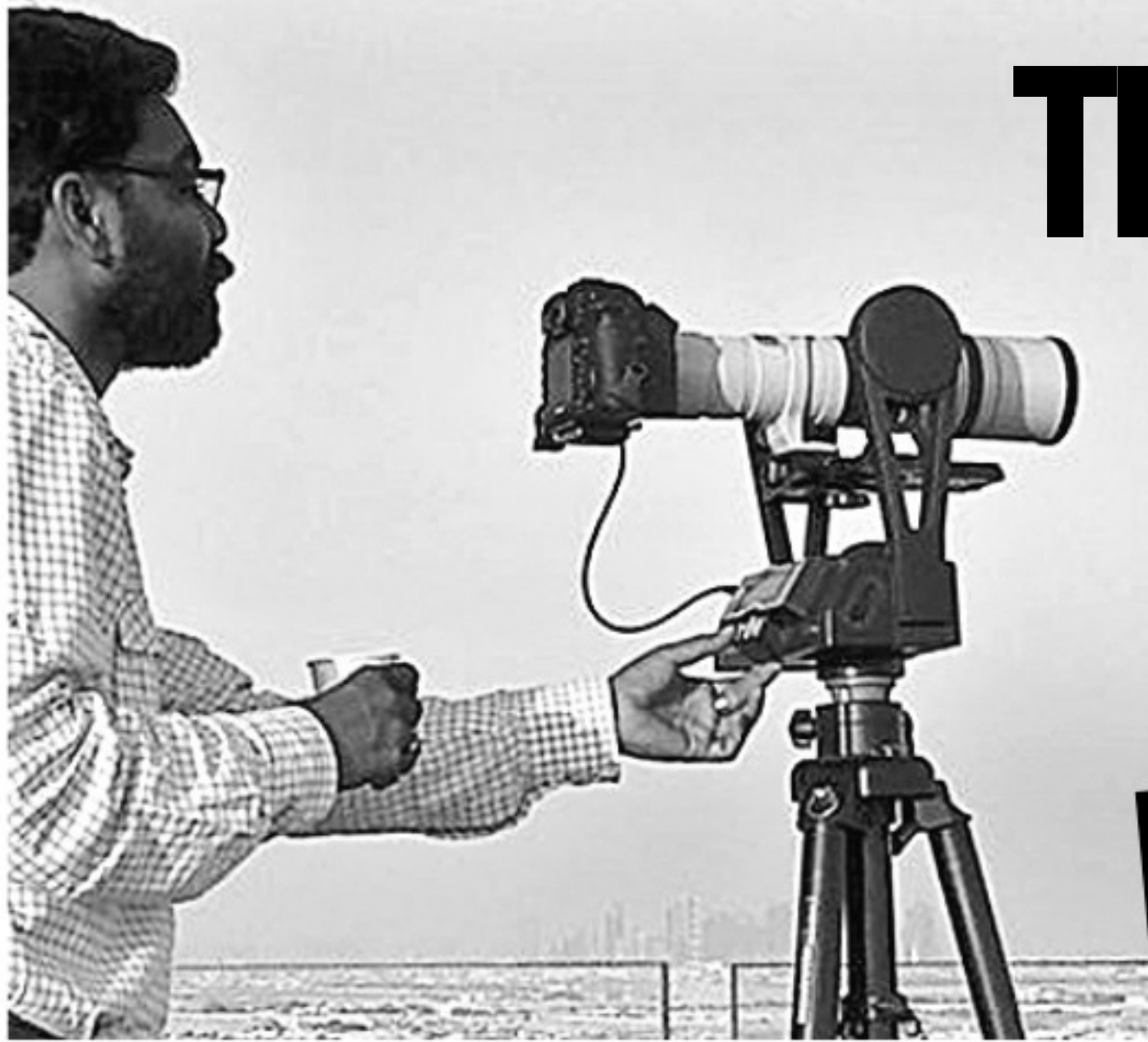


THE WORLD IS HIS FRAME

Photographer Leen Thobias on panoramic photography and breaking world records



MEERA MANU | THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

Leen Thobias is a name to be equated with panoramic photography in India. A few years before the start of the millennium, Leen, a photojournalist then, stepped into panoramic photography, an all-new, unheard medium, with the skills acquired through self-learning, on Apple's QuickTime. He is a Limca Book of Record holder, for capturing the tower of the Padmanabha Swamy temple in Thiruvananthapuram as a giga pixel panoramic image, the largest photographic image in the country, in 2012. He created his first Limca record way back in 2007 for creating the first photo biography in India about noted playback singer KJ Yesudas.

Hailing from Kollam in Kerala, in between his bachelor's in commerce and master's in journalism, Leen, whose love for photography started during

childhood, went on to pursue a one-year diploma course in photography offered by the Government of Kerala.

As he grew older, he became a photojournalist at a leading Malayalam daily. He also did a course in the renowned Light and Life Academy in Ooty and underwent training at the Thomson Foundation, London. He holds professional membership in the International Virtual Reality Photography Association (IVRPA) in the US. Leen joined an institute in Denmark to learn more about panoramic photography.

Taking a trip down memory lane, Leen recalls his early days in panoramic photography. "It occupies the space between still photography and videography. Those days, the problem was people did not know how to see it. So I mailed the images to people I knew," Leen recalls. He set out to make his professional panoramic images of Mookambika temple and Velankanni Church in 2008, almost a decade after he started learning the techniques. In the same year, he resigned from his job and im-

mersed himself fully into the art.

A panoramic image provides a 360 degree view of a subject, which is captured by fixing the camera on a tripod and making clicks surrounding it. Divided into various small angles, a High Dynamic Range (HDR) image is finally made after carefully linking them with the help of software. The final image will make the viewer feel as if he/she is standing at a place and seeing it from top, bottom, left and right angles, of course, much more specific than human vision can offer. The viewer can see the image on the computer from any angle, rotated or zoomed. Experience it by logging onto his website, www.p4panorama.com.

Leen's images came as a blessing to tourism and real estate sectors when it fetched clients at international level by providing a detailed image of a place on fingertips with moving elements and background music. The arrival of social media earned him wider exposure.

Two years back, Leen began to concentrate on Gigapixel pan-

oramic images which enables cropping of unwanted portions and more zooming. His creations, the panoramic images of the Padmanabha Swamy Temple, Sabarimala and The Torch Hotel in Qatar were well-received.

So what gives him satisfaction? "Through the pictures, many people get a tour-like experience to several locations. On a single day, I get 10-12,000 visitors on my site, almost 60 per cent comprise foreigners. Whereas, while being a photojournalist, the photographs I took reached a limited audience," he says.

Speaking about the possibilities of panoramic photography in India, he believes this technique can be used for doing crime scene investigations and in journalism for e-papers.

Now 42, Leen finds tremendous demand in professional photography and has in the pipeline an institute for photography. "By bringing expert faculty and charging reasonable fee, the institute will provide good training. The syllabus has already been devised and it will start this year or next." He also has plans to publish books based on his work and countries he has visited. He is also into breaking his own record for making the largest photographic image by producing a larger image of Khajuraho.

— meera.manu@
newindianexpress.com



Through the pictures, many people get a tour-like experience to several locations.

— Leen Thobias

TEACHER OF THE FORTNIGHT

INSPIRE TO IMPACT

K Laxmi Narayana, associate professor in School of Economics, University of Hyderabad (UoH), does not limit his research work in the agriculture and education sector to publications, but explains to students the importance of facts and figures and helps them to take some action and fill in the gaps. "Not limiting to ideology, based on statistics, I teach students how bad the state of education is and explain to them the reasons behind why 100 per cent education is not being implemented. I try to motivate them to do something about it," says Laxmi Narayana.

The associate professor who has four publications related to the fields of agriculture and education, says, "One of my publications, *Understand the Andhra Crop Holiday Movement*, deals with the crop holiday and reasons behind the trend". He also gave a presentation at a conference on primary education which deals with why Right to Education Act (RTE) is not going to help, though there are some good policies which are not being implemented. His other publication, *Tragedy of Commons Revisited: A Case Study of Bauxite Mining in Visakha Area* is about impact of mining on livelihood of tribals in Araku Valley and how the State encourages private corporations.

Secretariat member of Andhra Pradesh Save Education committee, part of All India forum for Right to Education, Laxmi Narayana plans to pursue research on status of primary education in the state by doing ground level survey which helps him in getting first-hand information rather than relying on existing research.



Laxmi Narayana also acts as faculty advisor for Project Akshara, a social initiative of students who teach children studying in government schools located near the university. He opines that through this social work, students can ask government for help as they alone cannot solve the problem existing in thousands of schools in the state of Andhra Pradesh.

When asked about why did he choose the profession of teaching, Laxmi Narayana points out that one of his main objectives is to sensitise students about society and help them make an impact. "If I can give some message to generations of students in every batch, it will have a huge impact. I might be wrong, but I am of the view that other professions don't have such an opportunity," says Laxmi Narayana, who leads the way in motivating students to work for a social cause in their lives.

— shiva.shanker@
newindianexpress.com

