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Frame Of Mind

How many stories can a single picture tell? Many, as it turns out. Three women photographers give us a glimpse into their lenses

by Pranav Dixit

Kannagi Khanna
'Hollywood'

About 7,000 people live in the filth and squalor of Gulbaiokara, a slum in the heart of Ahmedabad that has been nicknamed after the glitziest destination in the world – Hollywood. The reason? The women who live here (mostly Bheels from Rajasthan), have a wild, exotic beauty reminiscent of top Hollywood stars. In June, 22-year-old photographer Kannagi Khanna embarked on a unique project: she printed out posters of top Hollywood actresses – Keira Knightley, Angelina Jolie, Drew Barrymore and many more and photographed the slum women in the same, exact poses "It was exciting to find affinity between two entities that were geographically, socio-economically and culturally so far apart from each other!" she says. "The women themselves were eager, but it was the husbands who posed a problem! Also, I had to constantly remind them to look at the poses in the posters and not their clothes!" she smiles.

all smiles

This woman's husband actually encouraged her to pose for the picture and even helped put the Drew Barrymore up poster on the brick wall, says Khanna

face off

'I couldn't find a face to match Keira Knightley till my last day,' says Khanna. 'Then I found this woman sitting outside her house and she was such a natural! I thought she looked hot'

Anusha S Yadav
'Is Tune For Fame'

When she was a child, 36-year-old photographer Anusha Yadav studied music. She participated in school competitions and even sang for Jaipur Television (she was brought up in the Pink City) and All India Radio. Those were the days when reality shows on Indian television didn't exist. "I don't care much for Indian reality shows that are today," says Yadav who currently works from Mumbai. Still, there was something about the latest season of *Sa Re Ga Ma Pa L'il Champs*, Zee TV's blockbuster singing talent show, that got her hooked. "I connected with these kids," she says. Over a

glitter and grit

9-year-old Priyanshi Srivastava from Lucknow participated in Zee's *Sa Re Ga Ma Pa*. 'She was instantly attracted to the camera,' says Yadav

shy guy

Azmat Khan, 10, hails from a family conservative family of musicians from Jaipur. He was shy but very interested in the camera. 'If he saw me around, he got self conscious,' says Yadav. 'But perhaps, it was this same self conscious instinct that made him perform for the camera, though he never looked at it directly'

period of 10 days, Yadav went behind the scenes on the sets of the show and shot more than 2,000 pictures of the little contest-ants. "It was shocking to see how seriously the children and their parents took their careers even at that stage," she says. Friendship, rivalry, peer pressure, affection, internal politics among parents... all come together in Yadav's series. Was there an urban-rural divide on the sets? "The small towners looked up to the city people in some ways... the way they dressed, the way they talked. But ultimately, when you're in a competition like this, your talent is all that matters," she says.

PHOTO: ALBERT KLEIN

Aparna Jayakumar
'Flex, Feroze'

Last year, Aparna Jayakumar spent a chilly winter evening ogling muscle at the Annual Zoroastrian Power-Lifting and Bodybuilding Championship in Mumbai. "Not many people know that the Parsis are great connois-seurs of the body," says the 27-year-old photographer who has always had an affin-ity for the Parsi community. She first saw an advertise-ment calling for body-builders in a Parsi newspa-per and was intrigued. "The Parsis are a dwindling com-munity and yet, here was this show of Parsi strength. The irony was striking," she says. The event was like a big party: there was every-one from young children to elderly women, loud music and crackling energy. "I think it was simply a way for a dwindling community to show its solidarity and togetherness," muses Jayakumar. "Or, I don't know... maybe elderly Parsi women just like to look at muscular young men!"

bawas and brawn

The Annual Zoroastrian Power-Lifting and Bodybuilding Championship in Mumbai saw Parsi bodybuilders strike some of their finest poses in the final round

the waiting game

Bodybuilder Percy patiently awaits his turn behind the stage at the Championship

Photos by these three photographers and others will be exhibited at the Delhi Photo Festival from 15 to 29 October, at the India Habitat Centre, New Delhi