

## Photography for International Understanding and Human Unity

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**U**nderstanding in singular sense, means acquiring knowledge about animate or inanimate objects. It also means being tolerant and having empathy towards other's feelings and views. In a pluralistic sense, 'Understanding' means mutual bondage or agreement amongst people about something. Photography helps in understanding things, objects, people, events, places etc. quickly, exactly and truly. It plays an honest and important role in this regard. "Unity in Diversity" is the Indian scripture, emphasising the essence of the word "understanding".

According to Ishopanishad (sloka 6)

*"Jastu Sarbani Bhutani Atmanebanupashyati*

*Sarbabhuteshu Chatmang Tatona Bijugupsate".*

*(He who thinks everyone is like him and finds himself within everybody.*

*He never hates any one and is not jealous to others.)*

**International understanding** or Internationalism is a sense of world citizenship which enables individuals to have a global perspective instead of narrow local or national viewpoints. Internationalism inspires people "to live together in peace as good neighbours; to take effective measures for the removal of areas of difference and to develop friendly relations among nations".

According to Dr. Walter H.C. Lewis "International Understanding is the ability to observe critically and objectively and appraise the conduct of man everywhere towards one another, irrespective of the nationality or culture to which they may belong." Oliver Goldsmith, the Irish novelist, playwright and poet says "International Understanding is a feeling that the individual is not only a member of his State, but a member of the World". In the words of Dr. S Radhakrishnan, "The world once divided by oceans and continent is united physically today but there are still suspicions and misunderstandings. It is essential for us not to live apart but to live together. Understanding one another's fears and anxieties, aspirations and thoughts are what we are expected to do. We must not claim a racial extermination, enslavement or segregation but work for racial harmony. We may be German, we may be American, we may be Russian but we are essentially human beings. Let us not overlook fundamental fact that lets us learn to live in a World Community."



Bride Sreyasee by Swapan K Bhattacharyya, India

Vivekananda advocates the theory of the whole world being a single family. His approach to internationalism is different from the western concept, which is a logical corollary of the modern concept of a sovereign state. Swami Vivekananda's internationalism stands for a family of self-respecting and self-governing nations united to each other by ties of equality and living at peace and concord with each other. This concept of Vivekananda is based upon the Vedantic principle of universality of self.

Rabindranath Tagore, the great Indian poet and philosopher, who himself was an

institution of International Understanding, whose life, philosophy, concept of education, religious belief were the epitome of International Understanding, wrote –

*"Aapon hote bahir hoye baire dnara*

*Buker majhe biswaloker pabi shara"*

*(Step out of yourself, the universe will respond within.*

*These swelling waves will break into a dance within*

*And the soul will be moved)*

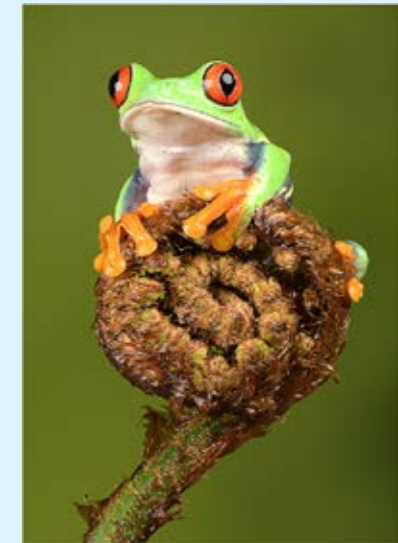
Sri Ramkrishna Paramhansa, a great Hindu mendicant and an epitome of religious tolerance propagated the philosophy of "Jata Maat, Tato Path", "as many faiths, so many paths" (of finding God).

**Technological progress** has shrunk our world; made international boundaries redundant and the world is now often regarded as a global village. Communication Technology is a huge boon in building International Understanding, Human Unity and Peace, as it strengthens the ties between individuals and improves their ability to share, learn and interact with each other. Photography plays a pivotal role in communication technology. Photography as a universal language is also contributing to the socio-economic and cultural development of the societies. In this article an attempt has been made to provide a broad outline of the application of various aspects of Photography in different domains. Photography being a universal language can prove to be a mainstay for International fraternity through the platforms of International Photographic Salons, Conferences and other such events.

With the astonishing speed and myriad modes of communication possible in today's world, the barriers between human societies have long been erased and there has been a paradigm shift in human understanding. People have become closer and it has been possible for us to understand ourselves and comprehend our world at large in a more purposeful manner.

**Photography** plays a very significant role in every sphere of our life. Starting from historical lore to scientific research, from underwater to space, from documentary to artistic pursuit and so on, so forth, there is hardly any sphere where photography is not utilised in this modern society. We are using photography in different ways for different reasons and purposes: for recording old memories and various social events, as a witness to history, for research, as a means of livelihood, or as a creative art medium.

**Language** is the mainstay of communication and it makes a conversation possible. To read a book or novel one must know the language in which it is written. Even a song cannot be properly realised unless the language of the lyrics is known. But for a visual art, or dance, language is not a barrier. Photography has been referred to as a Universal language. Photography is one of the most powerful visual languages which evokes emotion and helps foster mutual understanding amongst people of the world. It is a superb medium for International understanding irrespective of nationality, creed, colours and religions.



Fern Climber by Malcolm Jenkin, England



Waiting for the Bride by Biswatosh Sengupta

**Documentary Photography** which includes shots recording important events or memorable moments, covers almost all aspects and genres viz. Anthropological, Archaeological, Social, Cultural, Religious and Scientific. This kind of photography helps in knowing the various aspects of life, places, events, objects, etc. and thereby promotes human understanding at global levels.



Chimpanzee Kiss by Subrata Bysack, India

**Travel Photography** promotes tourism, makes people understand different lifestyles and human activities. It provides an opportunity to enjoy the beauty of wonderful nature subjects, which are an integral part of our lives. Through photography it is possible to enjoy the pristine beauty of the splashing water of the roaring sea at the Vivekananda rock temple, the grandeur of the Himalayas with its colourful hue, the fantastic natural scene at Kailash Manas Sarobar, the charms of the mountain desert at Ladakh, the awe-inspiring depths of the Grand Canyon and the magnificence of the Niagara falls etc. which have attracted and inspired humanity since eternity even without visiting the place. Human beings have always aspired to portray the astounding beauties of nature, through songs, poetry, painting and through photography.



Gurla Mandhata Peak by Rathindranath Chakraborty, India



Landscape 9 by Saurabh Bhattacharyya, India



At St. Mark's Square, Italy by Biswatosh Sengupta



Colosseum, Italy by Biswatosh Sengupta

**Architectural / Heritage / Monuments / Anthropological / Tribal**

Architectural and heritage photography contributes to our understanding of history. Anthropological Photography helps to understand ethnic and tribal groups; their life and customs.



Tribal Queen by Benu Sen, India



Victoria Memorial Hall Kolkata by Biswarup Ganguly, India

**Scientific / News / Photo Journalism**

Huge numbers of journals contain an enormous number of photographs capturing a wide spectrum of life, flora and fauna, and environment, as well as social, political, cultural and literal events. No doubt these photographs help us to understand various issues regarding people of different countries. Photojournalism / News Photography cater to the need of the updated happenings of the events, incidents and news of the world through photographs. There are many News Agencies and many freelance and professional photojournalists who provide News photographs to foster understanding of happenings amongst people.



During Covid-19 by Ashim Paul, India



Mamata Banerjee, CM, West Bengal Celebrating Rabindra Jayanti by Swati Chakraborty, India

**Environmental Photography**

Environment is the most burning issue of the time and is widely discussed and debated. Environmental Photographs help to create awareness amongst people about global warming, ecological problems, biodiversity, pollution, water crisis, etc. and thereby international understanding of the global environmental situation.



After Amphan by Swati Chakraborty, India



A forest in the Eastern Himalayas by Dr.Sayan Bhattacharyya, India



**Creative Photography / International Salon**

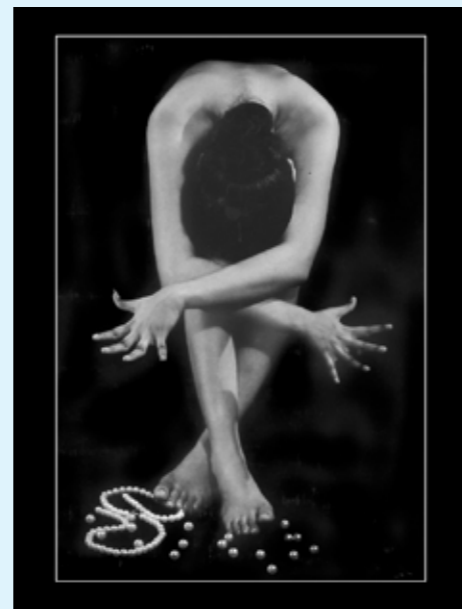
Photography can be a very powerful tool for creative expression. Creative photography principally finds its connoisseurs through salons, both national and international. International salons promote and propagate photography throughout the world and foster international fraternity. Salon is a French word which has long been used to refer to exhibitions by painters. Now we also use the word salons for a photographic exhibition. It is a wonderful platform for international understanding, providing opportunity to view works of various pictorialists under one roof. Salons help one understand and appreciate the various photographic developments going on throughout the world. Every year around 500 salons recognised by FIAP, and or PSA, are organised which cater for more than 9000 photographers from over 100 countries, who exhibit thousands of works.



Weather Snake by Ovi D Pop, Romania



Winter Light 2W by Dario Mario Simaz, Italy



Lost Horizon by Benu Sen, India



The Wizard by Kata Zih, Hungary



Rooted by Gautam Sen, India



Return Home by Partha Sarathi Sarkar, India



**Global Meets**

Apart from Salons, the International Photographic Conferences, Congress and global meets, organised by different Photographic organisations like FIAP, PSA and PAD here in India etc., also play a vital role in promoting international understanding. Since 1957, every year PSA recognises an accomplished living photographer, whose images have clearly contributed to the advancement of international understanding among people, with the "International Understanding Through Photography (IUTP)" award. Edward Steichen was the first recipient in 1957 and Clyde Butcher in 2019. Mr Butcher was also awarded Photographer Humanitarian of the year in 2005. A Memorandum of Understanding between FIAP and PSA was signed in September 2019 to foster a strong relationship of trust and mutual desire to formulate an agreement to work together for better universal understanding.



Mr Pollock, Past President of RPS with Dr A N Ganguly President of PAD



FIAP Secretary General presenting memento of the 11th International Photographic Conference to a Chinese Delegate



PADians with few other participants at Greek Photo-workshop organised by Hellenic PS under the leadership of Mr. Ioannis Lykouris, Secretary General, FIAP

**Social Network**

Social Networking is another startling avenue for global understanding using photographs, owing to an abundance of Mobile & Digital cameras. Now everyone can take snaps and many such images are uploaded to Facebook, Instagram etc. for circulation. However it serves as a means of great communication with others.

**United Nations**

The UN used to organise a number of photographic competitions on various topics for understanding the gravity of issues like Sustainable Development Goals, Empathy and Service to others, importance of the ocean and festivals, etc. UNESCO, the propagator of International Understanding for Human Unity (IUHU), also regularly conducts photographic competitions and exhibitions at different places on various themes.

**Conclusion**

In conclusion, let us hope that photography will go a long way to promote international understanding, fostering international brotherhood through the universal language of photography, understandable by one and all. Let photography bring peace, harmony, happiness and prosperity to the multitude - "Bahujana Hitaya Bahujana Sukhayacha".

**Acknowledgement**

I express my sincere gratitude and heartfelt thanks to those who helped me with this article and the photographers who kindly permitted the inclusion of their photos.