

## KEEP THE FAITH

HEMA NARAYANAN

**F**aith is not belief without proof, but trust without reservation. For each of us, faith can come from a different source and can be self-defined. Most times, faith offers the strength, when we feel we have none and hope, when all seems lost.

On the myriad journeys, I have embarked upon with a camera in

tow, I have often looked at what people hold onto as Faith, which gives them the power that is unseen but felt and have documented them as photographs. As the year draws on the year 2019, here are a few of my favourite frames based on the beliefs that people have and the ways they show their appreciation for what it gives them in return.

### Celebrate the Sun

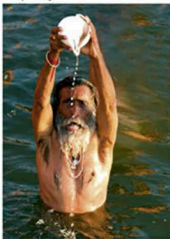
Can you think of a world without Light? Celebrating the rise of the sun and the setting of the sun is a practice that has taken place in parts of India, for years. While Arathi is offered in many a place using lit oil lamps, instrumentalists play melodious tunes on their Sarangi on the dunes of Pushkar - as a way to offer gratitude to the Sun God.

### Cherish the Light

Diyas or lamps - are lit in thousands, each year after Diwali at Varanasi, in the festival, named "Dev Diwali." It's a sight to behold as it happens on the full moon day of an auspicious month. I stood gaping in awe as there were lights everywhere - both in the sky and on the steps of the each of the Ghats of this sacred city. They cherish the Light and the concept of good over evil.

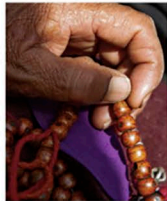
### Salute the Water

Rivers are the lifelines for us - they carry water and nutrients to all parts of the world and play a significant role in so many functions. Rivers in India are seen in abundance - each of them is highly revered and thanked across seasons. On a trip to Kashi, while sitting on the steps of Ghats of the Ganges, I was drawn to the way people paid their tributes to this mighty River (they call it 'Ma Ganga'). Each morning they prayed, dipped themselves in the cold water, looked at the Sun and paid a salutation to the Water, with immense faith and intensity. The drops of gratitude were evident.



### Believe the Beads

Called the Mala beads, they are generally a string of 108 beads, often used by the Buddhists. They are a prayer tool to help one focus their mind, count the mantras in sets of 108 repetitions and breaths while meditating. My eye caught the hand of an elderly Buddhist woman holding on to the Beads, sitting at the Hemis festival, in Ladakh. Her face was calm, her belief was true and she gracefully counted her beads starting from the 'Sumeru', the head bead. This frame captivated me and remains one of my favourites.



All these frames, time and again remind me, of how each of us need something very 'simple' to hold onto as Faith and express our appreciation for the role which it plays in our lives. An ode to year 2019...



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Hema is a professional Photographer & Published Writer, in Bangalore. As a Graduate from the New York Institute of Photography, she leads 'Experience India' Photo Journeys, conducts photo workshops. Her work is exhibited across National and International Photo expos and bought as a Souvenir Art for keepsakes or as a gift.