

## **A Journey Beyond the Veil**

~~~ *Pooran Chandra*

A hidden gem known as Kyari lies on the outskirts of Ramnagar, a popular tourist destination in Uttarakhand India. This is where wilderness whispers and myths blend. Encased in a cocoon of natural splendour, this place remained tucked away from the casual traveller's eye, its secrets guarded by tall trees and the gentle hum of a nearby stream. Mr. Jay, an amateur photographer with a thirst for the unknown, aimed his compass at this mysterious spot.

A melancholic grey hung over Ramnagar on the day Mr. Jay left, as if the clouds themselves were yearning for adventure. The local folks had spoken of Kyari in hushed tones, painting it as a tapestry of vibrant green. It was threaded with the songs of unseen birds and the murmurs of untamed water.

As Mr. Jay drove his rented four-wheeler through the muddied roads, the main city of Ramnagar receded in the rear-view mirror. Civilization seemed distant as Mr. Jay entered the dense foliage, marking the beginning of his adventure. A serpent of dust and gravel wended its way into nature, often disappearing under the shadows of the tall trees on either side.

The rhythmic jostle of the vehicle along the rugged path had a hypnotic quality, and Mr. Jay found himself slipping into a state of serene anticipation. Open-air jeeps sometimes passed him, filled with tourists' eager to see Jim Corbett National Park. Everyone had their cameras out, but Mr. Jay was looking for the road less travelled.

He was told that Kyari was about 5-6 kilometres away from the city's buzzing outskirts. However, the distance seemed to stretch further with every passing kilometre. The construction signs that sporadically punctuated the roadside were testament to a path still in the throes of becoming. Before darting back into the dense undergrowth, a single peacock appeared briefly, its feathers glowing iridescent against the brown earth. A local man, his face weathered by a lifetime of sun and wind, mentioned with a knowing smile that the land was home to elephants, boars, lions, and more. Mr. Jay was filled with a sense of excitement as he spoke with the ease of someone who knew the world beyond the foliage.

The further Mr. Jay drove, the more he felt the air changed. The sounds of construction faded away, replaced by a polyphony of jungle sounds. Under his tires, the road faded away, and he turned off onto a barely visible path, following instinct and the cryptic directions of the few who knew about Kyari. As he ventured off-road, his sense of adventure surged. The jeep trembled under the assault of the untamed path, protesting this detour from the known into the unknown. Those wheels of the jeep found hold on the slippery narrative of the earth in a baptism of dust and adrenaline.

When Mr. Jay finally saw his destination, twilight caressed the sky as the sun set in a blaze of glory behind the trees. It was as if the forest parted, revealing a resort that seemed to be one with the surrounding terrain. It was a vision of tranquility, with a humble homage to the natural beauty surrounding it. Mr. Jay checked in, his body weary but his spirit invigorated as he watched the stream that he had heard so much about glint in the fading light, harmonizing with the evening chorus of birds. The resort was surrounded by the tall guardians of the forest, whose leaves whispered secrets of the wild to those who chose to listen.

There was a blanket of stars over him, a stark contrast to the chaotic city lights he was accustomed to. Sleep came naturally, but he was serenaded into dreams of the wild by an unfamiliar symphony of sounds. A shroud of mist greeted Mr. Jay as the morning dawned. The resort was alive with other guests' sounds, but Mr. Jay had an itinerary on his hands. With his camera in hand, he set out to capture the untamed essence of Kyari, but as the day progressed, an eerie feeling settled over him. The place was a hushed beauty with an undercurrent of something else that was hidden.

During his exploration, he stumbled upon an old, weathered bridge that crossed the stream. It was not on any map he had seen. Compelled by an uncontrollable urge, he crossed the bridge to the other side, where the trees grew even denser. Taking a photo, he noticed something strange—a strange arrangement of stones that seemed deliberate, almost ritualistic. The air was heavier here, the silence of the forest more prominent. Astonished, Mr. Jay ventured closer, his camera forgotten. There, nestled

within the heart of this strange monument, was a leather-bound journal protected from the elements by stone guardians. The stones were covered in moss, their edges smoothed by the passage of time. In a state of suspense, he hesitated. What should he do? Should he unveil the secrets of the journal or should he leave it undisclosed?

Curiosity won. He opened the journal, the pages creaking with protest. Inside, written in a hasty scrawl, were entries dating back years, maybe decades. The writing spoke of Kyari, of its beauty, and of something more—a legend of a hidden place within the forest, where the veil between worlds was thin, where one could see the spirits of the forest.

As the entries ended abruptly, the last page carried a single sentence that made Mr. Jay's heart race: "I have seen the path, and tonight, I will follow the spirits into the forest."

There was no name, no clue as to who the writer was, or what had become of them. Mr. Jay looked around, half expecting to see the author emerge from the trees, but he was alone. As the shadows grew longer, a decision lay before him: to seek out this path or to return to the safety of the known.

In the waning hours of the day, he had the chance to unravel this mystery. The words of the journal echoing in Mr. Jay's mind as he stood in the silence of the forest, he knew that a trip to Kyari was more than a trip through space; it was also a journey through veiled layers of legends and stories that were whispered by the wind for generations. Thus, with his journal serving as a guide and the untamed heart of the wild serving as a witness, Mr. Jay took his first step towards the path the spirits walked, his camera a silent companion in the unfolding narrative of Kyari—a place where the journey is not just about reaching a destination, but about exploring the stories that lie there waiting for the right traveller to discover them.

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