

# His Animal Kingdom

Rohan Chakravarty's cartoon series uses entertainment and humour to create environmental awareness



Rohan Chakravarty; (below) his artwork

By BINDU GOPAL RAO

**A** dentist by training, an activist at heart and a cartoonist by nature. That, in short, is Rohan Chakravarty. This Nagpur-based illustrator worked as an animation designer at a multimedia firm in Bengaluru, before quitting his job in 2014, to start the cartoon series, *Green Humour*. And out came Orca Winfrey and Meghan Mackerel (if you please!) highlighting the grim state of the environment across the world with wry smiles thrown in. Sample this: "The Great Barrier Reef isn't visible from space anymore, but hey, the Great Pacific Garbage Patch is!" says Winfrey to Mackerel. Mackerel responds, "If Brexit is not used as an opportunity to tackle overfishing and replenish fish stocks that would really hurt my feelings."

Chakravarty says, "*Green Humour* began in 2010 but its seeds were planted in 2005 when I met my first wild tigress. I had been dabbling as a cartoonist with various themes that were not clicking for me. A meeting with that tigress on a trip to Nagzira Wildlife

Sanctuary in Maharashtra made me realise that an entire universe unexplored by cartoon art was waiting for me."

He uses the platform to spark discussions and debates and become a part of solutions to the problems on the agenda. Last year, Chakravarty was chosen for representation by Cartoon Collections (CC), a cartoon syndication company in the US/UK. As part of his engagement with CC, he often participates in Cartoonathons—where a few cartoonists attend seminars with experts from the fields of science, social science, humanitarian aid, environment conservation and gender studies, and draw live cartoons based on topics

discussed at the seminars.

"I have done four such Cartoonathons so far, on issues ranging from climate justice to inter-sectionality. This has not only given me a new direction to expand my portfolio but has also offered an opportunity to enrich my own knowledge and sensibility, while at the same time increase the impact of my work." And impact is something that he has managed across borders. A reader from Peru wrote to him after seeing his comic on the monkey pet trade and said it convinced him not to buy a marmoset. Many women readers saw his comic on sustainable sanitary products and thanked him as it helped them make the switch. "My comic on the

Draft Environment Impact Assessment released by the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change last year has become an important part of the visual identity of the protests against the ill-designed policy," Chakravarty adds.

An avid birder, he has released three books on wildlife so far—*The Great Indian Nature Trail*, *Bird Business* and *Making Friends with Snakes*. "My fourth book and the first compilation of my published comics, *Green Humour for a Greying Planet*, will be out in June," he says. Motivated by the works of Gary Larson, Patrick McDonnell, Bill Watterson and Bill Amend, he believes that an artist should not be restricted by

a single identity or style alone. Chakravarty is a passionate about illustration as he is about cartooning. It has resulted in a series of wildlife caricatures for organisations such as WWF, WTI, the Save our Seas Foundation among others. Besides, he is also focusing on habitat illustrations that showcase the various elements of flora and fauna in a given region. "The scope of my canvas is practically infinite," he draws the line.



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