

# (FOR A LIFE) ON THE ROAD

In search of fool's paradise and the true measure of aliveness

ABIDA RAHMAN CHOWDHURY

I was a particularly anxious child, so much so that even as I tried to sleep, I would resort to visualising elaborate scenes in the dark. And the scenes I often imagined would almost always be those of animals running free in the wild, the crimson orb-like sun setting on the horizon, just behind a large baobab tree. My imagination was heavily infiltrated by the shows I continuously watched on Animal Planet and National Geographic, a worldwide favourite among children, I like to think.

As childhood slowly, painstakingly,

led to adulthood, the bleak realities of life started to chip away at my imagination. And travel? Well that became a far-off dream. So much so that I started to hate it. The packing, the planning, the unknown bed, the melancholy of a slower pace of life—all made me shy away from it until a university degree brought rushing back lost childhood aspirations. And with it, bringing along pages upon pages of philosophies on travel, endlessly quoting and embodying the ideals of Henry David Thoreau and Christopher McCandless with a healthy mix of Diane Fossey

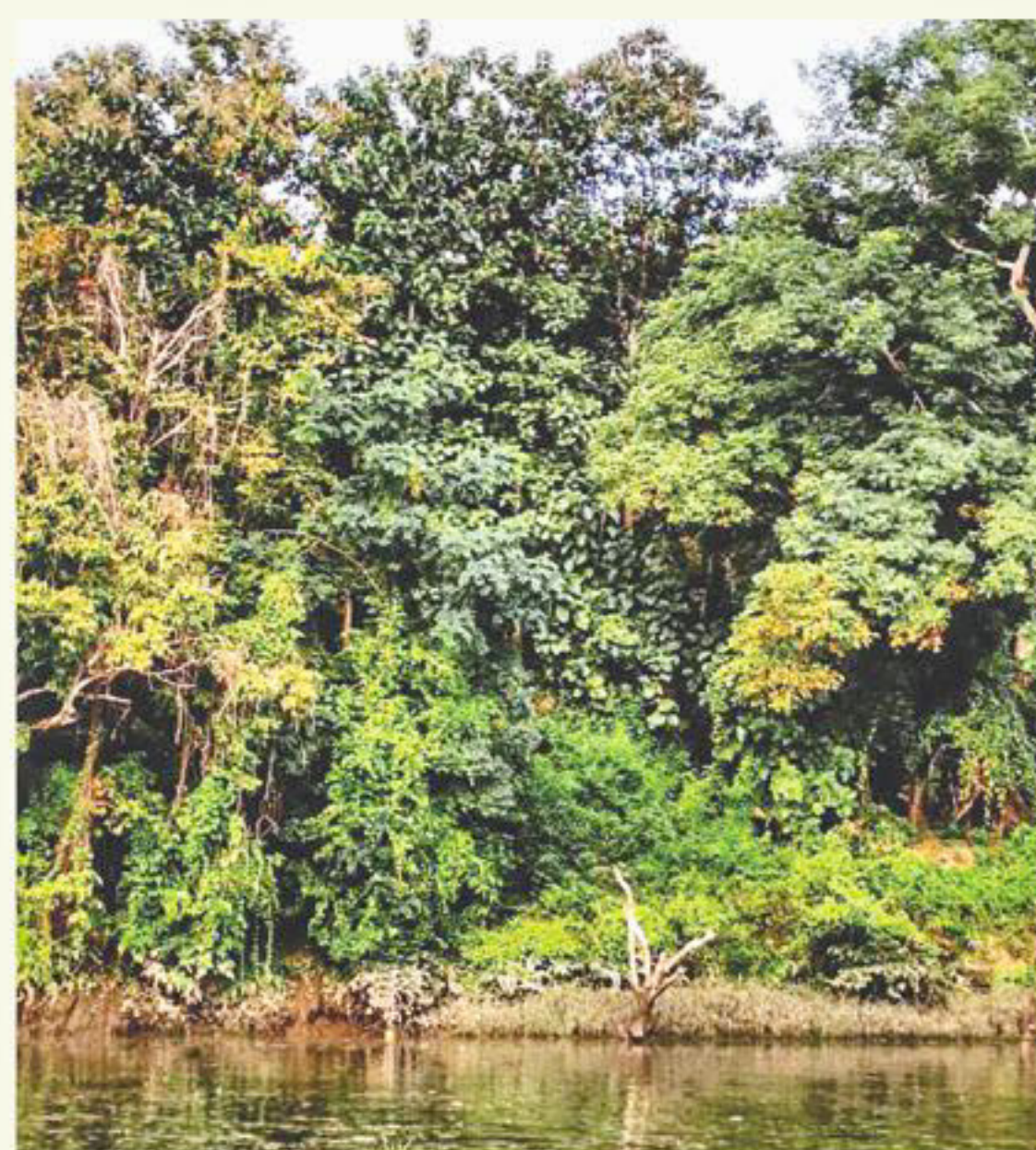
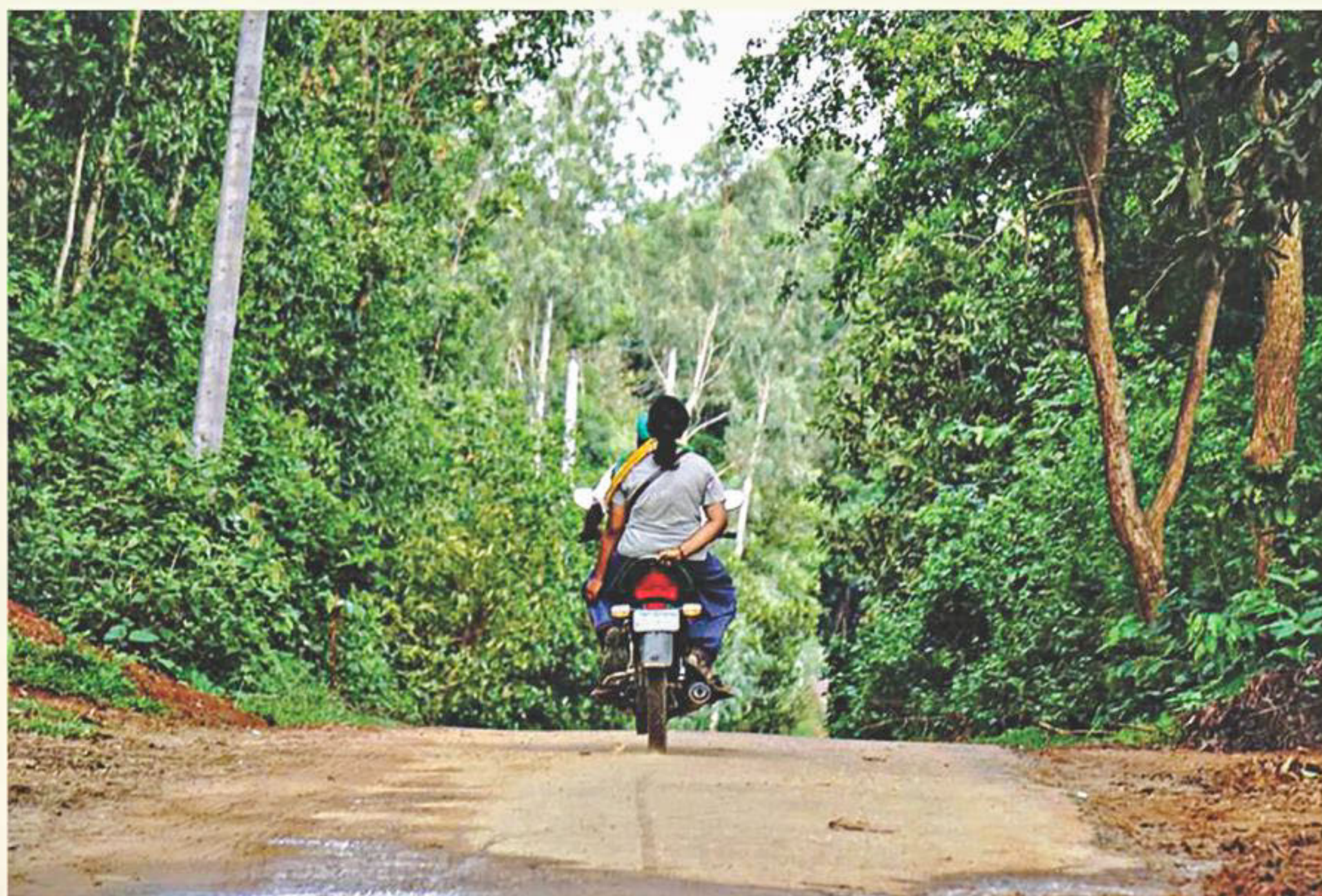


PHOTO: ABIDA RAHMAN CHOWDHURY

A wall of green at Kaptai.



Through the hilly roads of Askipara.

PHOTO: BRAD FRANK

and Jane Goodall thrown in for good measure.

As travels started, so did corresponding philosophies. Maybe, I was always a dreamy-eyed human, and travels made me often zone out and turn my gaze inwards as much as I gazed outwards. My journey began from the south of the country and continues to this day. And as I pen this piece, I imagine all experiences tied together in one seamless imaginary, cosmic thread.

It was years ago, I found myself in an upazila in Satkhira, grazing the periphery of the largest mangrove forest in the world—the treacherous Sundarbans. As walks led me from village to village, I was jolted out of the sometimes wrongly romanticised, somewhat sheltered existence of my life, into harsh realities.

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The sandy white beach and beautiful sunset at Saint Martin's Island.

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