



6. **Burra Bazaar, Calcutta**, Samuel Bourne
Albumen Print,
Photographer's Ref. 2589 B,
c.1867, 271 x 230 mm

Statuesque Enthrallment

Portraiture as an art form is embedded in the history of representation, and in South Asia, its manifestation through all mediums including painting, engraving and sculpture have accommodated the profile, the three quarter and frontal view – the last of which most strongly alludes to the 19th century photograph. (Fig.7) From Mughal miniatures, to the Victorian painter's rendering, a shifting sensibility about the 'figure', a more abstract notion

of the body, has inspired imagination and discourse around selfhood, ethnography, gender, identity and likeness – as it explores physical and psychological aspects of the human condition. The assorted strains, conflicted nature and anticipated functions of portraiture in the sub-continent, speak then of the 'migration' of these artworks across geographical sites, cultural contexts and media with photos produced at one time, now being exhibited more than 160 years after their production.

Of the images on view, several examples relate to painted or embellished photography and a few religious metapictures that symbolised a form of *darsan*, which had a resounding effect on visual culture in India. (Fig.8) In the former, the surface presented itself as a canvas for the 'photographer-artist', drawing upon conventions of illumination from regional courtly styles as well as popular performances. The Parsi theatre for instance provokes a consideration of the portrait as a collaborative endeavour – between acting, scenography and fiction. Hence, the use of a backdrop often reveals an aspiration, a fantasy. As opposed to the scientific stilled image, there emerged facets of 'planned spontaneity', transforming the notion of the steadied body in space, wherein photographer became the orchestrator of an enactment. Hence, the images, though meant for private consumption, were also in tune with public display strategies and how one may have appeared before the informal visitor, paramour and the voyeur.

On the other hand, as we showcase some of the rulers and the elite from India, Nepal, Sri Lanka and Burma, the Victorian sensibility to hierarchy is perhaps at play, suggesting that these early samples reference near-aristocratic productions, inevitable given the monetary excesses of early printing processes. Their arrangement in souvenir/presentation albums speaks of another kind of 'fashioning' – the mnemonic form of the book, which created a new model for memory by the use of personal narrative and creative juxtapositioning.

7. **Tamil Women**, Skeen & Co., Ceylon
Albumen Print, Photographer's Ref. 1136, c.1860–1890, 272 x 210 mm



8. **Baby Krishna Eating Butter**
Unknown Photographer and Painter, Gelatin Silver Print
c.1910–1930, 109 x 151 mm

The exhibition is curated by Rahaab Allana (Alkazi Foundation) in association with Beth Citron (Rubin Museum of Art, NY) and Davy Depelchin (Royal Museums of Fine Arts of Belgium)

Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts

The Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts (IGNCA), established in 1987 as an autonomous centre, under the Ministry of Culture, Government of India is committed to an encompassing study and experience of all the arts. The IGNCA's approach to the arts lies in the fact that it does not segregate the folk and the classical, the oral and the aural, the written and the spoken and the old and the modern. The emphasis is on the connectivity and the continuity between the various fields that ultimately relate human-to-human and human-to-nature symbiosis. IGNCA views photography as an art and has in its archives several collections of eminent photographers like Raja Deen Dayal, Henri Cartier-Bresson, Jyoti Bhatt and Shambu Saha.

The Alkazi Foundation for the Arts

Alkazi Foundation is a registered charitable trust based in New Delhi. It focuses on the study and research of the cultural history of India and South Asia. It has in its archives, a private collection of 19th and 20th century vintage photographs collected over the last thirty years by Shri Ebrahim Alkazi, the Foundation's Chairman. There is also a sizeable collection of antiquarian maps, originally from the Susan Gole Collection.

Front Cover:
Tattooed Man, P. Klier (active ca. 1845–1911), Albumen Print, c. 1890, 271 x 212 mm

All images from the Alkazi Collection of Photography



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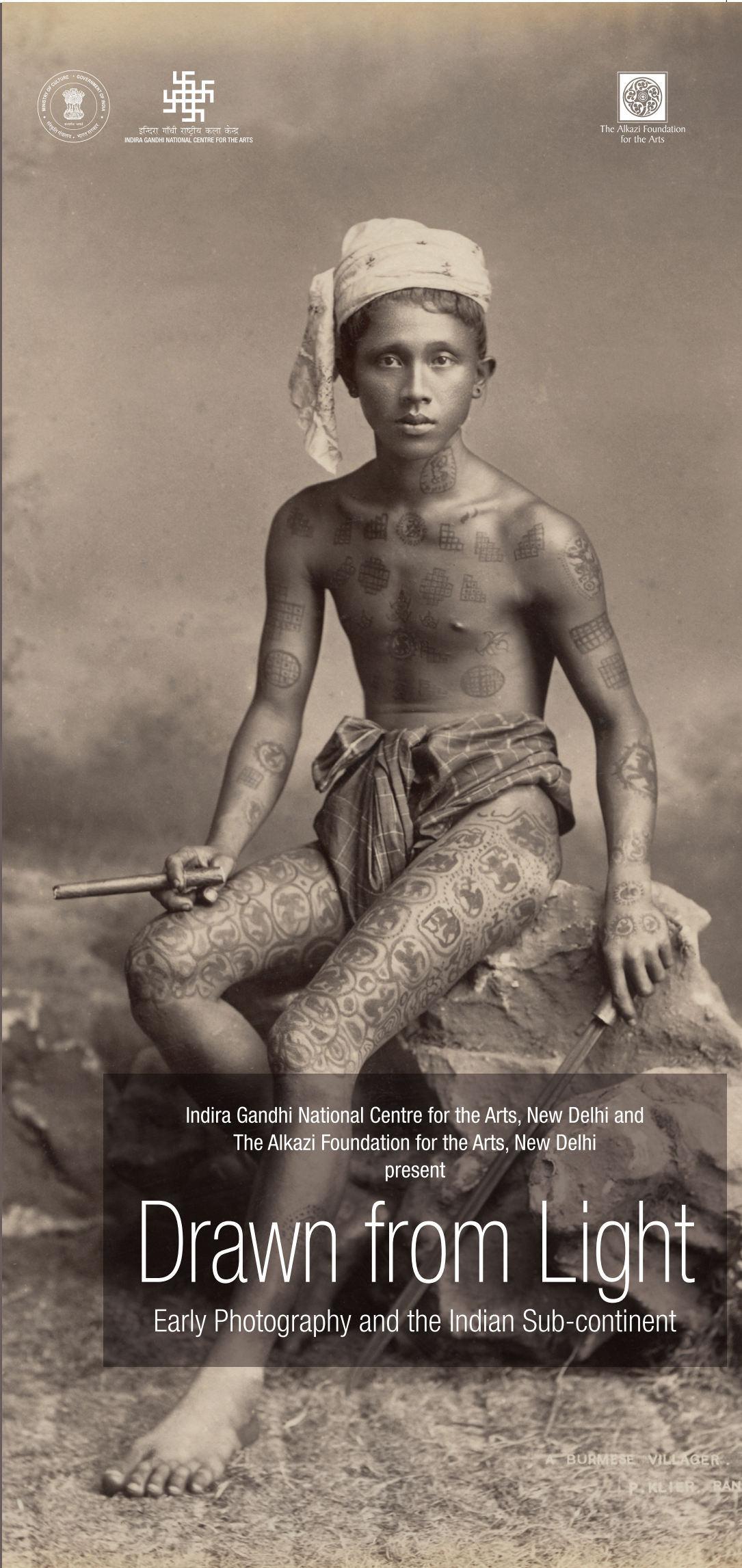
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RUBIN
MUSEUM
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The Alkazi Foundation
for the Arts



Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts, New Delhi and
The Alkazi Foundation for the Arts, New Delhi
present

Drawn from Light

Early Photography and the Indian Sub-continent

A BURMESE VILLAGER...
P. KLIER / BAN



1. **Jeypore**, Raja Deen Dayal (1844-1905), Albumen Print
Photographer's Ref. 1784, c.1884, 205 x 261 mm

The exhibition presents rare and iconic photographic samples emanating from the South Asian region, contained in the Alkazi Collection. (Fig.1) Remounted as a single show, it is based on two prior collaborative displays held in New York (Rubin Museum of Art) and Brussels (Royal Museums of Fine Arts) in 2013-14 respectively, the latter forming an integral part of the Europalia India Arts Festival.

Distinct sections in the IGNCA's Twin Art Gallery showcase the pictorial formats of portraiture, landscapes and cityscapes – visual signposts that encompass prevalent tropes and mannerisms from the region. Feverish photographic production was accompanied equally by the documentation and growth of the three Presidencies – Madras, Bombay and Calcutta, which were also the first cities to witness the rise of photographic societies during the mid-1850s.

Early photography in the larger Indian Sub-continent was primarily conducted by military and medical officers in the service of the English East India Company, later expanding to the field of commercial photography – practised first by Europeans and then local photographers alike. This transition details not only a development in patronage, circulation and reception but also reveals shifting visual and ideological strategies at play intimating early forays into photojournalism, documentary practices as well as pictorial or art-photography oriented productions. Hence, this show also reveals phenomena that propelled the wider transmission of photography – technical advancements in photographic practices and of the camera, such as the dry plate in 1870 and the Kodak No. 1 in 1886.



2. **The Tribesman**
Randolph Bezzant Holmes (1888-1973), Gelatin Silver Print, Photographer's Ref.125, c.1920, 288 x 220 mm

Bastions, Borders and Bridges

He is the true artist, who copies nature; but where he finds her mean, elevates her from his own ideas of beauty.

William H. Gilpin (1768)

The austere composure of the armed 'Tribesman' in Randolph Bezzant Holmes' photograph alleges the illusion of the eternal wonderer, reflecting upon a distant object, or perhaps following a target from mountaintop. (Fig.2) As an invocation to a segment of the exhibition, the image is intended as an 'overview', a metaphor for landscape photography. For many 19th century practitioners, the latter included architecture, the cityscapes and even the milling crowd merging with built spaces and scenery that encompassed or framed them.

Landscape photographs often served as visual sojourns; documentary surveys and explorations that enhanced the visual database of advancing colonial forces, and later even scholars and antiquarians. The syncretic culture of India's Heritage Sites in the exhibition is presented through the work of two army-men in the service of the English East India Company, namely Alexander Greenlaw (1818-1870) and Dr. John Murray (1809-1898). (Fig.3 & 4) Known for their sweeping and studied frames, the presence of imposing edifices, yet lyrical imagery establishes a visual lineage with the picturesque – topographic views suffused with the splendour of ruins – a mannerism derivative of English painting. Such images also encouraged travel writing and tourism – of the Frenchman, Louis Rousset (1845-1929), whose publication on display about the Native Princes, includes engravings of architecture based originally on his photographs; or infact the writing on photography in India by Lady Eastlake (1809-1893), the British author and art critic.

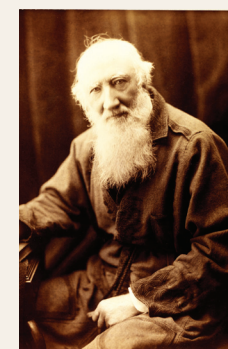
The mapping of the sub-continent – the ramparts of Tanjore or the view of a hill in Trichinopoly – rendered the setting accessible, navigable and a cherished possession, that in photographic form, was exportable. The cultural mechanism deployed through images represents a historicising process as museumised vistas articulate a supposedly unchanging and timeless portrait of places in the form of collectibles that were eventually retained in many of the national archives in Europe. However, the insertion of native subjects by the photographers within these pictures does more than contribute to an assessment of scale or provide a 'vernacular emphasis' – it underscores the unseen, yet fraught relationship between land, communities and the imperial vision. (Fig.5)

5. **Portrait of a Burmese Lady**
Felice Beato (1832-1909)
Albumen Print, c.1889,
206 x 270 mm



The repertoire of the featured photographers also includes Felice Beato (1832-1909) and William Johnson (fl. 1840s-1860s); studios such as Nicholas & Co., H.S. Mendelssohn Studios, Bourne and Shepherd, F. Skeen & Co. and Herzog and Higgins, to name a few. (Fig.6)

3. **Portrait of Dr. John Murray**
H.S. Mendelssohn Studios, Pembridge Crescent, London. W.
Albumen Print on Card, c.1880, 512 x 392 mm



4. **Taj Mahal with Ruins in the Foreground, Agra**
John Murray, Waxed-Paper Negative, 1858-1862, 378 x 457 mm

