READING 'STUDIUM' AND 'PUNCTUM' IN STEVE MCCURRY AND RAGHU RAI'S PHOTOGRAPHY

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Abstract. The paper attempts to study 'studium' and 'punctum' proposed by Roland Barthes in *Camera Lucida* with reference to the prominent photographers, Steve McCurry and Raghu Rai. It deals with the orientalist and occidentalist photographic gaze that primarily investigates the imaging of India. Steve McCurry delves on the intersubjective cultural spaces that diffract from the reciprocal exchange of images and Derridian notion of 'interiority/exteriority'. For McCurry, photography is not a technological miracle, rather it is an extension that is evoked from the consensual relationship between the photographer and the photographic subject. Raghu Rai on the other side chooses to acknowledge reflections of the societal attitude that transform the art of living. He depicts the subject's expression that explores the objective view of images. Hence, the paper focuses on the cultural longing and intricate relationship between cultural paradigms of the referential signs of the photographic image.

Keywords: 'Studium', 'Punctum', Steve McCurry, Raghu Rai, Orientalist and Occidentalist photographic gaze

1. Introduction

Photography is a unique art of expression. It is a 'picture taking' (Taminiaux 2009:6) process which produces images with accuracy and realism. Photography is a structural grammar that deals with "trans-linguistic" fields of communication. It is a performative survey of social structure that takes into account historical retrospectives and documentaries which rolls down from the reel of camera. Roland Barthes's analogy of photography is a critical discourse on the rhetorical moves of images. It demonstrates how images are permissive of investigating intertextuality of cultures embedded in the text. The definable meaning of text as decontextualized and anachronistic metaphor also lays embedded existential dimension in the process of both production and reception of meaning processed

through the text. Photography as "a source of emission, a channel of transmission, and a medium of reception" (Barthes 1991:3) suggests codes of reception which is a connotative mode of signification that out rightly searches for postures of "being-in-the-World".

The structural autonomy of photographic messages expressed through units of representation shift from reality to the 'message without code' (Barthes 1991:5). This elucidates composed structures of cultural phenomena compressed in the visual representation of the "language", the same photographic image subsumes the supplementary message through 'the style of reproduction' (Barthes 1991:5). Roland Barthes's primary focus on the '*mathesis singularis*' (Barthes 1981a:8) is a pure contingency of the photographic evidence. It is a reception of maneuvers, effects and transformations which emphasize on the rupture and nature of the 'third text'[1]. Barthes's contribution to the analogical tools of photography as 'studium' (Barthes 1981a:26) and 'punctum' (Barthes 1981a:27) in *Camera Lucida*[2], offers a 'coherent structure' (Seitz 1991:55) to normalize and recuperate the vicissitudes of reading of images. It associates photography through the constellation of signifiers clustering around" (Wiseman 1989:138) the image. Photography is a discourse that is affected by 'amused consciousness' (Barthes 1981a:11) of 'docile interest' (Barthes 1981a:40). It is awakened by 'passive, negative, interrogative and emphatic transformations' (Barthes 1981a:40). The concept of studium and punctum in *Camera Lucida* culminates from both 'concept and tone' (Shawcross 1997:xi). Roland Barthes's analogical and political con-siderations of images are proffered by Lacan's *l'imaginaire* which is associated by analogy between images. The image-repertoire is the register where the subject adheres to an image in a movement of identification that relies in particular on the coalescence of the signifier and the signified (1081:209). Diana Knight writes:

> *Barthes explores this hypothesis via a figure which appears with increasing frequency in his later work, the* tel *(just so) that will eventually pinpoint the intractable photographic referent of* La Chambre Claire*: "absolute Individuality, sovereign contingency, dull to the point of stupidity, just So [le Tel] (that particular photo and not photos in general), in short, the Touche', the Occasion, the Encounter, The Real, untiringly expressed* (1984:834).

Jonathan Culler suggests photography as 'a sign system', and is avowed by its 'exceptional power of denotation' (Culler 2002:21). Roland Barthes's photo-graphic analog is precisely the juncture of 'aesthetics of surplussage' (Aciman 1984–1985:110) that baffles meaning with the erotic texture. "It's a slight, gentle, cautious, apologetic voice, a touch nonchalant, which doesn't hang fire, not at all, but which advances in tiny bursts, in tiny scintillations, in tiny nibbles of writing" (Guibert: 1984:115). According to Carol Mavor, Camera Lucida is a "physical

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[1] Third text considers artistic forms of literature such as painting, music and photography. Here, Roland Barthes looks for a 'third meaning'.

[2] *Camera Lucida* is a seminal text written by Roland Barthes in 1980 which is also a direct response to the *L'Imaginaire* by Jean Paul Sartre. Roland Barthes's reflection of photography dramatizes the personal images associating with the wider concept of the imaginary.

embracement and a philosophical study of Barthes's cherished concept of *le neuter*" (Mavor 2011:219).

The distinction between studium and punctum is "the order of liking, not loving" (Barthes 1981a:*27*). It is the consensus view of disjunctive occlusion of images, by resolving image into text "by an absenting virtue of which it comes to be reassigned a generative role" (Gratton1996:357). Renaud Camus says: "photography is to talk about technique and framing and composition" (Camus 112). The binary between studium and punctum is to recognize and encounter the photographer's intention that enables reading the photograph 'with functions' (Barthes 1981a:28) and denotes the plentitude of photographic exercise, i.e. "to inform, to represent, to surprise, to cause to signify, to provoke desire" (Barthes 1981a:28). Reda Bensmaia, says, "Barthes brings together one writing movement, in a single *Text*, modes of discourse that had hitherto been separate-that of the *ecrivain* and that of the *ecrivant* and also that of the 'producer' (The Author) of the text and its "user"(Reda 1987:56). On the other hand, punctum, as Roland Barthes says, "Occasionally a 'detail' attracts me… This 'detail' is the punctum" (Barthes 1981a:42). Analyzing the difference between the two, he says, it is "matter of co-presence of two discontinuous elements" (Barthes 1981a:23), which is also the 'doubtless dual' (Barthes 1981a:42). Punctum in *Camera Lucida* stresses the role of individual's perception or response to a photograph. As Roland Barthes, says: "Certain details may "prick me" (Barthes 1981a:47). If they do not, it is doubtless because the photographer has put them there intentionally" (Barthes 1981a:47). Roland Barthes's expression of the Punctum is characterized by the three important features, i.e. its unintentional nature, its power of expansion and the temporality. Punctum for Barthes is not the result of an intentional action by the operator or the photographer but it unravels through the reading and the experiencing of the images. Michael Moriarty opines that "The book has a central adventure: the discovery, through a particular photograph, of an essence of photography: and this discovery, which gives meaning to the last quest" (Moriarty 198). Shawn Michelle Smith sees the idea of studium and punctum as the 'evocative power' (Batchen 2011:243) intrigued with the articulation of mirror image.

The souvenir proposed in the albums (Photography on India[3]) by Raghu Rai[4] and Steve McCurry[5] preserves the memory of India through oriental[6] and the

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[3]   Photography in India was first used in 1840, immediately after its development in Europe. Thacker, Spink and Co. of Calcutta advertised and imported daguerreotype camera in the daily "Friend of India". The first known image was of Sans Souci Theatre in a Bengali newspaper "Sambad Bhaskar" of Armaani Bazaar.

[4]   Raghu Rai is a popular Indian photographer and a photojournalist. Along with Henry Cartier Bresson, he cofounded Magnum photos. Rai started his photographic career in 1965 and later he joined Statesman. He earned Padamshree Award (it is the 4th highest Indian civilian award) in 1972 and the photographer of the year in 1992. His two popular collections are *India: Reflections in Colour* and *Reflections in Black and White*.

[5]   Steve McCurry is an American editorial photographer. He is widely popular for his iconic image "Afghan Girl" which originally appeared in the National Geographic magazine. Steve was educated in The Penn State University where he was awarded with the graduating degree in 1974. McCurry has earned several Awards such as Photography Appreciation Award

occidental[7] photographic gaze. Photography for both the 'operators' (Barthes 1981a:9) is a 'memory-storing activity' (Haverkamp 1993:258), the aphoristic and the provocative artistic form which "never finds its zero degree" (Barthes 1981a:12). Raghu Rai's photography gives a reminder to the grim realities of human situation in the middle of everydayness. He reflects on 'darshan' (Kaleido-scopic view) (Rai 2008:1) of India which he considers as a 'precious treasure' (Rai 2008:1) that encapsulates the tangible moments of crosscurrents of religions, belief and culture. In one of his interviews he says:

> *Photography is all about the instinct. What you see and how you respond to it. Especially now, with everything taken care of with technology, it is only the timing of the click and your instinct that you have to develop. You have to invest yourself mentally, physically and spiritually into the situation in front of you. Tumhari dhan daulat kya hai? (What is your total wealth?) Your body, your mind and your spirit. When you invest all of that and connect with every inch of space, you get what you are looking for. When you invest your entire wealth, you automatically get a big return on that investment* (Rai 2015).

On the other hand, Steve McCurry's congenial desire to click the 'colours of India' (On Artistic process…) and to focus on the narrative, 'the story' (On Artistic process…) serves to his profession of photojournalism. He chooses to interlace the photographic text with caption, which "mobilizes a half desire, demi-volition" (Barthes 1981a:27). Steve McCurry clicks images in order to become the spectator and photographer for the sentimental reasons by comprising "a whole network of essences: material essences necessitating the physical, chemical, optical study of the photography, and regional essences deriving for instance, from aesthetics, from sociology and from history" (Barthes 1981a:21). The 'eidetic science of photography' (Barthes 1981a:20) and the metaphor of images clicked by both photographers seem to be foreseeing the mentally stored visual representation. The main agenda is to give the spectator right dozes of information so that one can encounter 'photographer's intentions' (Barthes 1981a: 27), "to enter into harmony with them, to approve or disapprove them but always to understand them, to argue them within myself, for culture (from which the studium derives) is a contact arrived at between creators and consumers" (Barthes 1981a:27).

(2014), Leica Hall of Fame Award (2011) and many other accolades. His prominent publica-tions are *The Imperial Way* (1985), *Monsoon* (1988), *Portraits* (1999), *Southeast* (2000), *India* (2015) etc.

6   The Orientalist photography addresses the convergence and the triangular gazes of distant culture and spaces. It usually includes the non-indigenous photographers. Tanya Sheehan, says, the "local sitters have been frozen in historical images, which serve as a Western phantasms of the oriental world" (Sheehan 61).

7   The occidental gaze is the images that represent India and Indians.

Thus, the distinction between the approaches of clicking the photograph goes back to the Diderotian philosophy of anti-theatrical[8] distinction between 'seeing and being shown' (Fried 2005:141). However, both the photographers emphasize on "the emphatic truth of gesture in the great circumstances of life" (Barthes 1981a:23). The Punctum in the select images is not because it is being shown by the photographers of two different regions rather "occurs in the field of the photographed thing" (Barthes 1981a:47) which is to say that it is the pure artifact of the photographic event – "the photographer could not photograph the partial object at the same time as the total object" (Barthes 1981a:47). This also seems to suggest that photograph is an artifact of the encounter between the product of the event and the particular spectator or beholder.

2. Myths of religion: an analogy by Steve McCurry and Raghu Rai

Steve McCurry in his interview said that he wanted "to reflect on the 35 years of work in India"[9] (Shavin 2015). The photographic sublation through the western gaze also reveals the negative dialectics of testifying the charisma and intensity that bestow the ordinary life. Steve McCurry's choice of the Image, "Monk in the food stall/Bihar"[10] suggests flare acknowledgement of the presence of the saint with Diet Coke. The dull contrast between the monk and advertising banner in red implicates the confidence of the monk and the space of representation. It is the 'second-order semiological system' (Barthes 1981b:137) that is reduced to the 'mythical speech' (Barthes 1981b:137) by signifying 'metalanguage' (Barthes 1981b:137) of 'photographic existence'. McCurry's "pre-photographic world seemed to endow it with heightened referentiality, evidence, truth, objectivity, mimetic closure, realism and perspectival verisimilitude" (Koepnick 2004:97).

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[8]   Diderot talks about the problem of 'abortive sympathy'. For him "when the actors and audiences leave the theatre and return to their actual lives, the argument runs, the mental effects of such mistaken identifications and misunderstandings linger on; participating the fantasies of the stage world might render one incapable of negotiating the truths of the real world" (Howell 2015:249).

[9]   "Steve McCurry has been coming to India for more than thirty years, knows it intimately, understands its charms, and has seen it change. He intends to highlight the 'extreme contra-dictions'. He says "we see the landowner with his hunting trophies pinned to the wall, and we see the beggar dying beside the railway tracks, invisible to the passengers on the train; we see the soaked beggar children fingering desperately at the windows of taxi; we see the Bombay elite, coiffed and laundered, with their fleets of vintage cars and uniformed chauffeurs, and we see the Mumbai slumdogs in their tin-roofed shacks and stinking wastelands" (McCurry 2015: 4). McCurry wanted to highlight the fragility and the unevenness of the Indian Industrial growth by the suspension between the tradition and modernity. He suggests that India is emerging as "materialistic country, the middle class of which is obsessed with brands and Bollywood and ostentatious extravagance in all its forms, is also one of the most spiritual countries on Earth" (McCurry 2015:4).

[10]   Steve McCurry iconic images encapsulate arresting portraits of children, pilgrims and farmers.

Fig. 1. "Monk in the food stall/Bihar", Bodh Gaya, Bihar, 2000 McCurry.

The image of Buddhist monk here subjects to anecdote of the awakening, the i.e. 'vritti and nirvana' or the 'torin', 'the method of abrupt, separated broken openings' (Prosser 2004:212). The bold calligraphy of Coca-Cola shows the way how the impermanence of life becomes the subject of encoding the existential connection "the necessarily real thing which has been placed before the lens and the photographic image" (Tagg 1985:1). The monk with a loud caption in the background suggests the social control and cultural hegemony in modern society. It offers a kaleidoscopic view of the changing proponents of spirituality with the new modes of expression embedded in the driven force of globalization. McCurry's contrastive projection of "co-presence of the two discontinuous elements" (Barthes 1981a:27), i.e. monk and Coca-Cola in the advertising banner is against the Buddhist tradition. It undermines the contemporary relations between religion and global capitalism as the authentic forms of religiosity fostering socio-economic trends that are antithetical to the core values of the tradition. The image punctuates the perception of traditional belief system and offers the cut to which they see the de-spiritualization and the commercialization of the culture. McCurry's personal affiliation to the Buddhist culture[11], transcribes the image of monk into the 'retreat of signs' that perpetuates the contemporary culture to materialistic consumption relegated into the Indo-Tibetan Buddhism.

Another Image that McCurry takes up is "Young child, dressed as Lord Shiva, seeks alms/ 1988".

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[11]   Steve McCurry says, "I am often asked about which countries I enjoy photographing the most. That's very hard to answer, but I enjoy going back again and again to Buddhist countries" (McCurry 2015:3).

Fig. 2. "Young child, dressed as Lord Shiva, seeks alms", Haridwar, Uttarakhand, McCurry 1998.

By clicking the image of the child, mimetic of Lord Shiva, McCurry wanted to write the religious performativity in India. Through his photography, as he says he wanted to let people know that 'their story matters' (Shavin 2015). By extrapolating the anthropomorphic representation of gods and goddess strongly filled with the economic thought, McCurry captures images through the 'prism of fiction' (Taminiaux 2009:59), the wholly unholy experiences that delineate the physical harshness in the performative reality. However, for Steve, the element of the 'differentiation' obtains the photographic 'shock' that embrace the relationship between the visual and the literary dimension of the text. The child posing as God seems to be a theatrical representation of religious cultural heritage which diverges into the representational profanity of religious cultural power, as well as enacting the sacred history for survival of everyday life. His dark blue skin and activity of seeking alms is 'picturesque agent' (Lopes 2012:855) that shows 'obedience to the machine' (Lopes 2012:855) forcing "the viewer into the stark confrontation with the problems of agency and automatisms". Here the 'photographic look' (Barthes 1981a:111) is paradoxical to the perception that 'noeme' of photography is 'simple, banal; no depth'. The punctum of the image of child enacting as Lord Shiva, is a 'blind field' (Barthes 1981a:57) that brings out the clicked image that permits us to see 'the fantasy of praxis' (Barthes 1981a:59), 'the degree of open-

ness' (Barthes 1981a:58) reflecting the 'Kairos of desire' (Barthes 1981a:59) in the performance of brutal corporeal enactment. The photographic image offers the studium as it is rationally 'intermediary of ethical and political cultures' (Barthes 1981a:26). The legitimacy of the photographic images sheds new light to the inter relationships of the notions of representational technologies. The preeminence of 'photography's repression' explains the autonomous hegemonic role which appropriates the "photographic real by visualizing the unconscious presence of 'the real' as hyper real and the shock of the unreal" (Iskin 1997:47). Images of Varanasi[12] in India, is one of the interesting destination of the Orientalist gaze.

Steve McCurry's snap on "Astrology-Varansi, Uttar Pradesh/1996/ Hindu Pilgrims visits shrines and ghats along river Ganges" reflects the mockery on 'religious economics' that appraises the epistemological changes in the reception of religion branding the 'preference falsification'[13] (Kuran). Astrology[14] is an Indian Science that depicts the phenomena of occult influences of stars on the planet Earth and erractically thematizes the notion of "magic, divination, a psychological tool, a religion, an art or a science" (Campion 2012:1). The following image is an infra-knowledge" (Barthes 1981b:30) that supplies fetishism of faith mixed with esoteric ideas and the potent examination of skeptical perplex alarming the alternative spiritualities of India. Thus, it seems that the 'biographeme' of Indian culture is not touched by the art of photography but by the 'theatre' which is the conventional play of ritualistic enactment of existential accounts of the human conditions. To examine the 'rare' effect in the image, Steve chooses the dawning hour when he can highlight the super impressions and exploit the trick of framing[15].To be precise it seems that the referential pull of the 'photographic mechanism' resists the Derridian polylogue as "the relation that, within the image, announces itself *as* relation" (Ritcher 2011:157). It does not guarantee "the hermeneutic key to its internal and external networks of reference" but generates "a multitude of senses and experiences that are mediated by the *mis-en-scène* of the relation itself" (Ritcher 2011:157). The vague backdrop of astrology related advertisement against the regular morning chores suggests the 'unicity of referential' demonstrating the retroactive documentation of changing faith that challenges the pseudo-existential angst.

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[12] According to the Hindu mythology, there are places of the liberation of soul, from the cycles of birth and death. They are Thiruvarur, Chidambaram, Thiruvannamalai and Varanasi. It is believed that, if one dies in Varanasi, then one will get *moksha* (Salvation*)*. Also, bathing in the Ganges is supposed to wash off all the sins of mankind.

[13] The preference falsification is the idea proposed by Timur which says that people's stated preference is responsive to the social influence. It is also related to the social proof as well as choice blindness.

[14] In India, astrology is considered to be one of the branches of Vedas. Theoretically, it is a practice of the presumed relationship between the celestial bodies and events on earth.

[15] Steve McCurry finds the abundance of light to be vital for his photography. He typically plays with the morning and the evening hour.
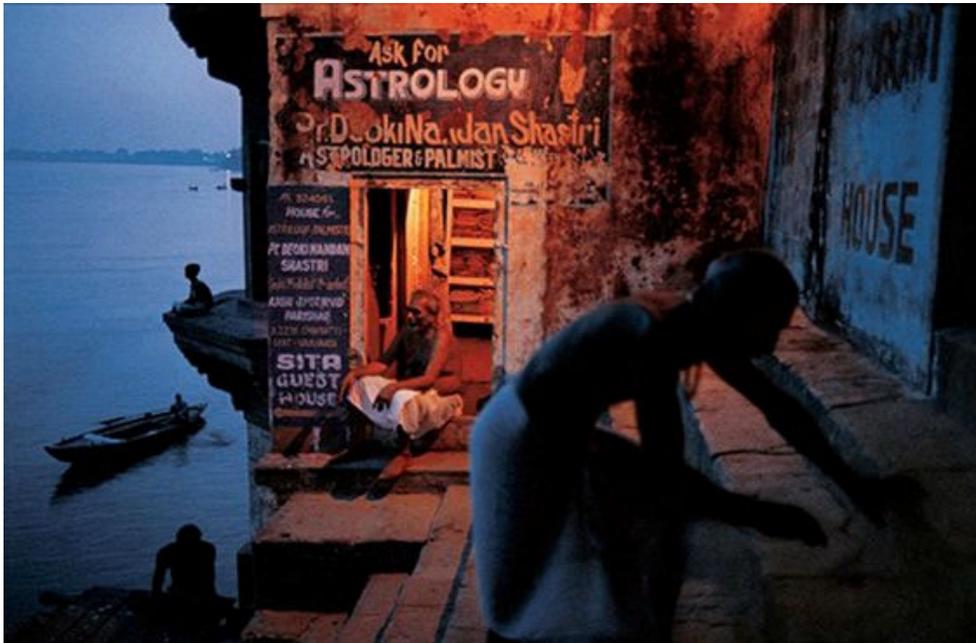
Fig. 3. "Hindu Pilgrims visits shrines and ghats along river Ganges", Astrology-Varansi, Uttar Pradesh, McCury 1996.

The stricking difference between Steve McCury and Raghu Rai's representation of Indian religious and mythological themes is that Rai does not see his images and the objects in the images beyond India. His occidentalist gaze of photography is well perceived for its exhibition of its own land which is "exceptional, mixing distance with intutive intensity" (Rai 2008:4). The dramatic impact of the image of sadhus at Varanasi expresses the compelling rhythm of the life-style of India sadhus. The images clicked by Rai is "not colored by his consciouness" (Rai 2008:4) rather he captures the 'epiphermal image(s)' (Rai 2008:3) that communicate the deeper responses of spirituality and the awakening.

In order to express the perfect communion between man and nature, Raghu Rai zooms the lens to capture the complete oeuvre of the Indian culture and space as he says, "work produced in India has to reflect India in every shape and form" (Rai 2008:4). In Raghu Rai's image of religious Sadhus of India, the absorption of shades is less deep but it succinctly demonstrates possible culture of India. Raghu Rai aims at clicking the unself-conscious pictures to capture the mood and mind which appears to be symptomatic of their nature-off guard. In order to fix the cultural diversity, he projects the empathic interest to establish for a suspended moment. According to Strand, it is 'nerve-racking' intensity that calls for the attention of his subjects.

Hence, the images pertaining to the mythology of religion snapped by both orientalist and occidentalist gaze demands the photographic realism. The 'duality

of the signifier' (Barthes 1981a:7) is mediated by the contingency of 'stains of the real' (Lacan 2005:13) which evoke the 'psychic reality' (Arlow1985:659) considering 'fissures of meaning' (Barthes 1981a:35) challenging the symbolic manifestation of the Indian culture and the tradition by large.

Fig. 4. "Sadhus at Varanasi Ghat", Raghu Rai, 2001.

3. Indian monsoon: framing the exotic and esoteric

Monsoon in India is attraction for many photographers across the world. However, the monsoon which is enjoyed by people across the country also brings adversities in their everyday life. Due to the unplanned roads and sewages, the pleasure of monsoon often turns into the flash floods and floods. Both Steve McCurry and Raghu Rai document the condition of Deluge to show the epidemics of rain. Steve McCurry's image of "Porbandar, Gujarat 1983-Tailor carries his sewing machine"[16] contains an interesting story of man and nature, life and death.

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[16] As Steve McCurry writes about this iconic image, "I did a story on the monsoon. One of the dramatic things of the monsoon season is there's an incredible heat buildup. The wind blows, the dust storms come up. So the monsoon is a relief. I was in the city of Porbandar photographing the monsoon during one of the floods and I was up to my chest in the water. As I was wading through the streets I saw this man walking down with a sewing machine on his shoulder and it seemed so odd and so surreal. Everyone started alerting this man that there's a

Fig. 5. "Porbandar, Gujarat 1983-Tailor carries his sewing machine" McCurry, 1983.

The photograph shows the existential angst of the old man lifting his rusted sewing machine and making his way through the flood in the state of doubt and uncertainties. The image depicts the man's survival strategy and his desire for life suggesting one's ability to compete, survive and evolve. The metonymy of the shared expression on the camera with a smile and flood expresses the hetero-geneity of the initial pose with the final print. It does not certify 'the presence' (Barthes 1981a:87) but hints on the "ectoplasm of what had been" (Barthes 1981a: 87). As Derrida says: "The *versus* of the conceptual opposition is as insubstantial as a camera click" (Knight 1984:130). Raghu Rai on the other hand, clicks the panorama of the epidemic of rain in the following Image.

Rai's meditative pictures on flood suggest the post-utopian struggle of the Indian monsoon. The dichotomy between the 'mythological prototypes' of monsoon and the multiplicity of existence adheres to the 'ultimate truth' exhibiting the 'essential reality' of existence during the natural calamity of rain. The photograph of deluge in Bihar is a '*le quotidein*' that demystifies everyday life.

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photographer around, and telling him to smile for the camera. He has this rusted sewing machine which is from his shop and it's destroyed and yet he's up to his neck in the water with this smile. The best part of the story was that the German manufacturer of the machine saw this picture and tracked him down and sent him a new sewing machine" (McCurry 2016).
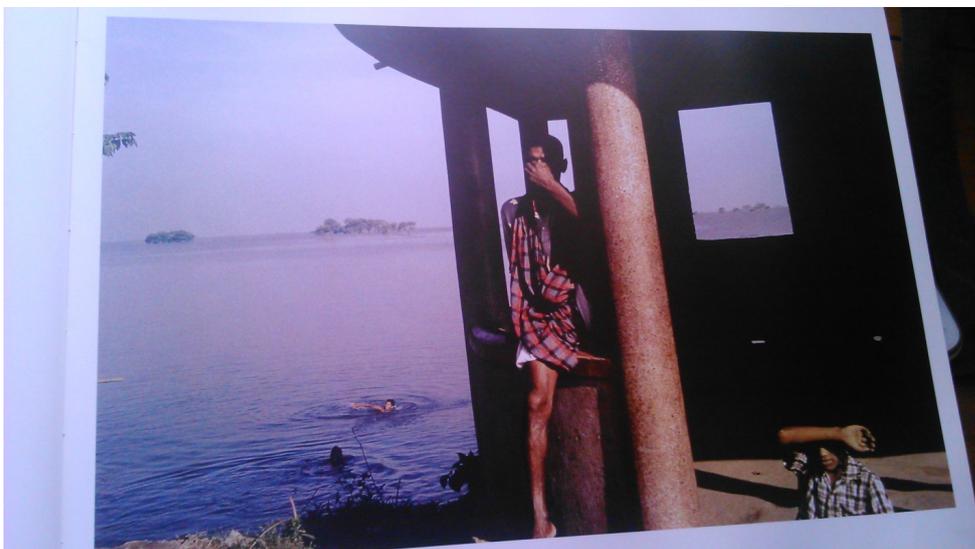
Fig. 6. Deluge in Bihar[17], 2000 Raghu Rai.

Both the photographers repose the force of monsoon as the contrapunctual experience of Indian Monsoon. In India, the suffering of flood begins with drowning, water-borne diseases, snakebites or hunger. However, the representation of Deluge by both the photographers is quite different. Steve McCurry, in order to find a 'story' on monsoon, makes the image exotic. Undoubtedly, McCurry's images are set in the world of almost make-believe and contains element of the magical and absurd which exoticizes the appeal. On the contrary, Raghu Rai sees India with intact "inner spirit of her own civilizations with all its contradictions" (Rai 2). He clicks the diverse natural calamity that speaks the 'multilayered complexities' of everyday life. Rai uses myriad hues to infuse the emotional texture in the images.

4. Representation of 'slumdogs' and coal miners

With the contradictory euphemism of 'slumdog millionaire', Mumbai textile workers are often represented as the slumdogs[18] as they were found between the

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[17]   Bihar is among the most deluge prone states in India. Based on the central Gangetic Basin, it faces the acute climatic change models with the heightened risk of maladaptative embankments. Each year, deluge plagues Bihar that leaves the state with the acute deprivation of food, cloth and shelter.

[18]   The representation of the slumdogs has been quite exotic in Bollywood. Recently, Mumbai was hosted as the "world's first slum museum" after the successful film "Slumdog Millionaire". It aims at displaying everything, right from "pottery, textiles and the recycled items".

cramped squalid machinery that stood for acute labor exploitation. Steve McCurry clicks the image of Mumbai textile workers in 1993, exactly after the decade of massive textile workers strike. Still, it did not bring much change to their lifestyle, as they continued with their struggle against rationalization, wage cuts, unemployment and the crush against the colonial resistance.
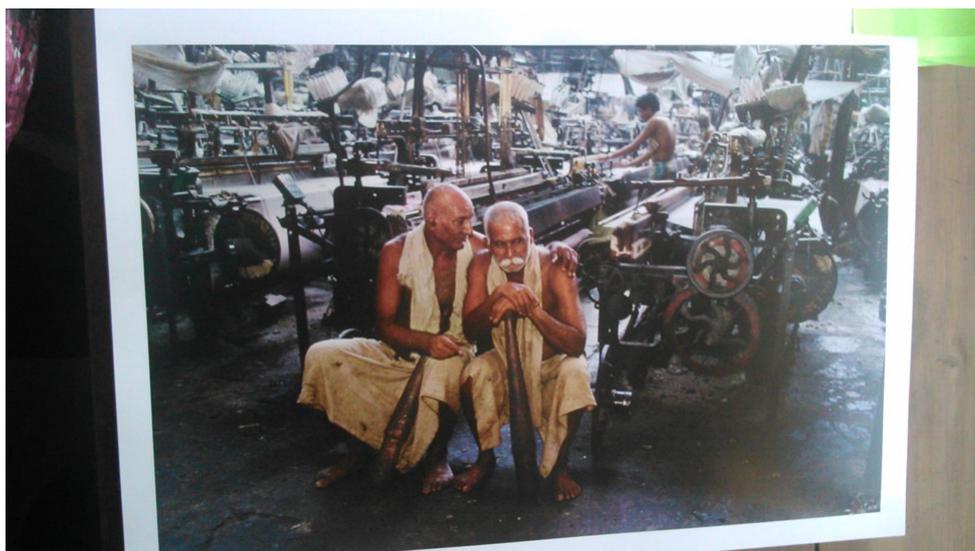

Fig. 7. "Textile workers take a break at a mill", Mumbai, 1993, McCurry.

In the image Textile workers take a break at a mill, Mumbai, 1993[19] McCurry through this photograph captures the story of the working conditions of the labor force in the textile mills which was deteriorating at a fast pace. People for meager wages worked like in sweat shops with the old traditional handlooms.

In a similar way, Raghu Rai too captures the poor condition of miners[20] in India. It is the set of 'techniques' which prioritizes 'expository clarity' by artistic depictions of 'shock worker' as a socialist hero-anticipating. The picture depicts how human life is devalued in mines and there is a lack of safety implements at

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[19] The year,1993 was the revolutionary period in the textile mill as most of the mills were planned to revamp with modern technology. The leader of the Atul Ruia-led Phoenix Mills Limited made an unsuccessful attempt to modernize textile industry. This incident rebooted the destruction of the textile mills.

[20] Jharia, located in Dhanbad is the coal capital of the country, i.e. Dhanbad. The town is famous for its rich coal resources used to make coke. The town plays a vital role in boosting the economy and the development of the nation. In fact, Jharia was the prominent basis for the development of working-class in India during the 19th century. Later, Dhanbad became infamous for its 'mafia', a particular network which 'organized' the reproduction of the working-class through money lending and labor contracting.

work place. About forty to fifty percent of the total accidents in coal mines are associated with the handling of mining tools in lift cages, in the shaft, tramlines, haulage engine and boilers etc. The claim between the recourse of writing photography is differentiated by the modalities of thought which is associated with skeins of the unconscious. Here the photographic phantasy subjects to the transforming of 'phantasy identification' of the repressive labor exploitation.

Fig. 8. Coal Miners in the lift, Jharia, Bihar, 1992, Raghu Rai.

5. Wrestling in India: The Sporting Marvel

Wrestling in India[21] is among the traditional sporting exercises, also known as 'malla-yudha'. Wrestling is a 'spectacle of excess' (Barthes 1981b:3) which denotes a special art form, including the three primary dimensions, *daw* (moves), *pech* (countermoves), and *pantra* (stance). Raghu Rai's image of *akhara* shows the free-style of wrestling played in India which is an 'open air spectacle' (Barthes 1981b:3). The visual tone of the photographic images is reflexive and theatrical in nature. He tends to show the essential features of *akhara* such as Earth, air, trees which give the aesthetic appeal to his imaging. Rai uses the soft contrast to show the complete picture of the *akhara* at Delhi.

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[21] Wrestling in India according to *Malla Purana* describes the details of the exact dimensions of various types of wrestling as pits-square, rectangular and round. This text also elaborates upon the quality of the pit earth, emphasizing that color and texture are important and that it must be "pleasing to see as that required for seed laying". Sandesara and Mehta note that the *mallas* (wrestlers) of contemporary period mix various substances in the earth such as buttermilk, oil, and red ochre.

Fig. 9. "Wrestlers in an akhara", Raghu Rai, Delhi, 1988.

Steve McCurry, on the other hand, tried to capture the sensuality in the *akhara* in the photograph. He wanted to show the enchanted culture of wrestling in Varanasi which is more inspired by crass-commercialization and immoral materialism. In opposition to the general notion *of akhara* as the public gymnasium, it is shift of consequence of a fight between two 'fantasies of the imagination'. It often seems that McCurry alerts his people before photographing them. In the select photograph where he images the wrestlers in the *akhara* at Varanasi only captures three wrestlers clinging to each other's body.

Fig. 10. "Three wrestlers clinging to each other's body", Varanasi, Uttar Pradesh, 1996 McCurry.

6. Conclusion

Thus, the analysis of the oriental and the occidental gaze of the photographs reveals that Steve McCurry aims at projecting the counter-ideological strategies of aestheticism of everyday Indian life style. To him, India is a land of stories, and always seems to move away from the utopian state. However, the antiquity of Indian tradition and religion excited him to read the diffusion of power which needs to be thought differently. The undoing of images by using a caption with the voyeuristic gaze dislodges the wounding potentials evident in the aesthetic and political transformation. McCurry tends to project the fantasy of orientalist images that is presumed with the intense reality effect. Raghu Rai on the other hand, suggests that a different strategy of resistance is attuned to the immanence of life. He aims at bringing awareness to everyday problematic through the collective and the personal projects. If 'the personal is political', then the personal life through the western gaze, is not outside the institutionalized space as it is interpreted by the sphere of production of meaning subjected to life within it. The contours of east-west gaze[22] witness the crisis of the agenda of change in the everyday scenario of the common mass. The epistemological change in the capturing of images and imagination and the experimentation of the same condition through a different angle imaging the different life constitutes the exemplary dimension of photography in general. Nevertheless, both the photographers project the critique of redemption of art and the stratified forms of everyday life, but Raghu Rai strips away, "all the layers of his appurtenance to social, discursive existence, tapping dangerously into a visceral 'real' to emerge, differently, into redemption through art" (ffrench 1998:292). In both photographers' one sees the everyday life of India trapped into the lens of the ideology saturated with meanings. Nevertheless, the space and the dissolution of thought liberate the ways of thinking.

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[22]   East-west gaze is influenced by Edward Said who sparked off the crass-caricature of the 'other' by exploring the cultural legacy of alternative identities. The east-west gaze in terms of photographic archives convincingly explores the cornerstone of the orientalist discourse.

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