

STORIES THROUGH PHOTOGRAPHY: KNOWING HASAN CHANDAN

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In the last two decades, photography in our country has flourished and made a place for itself in the international area. Many photographers have contributed to this journey. One of them is Hasan Chandan. Known for his amazing work on Kamalapur Rail Station, this Dhaka based photographer has been appreciated by photography enthusiasts both home and abroad. His specialisation in fine art photography, visual journalism and documentary filmmaking has helped create a new path towards unconventional photography. Till now he has received various national and international awards including the FIAP gold and silver medal, grand prize in 11th Photo Contest in Asia and Pacific organised by Asian Cultural Centre for UNESCO, Nikon Annual third prize and honourable mention, etc. Hasan Chandan is also one of the founding members of MAP Photo Agency.

Though born in Noakhali, Hasan Chandan spent his early childhood in Kaptai. His curiosity towards photography had generated at that stage. "I was very curious about gadgets and electronics. That curiosity drove me towards my father's camera," says Hasan Chandan. Mesmerised by the 6 by 6 photo paper,



Hasan Chandan

PHOTO: COURTESY

the general was crying. Seeing that, the 10-year-old me ran to get the camera and shot every bit of it. It's a sorrow that the films were lost otherwise this would have been a historical documentation."

Up until the 1980's, photography was just an interest for Hasan Chandan, much like his interest in jazz drumming and badminton. "While studying in Notre Dame College, I faced a challenge as for a period of time I couldn't write," says Chandan. Due to this situation Chandan dropped out of college and joined his uncle's shop outside of Dhaka, in Jamalpur.

One day, while buying chocolates for

courses there and his journey towards photography finally took its course.

Hasan Chandan soon established himself as an unconventional photographer in the photography society. His use of patterns and zone selection stood out of thousands. "I think this was a result of my reading habit. I read tons of books on art, realistic photography, conceptual photography, Dadaism, surrealism etc. This knowledge still helps me when I shoot." Throughout 1984-92, Hasan Chandan won eight National Photo Contest awards. He was also the youngest jury member of the 1986 National Photo Contest.

the shop, Hasan Chandan came across a photography wholesale shop outside of town, which took him down memory lane. "Nostalgia struck. I bought a pack of films, borrowed my uncle's camera and went straight back to Jamalpur," says Chandan. While developing the photos in the famous *Chitrallekha* studio, he learnt about developing. "They showed me how to enlarge and how to develop and immediately I created my own dark room at home." While this was happening, Hasan Chandan came across an announcement to submit photographs for the National Photography Competition.

"I immediately decided to submit one of my photos. A relative of mine had a studio in Ghatail and I gave it to him to make it into a 10:12 size but he didn't give me the picture back. After a while I even forgot about it." After three months Chandan saw his photograph being exhibited in his relative's name in the national exhibition. "I talked to a lot of people in BPS (Bangladesh Photography Society) about this incident, where I met Manzoor Alam Beg and was introduced to the Begart Institute of Photography." Chandan enrolled himself to one of the

In 1989 through photographer Peter Fryer's assignment, Hasan Chandan began his famous work on Kamalapur Rail Station. His work later came out as a book named, 'The People of Kamalapur Rail Station' and also took him to Switzerland for a solo exhibition. "This work was very much inspired by Raghu Rai's book 'Taj Mahal'," says Chandan. "Though I wanted to work on Kamalapur for ten years, after the exhibition in Switzerland I never continued." This work of his showcases how he used patterns in the everyday life of that area. At that time, Hasan Chandan was one of the first ones to implement this technique and Kamalapur, much like Panam City or Shadar Ghat soon became one of most popular hubs for photographers.

Through time has come to be known as one of the most prominent and eccentric photographers of our country. People who are close to him know how his life circles around his photography. "To me, photography is a life style," says Chandan. "There are people who do it for the prizes, but doing it for your own soul pays off more than the awards."

ENVIRONMENT



Climate change is the harsh reality of today, and its impacts are undeniable for nations such as ours. Global warming is leading to unprecedented rise in sea level, and for a low lying nation like Bangladesh, that means widespread inundation. Changing weather patterns are also wreaking havoc on agricultural production which is dependent on regular patterns of rainfall, heat and cold. Frequency and intensity of droughts, floods and cyclones are on the rise. And millions of hapless victims are finding themselves in dire straits.

Bangladesh contributes very little to global warming – its emissions being less than 0.35% of the global total. But as countries around the globe continue to emit millions of tons of carbon, the impacts of climate change will keep worsening for Bangladesh. It was labeled as the most climate vulnerable nation according to the Climate Change Vulnerability Index (CCVI-2011), which calculated the vulnerability of 170 countries to the impacts of climate change over the next 30 years. According to the Asian Development Bank's estimates, climate change may cost Bangladesh a 2% loss of GDP annually by 2050.

The impacts of climate change that vulnerable nations such as Bangladesh are experiencing today are primarily the results of historic emissions by developed nations during their path to development, but paying the blame game will get us nowhere. Making a stand against climate change today

LEADING THE CLIMATE CHANGE RESISTANCE

SOHARA MEHROZE SHACHI

PHOTOS: DIN M SHIBLY

requires concerted effort by all states. Recognising this need for global action, developing and developed countries have made public pledges known as Intended Nationally Determined Contributions (INDCs) to fight climate change at their national level, in the largest international climate conference-COP 21- last year. As Bangladesh's emissions are minimal and adaptation needs are extensive, the most important element of Bangladesh's INDCs is the support the country needs or will provide to aid the vulnerable populace adapt to climatic impacts. In order to so, Bangladesh is not only prioritising adaptation measures that aid mitigation, but is also aiming to minimise the carbon footprint of adaptation interventions. To make sure

its INDCs are implemented, the country has undertaken commendable policies and interventions. Bangladesh submitted its revised National Adaptation Programme of Action in 2009 and was the first country to develop a Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan – a coordinated plan of action for combating climate change. Moreover, the country has prepared a roadmap for a comprehensive National Adaptation Plan (NAP), with the aim of facilitating the integration of climate change adaptation into national policies, development planning processes and strategies.

The Bangladesh government has invested over \$10 billion over the last thirty years to increase climate change and disaster resilience, and allocates 6-7 per cent of its annual budget (around \$1 billion) for adaptation. The government has established the Bangladesh Climate Change Resilience Fund (BCCRF) with support from international development organisations and the Bangladesh Trust Fund (BCCTF) using \$400 million of its

own money. The BCCTF has funded over 230 local adaptation projects so far, which include construction of cyclone resilient housing, sluice gates, waste management and drainage infrastructure, excavation of canals, introduction and dissemination of drought tolerant seeds, installation of solar panels and afforestation.

As recognition of the efforts to fight climate change, and the vision to turn Bangladesh into a developed nation by 2041 through implementing environmentally aware policies, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina received the United Nation's Champion of the Earth award last year.

"Through a number of forward-looking policy initiatives and investments, Bangladesh has placed confronting the challenge of climate change at the core of its development," said UNEP Executive Director Achim Steiner. "As an early adopter and advocate of climate change adaptation policy, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina continues to be an example to follow."

Through its innovative policies and proactive measures to implement its INDCs, Bangladesh is leading the path for climate change adaptation for vulnerable developing nations. But no level of adaptation will be enough in the long run unless greenhouse gas emissions are reduced significantly, as developed nations have pledged. Now it is time for them to turn their promises to actions, and build a global resistance to prevent catastrophic climate change in a last stand to save Mother Earth.

The writer is a climate tracker youth fellow and development professional based in Bangladesh.

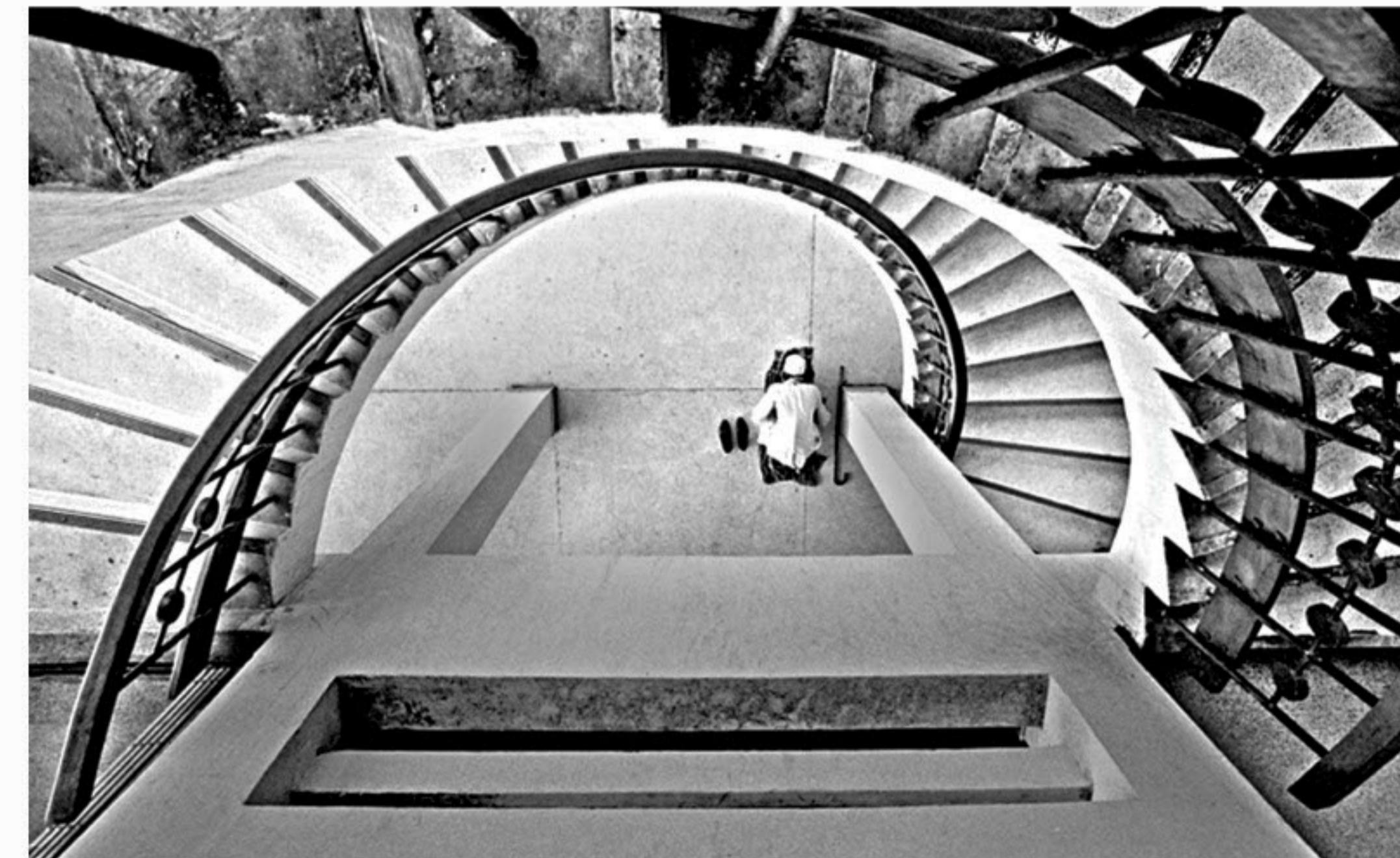


PHOTO: HASSAN CHANDAN

Hasan Chandan borrowed his father's camera and took his first pictures at the age of seven. "After my father showed me the basics and gave me a reel to shoot, I shot my heart out. I remember I took mostly landscapes at that time."

In 1971 Hasan Chandan and his family

were struck with tragedy when his father was killed by the Pakistani army. This incident began his documentary photography. "After my father's death, the Pakistani army came to my mother to show their condolences. They told us it was a mishap." He also adds, "I remember