

Contemporary Indian Photography

A long read on Indian photography

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Commissioned by DutchCulture,

Centre for International Cooperation. 12-04-2017



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INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this paper is to acquaint Dutch professionals, engaged with the medium of photography, with the developments in photographic practices in India today. This includes a mention of young, emerging practitioners, and the concerns that populate their practice today. Three broad categories have been created in order to slot practitioners on the basis of issues that are largely emerging in multiple practices. The paper also seeks to familiarize the reader with the trends that have been developing within the industry with regards to education, opportunities for photographers with the decline of the press and the state of the market economy within the photographic industry as well as the emergence of the photo festival as an alternate means for display, education and discourse with regard to the Indian photographic landscape. The paper also highlights new initiatives such as online

platforms for photography, self-published books and collectives that have emerged, signaling new directions for emerging practitioners within India today.

For the benefit of the reader, I have included an initial section on the brief history of Indian photography, so as to give a context about the emergence of the practice on the subcontinent. It is important to recognize the conditions and concerns that preceded the contemporary moment and informed the practice of many photographers mentioned in this paper. This paper is by no means an exhaustive survey of all important practitioners and artists within photography. The intent is to highlight issues and subjects that emerge within contemporary photographic practice and how the photographic industry in India is responding to these changing concerns.

FRONTISPIECE:
Image by Sohrab Hura

From the series
'Coast'



HISTORY OF INDIAN PHOTOGRAPHY

1. Photography and the Empire

The advent of photography in India was concurrent to the earliest developments in photography in Europe, circa 1840s, owing to the British regime presiding over the country. The first practitioners of the medium of photography were members of the British Army as well as employees of the British Government, commissioned to document the architectural wealth of India. Photography became an efficient, economic tool to record the architectural and archeological sites, as a source of information about the land under the control of Queen Victoria and the British Government. The shift in subject matter, from documentation of the land to its people, occurred first with the Mutiny of 1857 or First War of Indian Independence, an important event

in the political history of India. The British Army became preoccupied with the confronting the uprising and photographic responsibilities on the part of the officers took a backseat¹. Felice Beato, an Italian photographer, was one of the few photographers to capture scenes of the aftermath. In the famous photograph, titled *Interior of Secundrabagh after the Massacre, April 1858*, skeletal remains conspicuously lay in the foreground attributing to the death of 2,200 sepoy soldiers who had made it a stronghold during their siege of the city of Lucknow (Image 1). It is believed to be the first staged photograph, and that Beato exhumed² and/or rearranged the corpses of dead Indian soldiers to increase the impact of the image.



IMAGE 1:
Image by Felice Beato
Interior of Secundra Bagh, Lucknow from the album 'Views in Lucknow, Cawnpore and Delhi'

Albumen Print, 1858,
249 x 289 mm, ACP:
98.77.0001(16)

Courtesy Alkazi Collection
of Photography

IMAGE 2: Image by Lala Deen Dayal
The Grand Duke Alexander of Russia and Companions after Cheetah Hunt from 'A Souvenir from Nawab Sir Asmah Jah, Hyderabad (Deccan) 1895'

Albumen Print, Photographer's Ref. 9725, Mach 1891, 203 x 270 mm
ACP: 97.20.0001(42)

Courtesy Alkazi Collection of Photography



IMAGE 3: Image by Deen Dayal
Drawing room in the Bashir Bagh Palace in Hyderabad from the 'Curzon Collection: Views of HH the Nizam's Dominions, Hyderabad, Deccan, 1892.'

Courtesy British Library/Public Domain

2. Adoption by Indian practitioners

In the period following the mutiny, photography began to be used as a tool; it went beyond pictorial renditions of landscapes and architecture, and was used to document the people, the places, the culture and traditions of India.

A prominent name at the time was Maharaja Sawai Ram Singh II (1833-1880) of Jaipur who came to be known as the first photographer-prince. He invited artist-photographer T. Murray from England to his court multiple times and used this opportunity to learn from his craft. The Maharaja School of Arts established in Jaipur was also the first school in India to teach photography. The collection of photographic material at the Maharaja Sawai Man Singh II Museum consists of 6050 individual prints (including duplicates) contained in 105 albums and 1,941 glass plate negatives containing 2008 images (some plates carry two). It also includes camera equipment. The albums range from the 1860s when Sawai Ram Singh II began photographing and collecting to the 1970s. The photographic processes they encompass are albumen and silver gelatin prints, on both printed and developed out paper. The prints belonging to Sawai Ram Singh's time were all albumen prints, the dominant technology of the time. They range in size from *Cartes de visite* or visiting card sized photographs that were mounted on thin card (eventually becoming thicker, gilded and more ornate), to roughly A4 size photographic prints by established photographers or studios such as Deen Dayal, Johnston & Hoffman and Bourne & Shepherd³.

Between the 1840s to the 1900s, various Indian photographers also opened up their studios in Bombay, Calcutta, Delhi and Agra. Lala Deen Dayal (1844-1905) was one of the first Indian photographers to be prominently recognized on the photographic scene, which till now was dominated by European names such as Bourne & Shepherd, Feallice Beato, Linnaeus Tripe and the like. He opened his first studio in Bombay and by the 1870s he had a host of studios in Indore, Hyderabad and Secunderabad. In 1884, he was appointed to be the court photographer for the sixth Nizam of Hyderabad, Mir Mahboob Ali Khan, the then monarch of the state of Hyderabad. Three years later, he was given the appointment as photographer to Queen Victoria and King Edward VII⁴. Deen Dayal's archive, conserved both in prints and glass plates, contains images of the lifestyles of the elite, complete with portraits of the nobility, interiors of palaces, hunting scenes

as well as images of courtesans, all showcasing elements and symbols of power and dominance. His aesthetic and technical capabilities had such finesse that he would gain commissions from both the Indian as well as British patrons. Deen Dayal focused on the picturesque, much like his western counterparts, which perhaps explains his popularity with the colonial powers. There are arguments that this reinforced the colonial gaze already familiar in images by the European authors. However, his images are nevertheless an important document, photographic as well as historical, to record the grandeur that existed in the resource-rich 19th century India (Image 2 and Image 3).

3. Advent of press photography and photo-journalism in the 20th Century

In the 20th century, as the British stronghold over India increased, one of the names that emerged prominently in the field of Indian photography was that of Homai Vyarawalla (b. 1913). Born to a Parsi family in Gujarat, Vyarawalla was the first female press photographer in the country. By the time Vyarawalla began working for the press in the 1930s, heavy cameras and glass plates had been replaced by film, making the photographic practice more accessible than before. Photography was a viable option for men, however women owning camera equipment was a rare phenomenon. The fact that Vyarawalla's first published images were printed under her husband, Maneckshaw's⁵, name is testimony to the fact that her gender was an anomaly in the field of photography. In 40 years of work, spanning from 1930 to 1970, she chronicled important moments in India's political history leading up to and the years following India's independence. Vyarawalla documented important historical events such as the meeting of the vote for India's partition, the first flag hoisting ceremony on August 15, 1947, funerals of great leaders such as Mahatma Gandhi (Image 4), visits of important dignitaries to India such as Ho Chi Minh and Jacqueline Kennedy as well as following India's first Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru during his official trips (Image 5). Her work was published in *Illustrated Weekly of India*, *Life Magazine*, *Time Magazine* and she was on the payroll for the *British Information Services* as well. Homai Vyarawalla died in 2012 at the age of 98.

At the time of Vyarawalla, there was another photographer by the name of Kulwant Roy (b. 1914) that was chronicling India right before she gained independence and then immediately after. As a news photographer, Roy had unique access



IMAGE 4 (top): Image by Homai Vyarawalla
The ashes of Mahatma Gandhi being carried in a procession, Allahabad, February 1948

Courtesy HV Archive/Alkazi Collection of Photography

IMAGE 5 (above): Image by Homai Vyarawalla
Jawaharlal Nehru lighting up a cigarette for Mrs. Simon, the wife of the Deputy High Commissioner of Britain on the first B.O.A.C. flight in India.

Courtesy HV Archive/Alkazi Collection of Photography

to many leaders such as Jawaharlal Nehru, Mahatma Gandhi, Sardar Patel and Mohammad Ali Jinnah and his images are a testimony to the relationship of trust that existed between the state and the press at the time. He also pursued personal projects such as photo essays on Kashmir and Kedarnath as well as unique documentation of the Bhakra Nangal Dam⁶ (Image 6), one of the initiatives of Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru to spearhead development in Independent India. Born in Lahore, Roy set up his studio and agency in Delhi by the name of Associated Press Photographs in 1940. A decade after independence, Roy travelled the world visiting more than 30 countries from 1958-61 and funded his trip by selling many of his images to international publications. Roy parceled most of his negatives to India while he was overseas, which got misplaced en-route and were never found again, creating a large gap in his archive. His remaining archive now rests with his family friend Aditya Arya in New Delhi, where it is restored, digitized and preserved. Arya's practice was greatly influenced by his interactions with Kulwant Roy at an early age. Arya, himself, is a prominent figure in advertising and corporate photography and also has a collection of approximately 110 analogue cameras⁷ that he has amassed over 30 years.

Another important name that figures in the history of Indian photography is that of photojournalist Sunil Janah (b. 1918). Janah was an important chronicler of the Nehruvian era, and much like Vyrawalla and Roy, he was well known for his images of the crucial years leading up to independent India. However, in contrast to the above, his images documented the daily life of the people, especially that of the working classes, the labour movements, the peasant life, the tribal and village folk. He is most recognized for his images of the Bengal Famine of 1943-44, which showed hundreds of starving villagers queuing for food rations, dogs chewing on human remains and skeletons, and dead bodies piled up on one another (Image 7). A political activist himself, and aligned with the Communist Party of India, he used his images to create awareness of the state of India at that time and the atrocities committed by the British rulers.

Post independence, photography began to take on a new form and small-format street photography and the Decisive Moment began to emerge in the photographic image. One of the leading names that pioneered the aesthetic in colour was self-taught photographer Raghubir Singh (b. 1942). Singh, heavily influenced by western photographers like Robert Frank and



IMAGE 6: Image by Kulwant Roy
Courtesy Aditya Arya Archive

IMAGE 7: Image by Sunil Janah
Men leaving their villages to walk to the famine relief centers in the district town, Andhra, South India, 1945.
Courtesy Arjun Janah



Henri Cartier-Bresson, developed his unique vision of looking at his own country from the eyes of an insider. His images incorporated the chaos, the contradictions and the diversity of India and its people. Singh's images often embodied a tension, tugging at the four edges of the frame with multiple subjects competing to tell stories, serving true to the experience of living in the fast-changing post-Independence India of that time. What is particularly notable of his oeuvre is his ability to depict the nuances of the country, the urban as well as the rural, the modernizing India as well as the lasting traditions and the complex juxtapositions of the new and the old. For him, India was not just the exotic land that was so often perceived as such through the western lens. Singh was a recognized photojournalist whose works were published in various international publications such as National Geographic, Time, New York Times and the New Yorker. Singh published his first book *Ganga: Sacred River of India* in 1974 and since then has had 14 monographs to his name. Much of his long-term documentary work, which culminated later in his books, emerged from his editorial work done for international publications. His expertise which lay in looking at India in colour was exemplified by the following statement, "If photography had been an Indian invention, I believe that seeing in colour would never have posed the theoretical or artistic problems perceived by Western photographers"⁸. Singh inspired many important photographers in the generation after him such as Ketaki Seth and Sooni Taraporevala. The latter credits Singh with guiding her to develop one of her seminal projects chronicling the Parsi community in India from the 1970s till early 2000s which culminated into a book and exhibition.

Another name that distinguished itself was that of photographer Raghu Rai (b. 1942), who has been hailed as one of India's prime photojournalists and street photographers. His elder brother S. Paul, a prominent name in photography himself, was already working as a photographer at the time and was instrumental in introducing Rai to the photographic medium. Much like Raghubir Singh, Rai became a pre-eminent editorial photographer of international repute. Over his career, he has worked with publications such as TIME, LIFE, GEO, New York Times, Newsweek and The New Yorker. He was nominated to the agency Magnum Photos by its co-founder Henri Cartier-Bresson in 1977. Rai's photography exemplified the very aesthetic that Cartier-Bresson pioneered – of the Decisive Moment (Image 8 and Image 9). His black and white images possess a timeless quality, focusing on beauty of the form and poetics of movement. While accessing similar subjects as Raghubir Singh, his imagery is easier to consume, his compositions are less tense and break far fewer rules and yet, incorporate the multi-layered landscape of India. He is often credited with the ability to capture the true face of the human spirit as well as chronicle the changing face of contemporary India. His imagery covers a wide spectrum, from portraits of those in positions of power as in his first book *A Day in the Life of Indira Gandhi* (1974) to the daily life of the weak and the marginalized. As a photojournalist for India

IMAGE 8: Image by Raghu Rai
Akhara, Delhi



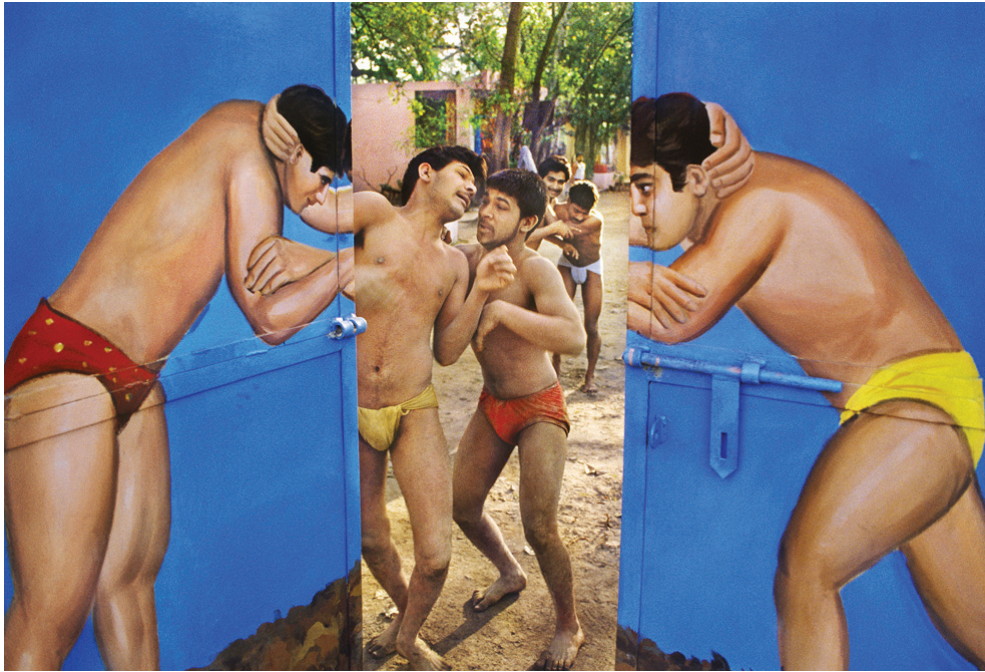


IMAGE 9: Image by Raghu Rai

Dust Storm, Rajasthan

Today, he was one of the first to cover the Bhopal Gas Leak from the Union Carbide factory in 1984 and shot the image (along side photographer Pablo Bartholomew) titled *Burial of an Unknown Child*, of a child poisoned by the gas leak moments before being buried by his father. Rai worked as chief photographer and picture editor for India Today, one of India's leading political magazines, during its formative years from 1982-1991. He also served on the jury of World Press Photo three times and has 18 books to his name⁹. He has photographed many people that are seminal to the history of

the Indian subcontinent such as Mother Theresa, Dalai Lama, Faiz Ahmed Faiz and the late Prime Minister Indira Gandhi amongst others. Rai has inspired many photographers after him to continue the tradition of street photography and has been hailed as one of the most important contributors to Indian photography till date.

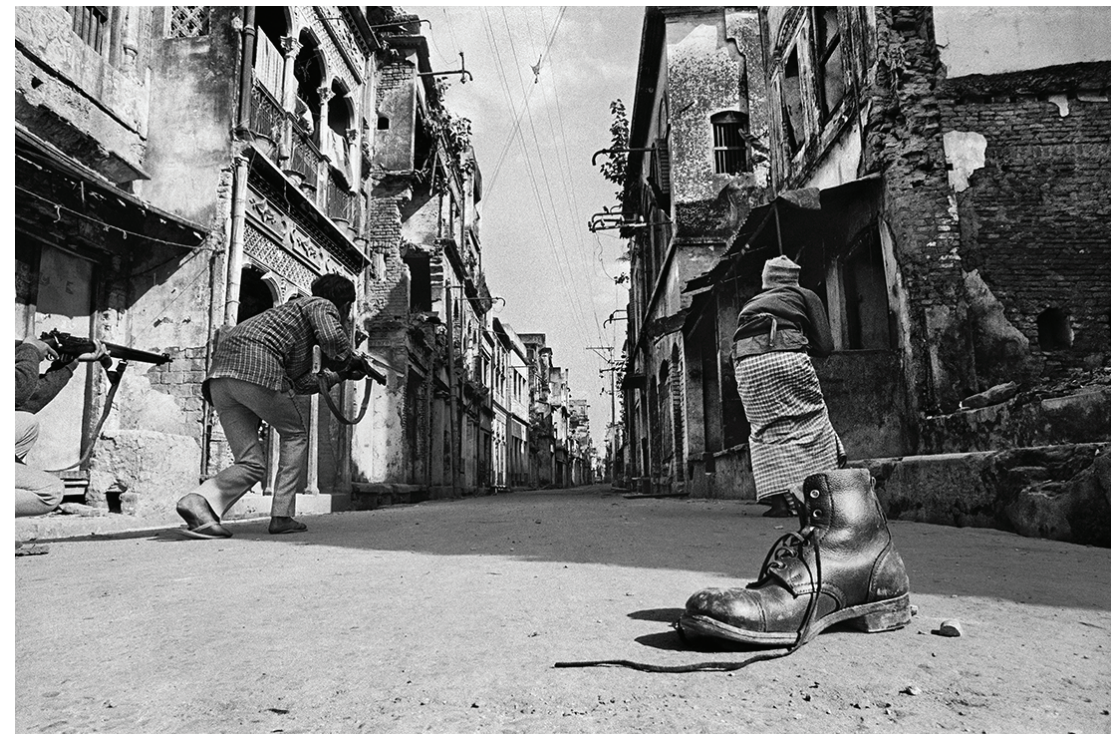
Another photographer considered a stalwart of Indian photography was Kishor Parekh (1930-1982). He was one of the first Indian photographers to have been educated abroad having attained a Masters degree in Filmmaking and Documentary Photography from the University of Southern California. Armed with this education as well as an internship at LIFE magazine, he returned to India in 1960 and joined the Hindustan Times newspaper. As chief photographer from 1961-67, he is credited with proposing radical changes in photo coverage done by newspaper such as introducing full-page photo features (Image 10) hitherto unseen in Indian print media, fighting for images to appear as large as 8-columns in newspapers and ensuring photographers received credit for their published work¹⁰. Parekh chronicled some of the most important moments in Indian history such as the Indian expedition to Everest, famine in Bihar, Prime-Minister Lal Bahadur Shastri's last moments and prime-minister Jawaharlal Nehru's funeral. However, his focus was to steer attention from public events to issues of larger human concerns. His coverage from India found acceptance in a wide range of international publications, including *National Geographic*, *Paris Match*, *London Times*, *TIME*, *Newsweek*, *Stern*, *Popular Photography* and *Asahi Graphic*.

The high point of his career, however, was his unflinching and powerful record of the war for independence in Bangladesh in 1971. At the time Parekh was not affiliated to any newspaper, and undertook the entire exercise on his own, self-motivated and self funded. The images recorded by Parekh's camera were powerful testimonies of the suffering of the people during the war. Upon his return, Parekh produced a book dummy that received a sanction from the Indian Government for an order of 20,000 copies. This book titled *Bangladesh: A Brutal Birth* became an official document of the war containing images that became iconic of Bangladesh's liberation movement (Image 11).

A photographic practice, concurrent to this time period that distinguished itself



from the others was that of Jyoti Bhatt (b.1934). Trained primarily as an artist and printmaker, Bhatt studied under eminent Indian artist at the Faculty of Fine Arts in Baroda. In the late 1960s, Bhatt took to photography by embarking on a journey in 1967, of recording folk art, craft and tradition in rural India, which he continued till 1995. Over the course of his sojourn across central and west India, Bhatt took close to 30,000 images, which serve as a record of living artistic and cultural traditions in postcolonial India. Bhatt's images were distinct from those of his contemporaries, possibly informed by his knowledge of painting. He focused on the two-dimensionality of the image, playing with graphic abstractions and even drawing on top of his silver gelatin prints to make some of the earliest mixed media work of his time. Bhatt's archive comprising of photographs of living traditions in rural India and his contemporaries in the artist community as well as his publications on art and primary documents (diaries, letters, manuscripts and essays, etching press drawings) rests with the India Gandhi National Center for the Arts (IGNCA) in New Delhi in digital form¹¹.



In order to highlight emerging concerns and preoccupations in photographers' works henceforth, I will broadly divide them into three categories. For the last six decades, these concerns have emerged repeatedly amongst practitioners pursuing the documentary style of photography in particular. This, by no means, is an exhaustive list but an indication of the popular preoccupations that have emerged within the practice until now, not necessarily cited in chronological order.

IMAGE 10 (left): Initiation of full page photo-essay and credit lines for photographers in Indian print journalism by Kishor Parekh. From the Hindustan Times, 1961

Courtesy Hindustan Times Archive

IMAGE 11: Image by Kishor Parekh

Mukti Bahini guerillas in combat against Pakistani forces.

From the book 'Bangladesh : A Brutal Birth'

CONTEMPORARY INDIAN PHOTOGRAPHIC PRACTICE AND THE LONG TERM DOCUMENTARY PROJECT

1. The Self and the Family as the Protagonist

Many photographers have used the trope of looking inward and around their own surroundings to produce long-term bodies of work. For some, it is this comprehensive look at a particular person, family or community that could in turn be representative of a social macrocosm of a particular time or generation. For others, photography becomes a tool to understand, record and situate their own selves and relationships within their personal histories. At times, the act of making the photograph has been a therapeutic tool for the photographer to negotiate various personal and social concerns.

Pablo Bartholomew (b. 1955), recognized as one of the foremost photojournalists in the country, is the son of one of India's leading art critics and writer Richard Bartholomew. It was through his father's network that he was introduced to the art and theatre scene of Delhi. Bartholomew received the World Press Photo award in 1975 for his series on

morphine addicts in India and again in 1984 for his image of a dead child from the Bhopal Gas Tragedy in Madhya Pradesh, India. Even though Bartholomew worked successfully as an internationally reputed photojournalist with leading news publications like *Time*, *The New York Times*, *National Geographic*, *Newsweek* etc. his most prolific work was that which looked at his own life and that of his friends in the 1970s. The work *Outside In: A Tale of Three Cities*, shot in New Delhi, Mumbai and Kolkata followed a diaristic approach chronicling the lives of his friends, acquaintances and loved ones. The work, autobiographical in nature, looks at the trials and tribulations of relationships, the loves, the losses, the intimacy and the challenges of growing up in 1970s

India. He first showed the work at Les Rencontres d'Arles¹² in 2007, two decades after it was produced, presenting itself in the romantic context of a bygone era. Bartholomew has a penchant for nostalgia, and uses memory as a tool to engage the audience. He continues to unearth his archive, as well as his father's, who was also a notable photographer and regularly brings out material that he shot over his career spanning nearly five decades (Image 12 and Image 13).

Another photographer that deserves a mention in this category is Kushal Ray (b. 1960) and his work *Family Matters*, which charts the lives of the Chatterjee family in the Kalighat for close to a decade. Manju Chatterjee, the matriarch of the family, took care of Ray when he contracted tuberculosis in 1999, after which he continued to spend the next four years in their modest middle-class house, chronicling their day-to-day activities. Ray's work captures the mundane, the happiness, sadness and even boredom of the joint family setup of the Chatterjee family. Though it was not intended to be a commentary on the demise of the



IMAGE 12: Image by Pablo Bartholomew

From the series 'Outside In: A Tale of Three Cities'



joint family setup in India, the work chronicles the evolution and eventual dissolution of the family over the time period of a decade. Ray decides to end the work when his friend Manju Chatterjee, who took him into the house, dies of cancer. It is here that the relationship of the photographer with the subject is intertwined, even though the family was not Ray's own, his insider-outsider approach to photographing them affords him a kind of intimate privilege which a stranger would not have been able to achieve. Niyogi Books published the work in 2012 as a book titled *Intimacies* with essays by Kunal Basu¹³.

Amongst younger practitioners, Sohrab Hura (b. 1981), has emerged as a prominent name with regard to producing work emanating from his close family and relationships. His body of work *Life is Elsewhere*, which culminated into a self published book (under the imprint of Ugly Dog press) in 2015, is a journal looking at his emotionally complex relationship with his mother and her battle with paranoid schizophrenia. The book is a personal look at Hura's journey of making sense of his situation, including handwritten notes and references to his partner, his dog Elsa, and some friends he encounters along the way. The work, despite a heavy, stylized black and white aesthetic, is an extremely personal portrayal of the reality of the photographer allowing himself to be vulnerable to the audience. This is the first chapter in a series Hura titles as *Sweet Life*. The second chapter in this work, titled *Look, It's Getting Sunny Outside*, explores a narratives where his mother recovers a bit from her illness and the glimmer of hope reflects in the change of palette of the work, which switches to colour and the language much more playful and casual.

When looking at Hura's body of work, he switches between the biographical and sociological with ease. His current work *Song of Sparrows in a 100 Days of Summer* looks at life in Barwani, a village in central India that is one of the hottest

IMAGE 13: Image by Pablo Bartholomew

From the series 'Outside In: A Tale of Three Cities'

regions in the country. The work looks at oppressive climatic conditions in the area, with extreme temperatures and little rainfall heat in the area, and the impact it has on human lives and relationships. Inspired by Gabriel Garcia Marquez' landscape in *A Hundred Years of Solitude*, the images are lyrical in their approach. Hura claims that life here can take on an alternate reality that unfolds in the twilight moments of this heat¹⁴ (Image 14). He is also experimenting with different media and his work, *The Coast*, uses sound and images to construct a narrative that "enters through fiction and exits in reality"¹⁵. The use of the word 'coast' is metaphorical, to refer to the fringes of society that are subject to everyday violence and prejudice within India today. The output of the work is a video piece combining photographs, found images and music composed by two Belgian composers Hannes d'Hoine and Sjoerd Bruil in collaboration.

Hura was also the second and only other Indian after Raghu Rai in 1977, to be made a Magnum nominee in 2015.

Other photographers that are noteworthy in this genre are Zishaan Akbar Latif (b.1984) with his series *95 Mani Villa* documented the life of his ageing grandfather and Srinivas Kuruganti (b. 1967), who chronicled his life in a snapshot aesthetic in England and the USA as a member of the Indian diaspora. His works *Between the Moon and New York City* and *39 East First Street* have been recently shown at exhibitions in Delhi, India. Recently, photographer Harikrishna Katragadda is working on his book titled *I'll be looking at the Moon but I'll be seeing you* chronicling the relationship with a lover in an ambiguous, poetic format reminiscent of a sad love song.

IMAGE 14:
Image by Sohrab Hura

From the series 'Song of Sparrows in a Hundred Days of Summer'



2. Gender and Body Politics

In contemporary Indian photography, many documentary photographers have used the medium as a trope for raising awareness about issues that are inaccessible for discourse or considered taboo in mainstream Indian media. Many photographers and artists have also played the role of activists in situations where they are invested on a personal or political level. For the purpose of this paper, I will divide this section into practitioners who produced works from within the movement, simultaneously involved with activism, such as Sunil Gupta, Sheba Chhachhi and Tejal Shah. The others – namely Dayanita Singh, Pushpamala N and Akshay Mahajan – observe the lives of others, positioning themselves as outsiders looking in.



IMAGE 15:
Image by Sunil Gupta

From the series 'Sun City'

IMAGE 16:
Image by Tejal Shah
Southern Siren from the series *Hijra Fantasy*

Digital photograph on archival paper, 2006

Courtesy of Project 88 & Barbara Gross Galerie



One of the primary figures in Indian photography that has been vocal about the issues of gay rights in his work has been London-based photographer, curator, writer and educator Sunil Gupta (b. 1953). Gupta, HIV+ himself, has used photography as a tool to tell the stories and raise questions about the rights and access for gay men, especially in public spaces, in various countries across the world. His work explores the gay subculture in India, London and Canada, through the prism of an insider. He received a commission from The Photographer's Gallery in London to produce his work *Exiles*, looking at the community of gay men in Delhi. He was also commissioned by the Centre Pompidou in Paris to reconstruct a French film *Le Jetée* by Chris Marker, but with an Indian protagonist and replacing the nuclear apocalypse of the original film with the ongoing struggle of HIV/AIDS¹⁶. The project titled *Sun City*, though motivated by personal concerns addresses issues that plague the LGBTQ community in India and elsewhere to this present day (Image 15).

A practitioner that has been a committed chronicler of the women's movement in India, and whose craft has evolved with the evolution of the movement itself is photographer turned installation artist Sheba Chhachhi. In the 1980s, Chhachhi began as an activist and documentary photographer. A decade later, her practice became more collaborative as she began doing staged portraiture with her subjects¹⁷. Her subjects have very often been activists themselves such as feminist and publisher Urvashi Butalia. Chhachhi's works range from anti-dowry concerns to documenting the lives of women ascetics, which she worked on for ten years. Her practice, at the turn of the century, moved towards installations dealing with images, video, sound and lightboxes. Even though the form of her work has evolved over a period of time, feminism as a subject has remained at its core. In 2016, the book *Arc Silt Dive* was published which records three decades of her work. It maps her methods, the modes of address and inquiry in her photographs, animated lightboxes, videos, and installations¹⁸. Kumkum Sangari, who is a feminist academic and activist herself, is the editor of the book.

Another artist exploring the realm of transgender politics and LGBTQ rights is the Goa-based Tejal Shah (b. 1979). Shah, a visual artist working with photography, is one of the few practitioners that explores

IMAGE 17:
Image by Dayanita Singh

I get this strong urge to dance from within, Ayesha's second birthday, 1991

From the series
'Myself, Mona Ahmed'

IMAGE 18:
Image by Dayanita Singh

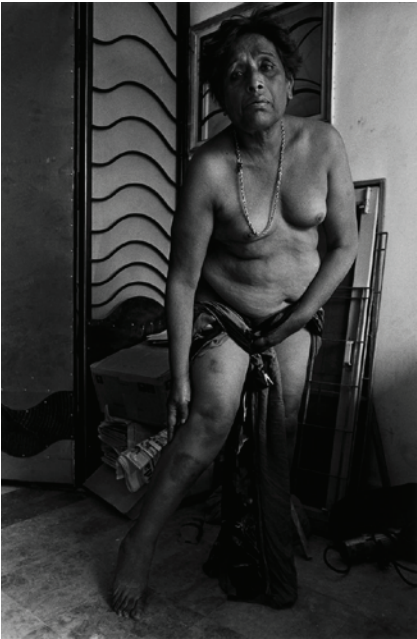
When I went to meet Ayesha, the eunuchs had me tortured by the police. In my pain I ran to Dayanita's house to make a record of my pain, 1998

From the series
'Myself, Mona Ahmed'



the realm of contemporary art and uses photography, video, installation, sound, and performance to portray ideas of feminism, sexuality and queer politics in her work. Her work titled *Hijra Fantasy Series* (Image 16) is one such example of a work using photography and video stills as a tool of communication. *Hijra* is translated as transgender in Hindi. Shah worked closely with three of her protagonists from an earlier video installation titled "What are You?". She creates staged tableaux, one of which was inspired by the works of the famous Indian painter Raja Ravi Verma, in which her protagonists enact their own personal fantasies of themselves. The fantasies, once elaborated visually by the artist through her collaborative approach with her subjects, are strikingly commonplace and pedestrian – the fantasy of being in love, of being powerful and glamorous and of having a family – driving attention to the dualism, of what may be normal for hetero-normative audiences may prove to be an upward battle for the transgender community in India. Unlike Sunil Gupta, whose work is inextricably linked to his own condition and concerns, Dayanita Singh's work on the life of transgender Mona Ahmed was propelled by her close relationship with the protagonist. The work *Myself Mona Ahmed*, initially intended to be a photojournalistic assignment culminated into a visual novel using photography and text to weave a first person account of the trials and tribulation of Ahmed, a Muslim boy from a conservative area of Delhi who chose to get himself castrated and join a group of *hijras* (trans-genders). Mona Ahmed identified herself as the third gender, not conforming to society's binary definitions of gender. Singh's images, documentary in nature, interweaved with emails dictated by Mona build a story that lies somewhere between fact and fiction. The images culminated into a book in 2001 (Image 17 and Image 18).

Another female practitioner looking at the notion of gender in her work is Pushpamala N. Her work uses techniques of performance placing herself as the subject of her compositions. In her series *The Native Women of South India – Manners and Customs*, which she produced in collaboration with



photographer Clare Arni, the artist recreates tableaux of representations of South Indian women as seen in different media such as historical photographs, newspaper photographs, film stills, advertisements including images of criminals, goddesses and mythological characters¹⁹. The work, incisive and humorous at the same time, comments on notions of female representation, high and low art, ethnography and ideas of race and caste, colonialism and Indian modernity, as well as history of modern Indian art and photography²⁰.

A photographer whose works focuses on the hinterlands, or the peripheries in which societies often reveal themselves in all their horrors and splendour, with a special relationship to women²¹ is Poulomi Basu (b. 1983). She looks at the lives of ordinary people in extraordinary circumstances, conforming to or questioning gender roles within traditions and the long-term consequences of the same²². Basu, trained at the London College of Communication (LCC), returned to India and worked on her first story *To Conquer Her Land* during 2009-11 (Image 19). The work focused on women soldiers when the armed forces in India opened their ranks to women for the first time. Basu traveled with this regiment of women, stationed at the India-Pakistan border in Punjab and Jammu & Kashmir. The

IMAGE 19:
Image by Poulomi Basu

From the series 'To Conquer Her Land'



work looks at the battles against patriarchy that these women fight within their own families, as well as within the force, which is made up largely of men. Her narrative is layered, looking at social concerns such as the desire by them to build a better life than the poverty-stricken conditions of their villages as well as emotional and psychological concerns such as the idea of leaving one's home, fighting loneliness and coping with the stress and pressures of the job. Basu has worked for international publications on assignment such as The Guardian, The New York Times, International New York Times, Financial Times Weekend Magazine, Monocle and NPR as well as for organizations such as UNESCO, Water Aid and Save the Children. Basu has received several accolades for her work including being a VII Mentee and receiving the Magnum Foundation Human Rights Fellowship at New York University as well as being nominated for the Ian Parry and Inge Morath awards²³.

Another photographer who has worked in the realm of gender politics is Akshay Mahajan (b.1985) with his series *I Don't Want to Sleep Alone*, where he turns the camera back at individuals that are an extension of his own life. The central feature of the story here that fact that the subjects are very much like the photographer—similar upbringing, family structures, and most importantly economic background or class. It is incidental that they happen to be from the queer community, and as Mahajan states "in many ways this is how they want to be perceived and may not want their body politic

IMAGES 20 / 21:
Images by Akshay Mahajan

From the series 'I don't want to sleep alone'



IMAGES 22 / 23:
Image by Ronny Sen

From the series
'End of Time'



to be sewn on their breast like a badge"²⁴(Image 20 and Image 21).

Over the years, India has no doubt been exoticized by the foreign gaze, but Indian photographers themselves have many a time found themselves trapped in representing 'the other'—what is alien and exotic to them. Often these are subjects that are at a lower level of privilege than the photographer. Very rarely do we see works looking at concerns amongst those much like ourselves—the urban middle class individuals grappling with their own struggles, issues and societal tensions.

3. Demographic and the Landscape

Owing to the vastness of the country in terms of area and population, many photographers and visual artists have chosen to focus their work on specific geographical areas and people, so as to draw narratives through the analysis of a limited demographic. Often times, the human concerns that emanate from these specific microcosms can be representative of similar communities in other parts of the country or marginalized communities in the country at large.

One of the photographers that recently received acclaim for his work on the Jharia region in Eastern India is Kolkata-based photographer Ronny Sen (b. 1986). Jharia, the protagonist in Sen's work, is a city ravaged by excessive mining and underground coalfield fires, one of which has been burning for the last 100 years²⁵. As a result, the thick fumes permeate through the ground and cloud the city, entering the homes, the villages and lives of the people. Sen looks at this apocalyptic atmosphere to question, "What does the end of time look like?"²⁶. As a possible metaphor for end of the world through rapid changes in climate, the work is a poetic rendition of a hard-hitting reality. Sen photographs the entire body of work on a mobile camera and was awarded the Getty-Instagram grant for photography (2016)²⁷ (Image 22 and Image 23).



IMAGES 24
Image by Sumit Dayal

Father and Son from the Bakharwal (shepherd) community in Kashmir shield themselves against cold winds at the Peer ki Gali mountain pass on the Pir Panjal range.

From the series
'Kashmir Attaché / Chapter Two - LOC'

Another photographer looking at demographics in a defined terrain is Sumit Dayal (b. 1983) in his body of work *LOC (Line of Control)*. The LOC is the military-controlled line between the India and Pakistan in the former princely state of Jammu and Kashmir – a line that to this day does not constitute a legally recognized international boundary and is a de facto border²⁸. Due to the indeterminate nature of its validity, the LOC has seen continued conflict on both sides since Independence causing innumerable casualties and deaths. Dayal, whose family hails from Kashmir, returns to his homeland after 17 years, to travel across the length of the LOC (2013) so as to draw a detailed portrait of the land and its people. As one chapter in his larger work on Kashmir, Dayal works with varied media – small and medium format film, found imagery from Kashmiri studios, his own family album and video footage (Image 24).

Another photographer exploring this genre, observing communities and their relationship to their land is Karthik Subramanian (b. 1987). In his work *Mohona (Confluence)*, Subramanian observes the intersections and overlaps between man and nature in the Sunderbans region of East India, the biggest halophytic mangrove block in the world and the largest reserve for the Bengal Tiger. Using the night as

his landscape, one that magnifies the ambiguities between man and wild, he works with photographs, sound and moving image to construct his narrative (Image 25).

Other photographers focusing on specific communities are Showkat Nanda on the human rights violations in Kashmir, his homeland; Senthil Kumaran in his work on the human-tiger conflict, Avani Tanya exploring alternate narratives of Bangalore, Arko Datto looking at and Soham Gupta focusing on a psychological narrative of people at the fringes in Calcutta's seeming underbelly.

4. Fiction, humour and post-photography

There are some practitioners for whom the various contradictions evident within India serve as continuous fodder for their work. For a country as diverse as India, there are large sections of people separated by caste, class, ethnicity, region, language, customs etc. This unique trait allows photographers working in the country to feed on multiple realities. What may seem distant, humorous or even absurd to one may appear to be the mundane reality of another. Such a contradiction allows for artists to piece narratives that tow the lines of fiction, irony and fantasy—many a time using it as a trope to make larger socio-cultural observations.

Kapil Das is one such photographer—his anecdotal style of making images allows for him to observe the peculiarities that exist in the world around him. Very often adopting the snapshot aesthetic, Das does not consider himself a photographer by profession, claiming it as one of the many interests that he pursues on a regular basis. Working full time in a firm he co-founded named *Quicksand*, which specializes in design research and innovation, he describes himself to be an ethnographer by profession^{29a}, with his interests deeply rooted in understanding how people choose to function and represent themselves, as individuals or a collective entity. His images appear to be spontaneously made, though he claims that they are not so much conceived, as they are realized. He defines photography as a process for him to engage with the world without inhibitions and also a way for him to trace his 'existential footprint'^{29b}. His bodies of work—many of which are retrospective collections of images taken at disparate locations and times, edited and pieced together from his extensive archive—all have a running thread of irony, of looking at society as a distant observer. He says that they serve at best for him

IMAGE 25:
Image by Karthik Subramanian

From the series
'Mohona (Confluence)'





IMAGE 26:
Image by Kapil Das

as ‘some sort of orientation in reading images, especially those that are emanating from India’^{29c}. His series *154 Neshvilla Road and Other Stories Part I* is about life in his home in a small town named Dehra Dun in North India, where he grew up. The work, despite emanating from an intimate relationship with his subject, embodies a distance, which allows him to step back and observe daily life—the details, the quirks, the peculiarities in the mundane—all subtly tinted with wit and dry humour. It feels as though Das is always on the lookout for the strange and the absurd, and finds it in the most unassuming of circumstances—the clutter of a family storeroom; in the performers and lookalikes of famous actors and celebrities of a traveling

theatre troupe; in the aesthetics of a middle class household in small town India. Much of the subtext in Das’s work speaks to a local audience, as it feeds on memory and nostalgia of an India that we all recognize and is seemingly in the past. On closer observation, however, the India that he portrays very much exists today, hidden behind all the glamour of the big cities and modernity of the metropolises. What seems to be the primary aim of his work is to subvert the stereotypical narratives of India and the accompanying aesthetics that are very often projected to build that image²⁹ (Image 26).

Das also works with found imagery, with the Internet serving as his primary source. His self-published book *Rapunzel* comprises found images that deal with hair fetishes. He also has another collection of images from the Internet, under the title *You So Sexy*, in which he looks at the way Indian women and their bodies are fetishized online by the male gaze. The imagery in this work subverts aestheticized notions of beauty and taps into a more mainstream language of fetishization that finds its voice on the web. Since Das found the images on the Internet, he feels that the most appropriate platform for his derived artwork to be published is also within the virtual world.

Das, along with Akshay Mahajan, co-founded the collective *Blindboys*, a platform to share photography and new visual perspectives from Asia. Primarily a community exercise, one of the earliest initiatives of *Blindboys* was “BlowUp!,” held in Bangalore, India in August 2009. Das and Mahajan invited participants to collectively display their photographic works in public spaces across cities in order to engage with local communities³⁰. One of the earliest platforms to engage with and outside the photography community, the guerrilla-style initiative became more structured over the years, with street interventions in the form of curated slideshows, participatory exhibitions at festivals, and an online blog featuring reviews, interviews and comments on photographic works.

Another practitioner using non-linear narratives to make commentary on critical issues is the photographer Arko Datto. His bodies of work, though different in form and language, signal a desire to explore the existential dilemmas of our times³¹. Datto simultaneously works on multiple projects, dealing with vastly different social concerns. He believes that an identifiable style repeated over multiple bodies of work accords a higher value to the artwork and makes it more palatable. Datto attempts to challenge the dominant way of seeing things and speaks about promiscuity beyond its definite sexual connotation, to indicate his interest in various issues at the same time and allowing for a multifaceted point of view.

In one of his works titled *Mannequin*, Datto explores the nocturnal realm, photographing after dark at various locations across the country. The work veers towards a phantasmagorical or surrealist language, where Datto makes observations of the ‘dark reality of Indian existence’³². As part of his artistic expression, he pushes the colours in the image to extremes, making the images appear hyper-real and his subjects otherworldly. Saying that this work is most representative of him, where

he is exploring his own unique visual language, Datto uses the politics of colour to present a view of India unlike mainstream stereotypes propagated in the past. India has often been regarded as the ‘land of colour’, and this trope has perpetuated many exoticized views of the country. Datto turns this narrative on its head, using the trope of colour to speak about the idea of the *other*—the vulnerable, the marginalized, the disenfranchised. Datto feels that the work, when viewed against the backdrop of the current socio-political situation in India, “where cow vigilantes lynch Muslims and Dalits suspected of eating beef or smuggling cows, where anti-Romeo squads assault inter-faith and inter-caste couples, where mothers beg sons to leave their taqiyahs at home and where Facebook and Whatsapp are used to spread hatred, hysteria and paranoia”³³, signals the violence and apathy that has come to creep into our everyday reality. *Mannequin* is the first part of a trilogy, with a series named *Snake Fire* as the second, and the third yet unknown (Image 27 and Image 28).

Datto is also interested in exploring what it means to be a photographer in the digital age, which is evident in his trilogy of three series *Cybersex*, *Captive Cam* and *Crossings*. Using screenshots from webcams, images from Google Maps and Google Earth, and screenshots of live-cams fitted in various zoological institutions keeping animals in captivity, Datto examines the politics of the image in the virtual world. These works range from commentary on the virtual prostitution industry, to psychological manifestations of captivity on animals as well as the politics of labour in the Middle East, and explore a multitude of issues through the trope of the digital image. All of Datto’s starkly different bodies of work suggest an artistic practice firmly rooted in political concerns. Datto is represented by the Dubai based gallery East Wing and his work has been published in various international publications such as TIME, National Geographic, NEWS-WEEK, The Guardian amongst others.

A photographer employing humour in his work to speak about the opulent wedding industry in India is Mahesh Shantaram. In his work *Matrimania*, he casts a critical look into the burgeoning wedding industry in India, where people spend obscene amounts of money in a flashy show of class and power. Shantaram, a photographer working primarily with the documentary language, was hired by many of his subjects to photograph their weddings. . He described his position during these assignments as a ‘ringside view into the theatre of society’³⁴. Shantaram, armed with a sharp eye and sly wit, culled out a narrative from his outtakes of these assignments—a fictional narrative about the dark reality of Indian society through the prism of its over-the-top wedding culture. The events he documented provided the perfect backdrop for his narrative, where ‘young men and women assume the role of prince and princess in a Bollywood fantasy.’ ‘On the periphery,’ Shantaram said, ‘a multitude of workers facilitate the creation of Disneyland-like sets, entertain crowds, cater to thousands of guests, and generally keep the show going on for days’³⁵. Shantaram’s images are a testimony to the class disparities that exist in such scenarios, representative of various inequalities at play in India outside this microcosm.

IMAGES 27 / 28:
Images by Arko Datto

From the series ‘Will My Mannequin Be Home When I Return.’



PHOTOGRAPHY EDUCATION AND TRAINING

India, for all its rich history of arts and culture, is yet to have a dedicated institution for long-term photography education. Unlike our counterparts in Bangladesh, with the Pathshala South Asian Media Institute and its dedicated Three Year Professional Photography program, we are yet to have a degree that focuses on technique, history, vision and application of photography and the allied arts. A few programmes are available for interested individuals, depending on the level of their skill and areas of interest, however none of them are recognized as broad-based education platforms at par with international standards of Bachelor or Masters programs. Most of the photography programs are housed within larger institutions of Communications and Media, with photography offered as a minor or diploma program. The following are the degree and programs available as options for short-term photographic training –

Sri Aurobindo Center for Arts and Communication, New Delhi

- Offers a 15-month Photography Diploma Course and a 2-month Photography Foundation course³⁶.
- Currently one of the foremost institutions in the country imparting photography education by measure of curriculum, faculty and student output. The program engages with working professionals in the field for guest lectures and workshops to give the students a holistic view of the photography industry at large.
- Student final output ranges from fine art, documentary practice and commercial photography.

National Institute of Design (NID), Ahmedabad

- Offers a Masters in Design (M.Des.) for a duration of 2.5 years at the NID Campus in Ahmedabad.
- Housed within one of the premier institutions of Design education, the program looks at the interaction of photography with design. The permanent faculty is from the Communication Design department, with intermittent workshops conducted by visiting faculty from contemporary practitioners in the industry.
- The program has a strong emphasis on interactions and exchanges with other photography programs in UK, Bangladesh, Germany, Canada and Japan³⁷.

Sanskriti Pratishthan supported by Alkazi Foundation of the Arts

- Offers a Certificate course titled *Perspective on Indian Photography : A course on the History and Genres of Indian Photography*. The course is curated by Jyotindra Jain (Art & Cultural Historian) and Rahaab Allana (curator, Alkazi Collection of Photography). Notable academics, curators and photographers undertake lectures in various sessions such as Dayanita Singh (Artist), Sabeena Gadihoke (academic and professor at AJK Mass Communication and Research Center, Jamia Millia Islamia University), Sabih Ahmed (Art Historian and research at Asia Art Archive)³⁸ etc.

Light and Life Academy, Ooty

- Offers a PG Diploma in Photography, Course in Photojournalism and Short-term workshops³⁹.
- Curriculum focuses primarily on techniques of photography. Ideal for individuals interested in commercial and advertising photography.

Symbiosis School of Photography (SSP), Pune

- Offers a 3-year BA degree in visual arts and photography⁴⁰.

AJK Mass Communication and Research Center, Jamia Millia Islamia University, Delhi

- Offers a PG Diploma in Still Photography and Visual Communication⁴¹.

The One School, Goa

- Offers a 1-year and a 3-year course in photography⁴².

Raghu Rai Center for Photography, Gurgaon

- Offers a Diploma in Creative Photography, shorter courses specializing in fashion, advertising, and commercial photography⁴³.

The following institutes offer photography as an elective course as part of their Bachelors and Masters programs –

School of Arts and Aesthetics, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi

Srishti Institute of Art, Design and Technology, Bengaluru

Pearl Academy – Design College, New Delhi

Film and Television Institute of India, Pune

In the absence of a comprehensive academic program geared towards training practitioners for the photography and contemporary art industry, a large majority of Indian photographers are self-taught professionals, learning on the job and working on the field as freelancers. The recent emergence of photo festivals, which I will be touching upon in forthcoming sections, seeks to fill the gap of photography education through its seminars, workshops and master class programs. Individuals seek to develop their works through workshops and short-term courses available in the region such as courses at the Angkor Photo Festival and workshops in Siem Reap, Cambodia; the Foundry Photography Workshops; workshops held at Photo.Circle, Kathmandu and the international program at the Pathshala South Asian Media Institute. Few photographers that have access and resources seek international photography programs in Europe and USA.

MOVEMENTS AND TRENDS



For the forthcoming section, I will divide the paper into broad categories of movements and trends that have shaped the discourse of contemporary Indian photography in the last decade or so. These include shifts in the publishing industry, changes in the photographic market and opportunities available for photographers to develop, showcase and sell their works.

1. OPPORTUNITIES – PRESS, FREELANCE AND THE GALLERY

As mentioned previously, most photography professionals in India are self-taught and seek opportunities in the professional space as a training ground for their practice.

The photojournalism industry in India was thriving in the 1990s and early 2000s with national newspapers and magazines such as India Today Magazine, Outlook Magazine, The Indian Express Newspaper, The Statesman Newspaper and Frontline magazine serving as leading avenues for photography publication within India. Some of the leading names in photojournalism in India such as Raghu Rai,

IMAGE 29:
Image by Prashant Panjar

Delhi, 1984

From the series
'King, Commoner, Citizen'

Prashant Panjiar (Image 29), Neeraj Priyadarshi, T Narayan, Bhawan Singh, N. Thiagarajan and TS Satyan were involved with these publications. As mentioned before, one had seen the likes of Kishor Parekh transform the perception of photography and the position of the photographer within the newspaper and the likes of Raghu Rai, as the photo editor of India Today, publish some of the most iconic images in contemporary Indian history. Prashant Panjiar, who was photojournalist and editor at the Patriot newspaper, India Today and the Outlook Group of publications worked towards building greater credibility and representation of photographers in these publications. He was conscious that as a picture editor, the role was to commission stories for visual journalists to convey visual narratives that are at par as those commissioned by other editors in the magazine.

The turn of the millennium saw the emergence of new magazines with an increased focus on photography such as Tehelka Magazine (launched in 2007), OPEN Magazine (launched in 2009) and The Caravan Magazine (re-launched in 2009). These gave an opportunity to a new wave of younger photographers interested in doing in-depth stories, using photography as their medium. However, with the introduction of digital photography and the slow

collapse of the press, photography departments in news media were the first to suffer the setback. Many of the publications that existed earlier either folded or let go of their photography staff, choosing to feature stock or wire imagery rather than commissioning exclusive stories. Most of the photographers that trained with these publications at the turning point of film to digital such as Chirodeep Chaudhari, Arko Datto, Ishan Tankha, Ruhani Kaur, Natasha Hemrajani, SelvaPrakash Lakshmanan, Ritesh Uttamchandani to name a few have now turned to freelance documentary work as a sustainable outlet for their practice. Most photographers within the documentary practice that are independent either work for international publications as stringers or on a

per assignment basis, local and international NGOs on contract or are employed with wire agencies such as AFP, AP and Reuters. Most photojournalists working with the wire such as Javed Shah, Javed Dar, Altaf Qadri, Adnan Abidi, Chandan Khanna, Yasin Dar and formerly Mustafa Quraishi, have commendable archives, however mostly comprised of single images, with very few of them working on larger bodies of work to be exhibited or published outside their agencies. Most of these avenues are training grounds for many Indian photographers, who start their careers with these institutions and later turn to freelance to be able to work on their independent stories. Some of them choose to continue working on issues they began covering in mainstream publications, however due to the fast-paced nature of media, could not afford to go deeper into the stories or express themselves using alternate non-linear visual tropes. One example is Ishan Tankha with his body of work *A Peal of Spring Thunder*, focusing on the Maoist conflict in East Indian states (Image 30), which he began while working on a story with Tehelka Magazine. Tankha followed the story independently for 8 years, which was eventually showcased as an exhibition at the recently concluded Photo Kathmandu 2016⁴⁴ and is due to be launched as a self published book.

Post liberalization in 1991, when the Indian economy opened up to foreign investments and brands, the advertising industry in India got a huge boost. As a result, there emerged a demand for photographers pursuing commercial work for the advertising and fashion industries. With higher budgets available than for press photography, some photographed emerged as pioneers in the field, setting precedents for future generations.



IMAGE 30:
Image by Ishan Tankha

From the series 'A Peal of Spring Thunder'

One photographer that successfully used the documentary aesthetic within advertising was Swapan Parekh (b. 1966). Parekh, the son of photographer Kishor Parekh (mentioned above) took to photography at the age of 16, spurred by his father's death. Like his father, he returned to India in 1989, after studying abroad at the International Center of Photography. He realized early on in his practice that news and regular documentary assignments were not his primary interest, despite being commissioned to shoot assignments through the reputed American photo agency Black Star. Soon after, in 1991-92, he got the opportunity to bring his documentary aesthetic to advertising imagery. It was a unique moment, when a photographer was given the reign to conceptualize, visualize and execute the campaign on his own terms and his visual language. Parekh would have control over the entire process – from the making of the image, to processing his own film, making his own prints and insisting that the images not be cropped for the advertisements. He worked as an advertising photographer until the advent of the Internet, which presented cheaper solutions to print campaigns, resulting in reduced budgets for good production values and ideas of value to be viable. During his peak years he produced visuals for some top brands such as Emirates Airlines, Taj Hotels, Killers Jeans, Colgate etc. Parekh claims that it was the slow ebbing of the medium that reduced his work in advertising, though he is now engaging with it again through the medium of cinematography and shooting ad-films⁴⁵ (Image 31).

This is not to say that Parekh was not recognized for his documentary work outside of commercial photography. He was the recipient of the World Press Photo award in 1994 in the Spot News category for his image of the woman grieving for the death of her family members after the Latur Earthquake. He has also served as a member of the World Press Jury three times in 2004, 2005 and 2008. His work has also been published in magazines like TIME, Life Magazine, American Photo, The London Independent, Der Spiegel and El Pais⁴⁶.

Parekh continues his affinity for pursuing his documentary work in his personal projects. His style encapsulates the contemporary moment, as he moved away from the conventional visual trope of focusing on the 'decisive moment'. Parekh firmly believes in the 'visuality' and aesthetics of the image, and that photography need not always have a social concern. For him the spontaneity of the moment is paramount and thus, finding inspiration in the ordinary. Parekh claims that his work is 'quantified by the absence of things, rather than the presence'⁴⁷. His work, *Between Me and I*, which he terms as a 'parking slot for his colour work' began in 2005-06, to satiate his budding curiosity with the medium of colour and the ability to have control over his images, as he did in the black-and-white



IMAGE 31 (top):
Image by Swapan Parekh

Ad campaign for Jadoo.com based on the theme – death of the computer

IMAGE 32 (above):
Image by Swapan Parekh

Untitled

From the series 'Between Me and I'

darkroom, courtesy the onset of digital. This work is ongoing and was exhibited at FOAM Gallery in the Netherlands in 2008 after which it was showcased at Photoink gallery in Delhi, which also produced a publication by the same name (Image 32).

Within the fashion industry, a practitioner that defined his own vision was photographer Prabuddha Dasgupta (1957-2012). Dasgupta, son of famous Indian sculptor Pradosh Das Gupta, spent his early years living in the premises of the National Gallery of Modern Art, where his father was the director. He began his work in photography and taking on commercial shoots in the 1980s, and in 1991 was awarded the Yves Saint Laurent grant for photography in 1991. Dasgupta worked with the first wave of Indian supermodels and worked for the top fashion magazines across the world such as Vogue, Elle and Marie Claire and clients such as Louis Vuitton, Hermes and Ravissant (Image 33).

However, it was his ability to crossover into his personal work as an extension to the same visual aesthetic, and vice versa, that propelled his artistic caliber. In 2008, he launched his book *Women*, which carried a collection of portraits and nudes of urban Indian women. This book challenged the taboos that surrounded the conventional pictorial depictions of women in Indian society. While continuing with his career in fashion photography, Dasgupta weaved a parallel career trajectory for himself, working on various personal projects such as his landscapes in Ladakh which culminated into a book in 2000, his series on the catholic community in Goa titled *Edge of Faith*, which was also



published as book in 2009 and his most recent series *Longing*, which remained incomplete due to his untimely death in 2012 at the age of 55. The images in this series, drawn from his relationship with his girlfriend, are

at the same time sensually evocative and emotionally disturbing, relying on ideas of love, memory and loss. If one is to observe Dasgupta's entire spectrum of work, which was exhibited as a retrospective in 2016 at the National Gallery of Modern Art in Delhi, one finds multiple threads that resonate cross-genre. His landscapes of Ladakh carry a similar isolation as do many images in *Longing*, his photographs of plants are at times as sensual as his portraits of women. His work looks at ideas of the self, sexuality and relationships while lacking temporal or spatial specificity. The binding thread in a lot of his work is intimacy, that between him and his subjects which is a possible marker of his relationship with the medium itself (Image 34 and Image 35).

One of Prabuddha Dasgupta's mentees, Bharat Sikka (b.1973), a photographer turned filmmaker, started his practice as a fine art photographer but worked commercially within fashion photography for an extended period of time. In his early years, he assisted Dasgupta, thus building a practical understanding of the craft for further developing his own practice. Sikka managed to make the leap from his fashion



IMAGES 30/31/32 (clockwise from top):
Images by Prabuddha Dasgupta

Untitled, From the series 'Ganjam'

Sand dune in the Changthang, Ladakh,
From the series 'Ladakh'

Untitled, From the series 'Longing'



communities of Brighton and Mumbai and culminated in an exhibition at the Brighton Photo Biennale 2016. His work on Kashmir, *Where the Flowers Still Grow*, includes photographs, sound recordings and collected objects. The work culminates in a site-specific installation at the third edition of the Kochi-Muziris Biennale in Kerala, India creating an atmospheric experience of consuming images in the midst of, and hence interacting with, other visual artworks (Image 36).

Another photographer that has succeeded in forging a link between his commercial practice and personal work is Bangalore based Mahesh Shantaram (b. 1977). Shantaram capitalized on the burgeoning wedding industry in India by photographing holy matrimonies for close to six years in an effort to financially sustain his photographic career.



editorial and advertising work to his personal practice, much like his mentor Dasgupta, by bringing his exacting commercial aesthetic to his personal documentary projects through his series *Matter*, *Indian Men* and the most recent *Where the Flower Still Grow*. He recently collaborated with Olivia Arthur in a project commissioned by Photoworks/FOCUS Festival in partnership with the University of Brighton⁴⁸. The project, titled *ReIm-agine*, explored concepts of gender, sexuality and identity in the LGBTQ+ com-

munities of Brighton and Mumbai and culminated in an exhibition at the Brighton Photo Biennale 2016. His work on Kashmir, *Where the Flowers Still Grow*, includes photographs, sound recordings and collected objects. The work culminates in a site-specific installation at the third edition of the Kochi-Muziris Biennale in Kerala, India creating an atmospheric experience of consuming images in the midst of, and hence interacting with, other visual artworks (Image 36).

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IMAGE 36 (left):
Installation view of Bharat's Sikka's work *Where the Flowers Still Grow*

Kochi Muziris Biennale, 2017

IMAGE 37 (below):
Image by Mahesh Shantaram

From the series *Matrimania*

tographers to enter the art market was Dayanita Singh, an artist working with photography that now believes in books as her primary form of expression. Her first solo show *Family Portraits* was held at Nature Morte, a gallery in Delhi, in 2007⁵⁰ and since then she has proceeded to show her work numerous times in India and abroad. Some of the Indian galleries that have represented and/or showcased her work are Nature Morte, Delhi; Gallery Chemould Prescott, Mumbai; Gallery Steinrucke + Mirchandani, Mumbai and Bose Pacia Gallery, Calcutta. She has also shown her work at the National Gallery of Modern Art, Mumbai, Kiran Nadar Museum of Art, New Delhi and many prestigious galleries, museums and art biennales worldwide.

I would like to deviate here for a moment to speak about the vast spectrum of Singh's work. Singh, much like many of her above-mentioned male counterparts, was one of the leading voices in contemporary photography in India over the last two decades. As a practitioner, she has explored various genres of photography in her work from photojournalism to editorial photography, a shift towards art practice based work, exploring fictive narratives within her works and pioneering the idea of the book as object, within the Indian photographic scenario (Image 38). Her body of work looks at subjects across genres, from her second book *Myself, Mona Ahmed* on the life of a transgender to her photographs of upper class living rooms in *Privacy*; her choice of subjects across works does not follow a predefined class or cultural narrative. Singh was conscious of the exoticization in her own work, of photographing the *other*, in choosing subjects like poverty and disaster. In *Privacy* (2004), Singh sought out to photograph her own world, that of well-to-do families replete with markers of post-

colonial prosperity. A side of India that was not often seen, that of the self-confident elite, Singh created an alternate portrait of Indian society that was perhaps not as populated in the minds of the western viewer. *Go Away Closer* (2007) was Singh's first foray into a photo-novel. She calls it a "novel without words"; a trope that appears in one of her later works *House of Love* (2011) and *Museum of Chance* (2015) as well. *House of Love* is a work of photographic fiction in the form of nine short stories. In this work she explores the relationship with text, with her long time collaborator art-writer Aveek Sen, as his writing populates the book at various intervals. Though her practice is rooted in the documentary, the eventual outcome of her work cannot be contained within a single genre. In her book *Blue Book* (2009), Singh created a book object to be

displayed as a work of art consisting of 23 postcards with images she made during her travels around the Indian industrial landscape. In her recent venture, *Museum of Chance*, Singh creates a book object with German publisher Gerhard Steidl. An extension of the idea in her earlier book *Go Away Closer*, Singh explores the connections that emerge between images when they are placed side-by-side on the spread of a book. Playing on this element of chance and coincidence, Singh weaves a fluid narrative, facilitated



IMAGE 38 (left):
A display of Dayanita Singh's book 'Sent a Letter'

Courtesy Dayanita Singh

IMAGE 39 (below):
Exhibition display of Dayanita Singh's book project 'Museum of Chance'

Courtesy Dayanita Singh

by the nature of her images, which on the whole, lack temporality. The non-linear narrative in the book allows the viewer to make sudden shifts, across time and space, allowing for the element of fiction to once again evidence itself in her work. Each copy of her book carries a different pair of images on the front and back cover making every one of them a unique object. Additionally, when Singh displays the work, she exhibits the book itself in the same way that a photograph would be displayed, inside a frame. As every book is different, each of them makes an appearance on the walls, allowing the book to transcend various spaces of being an art object, an exhibition and a catalogue⁵¹ (Image 39 and Image 40).

In 2001, the first space dedicated to photography opened in India. PHOTOINK, an initiative started by Devika Daulet Singh, started as a photo agency and publication design house that began publishing photo books by 2004. By 2008, India had its first photography gallery in Jhandewalan, Delhi where contemporary as well as vintage photographic works were exhibited. Some of the renowned Indian photographers that have shown with them are Pablo Bartholomew, Richard Bartholomew, Madan Mahatta, Raghu Rai, Dileep Prakash and Ketaki Sheth. Some of the younger contemporary practitioners that they represent are Kapil Das, Dhruv Malhotra, Madhuban Mitra and Manas Bhattacharya⁵². All these practitioners have vastly varied practices – Das' work is entrenched in the theatre of the humorous and absurd from banal daily life scenes, Malhotra uses the night as his landscape with long exposures to create a surrealistic alternate narrative in his images and the duo of Mitra and Bhattacharya use photographs, video and digital collage to recreate elements of nostalgia and memory in their works. Since its inception, PHOTOINK has become one of the vanguards of the contemporary Indian photographic scenario, having represented Indian photographers internationally at reputed festivals such as Les Rencontres d'Arles exposition in Arles, France as well as showcasing eminent international artists' works in India. Since 2001, various other galleries have begun representing and showcasing contemporary photographers as a part of their portfolio such as Tasveer Gallery, Bengaluru; Project 88, Mumbai; Latitude 28, New Delhi; Exhibit 320, New Delhi; Wonderwall, New Delhi; Mumbai Art Room, Mumbai; Gallery SKE, Bengaluru; Chatterjee and Lal, Mumbai; Experiment-er, Kolkata in addition to those mentioned above in the article.

With the photographic landscape and the market for photography fast changing in India, many practitioners choose to be identified with commercial art galleries in order to gain an extended viewership and exposure to their work. The India Art Fair, established in 2008, is a reflection of the growing capital flow towards the arts in India and South Asia and photography, though a small part, proverbially rides the wave of this phenomenon. The Kochi-Muziris Biennale was also the first international art biennale to be established in India in 2012. In 2016, the biennale hosted the exhibitions of 97 artists of which photography and video occupied a substantial section. As the aim of the biennale is art education, dissemination and exhibition, it opens up new avenues for exploring the representation, interpretation and the usage of images.

2. EMERGENCE OF THE PHOTO FESTIVAL

In 2009, by the time the digital medium had already marked its stronghold on photography, India had a growing number of practitioners interested in photography and pursuing it as a career or as an art form. It was increasingly felt that photography, much like the contemporary art network, suffered from a handful of gatekeepers that would reiterate the same names time and again as representatives of

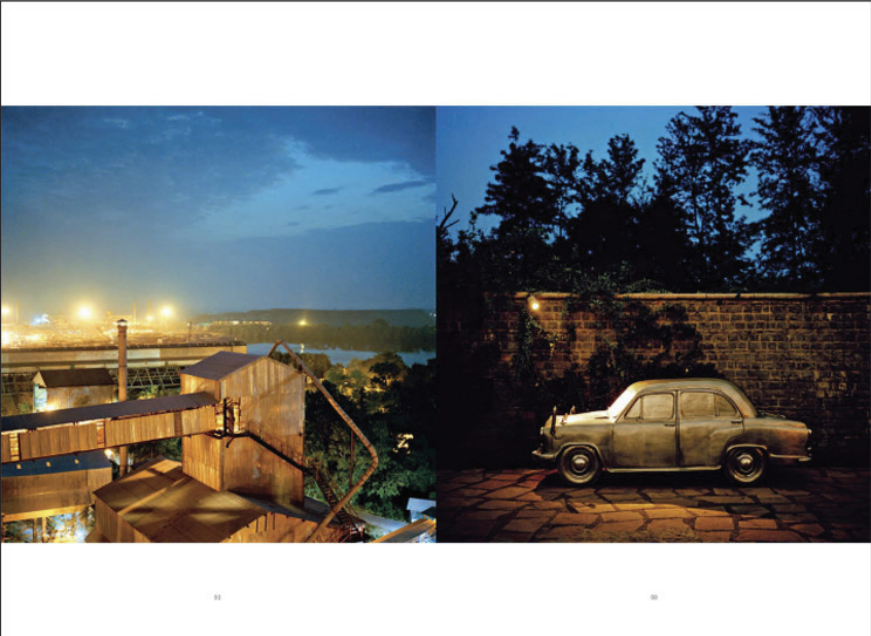


IMAGE 40:
Continuous cities from the book 'House of Love'

Courtesy Radius Press/Dayanita Singh



IMAGE 41 (top):
Installation view of Soham Gupta's work 'Angst' at the third edition of the Delhi Photo Festival

IGNCA, New Delhi, 2015

Courtesy Delhi Photo Festival

IMAGE 42 (above):
Installation view of Kishor Parekh's work 'Bangladesh-A Brutal Birth' at the first edition of the Chennai Photo Biennale as part of the Delhi Photo Festival exhibitions

Lalit Kala Akademi, Chennai, 2016

Courtesy Delhi Photo Festival

Indian photography. However, the ground reality was that the trends were changing, the craft was much more democratic and no longer limited to an elite few. Increasingly, a large number of people were beginning to interact and interpret the visual medium. However, in the absence of any educational institution and by virtue of the isolation the photographic medium requires from its maker in his process, there appeared to be a lack of a photography community, which allowed practitioners to come together to discuss, ideate and collaborate together. It was through a conversation along these lines amongst photographers that the idea of the Delhi Photo Festival (DPF) was born. The festival under the aegis of two established photographers in the field, Prashant Panjiar and Dinesh Khanna, came out with its first edition in 2011. Over the last six years, DPF has become a central space for open and critical dialogue, artistic expression, exposure, recognition and international engagement for the photography community.

In fact, the institution of the festival is now slowly filling the gap that has long been felt in education for photography in the country. At the heart of DPF is its education program, which includes artist talks, seminars, panel discussions, workshops and master classes with reputed regional and international photographers, all in an effort to promote a discourse in photography that has long been absent. The festival also strongly believes in mentoring young, budding photographers and curators by encouraging them to become lead decision-makers in the festival design and organization. The intent is to recognize that this

is instrumental in nurturing home grown talent and bringing a fresh, dynamic perspective to the festival space.

Guided by its not-for-profit and non-commercial ethos, DPF organizes free exhibitions in its central venue and around the city with the aim of bringing awareness, appreciation and learning of the medium to as wide an audience as possible. Over the course of its three editions the festival has exhibited 263 print exhibitions and digital shows, held upwards of 150 artist talks, seminars, lectures, workshops, performances and events and welcomed over 20,000 visitors (Image 41 and Image 42).

With the advent of the Delhi Photo Festival in 2011, India has seen a big boom of photography festivals and now boasts of multiple photo festivals across the country with Focus Festival in Mumbai, PondyPHOTO in Pondicherry, Chennai Photo Biennale in Chennai, India Photo Festival in Hyderabad, GoaPhoto in Goa, Jaipur Photo in Jaipur, Shillong International Photo Festival in Shillong and the latest entrant Jadavpur University Photo Fest organized by the students of Jadavpur University on their campus in Kolkata .

The boom of festivals in the country can be attributed to the previously evident dearth of a community as well as a rapid democratization of the medium with ease of accessibility to a smart phone with a camera. There has been a growing desire to allow for an alternate space to emerge for the showcase of photographs, one that is guided by artistic or curatorial concerns for the purpose of discourse and debate, and not be governed by commercial



centers and cafes, FOCUS seeks to transform the city of Mumbai into a hub of photography every two years (Image 43 and Image 44). The festival is based partly on an open call and partly internally curated by the founders and the gallerists. PondyPHOTO, organized by Kasha Vande (Image 45), on the other hand uses an old port in the city of Pondicherry for the exhibition of its works, which are most often large scale public installations covering the entire facades of buildings. Close to Pondicherry, the site of PondyPHOTO, is the Chennai Photo Biennale, which held its first edition in the city of Chennai in 2016. The curatorial strategy of the festival was cumulative in that its main exhibitions consisted of three parts – one part culminating out of a workshop conducted with 15 photographers prior to the festival, one part displaying 23 out of the 45 artist works of the Delhi Photo Festival (edition of 2015) and the third part curated by Yannick Cormier, a French photographer working in Chennai and also a member of Trikaya Photo Agency. GoaPhoto and Jaipur Photo (Image 46) are festivals that were both founded by the same individuals – Lola MacDougall Padgaonkar and Nikhil Padgaonkar. Both festivals are curated by international cura-

incentives as in the case of galleries and art fairs.

Multiple photo festivals also imply different audiences, content, motivations as well as funding strategies. While Delhi Photo Festival began with the idea of a festival for photographer by photographers, with one of its key motivations to build a photography community other festivals have had differing concerns. FOCUS Festival in Mumbai is a festival founded by three individuals, none of whom are practitioners but all supporters of the medium. FOCUS is managed under the Directorship of Mumbai-based architect, Nicola Antaki, photography specialist Matthieu Foss and arts producer, Elise Foster Vander Elst. The festival uses the commercial galleries in Mumbai as their main partners, serving as exhibition venues during this 14-day event. As a coming together of multiple venues scattered around the city, such as art galleries, international cultural



IMAGE 43 (top):
Installation of Chirodeep Chaudhuri and Jerry Pinto's exhibition 'In the city, A Library' as part of FOCUS Photography Festival

Project 88, Mumbai, 2017

Courtesy Chirodeep Chaudhuri

IMAGE 44 (left):
Installation view of BIND collective's exhibition 'Body-guard Lane' as part of FOCUS Photography Festival

Rampart Row, Kala Ghoda, Mumbai, 2017

Courtesy Philippe Calia

IMAGE 45 (below)

Installation view of exhibitions at PondyPHOTO

Pondicherry, 2016

Courtesy Yannick Cormier



IMAGE 46 (top):
Installation of Chi-
Installation view of
exhibitions at Jaipur
Photo

City Palace, Jaipur,
2017

Courtesy Aditya
Kapoor

IMAGE 47
Nishant Shukla's
book 'Seeking
Moksha' realized
as part of the Alkazi
Photobook Grant

Courtesy Nishant
Shukla

tors such as Frank Kalero (Goa Photo, 2015) and Federica Chiochetti (JaipurPhoto, 2017). Most of the works displayed are international, with South Asians occupying a small part of the exhibitions or education programming. The latest addition, Jadavpur University PhotoFest is the first of its kind to be organized entirely by the students at the university, most specifically those part of the Jadavpur University Photographic Club. They defined their intent as to understand the role of photography within the realm of contemporary art as well as promote alternate discourse.

It is yet to be seen which initiatives survive the test of time and manage to sustain for over long-er periods of time, as funding is usually scarce for such niche events. Delhi Photo Festival used private sponsorship, crowd funding and support

in kind from international cultural centers to garner funds. Largely the tourism departments of their respective state governments fund Jaipur Photo and Goa Photo and Chennai Photo Biennale had the Goethe Institute as one of its primary partners in its first edition.

3. FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES AND AVAILABLE GRANTS FOR PHOTOGRAPHY

In India, photography has been slow in being recognized as a contemporary art form. Government funding is usually earmarked for traditional arts such as painting and sculpture. Even though government funds such as the National Culture Fund are earmarked under the Culture Ministry for the support of arts and culture in India, the contemporary arts do not qualify under their mandate. Since the state does not support the contemporary in India, most of the funding for photography and the visual arts comes from private sources.

Alkazi Foundation for the Arts – Grants for Documentary Photography Project and Photo book

In 2016, the Alkazi Foundation established two yearly grants to be given to photographers. The first, a grant for documentary photography, earmarked an amount of INR 4 Lakhs (equivalent to approx. EUR 5600), in an effort to advance socially engaged photography and its potential to drive change. The grant was awarded to Nandita Raman for her series Letters to Alice, Bill and Allen. The grant does not restrict its recipient to have a traditional documentary visual style, and is open to interactions with fine art and conceptual photography. It requires the recipient to complete the project within one year of receiving the grant money.

The grant for the photo-book also earmarked a similar amount to be given to an individual who showcased a promising dummy of their proposed book to be published. The grant was awarded to Nishant Shukla for the dummy of his book project Seeking Moksha (Image 47). It requires for the recipient to realize the book project, complete with design, proofs and printing, within the one year of receiving the grant money.

Umrao Singh Shergill Grant for Photography

In 2015, The Shergill-Sundaram Arts Foundation



(SSAF) instituted a yearly grant to encourage independent voices in photography in India. The grant is dedicated in the name of Umrao Singh Shergill (1870-1954) who was recognized as a pioneering figure of staged photography in India⁵³. The grant, therefore, is for projects dealing with the staged or constructed image. It awards INR 5 lakhs (equivalent to approx. EUR 7,000) to the grantee to complete their proposed ongoing project within a year of receiving the grant. The grant was awarded to photographer Shan Bhattacharya for his ongoing work *Portal* in 2015.

National Foundation of India (NFI) Grant for Photojournalism

Every year, the NFI Grant for photojournalism, as part of their National Media Award programme, is given to a proposal seeking to work on a social issue based subject. The amount for the grant is INR 1,25 Lakhs (Approx. EUR 1800) to cover the honorarium, travel and contingency costs for the project. The jury and mentors for the grant comprises of three notable photojournalists in India namely Prashant Panjiar, Pablo Bartholomew and Raghu Rai.

Toto Funds the Arts (TFA) /TASVEER Photography Award

Institute in 2008, each year the award is given to two individuals between the age groups of 18-30 on the submission of a project that excels in visual storytelling. The award is of the amount of Rs. 25,000 (Approx. EUR 350).

Indian recipients of international grants such as Joop Swart Masterclass and Magnum Emergency Fund

In the absence of substantial grants for photography available at home, many photographers apply for funding to international programs and grant institutions. Indian photographers to have attended the Joop Swart Masterclass, organized by World Press Photo in Amsterdam are Sohrab Hura(2009) and Dhruv Malhotra (2012). Recent grantees of the Magnum Emergency Fund grants from India have been Poulomi Basu (2017), Showkat Nanda (2017) and Sohrab Hura (2010), Soumya Sankar Bose (2017), Pattabi Raman (2013) and Poulomi Basu (2012) have been selected for the Magnum Photography and Social Justice fellowship.

4. PHOTOGRAPHY PUBLICATIONS AND ONLINE INITIATIVES

With an increase in interest in photography from India and the surrounding region as well as a simultaneous increase in access to photography, various individuals within the field have undertaken initiatives to highlight, showcase and archive photography practices. The following are examples of print publications that have been initiated from within the photography community.

PIX

Initiated in 2011, the PIX is a display practice and publication platform (Image 48 and Image 49) that aims at building an archive of contemporary photography in South Asia. With Goethe Institut (Max Mueller Bhavan, New Delhi) as its primary sponsor, the quarterly has produced 14 issues and 2 newsletters over a six-year period. This has included six country specific special issues on Sri Lanka, Iran, Pakistan, Afghanistan, Nepal and the most recent one on Myanmar. PIX functions on the basis of an open call for submissions, for theme-based bodies of photographic works, incorporating all genres such as reportage, documentary, vernacular, conceptual and fine art photography. The intent of the quarterly is not to create a survey of the best photography in the region, but to analyze the responses at a particular moment in time to observe the concerns in various practitioners' works in the region. The publication also seeks to create an interface with various literary forms such as poetry, biography, prose, fiction, journalism and invites responses



IMAGE 48:
Installation view of
PIX – The Pakistan
Issue – Surge

Max Mueller
Bhavan, New Delhi,
201

Courtesy Tanvi
Mishra



to photographic works by new and established writers, scholars, theorists, researchers and practitioners working in areas of art history, visual anthropology, philosophy, culture and technology studies as well as artists, curators, media practitioners, critics and students – an eclectic and diverse set of parameters within which photography functions.

Apart from the publication, with a print run of up to 2000 copies and all issues free to download from the website (<http://www.enterpix.in>), the group also organizes an exhibition of the works with the launch of each issue. In the case of

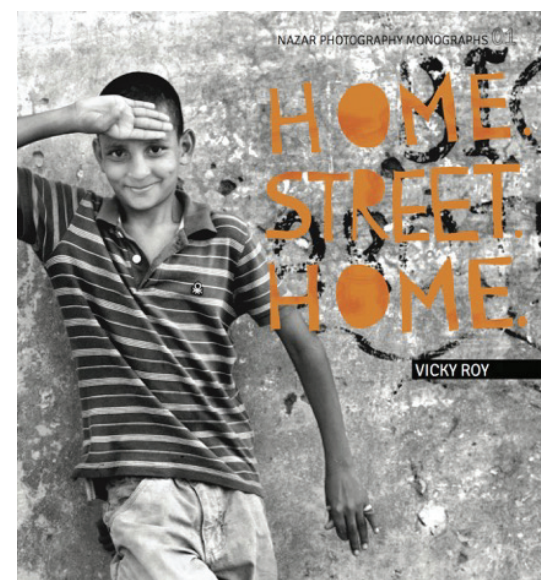
IMAGE 49 (top):
11 out of the 14 PIX issue covers including one special newsletter

Courtesy PIX

IMAGE 50
First in the series of Nazar Photography Monographs

Vicky Roy's 'Home. Street. Home.'

Courtesy Nazar Foundation



special issues, they have held exhibitions in Colombo, Tehran, Karachi and Kathmandu respectively before bringing them back to India.

The team for the initiative is diverse – Rahaab Allana the editor is also the curator at the Alkazi Collection of Photography, New Delhi. The photo-editorial team comprises of Akshay Mahajan (Photographer), Philippe Calia (Photographer) and Tanvi Mishra (Curator/Photographer). The text editor is Nandita Jaishankar (poet and editor)⁵⁴.

The PIX initiative is also geared at promoting discourse and discussion around photography and its interaction with allied media. In 2014, a three-day seminar titled *Frameworks* was initiated in Mumbai that brought photographers in conversation with various stakeholders in the visual art arena such as curators, academics, writers, gallerists and so on to address the preoccupation and challenges of contemporary photography in India today.

Nazar Photography Monographs

An initiative of photographers Prashant Panjari and Dinesh Khanna, founders of the Nazar Foundation (parent organization of the Delhi Photo Festival), the monograph series seeks to support the publication of books of photographic works that would otherwise not find a market in the commercial publication space. With four editions since 2011, Nazar Monographs have published the works of Vicky Roy (*Home. Street. Home*), Adil Hasan (*When Abba was Ill*), Kanu Gandhi (*Kanu's Gandhi*) and the upcoming edition of the work of Ronny Sen (*End of Time*)⁵⁵. Up till now, the books have been supported by the foundation with a team of Sanjeev Saith as the editor, and Gopika Chowfla as the designer (Image 50 and Image 51).

The monographs fulfill a much-needed space within the Indian photography scenario of helping photographers publish their works. In the current climate of photographers primarily choosing to self publish their works for the lack of a mainstream publisher agreeing to support the project, the Monographs have provided a welcome respite from the above trend by not only aiding the production but also the distribution of the books they support.

Camerawork Delhi

Camerawork Delhi, a photographic journal, was launched in 2006 with an intention of 'articulating ideas relating to the notion of independent photography in Delhi but with reference to India and the world.'⁵⁶. The journal has published six volumes till date and has been intermittently supported by Pro Helvetia, Swiss Arts Council in New Delhi.

The editors for Camerawork are Gauri Gill, Sunil Gupta and Radhika Singh. Gauri Gill, one of India's leading photographic practitioners, was the recipient of the Grange Prize in 2011, Canada's foremost honour of photographic excellence. Gill's practice explores collaborations, either with her subjects as in her series *Balika Mela*, where she constructed a pop-up photo studio in a fair in Rajasthan inviting her sitters to co-produce the portraits or with other artists such as Rajesh Vangad, a *Warli*⁵⁷ painter in West India, who she worked with in her series *Fields of Sight*. Here Gill invites Vangad to create narratives together, either through his words and imparting knowledge of the area she photographed, his presence as a protagonist in her images or as an artist, inviting him to paint over her photographs with his traditional art form.

With the difficulties in sustaining print publication as well as the rapid spread of the digital medium, India has seen a recent boom in online startups and platforms providing new and innovative spaces to display and archive photography. If statistics are to go by, the future of internet usage in India looks very bright: currently, out of a population of 1.3 billion there are 462 million internet users⁵⁸, 134 million of whom are active on social media. It comes as no surprise therefore that social media platforms open up huge opportunities for enterprising photographers wishing to create new eco-systems of creativity, collaboration and profit.

Following are a few of the online initiatives that have benefitted from this surge in online presence within the country.

India Photo Project (IPP)

Initiated in 2014 by photographer Sumit Dayal, IPP is India's pioneer platform using Instagram to create an overarching view of India's photographic community by aggregating and curating images from a diverse range of new and talented image-makers. The feed, which can be accessed at the Instagram handle @indiaphotoproject, is a selection of single images posted on the social media platform. The authors can be from any nationality, though majority of the authors have been Indian, and the content produced must be specific to India. The feed has close to 46,000 Instagram followers and serves as an online archive for photography emerging from within the country, irrespective of whether the authors are working professionals or photography enthusiasts (Fig. 57).

India Memory Project

Initiated in 2010 by photographer, publication designer, photo archivist and curator Anusha Yadav, the Indian Memory Project is a visual and narrative based online archive that aims to trace personal histories of the Indian Subcontinent through photographs found in family albums and letters from personal archives⁵⁹. The project invites individuals to submit photographs, taken prior to the year 1991, from their personal family archives. It makes use of these images and accompanying narratives in order to trace families and ancestors, cultures, traditions and lifestyles of the largely undocumented side of the subcontinent. In the words of its founder, India Memory Project is a personal memory of the world – a sociological and photographic history, remembered, realized and experienced by its own people⁶⁰. The archive currently has over 160 contributors and is growing with continued submissions.

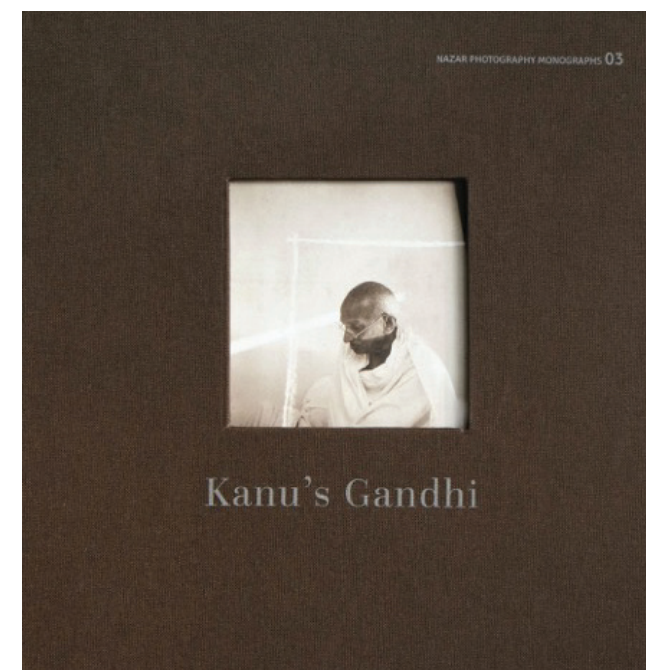


IMAGE 51
Third in the series of Nazar Photography Monographs

'Kanu's Gandhi'

Courtesy Nazar Foundation

Galli Magazine

An initiative by photojournalist Harsha Vadlamani, this online magazine <http://www.galli.in/>, looks at visual narratives in India, independent of the photographer's nationality. Focused on the social issue based documentary narratives, owing to its curator Vadlamani's personal interest, the website provides a directory of a wide range of work produced in the country, many a times in collaboration with reporters or journalists.

5. SELF PUBLISHED BOOKS AND COLLECTIVES

The book as an object has received considerable attention, in recent years, within the photography industry worldwide. Many photographers choose to self-publish their works with limited print runs and the artist book is slowly positioning itself as an affordable object in a market where print sales are running low. The photo-book is an object that more and more photographers are increasingly turning to, experimenting not just with content but also with design and form.

Keeping this context in mind, following are the names of a few Indian photographers that have chosen to use the book as the final form of their works. Few have found external publishers to support the book and others have either self-published or met the costs through a grant.

Dayanita Singh – Positions herself as an artist with photography as her medium and the book as her primary form. She has produced 13 books of which notable publishers such as Steidl, Penguin Books India, Radius Books and Peabody Museum Press have supported most.

Kapil Das – Recipient of the Steidl Book Asia Award (2016), where Gerhard Steidl selected eight books from Asia that he would publish. Das will be publishing his book *Lumpy Gravy* in the box of eight.

Nishant Shukla – Recipient of the Alkazi Grant for Photo-books (2016) where the Alkazi Foundations for the Arts supports the publishing of one photo-book. Shukla will be publishing his long-term project *Seeking Moksha* into a book.

Sohrab Hura – Self published, under his self-titled publishing house *Ugly Dog*, his book *Life is Elsewhere* (2015).

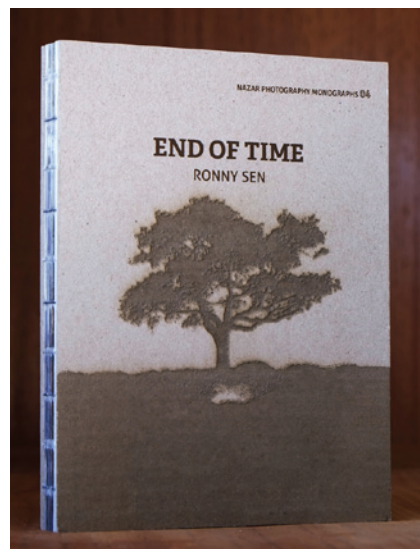
Adil Hasan – Nazar Photography Monographs published his book *When Abba was Ill* (2014) as their second monograph (Image 52).

Ronny Sen – Nazar Photography Monographs published his book *End of Time* (2017) as their fourth monograph. He also self published his book *Khmer Din* (2013) (Image 53).

Avani Tanya – Self published her book *Snapped Rope and Other Stories from the New Bangalore* (2013).

BIND Collective and Photo-book Library

Mumbai based collective, BIND, comprises of five photographers that seek to explore the realms of collaborative projects in photography, filmmaking, writing and design. BIND's association with the photo-book goes back to the beginnings of the collective, where they set up a pop-up library to make limited edition photo-books accessible to



a larger audience. Since then they have amassed a selection of over 150 photo-books in their permanent library, collated from their individual personal collections or donations by artists, institutions and publishers. Their goal remains to make the book form accessible to as many people as possible, especially with the rising trend of the book as an art object making them limited and expensive to purchase.

BIND organizes pop-up libraries from their collection at various festivals such as FOCUS photography festival (Mumbai), Delhi Photo Festival (New Delhi), Travel Photo Jaipur (Jaipur) and Photo Kathmandu (Kathmandu, Nepal). In the 2015 edition of the Delhi Photo Festival, they also did an intervention of translating Max Pam's book *Atlas Monographs* into a site-specific installation. The exhibition titled *Of Journals and Journeys* incorporated a fluid and performative experience⁶¹ where the photographs in the exhibition changed daily over the period of the opening week of the festival (Image 54 and Image 55).

6. ARCHIVES

Alkazi Collection of Photography

Notable Indian collector, Ebrahim Alkazi, was an important patron of the arts in India since the 1960s onwards. He established the Alkazi Foundation of the Arts in 2006. Within the foundation, lies his personal collection of

19th and 20th century photographs, called the Alkazi Collection of Photography. The Foundation is dedicated to the research, study, documentation and conservation of the collection which covers India allied South Asian countries such as Nepal, Tibet, Sri Lanka (Ceylon), Burma (present day Myanmar) and Afghanistan.

The collection contains photographic albums, prints, paper negatives, glass plate negatives, painted photographs and half tone postcards. The archive contains collections ranging from prominent Indian photographers such as Raja Deen Dayal and the first woman press photographer, Homai Vyrawalla as well as commercial photographic studios from an early period (1860s onwards) such as Bourne & Shepherd and Herzog and Higgins.

The foundation has a mandate of education. It regularly organizes seminars, exhibitions, scholarly publications and archive visits so as to make this large repository available to the academic community as well as the general public.

Currently the archive holds over 100,000 objects in different formats. The archive

IMAGE 52 (top)

Adil Hasan's 'When Abba Was Ill' published as third in the series of Nazar Photography Monographs

Courtesy Nazar Foundation

IMAGE 53 (right)

Ronny Sen's 'End of Time' published as fourth in the series of Nazar Photography Monographs

Courtesy Nazar Foundation

IMAGE 54 (top)

BIND's pop-up photobook library

FOCUS Festival, Bombay, 2015

Courtesy Philippe Calia

IMAGE 55 (above)

Installation view of BIND's exhibition of Max Pam's book 'Of Journals and Journeys',

Day 7: Karakoram

Delhi Photo Festival, 2015

Courtesy Philippe Calia

plays an important role by cataloging the photographs, sharing its resources in descriptive as well as interpretive ways, with the help of known scholars. As the early photographs were made for different audiences for various purposes as a representation of the photographic form and the intent may not necessarily have been for creating historical documents, the archive catalogs the images to interpret them in the context of their creation and authorship⁶².

Currently the foundation and the photographic collection functions under its Curator, Rahaab Allana and his team.

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Author Bio

Tanvi Mishra (b. 1986, India) began her career as a documentary photographer based out of New Delhi, India. Trained as an economist at the London School of Economics and Political Science, she finds her photographic practice to be heavily influenced by her background in the social sciences. Using her experience as a practitioner of the medium, Tanvi became interested in looking at photo-editorial and curatorial aspects of photography. She is keen on observing changing trends in visual culture in this age of mass image proliferation as well as exploring the notion of fiction and truth in photography. She is part of the editorial team of India's first photography quarterly PIX (www.pixquarterly.in). She curates independently as well as for India's first photography festival, Delhi Photo Festival (www.delhiphotofestival.com). She was also guest curator at the second edition of Photo Kathmandu (www.photoktm.com), held in 2016. She is currently the photo editor of The Caravan Magazine (<http://www.caravanmagazine.in/>), India's foremost journal on culture and politics.