

## A Serendipitous Chase

Ever since we found out that the next eclipse would be seen in our own neighbourhood, we were eagerly scanning for all information which could help us converge on a location. That Mysuru would only experience a partial phase meant, we would have to move. The choice was between Kerala and Tamilnadu. Weather became the next consideration; and to our dismay almost all places had predictions of cloudy weather and even rainfall. Our choice of Kallodi in northern Kerala had to be given up due to predictions of thunderstorms. Our teacher and veteran eclipse chaser, Dr. S N Prasad too was undecided as late as the 20th December, for exactly the same reasons. He decided on the west coast near Kasargod. The pictures he got (published in the local evening paper, Star of Mysore, 26th December, 2019) are ample testimony to his experience and insight. We chose a lazier option – ride across into the path of annularity on our two wheeler and keep going if the weather promised anything.

Waking up on 26th – clear skies – we even sighted stars. All gung-ho, we set out. To shield ourselves from a potential disappointment, we decided to visit a few other places – the Kabini backwaters, the dam and a few lakes in between, hoping to see some winter visitors, particularly the bar headed geese. So we packed in our camera gear too. Our hopes kept plummeting – the skies became progressively darker and temperatures kept dipping. 55 kms later, we were in the vicinity of Antharasante, close to the backwaters of the reservoir, when we chanced upon the tiniest of hopes – a little opening in the skies.



The time was 9:05. Congratulating ourselves on our great luck, however little that was, we quickly chose a convenient place along a mud path and got down to watch.

Serendipity gave us a second bonus. The solar filter would simply not show up anything. But, the Sun was so obscured by the clouds, that we could actually stare at it for as long as we chose. Jumping at the opportunity, we pulled out the camera, set up a tripod and actually shot the Sun without any filters. And it did pay off. Not only did we thoroughly enjoy the eclipse – our very first Annular Eclipse – but also got some really satisfying photographs.



That the weather conspired in our favour for exactly the 45 minutes that mattered (9:05 to 9:50) was a pot luck, we will never forget. Never mind the fact, that none of the water bodies we visited thereafter offered any geese.

We are happy to share the pictures with you. Hope you like them as much.

***Rajaram Sharma and Vidya M S***  
26 December, 2019