

Ritika Kaushik

Indians from 1967: A Reaction

2023

<https://doi.org/10.25969/mediarep/19741>

Veröffentlichungsversion / published version
Zeitschriftenartikel / journal article

Empfohlene Zitierung / Suggested Citation:

Kaushik, Ritika: Indians from 1967: A Reaction. In: *NECSUS_European Journal of Media Studies*. #Ports, Jg. 12 (2023), Nr. 1, S. 290–292. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.25969/mediarep/19741>.

Erstmalig hier erschienen / Initial publication here:

<https://necsus-ejms.org/indians-from-1967-a-reaction/>

Nutzungsbedingungen:

Dieser Text wird unter einer Creative Commons - Namensnennung - Nicht kommerziell - Keine Bearbeitungen 4.0/ Lizenz zur Verfügung gestellt. Nähere Auskünfte zu dieser Lizenz finden Sie hier:

<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/>

Terms of use:

This document is made available under a creative commons - Attribution - Non Commercial - No Derivatives 4.0/ License. For more information see:

<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/>

Indians from 1967: A Reaction

Ritika Kaushik

NECSUS 12 (1), Spring 2023: 290–292

URL: <https://necsus-ejms.org/indians-from-1967-a-reaction/>

Keywords

audiovisual essay, av essay, desktop documentary



<https://vimeo.com/814097498>

This video essay is a critical and self-reflexive reaction to the digital afterlife of the government film *I am 20* (1967), made by experimental filmmaker S.N.S. Sastry, who worked for India's primary state institution of documentary filmmaking – Films Division of India (FD). The film was commissioned for the twentieth anniversary of India's independence, and Sastry interviewed young people who were born in the year 1947 and shared their birthdays with the Indian nation. The interviewees voice their hopes and dreams as well as disillusionments with India's promised progress. Made

at a time of intense experimentation within FD, *I am 20* is one of the most important state-sponsored documentaries from India. Curiously, it is also a rare FD film that has found itself in multiple viral moments on social media, after its digitisation and [uploading on FD's YouTube channel](#) a decade ago.

This video essay begins three years ago, when the YouTube channel 'India in Pixels' by Ashris made '[Indians from 1967 talk about the future](#)' by re-editing and colorising *I am 20* and cutting it down to a shorter version, more focused on the interviews. After watching the re-edited video and its virality (as it featured on Reddit threads and inspired a steady stream of reaction videos), I began to wonder whether the digital afterlife of *I am 20* through 'Indians from 1967' may take us away from a nuanced understanding of the nation's past and its history of filmmaking. My interest deepened further when I watched another recent video by 'India in Pixels' called '[Where are they now? Indians from 1967](#)', which showed Ashris' search for the actual people who were interviewed in *I am 20* (as the film did not feature the names of the interviewees in its credits). The past and the present collide in 'Where are they Now?', as we see the faces of the 1967 protagonists of *I am 20* in parallel with images of who they are now or could have been, giving breath to a speculative 'I am 76' in 2023. I could not help but wonder if something also got activated in the film's free online circulation and its easy manipulation as a digital file.

This desktop documentary works through these conflicting questions and my own puzzlement with the two videos by 'India in Pixels' on *I am 20*, as well as the reaction videos made in response to them. The first part of this desktop documentary, 'reaction', trudges through an elusive loss steeped in an acute sense of film history. The second part turns self-reflexive, owing to a humbling wonderment in the face of the unending afterlives and perpetually new audiences of *I am 20*. I present this critical reaction as a formal and introspective attempt to comprehend what it means to watch and react to these 'midnight's grownups' born in 1947 and where they are now.

Author

Ritika Kaushik is a film historian and video essayist with a focus on the study of documentary cinema and South Asian cinema. She is currently a

Postdoctoral Research Scholar in the Research Training Group 'Configurations of Film' at Goethe University, Frankfurt. She received her PhD in Cinema and Media Studies from the University of Chicago. Her academic research focuses on the history, aesthetics, infrastructures, archives, and afterlives of state-sponsored documentaries in India. She has worked as a Research Associate at the Sarai Program, Center for the Study of Developing Societies, and holds an M.Phil. in Cinema Studies from Jawaharlal Nehru University in New Delhi. Her practice-based research is rooted in her training and experiences in filmmaking, which in addition to her own projects include her work as assistant director on a major Hindi feature film. She is currently an elected member of the Governing Council of Visible Evidence, an international community of scholars and practitioners of documentary film and nonfiction media. Her writings have appeared in *Bioscope: South Asian Screen Studies* and *Economic and Political Weekly*.