

Research
R. Ganesan,
Nabasmita Malakar

Art
Sahil Upalekar

Story & Script
Rebekah S.J.

Letters
Pranay Bendre

"IN 1911-12, BRITISH BOTANIST, I.H. BURKILL, AND OTHER SCIENTISTS WENT ON AN EXPEDITION TO THE SIANG VALLEY IN ARUNACHAL PRADESH.

"THEY RETURNED WITH A WEALTH OF INFORMATION ABOUT PLANTS. NO ONE HAD DOCUMENTED THE BIODIVERSITY OF THE SIANG VALLEY BEFORE THAT."

AND TODAY, NABASMITA, MORE THAN 100 YEARS LATER, WE'RE GOING ON AN EXPEDITION TO SIANG TOO!

WE'LL BE ABLE TO COMPARE THE PLANT DIVERSITY THEN AND NOW, R.G., AND DOCUMENT THE CHANGES OVER THE PAST 100 YEARS.

"THIS IS THE ROUTE WE WILL BE TAKING. THESE ARE NEARLY THE SAME SITES THAT BURKILL HAD VISITED AS WELL."



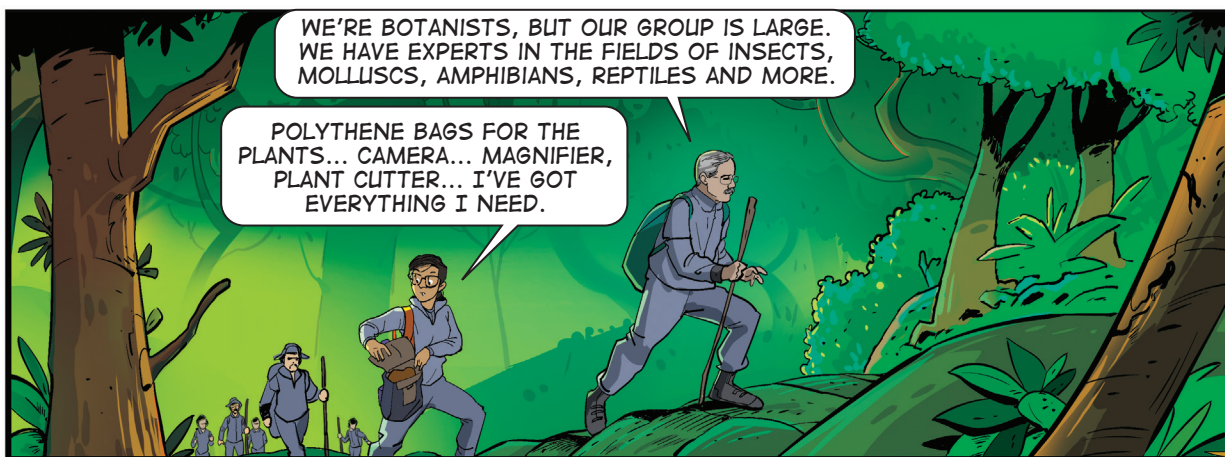
Burkill Expedition
ATREE Expedition

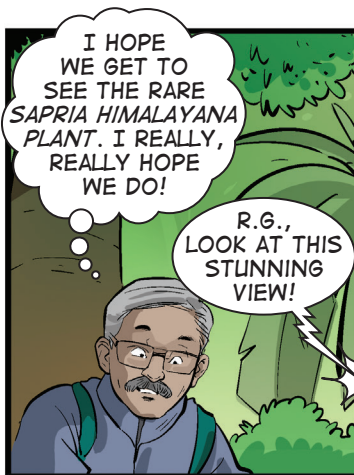
WE ARE NOT GOING ALONE, BUT WITH OUR FRIENDS FROM THE INDIGENOUS ADI COMMUNITY, LIKE YONG HERE.

TODAY WILL BE AN EASY HIKE TO THE FOREST. TOMORROW WILL BE CHALLENGING AS WE WILL BE CROSSING THE TEESTA RIVER.

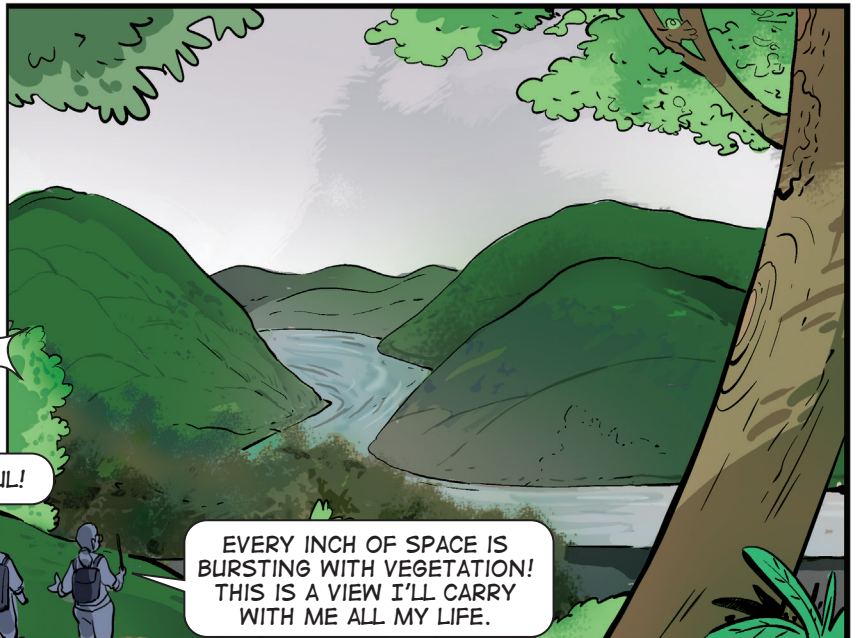
WE'RE BOTANISTS, BUT OUR GROUP IS LARGE. WE HAVE EXPERTS IN THE FIELDS OF INSECTS, MOLLUSCS, AMPHIBIANS, REPTILES AND MORE.

POLYTHENE BAGS FOR THE PLANTS... CAMERA... MAGNIFIER, PLANT CUTTER... I'VE GOT EVERYTHING I NEED.





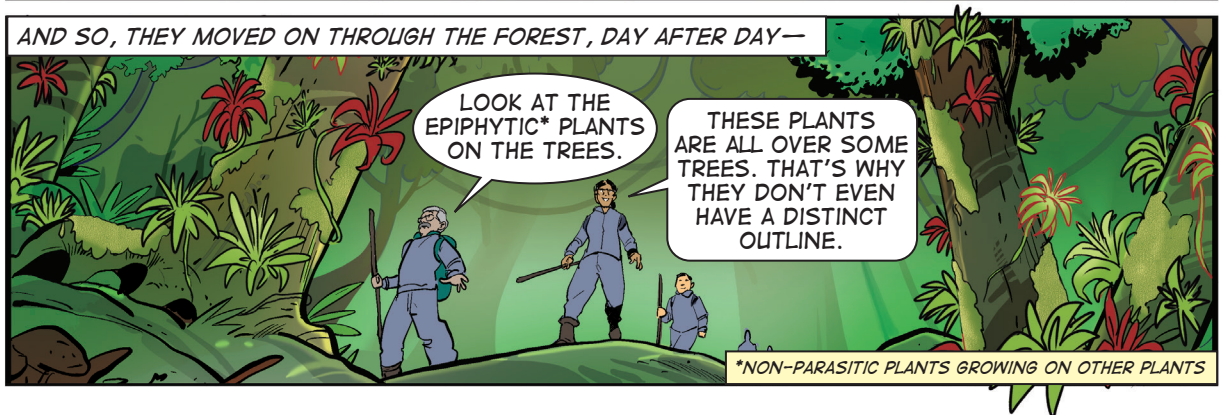
R.G.,
LOOK AT THIS
STUNNING
VIEW!



BEAUTIFUL!

EVERY INCH OF SPACE IS
BURSTING WITH VEGETATION!
THIS IS A VIEW I'LL CARRY
WITH ME ALL MY LIFE.

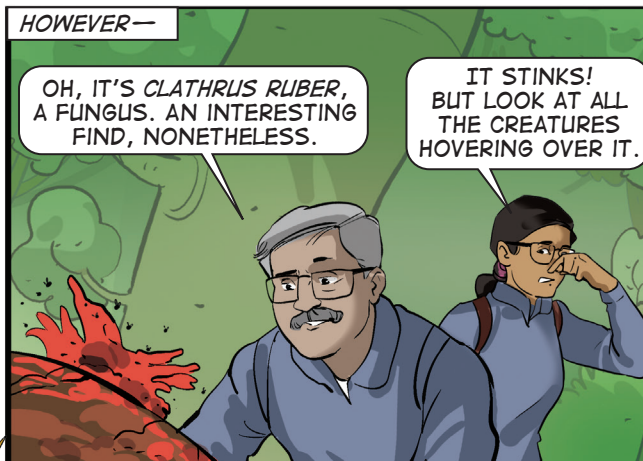
AND SO, THEY MOVED ON THROUGH THE FOREST, DAY AFTER DAY—



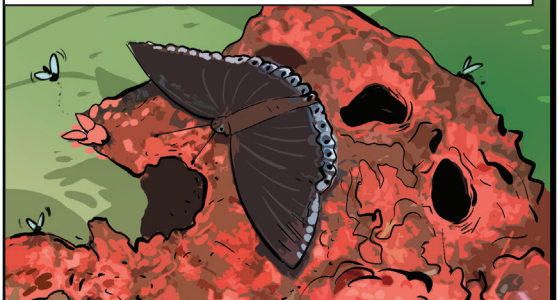
*NON-PARASITIC PLANTS GROWING ON OTHER PLANTS



HOWEVER—



"THAT'S THE FUNGUS'S DECEPTIVE METHOD FOR SPORE DISPERSAL. THE BUTTERFLIES AND INSECTS THINK IT IS ROTTEN FRUIT."



"THEY SIT ON THE FRILLS OR TAKE IN THE SAP. AND WHEN THEY LEAVE, THEY DISPERSE THE SPORES FROM THE FUNGUS."

SOON IT WAS THE FOURTH DAY—

YONG TOLD ME THAT THESE FLESHY PODS* WE COLLECTED ARE USED AS SOAP BY THE LOCAL COMMUNITY.

YES, I—WHOA!

*PSST! THIS IS FROM THE GYMNOCLADUS BURMANICUS OR THE DEKANG TREE

LOOK, LOOK! OH, PLEASE BE IT!

OH YES! ABSOLUTELY STINKY! OH, IT IS! IT IS THE *SAPRIA HIMALAYANA*!

"THE *SAPRIA HIMALAYANA*, CLOSE COUSIN TO THE *RAFFLESIA*, IS A ROOT PARASITE. IT DRAWS ITS NUTRITION FROM ITS HOST VINE THROUGH ITS HAUSTORIA*. THE PLANT CONSISTS OF ONLY THE FLOWER."

*ROOTLIKE PROJECTIONS

LIKE THE FUNGUS WE SAW BEFORE, THE ROTTEN SMELL OF THE *SAPRIA* ATTRACTS CARRION FLIES AND FRUIT FLIES.

THEY ARE DECEIVED BY THE *SAPRIA*'S SMELL AND UNKNOWINGLY HELP IN THE PLANT'S POLLINATION.

IT'S SO RARE TO FIND ONE OF THESE ENDANGERED PLANTS, NABASMITA! THIS IS THE BEST THING EVER!

I'VE NEVER SEEN R.G. SO EXCITED BEFORE! THE JOYS THAT SIANG GIVES US!

ALONG WITH THE JOYS CAME HARDSHIPS AND DANGERS TOO—

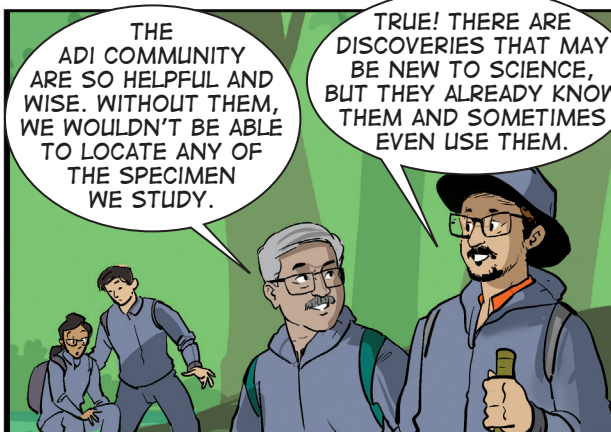
AAAAH!

OH NO! HOLD ONTO SOMETHING!



≥WHEW≤ SAVED BY THE SKIN OF MY TEETH!

IT IS VERY SLIPPERY AROUND HERE. BE CAREFUL!



THE ADI COMMUNITY ARE SO HELPFUL AND WISE. WITHOUT THEM, WE WOULDN'T BE ABLE TO LOCATE ANY OF THE SPECIMEN WE STUDY.

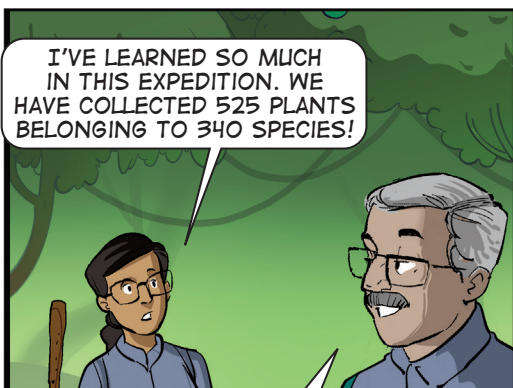
TRUE! THERE ARE DISCOVERIES THAT MAY BE NEW TO SCIENCE, BUT THEY ALREADY KNOW THEM AND SOMETIMES EVEN USE THEM.



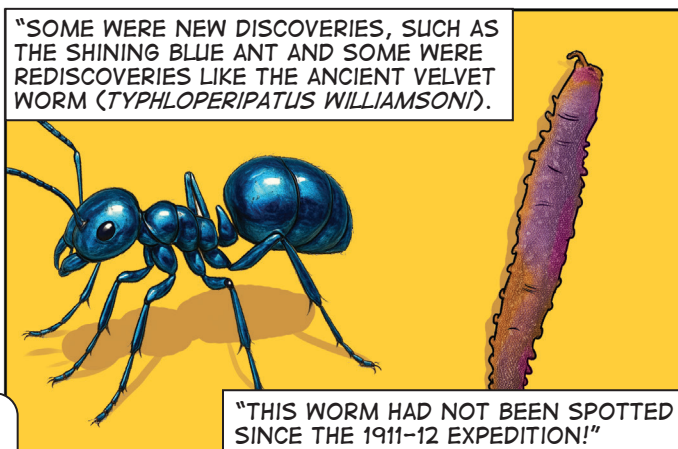
REMEMBER THE CATERpillARS THEY GAVE US THAT TASTED THE SAME AS THE LEAVES THEY WERE FEEDING ON?

YES! THE LEAVES ARE RICH IN AMINO ACIDS*. THIS PROVES THAT PLANT PROTEIN IS NO DIFFERENT FROM ANIMAL PROTEIN.

*AMINO ACIDS ARE THE BUILDING BLOCKS OF PROTEINS



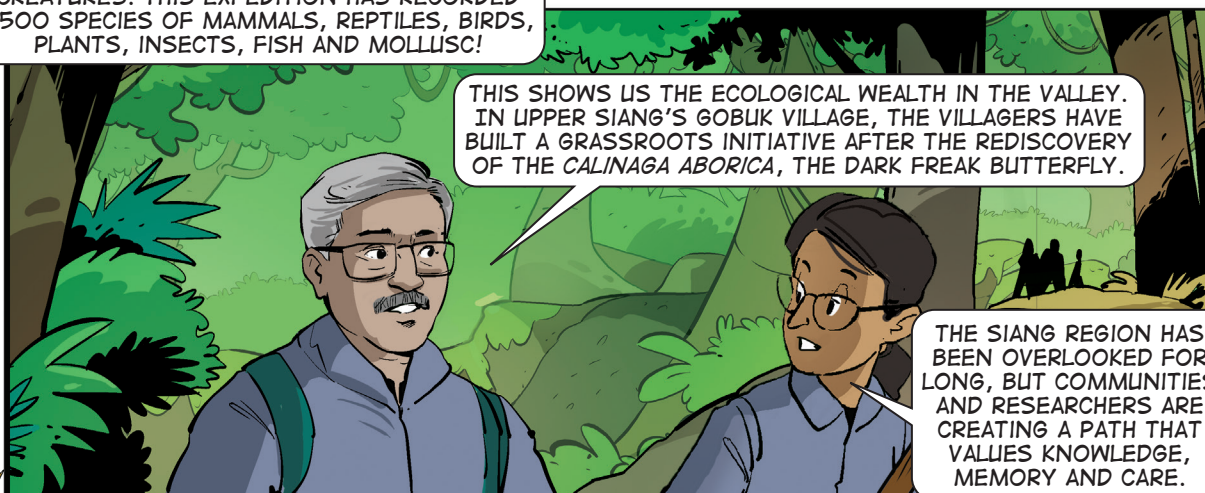
I'VE LEARNED SO MUCH IN THIS EXPEDITION. WE HAVE COLLECTED 525 PLANTS BELONGING TO 340 SPECIES!



"SOME WERE NEW DISCOVERIES, SUCH AS THE SHINING BLUE ANT AND SOME WERE REDISCOVERIES LIKE THE ANCIENT VELVET WORM (TYPHLOPERIPATUS WILLIAMSONI!)."

"THIS WORM HAD NOT BEEN SPOTTED SINCE THE 1911-12 EXPEDITION!"

THE 1911-12 EXPEDITION RECORDED 14 NEW PLANT GROUPS AND 244 SPECIES OF VARIOUS CREATURES. THIS EXPEDITION HAS RECORDED 1,500 SPECIES OF MAMMALS, REPTILES, BIRDS, PLANTS, INSECTS, FISH AND MOLLUSC!



THIS SHOWS US THE ECOLOGICAL WEALTH IN THE VALLEY. IN UPPER SIANG'S GOBUK VILLAGE, THE VILLAGERS HAVE BUILT A GRASSROOTS INITIATIVE AFTER THE REDISCOVERY OF THE CALINAGA ABORICA, THE DARK FREAK BUTTERFLY.

THE SIANG REGION HAS BEEN OVERLOOKED FOR LONG, BUT COMMUNITIES AND RESEARCHERS ARE CREATING A PATH THAT VALUES KNOWLEDGE, MEMORY AND CARE.

BIODIVERSITY POPULATIONS ARE ON A DECLINE GLOBALLY. IF THERE'S ANYTHING THIS EXPEDITION TEACHES, IT IS THIS: WE PROTECT AND GUARD WHAT REMAINS.