



A FILM BY ANDREW GARTON

OCEAN IN A DROP

BROADBAND IMPACTS ON RURAL INDIA



OCEAN IN A DROP

SYNOPSIS

India's invisible majority are poor yet literate in their own traditions and increasingly online. *Ocean in a Drop* is a film about these emergent online populations told by rural women and children, artisans and entrepreneurs.

Ocean in a Drop describes the impact the internet is having on India's rural & tribal communities; a silent revolution. Governments aren't being overthrown, something more enduring and subtle is emerging. *Ocean in a Drop* is a film about the entrepreneurs, community leaders, youth and children who are making this happen - India's own internet avant-garde.

These include the stories of folk musicians who have found refuge for their traditions online, children diluting caste discrimination in community information centres, young women transcending child marriage and women standing up to exploitative employers and abusive husbands since gathering around a single laptop and a government website.

Ocean in a Drop is a window into the lives of these ordinary people, many of them in villages where the web, Google and Facebook have arrived well before anyone has laid eyes on television.

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Duration: 73 minutes / **Aspect ratio:** 16:9 / **Sound:** Stereo
Screening formats: DCP 24fps, DNX, HQX 1080p 24fps , H.264, 1080p

A CO-PRODUCTION

Ocean in a Drop is an Australian and Indian co-production between Andrew Garton's Secession/Films and the New Delhi-based INOMY Media and the Digital Empowerment Foundation. *Ocean in a Drop* was produced with the support of the Internet Society, the Australia India Institute, Indiegogo and the Association for Progressive Communications.

CONTEXT

India is a country divided. Seventy percent of its population, its invisible majority, is based in vast rural areas where telecommunications infrastructure is patchy to non-existent. And yet India is considered to host the second largest Facebook population in the world. All up only 200 million out of India's total population of 1.2 billion are considered to be digitally literate - having access to either a phone or the internet.

The Digital Empowerment Foundation (DEF) seeks to bring one billion of India's rural population online by 2020. How can rural communities adapt communication technologies to their own needs, to their own culture, in their own language? *Ocean in a Drop* enquires into the challenges and unforeseen consequences of the Foundation's ambitions.

KEY POINTS

Ocean in a Drop received its international premiere at the Chennai International Film Festival, 16 December 2017 with the support of the Australian High Commission. Watch *Ocean in a Drop* via Video on Demand on vimeo.com.

A companion book, *The Right to Know - India's internet avant garde*, was launched in Dehli on 16 December 2017 with the support of the Australian High Commission.

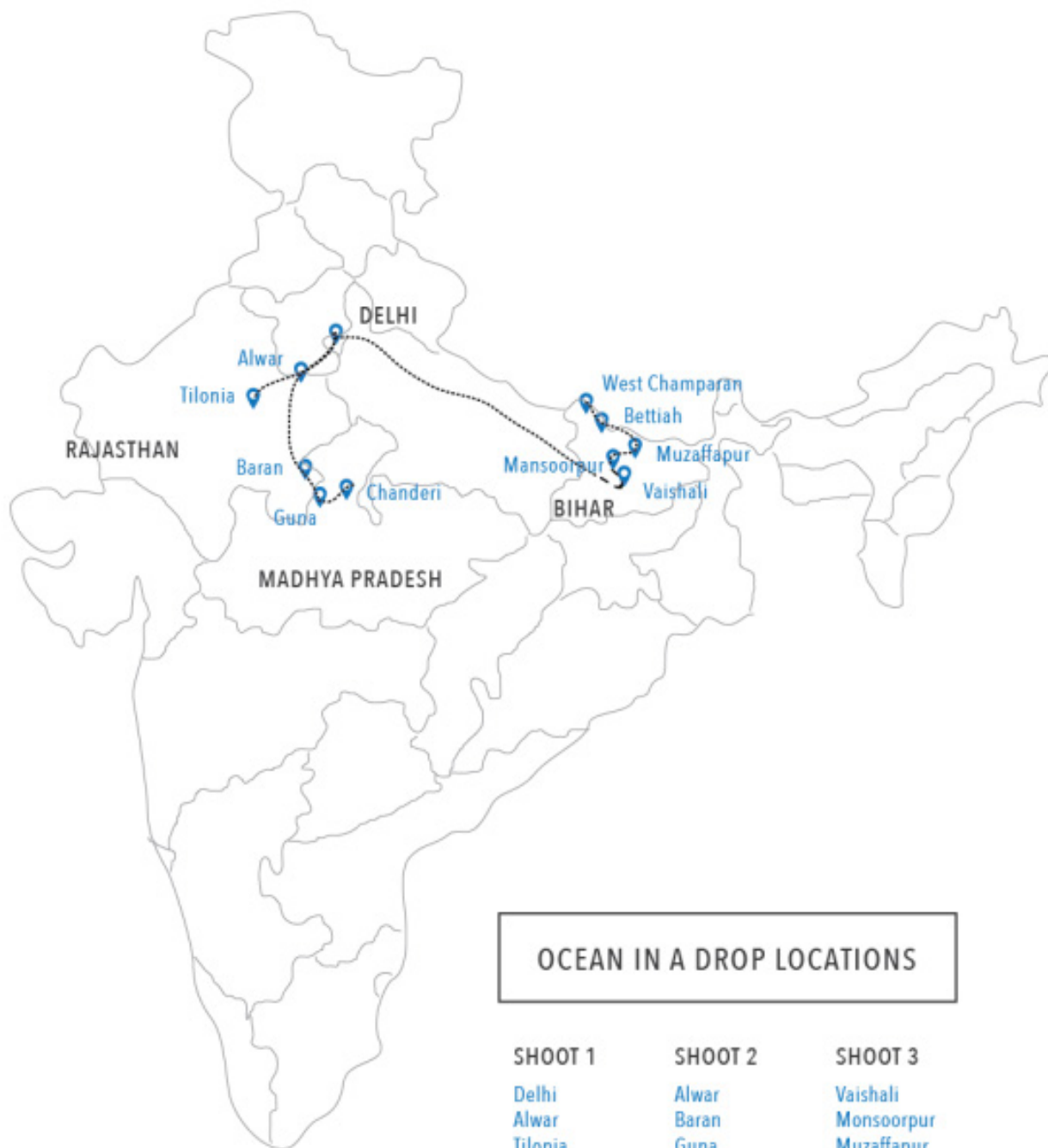
Published by the Digital Empowerment Foundation and the Australia India Institute, *Right to Know* is hand-bound and printed on hand-made elephant dung paper.

Ocean in a Drop was funded by the New Delhi based INOMY Media. Post-production was funded through an Indiegogo crowd funding campaign with additional financial support from the Australia India Institute and the Association for Progressive Communications.

Ocean in a Drop was filmed in fourteen villages throughout nine districts across Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh and Bihar. The local and international crew saw more of India than most will see in their life-times.

A unique soundtrack album has been released and is comprised of soundscapes, field recordings, original and traditional music. Available on bandcamp.com.





OCEAN IN A DROP LOCATIONS

SHOOT 1

Delhi
Alwar
Tilonia

SHOOT 2

Alwar
Baran
Guna
Chanderi

SHOOT 3

Vaishali
Monsoorpur
Muzaffapur
Bettiah
West Champaran



DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

In 1994 I co-wrote the *PAN Asia Network Report*, the first published study on the extent to which a pre-web internet had grown throughout South-east Asia, South Asia and Indo-China. Over three months my co-researchers and I visited universities, telecommunications facilities, news gathering centres and non-government organisations. We were also encouraged to where ever feasible to announce and demonstrate the attributes of the yet to blossom world wide web.

We found that the most publicly accessible of computer networks were cobbled together by former engineers, volunteer coders, human rights workers, environmentalists, labour union organisers and entrepreneurial funders. This saw the emergence of a new breed of activist advocating for public and secure access to information and communication technologies. Their goal was to connect like minded social networks to each other so that their public reach increased.

Twenty years later plans to make a film about the impact the internet is having on rural and tribal communities in India took shape. By January 2015 the first of four shoots was underway. I would find very similar stories, the same challenges and expectations as those I had encountered in 1994, with the same kinds of people organising local and regional networks with like-minded entrepreneurial funders backing their initiatives. Information and communication activists emerged from these rural villages too, enabling access to government initiatives and entitlements via the web, the only means by which much of these resources are now available. There was one major difference though. These were villagers who had leapfrogged radio and television, finding themselves face to face with Google, Wikipedia, Facebook, myriad integrated text messaging services and the world's vast store of websites.

By the end of 1994, 2,738 websites had appeared online. By 2015, on arriving in India, 863,105,652 websites and just over one billion videos were available to one and all, including newcomers to the internet. What would India's rural communities make of all this information and how would they find anything meaningful there? What would be the consequences, the ripple effects within a single person, their friends and families, or an entire village given the sudden appearance of internet connected computers at their disposal?

These were some of the questions I asked throughout *Ocean in a Drop* and in many ways, not that different to those I had asked in 1994. However, one significant achievement of the internet since is how it has become the largest, most unique, most far-reaching and instantaneous gathering of us ever! It's in our pockets, alerting us to global and local events the moment they happen.

This is the world – the torrent of it – its wild diversity and uncertainty, its spontaneity, its Wikipedias of the informed and the opinionated. What will India's internet newcomers make of the world they find there and how will we welcome them?

We visited 14 villages located in nine districts in Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh and Bihar. We travelled across highways reduced to rubble, mud, sand and surfaces, so uneven that large vehicles were seen toppled and abandoned on the roadside. We took trains to get to the furthestmost locations, amazed that we could lug cameras, lights, tripods jammed into every available space within our sleeper compartment.

It takes great determination to get to these remote communities and even more to install communication towers, computer centres and the training that follows. We returned with over one hundred interviews – visiting, analysing, filming and experiencing what UNESCO describes as the media dark – regions of the world where little to no information and communication technologies have reached.

In 1963 Nina Simone penned the lyric, *I wish you could know what it means to be me*. The question I ask now, as we stand on the precipice of catastrophes and miracles the world over; reflecting on all whom I had met in India and the stories we share in *Ocean in a Drop*, is *I wish we could know what it means to be us?*

Andrew Garton



REVIEWS / FEEDBACK

To know Andrew is to know compassion, a someone who can make you feel, something one never forgets with his child-like curiosity. This venture of his another masterpiece where he shows the change in human society the internet is causing.

- **MISHI CHOUDHARY** (Legal Director, Software Freedom Law Centre)

The women are stunning, beautiful and have so much dignity, it's hard to hear about the way they are treated and "classified" in some of the tribes. And it gives you hope they will come out on the other end. The family preserving traditional music are so beautifully portrayed.

- **MONIKA WUNDERER JOUVERT** (NY, USA)

So well filmed and with compassionate characters... Overall, the segments had a lovely feel and look about them, and I liked the low-key way the stories and information is revealed. Great stuff.

- **LESLEY BRANAGAN** (INDIA)

I have never imagine that India have such amazing people that talks heart to heart about removing racism, casteism and gender inequalities. It is amazing to see Indian guy speakers in the video embracing the thought of supporting women's role in India and also to promote equality and harmony by taking away the barriers of race and chaste, while focusing on real work and intelligence.

- **MINDY WONG** (MELBOURNE, AUSTRALIA)

This superbly produced and visually rich documentary explores the impact of broadband internet on remote communities in India. Against the challenges of geography, economics and infrastructure, broadband internet is slowly reaching communities, changing social structures, empowering women and children, and showcasing the unique heritage and culture of isolated Indian communities to the world.

- **SANDHYA BURTON** (Curator, WordFest, AUSTRALIA)



CREW

Andrew Garton - Writer, Director, Editor

Andrew's work spans the genres of non-fiction film-making, short-format documentary, non-linear radio documentary drama, projected video and sound installations. He is a producer, writer and director at Secession Films and Adjunct Industry Fellow, Communications and Media, Swinburne University. Andrew had been the inaugural Program Director at Open Channel and Operations Manager at EngageMedia; former Creative Producer with City of Melbourne and Creative Director and co-founder of Toy Satellite. He is currently completing his next film *Forged from Fire - the making of the Blacksmiths' Tree*.



Jary Nemo - Director of Photography

Jary Nemo is Co-Director of Wind & Sky Productions, an independent production company specialising in short form documentary. Jary has worked in the entertainment and media industry for more than 30 years. He has a history in music, theatre, documentary, animation and multimedia delivery. His roles have included Lighting Designer for live theatre, Rostrum Camera Operator for Hanna-Barbera delivering animation domestically and internationally for both broadcast and theatrical release.



Rohit Dhall - Line Producer, 2nd Unit

Rohit works as a producer, camera-man, editor and Assistant Director. He also provides training to grassroots organisations including community radio, NGOs and individuals with social media tools. Rohit is a graduate in BBA from Asian Institute of Management and Studies (Rohini) and he has completed the multimedia and mass communication course from Arena Institute (New Delhi). He is the founding director of Stopblockframes.com



Cathy Chen - Directors Assistant, Designer

Born in Taiwan and grew up in Canada, Cathy is passionate about using design thinking and practice to empower socially and cognitively differently-abled groups. She found herself interning for Digital Empowerment Foundation (DEF) in 2013 via her Master's degree program at OCAD University in Toronto, Canada. There, she studied to obtain a Master of Design in Digital Futures, a cross disciplinary program that encourages research and practice relating to digital media and its emergent developments. Cathy lives between Berlin and Dehli working as Senior Designer for the Association for Progressive Communications.





Mubeen Siddiqui - Videographer

Born in Dammam (Saudi Arabia) and raised in Hyderabad (India), Mubeen Siddiqui is a visual researcher, photographer, a wanderer and a storyteller currently based in New Delhi. He holds an MA Photojournalism degree from University of Westminster, London; and a bachelor's in Mass Communication & Journalism from Osmania University, Hyderabad. For his MA's major project, Mubeen went on nocturnal wanderings in the city to create a photo series documenting the life on streets of London after dark.



Udita Chaturvedi - Proof-reader, translations and subtitles

A former print journalist, Udita Chaturvedi is now a changemaker and storyteller at DEF, contributing towards enabling better access to rights for the masses as a Senior Officer (Communication & Media). With a passion for development and a flair for writing — besides her love for books, music, movies, sitcoms and travelling — Udita takes care of DEF's editorial content. She also frequently travels to the project sites across the country, to find stories of social and behavioural change, with a focus on women, children, health and education.



Ravi Guria - Translator, subtitles

Ravi Guria is a Media person, Social Media Enthusiast, Photographer, Filmmaker, Scriptwriter and Explorer with over 15 years of experience. Currently, he heads the Media, Communication and Design department at Digital Empowerment Foundation. He is using Media & Communication to address knowledge gap at the grassroots level. He loves travelling that gives him opportunity discover new places and meet new people he can learn from.



CREDITS

WRITER/DIRECTOR/EDITOR Andrew Garton
DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY..... Jary Nemo
LINE PRODUCER, 2ND UNIT CAMERA Rohit Dhall
ADDITIONAL CAMERAS Mubeen Siddique, Andrew Garton, Ravi Guria, Arun
LIGHTING, CAMERA ASSISTANT Arun
DIRECTOR'S ASSISTANT Cathy Chen

FOLK MUSIC FIELD RECORDINGS Shweta Roa courtesy of Khamayati
ORIGINAL MUSIC & SOUND DESIGN Andrew Garton

MUSIC *Aage Aage Kotal Ghodlo* performed by Langa and Manganiar Children - Deene Khan, Jhoote Khan, Khete Khan, Dilip Khan, Azhrudding Khan, Shobat Khan, Devu Khan, Nalemittha Khan and Anwar Khan Manganiar. *Alfat Inbin Unbin* performed by Manganiar Children - Latif, Hanif, Niyaz and Chillar Barmer. *Rajasthan Ambabadi Re* performed by manganiar children Dine, Jhutha, Khete, Dilip, Devu Khan and Anwar Khan Manganiar (Jhampli). *Raane Ka Raag* performed by Sawan Khan. *Langa Gurr-Ghoron Ki Dhun* performed by Sawan Khan Langa. *Khamayati Raag* performed by Shri Anwar Khan. *Manganiar Murli* performed by Pepe Khan (Murli) and Azad (Khartal). *Raane Ka Raag* performed by Sawan Khan Langa. vTraditional songs by Umar Khan performed by the Khan family.

PHOTOGRAPHERS Mubeen Siddiqui, Cathy Chen

INTERVIEWER Andrew Garton
ADDITIONAL INTERVIEWS Mubeen Siddiqui, Rohit Dhall

ON LOCATION TRANSLATOR Ravi Guria
TRANSLATION AND SUBTITLING Mubeen Siddiqui, Udit Chaturvedi, Ravi Guria
TRANSCRIPTIONS Cathy Chen
COPY PROOFING AND EDITING Lini Kane, Udit Chaturvedi

TRANSLATORS Ambar Afaq, Avesta Choudhary, Vahid Choudhary, Rucha Deshpande, Mayank Dev, Gayatri Handique, Neena Jha, Rajat Kumar, Abu Maroof, Namita Monga Rao, Saba Pandey, Sachin Ralhan, Deepshika Sharma, Pritam Sinha, Amarendra Srivastava, Rohit Dhall, Shipra Srivastava, Pawas Suren

TITLE DESIGN & GRAPHICS Cathy Chen

FINANCE & ADMINISTRATION Auspicious Arts

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IN ASSOCIATION WITH Internet Society, Australia India Institute, and Association for Progressive Communications with the support of Indiegogo.

Seccession/Films ⇌





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