

Anuj Dudwadkar



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A documentary photographer and ethnographer with over a decade of immersive fieldwork among indigenous communities, primarily focused on the Rasholi people of the Western Himalayas. My work blends Gonzo journalism with visual storytelling to document and preserve lesser-known cultural narratives, with an emphasis on indigenous knowledge systems, spiritual traditions, and cultural resilience. Through a participatory approach, I have developed deep, long-term relationships with the Rasholi community, allowing me to capture the subtleties of their ancient way of life as they navigate the challenges of modern times.

Currently based in Tampere (Finland), I am creating Going Gonzo in the Himalayas, a photographic book and exhibition project that reflects a decade of intimate documentation. The work presents an authentic narrative that challenges conventional ethnographic methods, offering a personal and immersive lens into the Rasholi community's cultural endurance and spiritual depth.

Fieldwork Experience 2011–2021 (10 years)

Independent Documentarian and Cultural Explorer

Rashol, Himachal Pradesh, India

- Documented the unique lifestyle, traditions, social structures, and folklore of the Rasholi community in the Western Himalayas through an interdisciplinary approach, combining photography, visual storytelling, and written narratives.
- Established deep, respectful relationships with the community, becoming a trusted participant in their cultural life and oral traditions without imposing external frameworks. This approach was pivotal in enabling a participatory and unobtrusive documentation process, reflecting the authentic rhythms of daily life in Rashol.
- Created one of the few comprehensive visual and narrative accounts of Rashol, forming the foundational data for my upcoming book project. This work contributes to a broader recognition of the village's enduring cultural heritage and serves as potential groundwork for future interest.
- Documented the seasonal migration and traditions of shepherds through an apprenticeship in high-altitude regions, capturing the fragility and resilience of this dying practice in the face of modernization.
- Independently managed all logistics during extended fieldwork, adhering to principles of sustainability and minimalism while navigating remote, challenging environments over the course of a decade.

Project Realisation (2022 - Present)

Inari and Tampere, Finland

- **Indigenous research and exploration (2022):** Moved to Inari, Finland, to explore the Inari Sámi culture and its connections with indigenous knowledge systems and the impacts of colonisation. Conducted one year of field research, paralleling my work with the Rasholi community in the Himalayas, focusing on cultural preservation and adaptation amidst global influences. Began to explore Sámi and Finnish society as the audience for my upcoming book and exhibitions.
- **Project realisation in Tampere (2023):** Relocated to Tampere to initiate the realisation of my decade-long Himalayan project. This phase includes organising exhibitions and finalising *Going Gonzo in the Himalayas*, a book that encapsulates my work, aimed at introducing the Rasholi community to Finnish audiences. This transition marks a critical step in moving from documentation to public engagement.
- **Exhibitions and public presentations:** Collaborated with galleries, including Kirjakahvila (Turku) and PCCA Hirvitalo (Tampere), to showcase photographs and narratives from my work in the Western Himalayas. The exhibitions provide Finnish audiences with insights into the Rasholi community and the broader implications of globalism on indigenous cultures. Announced the upcoming book during these presentations.
- **Book development (2025):** Currently developing *Going Gonzo in the Himalayas*, a photobook blending immersive visual storytelling with Gonzo ethnography. This work captures a decade of intimate documentation and is intended as both a cultural record and a tool for cross-cultural understanding. Completion is expected by 2025.
- **Membership and Contributions:** Joined **Photographic Centre Nyky aika** as a member, expanding my professional network within the Finnish photography community. Additionally, began contributing as a writer for *Obskööri*, the online magazine of *Tampereen Kameraseura*.

Professional Skills & Interests

- **Photography:** Specialized in documentary photography, using minimal equipment to capture unfiltered moments and authentic cultural narratives. Skilled in Photoshop and Lightroom to enhance storytelling through visual editing. Experienced in contact printing and alternative photographic techniques like Cyanotypes.
- **Gonzo Journalism & Ethnography:** Skilled in creative writing, cross-cultural communication, immersive storytelling, and ethnographic documentation. Focused on cultural sensitivity and transparency.
- **Indology:** In-depth understanding of Indian history, culture, and indigenous knowledge systems.
- **Cultural Diversity:** Committed to exploring how diverse cultures preserve their identities in changing environments.

Language Skills

- **English:** C2 (Bilingual proficiency)
- **Finnish:** B2 (Intermediate)
- **Kulvi / Rasholi:** C1 (Bilingual proficiency)

Additional languages (Full working proficiency):
Hindi, Marathi, Konkani

Photographic Exhibitions

Kirjakahvila, Turku
Going Gonzo in the Himalayas (September 2024)

PCCA Hirvitalo, Tampere
Going Gonzo in the Himalayas (May 2024)