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ARTIST STATEMENT

When you bring a fish to a new fish tank, it learns to coexist with different kinds of fish, animals, and plants, it changes itself by consciously developing new habits and behaviors; the more it tries the more creative it becomes. I use this analogy to explain my experience of moving from India to America at a young age. Performance within my art has been a way to express the mediation of the two cultures I live in. I use photography as a means to distill my experiences in a frame that becomes much like a page in a diary. I create an imaginative participation vs. physical participation, allowing my audience to recreate the space and time of the 'original' performance.

It seems that the desire to dress up and act as the other has always been present with me. As a pre-teen, I spent a lot of time watching and emulating Bollywood cinema. Such practice and play with performance provided avenues for creative expression in the business of becoming an American. With plenty of challenges, it allowed me the positive, enthusiastic, and slightly mischievous sense of creative confidence.

At age 24, I pictured myself as a young Indian housewife, roaming about, completing the tasks of the day. Who is she and why did she appear at that time and place in my life? In the process of reinventing myself, I wonder about what I left behind. I construct images that release my subconscious. Simultaneously I perform as if I am being watched. The awareness of that gaze is what consumes my photographs with the performative gestures. I find myself being imagined and re-imagined by none other than myself. For example, my current body of work assumes the personae of an English Memsahib, who lived during the time of the British occupation in India. As a displaced character of India's most prominent historical period, I collect the evidence of my hypothetical existence in order to decode the Hindi remark "The English left, but left you behind."

I believe that art, if not to change the world, definitely has the ability to leave a lasting affect on the mind of its viewer. Issues addressed in my work are not necessarily as simple as they seem: I allude to changing culture, religion, and traditions in the Indian American society. Unlike reconstructing and re-mythologizing the "other," I am rearticulating and reinterpreting myself. The gaze, particularly between society and the individual is what drives my work. The way we view ourselves is inextricably tied to the way we perceive how society views us, but the way I view myself is what society *does not* see. Improvisation and play are at the core of all my work. There is something naïve and spontaneous about my acquaintance with pleasure, pain, and contemplation.