

Adieu to the Crocodile Man

Gitika Verma
Journalism Intern

For some it means the bliss of doing nothing... To others it is having the freedom to do the things they love and have been putting off... To still others, retirement is a blank slate. Let us find out what retirement is for Mr. Binod Chandra Choudhury, popularly known as BC amongst his friends and colleagues.

In the heaps of file, research papers and various books on nature conservation of endangered species lies a vacant chair, I wondered this will be the scene from tomorrow, when the Crocodile-Man, Mr. B.C. Choudhury will retire from Wildlife Institute of India, DehraDun.

His almost thirty year long tenure in WII will come to an end on June 30, 2012. The person with cool temperament and large grin is taking his retirement as a new venture.

June 28, 2012. I was sitting in his chamber, waiting for Mr. Choudhury, to have a word on his retirement. I was thinking how upset he will be on the last day of his professional carrier. While waiting in his chamber, I struck a conversation with a gentleman, Mr. Satya Ranjan Behera, who is doing PhD under the guidance of Mr.Choudhury. The first word he uttered was "The Crocodile Man". Yes, he is the Crocodile Man, devoting more than half of his life to Crocodiles.

Finally my wait was over and entered Mr. B.C Choudhury, full of enthusiasm. He sat on his chair, answering his continuously beeping Cell phone. It was now my turn to listen to his take on retirement and life ahead. It felt good to see him talking about his retirement as a new venture, a new start.



He was earlier a journalist, started his career in Statesman, Kolkata. Mr.Choudhury, was assigned to do a story on Billy Arjan Singh- the Tiger Man. That's from where his interest grew and he went on to do something rather than just writing on them. He started his career as a conservationist with Late Shri S.R Choudhury from Simlipal National Park. The credit of making him what he is today also goes to Late Shri Pushpa Kumar. Mr. Choudhury joined Andhra Pradesh Forest Department in 1981 and later joined WII in June, 1987.

Your experience in WII, if you are in conservation, you should never think of "Those Golden Days", there is no good in going back to old days. But Yes, there were lots of thing that were very good and some that could have been better. Elucidating the point that the responsibility of field practitioner is more than a policy maker, he said, there is no second chance in conservation, once extinct is gone forever.

On being asked, where we are lagging behind, He stated, we are not able to communicate to the common people. Wildlife Institute of India, since inception have done and completed more than 150 projects, but when people are asked, they hardly know about it. We will have to communicate to two target groups, the Policy maker and the Public, both at the same time. Then only we will be able to communicate nature and wildlife effectively to everyone.

Why Tiger, why not Crocodile and Turtle in Indian media, Television wants TRP and Newspaper wants long shelf life. And tiger being a special creature adds to their glory than other species. But it is not the media that is wrong; it is our duty to tell them what to publish and what to broadcast and to what extent. Adding to this, he explained about his recent Andaman trip, where Mr. Choudhury spoke about Man-Animal

conflict, he said, we need to understand, who the target group is. Then only we will be able to communicate them effectively.

Is there anything that you wished, you would have done, My mind is young but many times my age does not support it, I want to go on a rainforest canopy walk, but cannot do it now. If I was young, I would have done it.

On being called a 'Crocodile Man', Crocodile made me what I am today and I made them what they are today. When I started they were in 2 digits, now they are in 4 digits. We made that obscure species known. It is a great feeling that I am one among those, who did this great work.

Your innings with Turtle, since I hail from east coast, major breeding ground of turtles, it was quite natural to get attached and attracted towards them. I was given an international recognition in the form of a painting dating year 1738 as memento.

Something that you never figured out and still wonder, why workable recommendation never gets implemented? There is neither dearth of talent nor lack of finance in India, so where is the hurdle then?

Plans after retirement, Create curiosity among people, who want to do something for wildlife and environment. New technologies are coming up, so are the challenges. People's perceptions have changed, so lots of thing can now be done, which were not possible earlier.

Message for everyone, Believe in yourself, remove the word 'Impossible' from your dictionary, be out and out optimist.

"No Conversation on Conservation, Only Conservation."

My conversation lasted for just thirty minutes and in those thirty minutes, energy and wisdom spoke a lot about the man's carrier and persona.

Retirement has never been more deserved. He has inspired everyone and has allowed WII to achieve the reputation for excellence.

