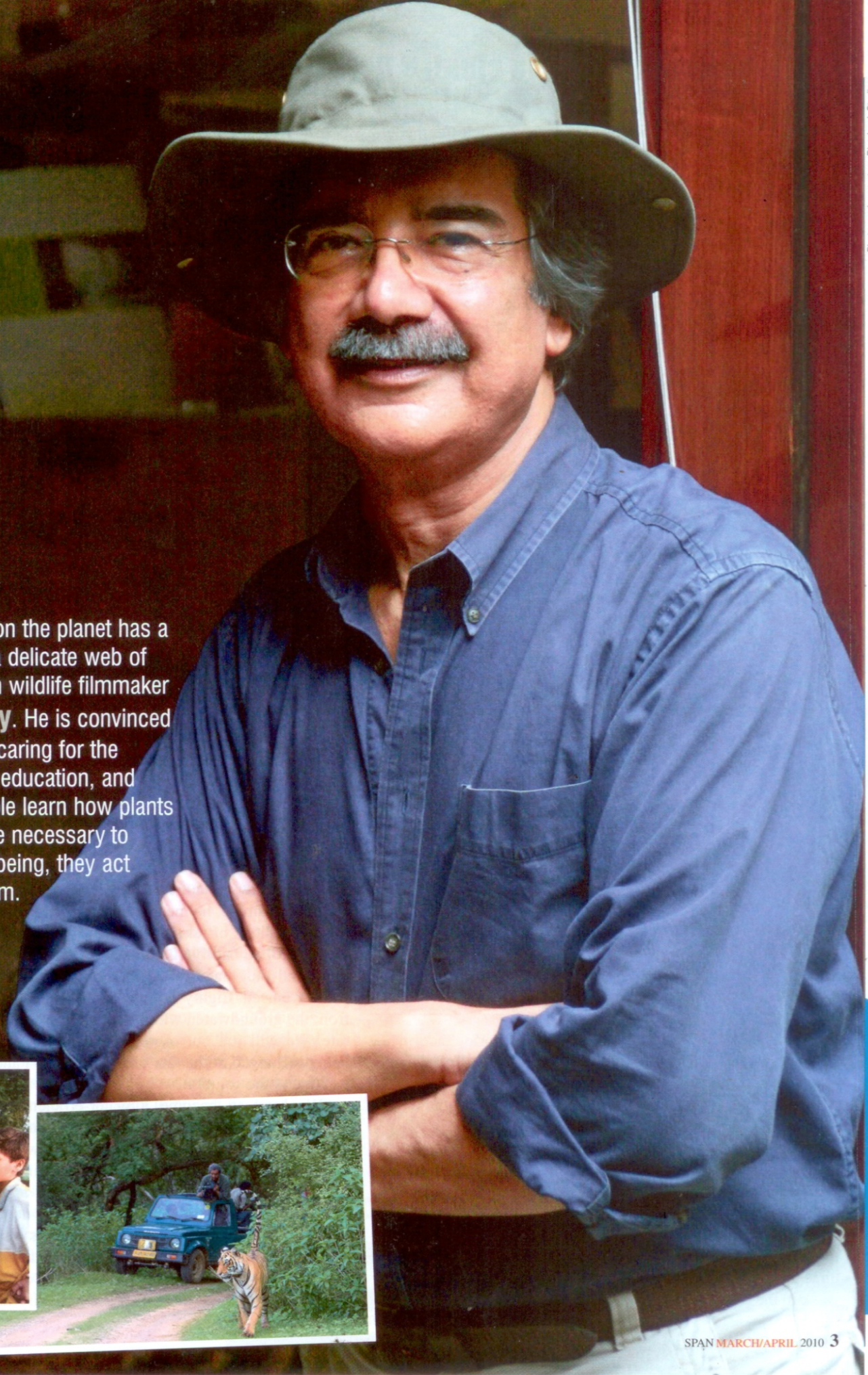
Mike Pandey believes in documenting results. It's not enough for him and his team at Riverbank Studios to win international acclaim through three Green Oscars and be household names in India through their *Earth Matters* program on Doordarshan. For Pandey, it's important to show that an animal has been saved from extinction, that a cruel practice has been banned, that a vital water or plant resource has been preserved for the benefit of this and future generations.

Pandey's films on the whale shark and the vulture are credited with helping to save these species from extinction in India, while his documentary on the torturous methods used to capture wild elephants led

*Below from left: Mike Pandey films The Last Migration at Ambikapur, Chhattisgarh; Pandey shows images on his video camera to members of the Maldhari community in the Gir Forest in Gujarat; Pandey at the Ranthambore National Park, Rajasthan.*



Every species on the planet has a role to play in a delicate web of life, says Indian wildlife filmmaker **Mike Pandey**. He is convinced that the key to caring for the environment is education, and that when people learn how plants and animals are necessary to their own well-being, they act to preserve them.

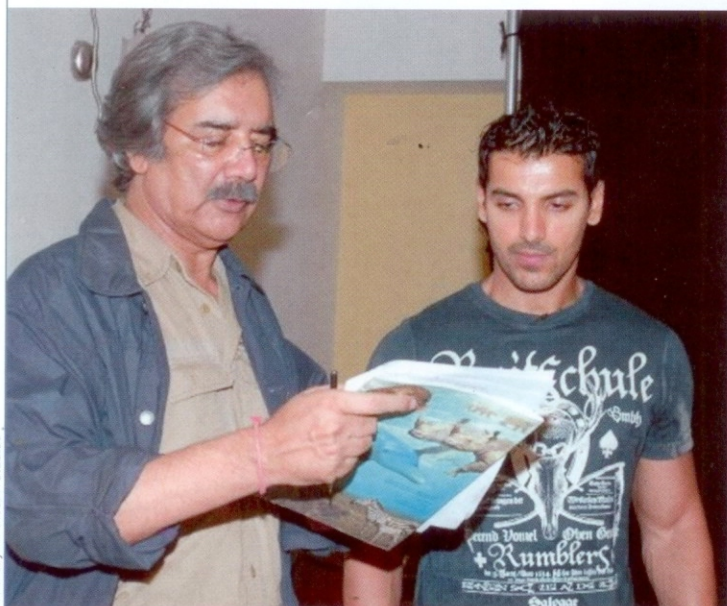


to quick government directives to halt some of the most inhumane practices.

Education and information, particularly through the medium of film, are the keys to drawing ordinary people into finding solutions that will protect the environment and animals, while respecting humans' needs to procreate, survive and lift their standard of living.

Pandey was born in Kenya where he grew up next to a wildlife preserve and began taking photographs with a Brownie box camera made in America by the Eastman Kodak Co. He also credits his special effects and stunt techniques, and ability to film animals without injuring them, to experience he gained working in Hollywood. Completing the circle, several of his studio's films are now in the U.S. Library of Congress, which is making them available to American universities, says Pandey.

In Hollywood, he worked with one of the pioneers in movie stunts and special effects, former rodeo star Yakima Canutt, who is famous for creating such scenes as a horse and rider leaping off a cliff, a cowboy being "shot" off a galloping horse, cattle



Mike Pandey and actor John Abraham at the Eco Warrior Awards in New Delhi in June 2008. Abraham was recognized for his help in creating an elephant village in Maharashtra at the awards given out by the Earth Matters Foundation.

stampedes, cavalry battles and finally, the chariot race in the movie *Ben-Hur*. Pandey interned with contractors who created animal stunts, and visual and sound effects for the original *Planet of the Apes*, starring Charlton Heston, and for the movies *Romeo and Juliet* and *Blade Runner*.

"I honed my skills and made lots of friends," Pandey says. "Those were very blossoming years because they opened my vision, opened my doors. After I came back I kept sending lots of my friends to...Los Angeles to acquire skills and learn from the masters, because what you learn in two or three years in college you could learn within a week in the presence of one of these masters."

Pandey says that in America he learned not only photography and lighting but flexibility and going beyond the "the call of the brief." He says the great film stars he encountered, such as Heston, "were very professional, never put on airs, they were the same as the other workers."

Although there is still much to be done to preserve India's tigers and wild elephants, watersheds and forests, Pandey says he is satisfied with the results achieved through his TV program *Earth Matters*. "When I started, there was hardly any awareness," he says. But a recent survey has shown "that nearly 67 percent of rural India, where real India lives, became aware of environmental issues, the problems that Earth is facing, through this program.

"It's a simple program that shares information, because I seriously believe that when you understand something, then you respect it...and what you respect you protect, and when you protect something, you love it," Pandey says, summing up the purpose of his work. "It is important for us to understand the link between the natural world and our own lives."

So what is the link between a villager's life and a predator?

"The tigers and the leopards are the apex of the food chain. They are the equalizers, the balancers of the forest ecosystem," Pandey answers. "They do not let the population of monkeys and deer and other animals go out of control. For example, look in Himachal Pradesh and Uttarakhand, where the leopards have been killed and the populations of monkeys and wild boar have exploded. And now they are coming onto farms and destroying farms, and for local communities, farming has become impossible; 3,000 to 5,000 farmers in one area have stopped farming. Had the leopard been there it would have kept the populations (of the marauding animals) low.... So this is an environmental issue we have caused by our own activity, through ignorance of what role the predator actually plays."

He paraphrases Mohandas K. Gandhi in saying, "Nature has enough for everyone's need, but not to feed man's greed. ...We have to slow down and understand that we share this planet with other species, we are not the supreme commanders, and if we respect the law of nature there will be enough."

As an example, he mentions, "India receives about 4,000 billion cubic liters of rainfall in four to five months each year, yet we can utilize hardly 12 percent. The dams take a long time to build and they have failed to supply India with the irrigation water we need. Eighty percent of our water for irrigation comes from the groundwater, which is depleting rapidly, at an alarming rate. We will run out of water because this 80 percent is not being recharged at the rate of abstraction," Pandey says.

What is the solution?

"We have to become a water-efficient nation," he says, emphatically. "The way we provide irrigation has to change. Use high technology. All over India the best way to store water is underground. ...If we revitalize our existing water bodies, the lakes and rivers which are heavily silted—and this has not been done for ages—and ensure that the water is kept clean and not polluted by industrial waste, we could tip the balance and make a difference," Pandey argues. "India is not a dry land. We have got

**For more information:**

Mike Pandey

<http://www.mikepandey.org>

Earth Matters

<http://www.earthmattersfoundation.org>

Green Oscars film festival

<http://www.wildscreenfestival.org/>

plenty of water. But what is needed is water management and it has to be done on a war footing, water harvesting on a war footing at local levels, each village has to be responsible for their water. This will not only replenish the wells, but will also start recharging the depleting aquifers.

"I believe the Earth has enough capacity to handle over 12 billion people, if need be," says Pandey. "But there is a need for sustainability. For the Earth to be sustainable, we have to use our wisdom and intelligence, bring about management of our resources and have respect for nature."

Pandey is very concerned about water security, and the related issue of food security. "At this moment there are about 1.25 to 1.3 billion people without potable water, and in another 15 years this number will reach definitely 2.5 to 3 billion people who will be without water," half of today's global population, he says. "Crop production all over the world is falling and if there is no water there will be fewer crops."


Despite all this, Pandey says he seldom gets depressed, only when he sees someone abusing an animal. Instead, he gets to work, forms a new coalition, makes another film, provides more information to those who can make a difference.

For instance, Pandey had not previously made a documentary on tigers, but is doing so now because he has gotten support from Indian film star John Abraham for a film called *The Return of the Tiger*. Pandey says, "The return of the tiger is possible if we all come together in a collective effort, and for that it means politicians, the bureaucrats, the citizens and the local communities."

We need the tiger, he explains, because "the hydrological cycle of the planet is controlled by our forests and that is very important for people to understand. We need the forest, and the forest is protected by the tiger and it has to have a chain. The grass needs to be trimmed so you need deer to eat that. You need the pollination so you need the butterfly."

To make a change, "you have to reach out to people's hearts and minds and tell the story in as simple words as possible," Pandey says, adding that he tries not to be judgmental or didactic in his films. "Good information is garbage if it cannot reach people and sink in."

Pandey laments that after nearly 40 years of Project Tiger, tigers are still dying. "Why can't the combined strength of all powerful lobbies and bodies in the world protect the tiger in a country where the tiger is revered?" he asks. "It is a shame that one and a quarter billion people cannot save 1,000 tigers. Where we have gone wrong, in my opinion, is that...the local communities that live around the sanctuaries, their livelihood, their concerns, have to be taken into consideration. They have to be involved if we want to protect the tiger."

He notes that information on tigers' habits, movements and territory comes from the local people "and they are very poor and I think it should become mandatory for resorts and people who charge thousands of dollars for (lodgings and safaris) to take 70 to 80 percent of their staff and workforce from the surrounding area. Train them, empower them and make them partners, and once the local communities begin to derive a benefit from the sanctuaries you will have all the villagers turn into policemen to safeguard their own interest." 

## U.S.-India Cooperation on Energy and Climate Change

U.S.-India Green Partnership, November 24, 2009

President Barack Obama and Prime Minister Manmohan Singh launched a Green Partnership, reaffirming their countries' strong commitment to taking vigorous action to combat climate change, ensuring their mutual energy security, working toward global food security, and building a clean energy economy that will drive investment, job creation and economic growth throughout the 21st century. Toward that end, Prime Minister Singh and President Obama agreed to strengthen U.S.-India cooperation on clean energy, climate change and food security.



PABLO MARTINEZ MONSIVAIS © AP/WIDEWORLD

Indo-U.S. Clean Energy Research and Deployment Initiative, November 24, 2009

Supported by U.S. and Indian government funding and private sector contributions, this initiative will include a Joint Research Center operating in the United States and India to foster innovation and joint efforts to accelerate deployment of clean energy technologies.

Support for an Indian Environmental Protection Authority, November 24, 2009

The Indian EPA would focus on creating a more effective system of environmental governance, regulation and enforcement. Working with India's Ministry of Environment and Forests, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency will provide technical support to help establish an Indian National Environmental Protection Authority.

Confederation of Indian Industry-Sohrabji Godrej Green Business Centre

This Green Business Centre in Hyderabad, Andhra Pradesh not only represents the promise of a green economy, it demonstrates the importance of the partnership between India and the United States in the 21st century.

India announces two nuclear power sites for the United States, October 17, 2009

The government of India announced that it has allocated two sites to the United States for the construction of civil nuclear power plants. These sites would be Chhayamithi Virdi in Gujarat and Kovvada in Andhra Pradesh. This announcement follows an agreement made between the governments for expanded cooperation on the peaceful uses of clean, nuclear energy.

United States promotes renewable energy in India, August 10, 2009

The first USA pavilion was launched at the third Renewable Energy Show in New Delhi, showcasing cutting-edge, American, renewable energy technologies.