

Brick by Brick- A Photobook

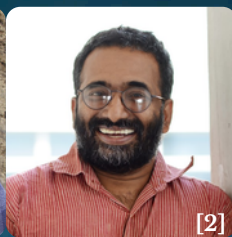
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The clay brick-making Industry is one of the largest rural industries in India at present. Brick-making workers in India form a significant part of the country's unorganised labour sector, often enduring harsh working conditions with minimal legal protection. Thousands of families are working in this sector. The industry relies heavily on migrant labourers from economically disadvantaged backgrounds, primarily from states like Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Jharkhand, Odisha, and Andhra Pradesh. These workers and their families migrate seasonally to brick kilns, where they live and work under strenuous conditions, shaping, drying, and firing bricks for long hours in extreme temperatures. The nature of employment is largely informal, with many workers trapped in cycles of debt bondage due to advance payments taken from kiln owners.

Wages are often low and irregular, and child labour is prevalent, with entire families—including children—contributing to production. The work is physically demanding, involving lifting and carrying heavy loads, exposure to hazardous dust and fumes, and long hours under the scorching sun.



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Despite being crucial to India's construction industry, brick kiln workers remain one of the most exploited and invisible labour groups, with limited access to healthcare, education, or basic amenities. During non-agricultural seasons, the families migrate across the country to the Brick kiln areas for around six to seven months a year.



Brickmaking is one of the eminent traditional practices used for construction dating from early civilizations. The Book Project "Brick By Brick" is an outcome part of the PhD course work "Digital Imaging and Photography". The Documentary Photography approach for the project is inspired by Eminent Photographer "Sebastiao Salgado" – His work is known for its deeply humanistic portrayal of labour, migration, and resilience.

Salgado's ability to capture raw emotions, intricate details, and the socio-economic conditions of marginalised communities is a guiding influence in this visual ethnographic project. His black-and-white compositions, rich in contrast and storytelling depth, emphasise the dignity and perseverance of workers in challenging environments.



Still- life

A visual ethnographic approach has been used for the documentation, including informal interviews and conversations. The project reflects a personal take based on the conversation and interactions with the participants at the brick kiln. The Photobook Project attempts to look closely at Brick workers' lives at the Brick Kiln and tries to capture the Mundane activities at the site, the hardship and struggle of families, moments of shared joy, togetherness and living experiences of the brick workers.



Morning Steps of Hope

“ Despite being crucial to India's construction industry, brick kiln workers remain one of the most exploited and invisible labour groups, with limited access to healthcare, education, or basic amenities. ”

Nearly thirty workers from the Krishna District of Andhra Pradesh and their families live and work at one of the Brickkiln near Mamidipalli Tanda, Sangareddy, Hyderabad. The place is filled with chaos, multiple living experiences and fleeting moments. The only struggle is to look at what lies beneath! Where multiple stories unfold simultaneously. The challenge is not just to document what meets the eye but to look beyond—to explore the underlying emotions, aspirations, and silent narratives that define their lived experiences.



Her labor, Our Shelter



Fathered Friendship

Keywords: Documentary Photography, Visual Ethnography, Life at Brick Klin, Photobook

Tugging Through Time

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