

Assignment Detroit: Inside an American City

TIME

SPECIAL REPORT

Heroes Of the Environment

Our annual guide to the leaders, entrepreneurs, scientists and activists who are working to help the planet



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On the cover: Illustration for TIME by Cecelia Wong

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Special Report

HEROES OF THE ENVIRONMENT

OUR ANNUAL GUIDE TO THE MEN AND WOMEN WHO ARE WORKING TO HELP THE PLANET

2009

**LEADERS.
VISIONARIES.**

Documentary Maker

MIKE H. PANDEY

In the home of Bollywood, film can be a powerful force for good

AL GORE WASN'T THE FIRST person to use a movie to help save the world. In India, efforts to protect everything from whale sharks to elephants, vultures to medicinal plants owe a debt to prolific wildlife-documentary maker Mike H. Pandey. Pandey has waged a three-decade war to defend India's wildlife and environment, rousing the apathetic and spurring governments, communities and individuals to act. His weapon of choice: film. By showing that the elephants who trample through villages are not "rogue" animals who should be shot, his 1994 film *The Last Migration* helped slow the decline in India's elephant numbers. *Migration*, which aired on India's state TV, revealed the complex fight for land and food between humans and animals,

and showed elephants as victims of man's greed for resources. The film and its sequel *Vanishing Giants* (2004), triggered a national debate and led the government to ban the more brutal traditional methods of elephant capture, which often result in the animal's death.

Born to Indian parents in Kenya, Pandey's love affair with nature started early. "I grew up right next to the Nairobi National Park, where elephants would raid my mother's kitchen garden and lions' calls would wake us at night," he says. After studying filmmaking in the U.S. and Britain, he settled in Delhi, founding Riverbank Studios in 1973 to make educational and environmental documentaries. This was a time when the word *conservation* was unknown in India, and Pandey and

his colleagues toiled for years unheralded. Success finally came when *The Last Migration* screened at the Wildscreen Festival in Bristol, England—the biggest wildlife and environmental film festival in the world—and won a prestigious Panda award. More films and awards followed. Pandey's most enduring success, though, is the weekly half-hour series *Earth Matters*, which has run on state television for 11 years, and has helped spur the emergence of grassroots conservation groups around India. "My effort has been to show what each of us can do," says Pandey. "The earth matters to all of us. Don't just drive to work, look around you, see the birds and trees, and if there's something going wrong, set it right." *Earth Matters* pushes that message into Indian homes every week. In such a fast-changing society, television is a powerful medium. "The key is education, and this is what my films aim to provide." —BY MADHUR SINGH/NEW DELHI



BHARAT SINKA FOR TIME