Pawan Sharma

Curriculum Vitae

Minneapolis–Saint Paul, Minnesota | sharm684@umn.edu | pawansharma.co

Creative practice and teaching: Documentary film; photography; exhibition design; spatial storytelling; digital narratives; media ethnography; migration and public space.

Education

2019–present | PhD Candidate, Asian Literature, Culture, and Media

University of Minnesota, Twin Cities. Expected completion: Spring 2027.
Dissertation: Infrastructures of Vision: Emergent Media Ecologies in Provincial India.
Advisor: Suvadip Sinha.

2024 | MA, Asian Literatures, Cultures and Media

University of Minnesota, Twin Cities. Conferred March 29, 2024.

2017–2018 | Graduate Exchange Student, Film and Media

The New School, New York

2016–2018 | MA, Society and Culture

Indian Institute of Technology Gandhinagar

2011–2014 | BA (Honors), English Literature

Ambedkar University Delhi

Selected Creative Work

2018–2021 | Immigrant Faces of New York

Photographer. Series exhibited at The New School, New York (2018), Coffman Art Gallery, Minnesota (2020), and in Amsterdam (2021). QR codes connected photographs to 3D demonstrations of public spaces and accompanying stories about occupation, visibility, and belonging.

2021 | Moving Tracts Cuisines Cultures Communities from South Asia

Artist, researcher, and exhibition designer. Photography, objects, installations, and QR-linked digital narratives, Coffman Art Gallery, October 7–November 28, 2021. Art direction and curation: Rituparna Rana.

In progress | Cinema Ruins

Co-director. Documentary on the decline and afterlives of single-screen cinemas in India; in post-production. Related story map organizes cinema sites spatially. The portfolio includes a separately sourced public research atlas.

2025–2026 | Extraordinary Elsewhere

Director. Documentary following nine immigrant artists in Minnesota; Rochester Art Center, June 7, 2025–April 26, 2026. Interviews: Rituparna Rana. Exhibition curator: Zoe Cinel.

2023–2024 | Sound Stories

Audiovisual production and documentation for Sound Stories: Activating Community Voices in a Collaboratory, Liberal Arts Engagement Hub, University of Minnesota. Project creators: Ritika Ganguly, Zoe Cinel, and Nida Sajid.

2022 | Visual Narratives Maji Ya Chai

Media documentation for a Black-led, nature-based healing space in Minnesota.

2019 | Migration Echoes Material Memories

Exhibition work, Amsterdam. Photography and material memory.

2017 | Qissa e Manto

Dastangoi performer. Storytelling based on Saadat Hasan Manto; documented performance at Conflictorium, Ahmedabad, October 14, 2017, presented with Meraki theatre group.

2017–2018 | Documentary projects at IIT Gandhinagar and in the Gir Forest region

Collaborative films made with an Indigenous community for the Forest Department; society, environment, and community knowledge.

2016 | Be the Change

Collaborative film with IIT Gandhinagar and Sabarmati Ashram; certificate of excellence from the Information and Broadcasting Ministry and NFDC.

The Impure Redemption

Malwi-language short film made with people from my home region.

Teaching Experience

Instructor and adjunct appointments

Spring 2026 | Digital Cultures and Storytelling

Instructor of Record and Course Designer, Asian and Middle Eastern Studies, University of Minnesota. Designed the syllabus and assignments connecting visual analysis, mobile photography, video editing, digital archives, and critical writing.

Fall 2024 | Knowledge, Power, and the Politics of Representation in Global Studies

Instructor of Record, Institute for Global Studies, University of Minnesota.

Fall 2020 | Hindi/Urdu: Beginner and Intermediate

Instructor, Asian and Middle Eastern Studies, University of Minnesota.

2018–2019 | Photography and Curatorial Practices

Adjunct Faculty, National Institute of Design, Gandhinagar.

Teaching assistantships

Spring 2023 and Spring 2022. Korean Film and Media, University of Minnesota.

Fall 2025 and Fall 2022. Asian Film and Animation, University of Minnesota.

Fall 2021. Arrow, Fist, and Sword: Conceptions of the Hero in Asian Cultures, University of Minnesota.

Spring 2021. Environment, Technology and Culture in Modern Japan, University of Minnesota.

2017–2018. Photography (Analogue and Digital), Parsons School of Design, The New School.

Research Profile

Ethnographic research on cinema exhibition, informal distribution, and regional production in provincial India. Two years of fieldwork connect changes in moving-image infrastructure to creative labor, caste, and regional-language media. Documentary filmmaking and visual analysis form part of this inquiry. A developing book project extends the research to AI-assisted production in small studios. A documentary in development forms part of the dissertation.

Publications and Manuscripts

Forthcoming publications

Sharma, Pawan. “The Unarchived Counterpublic: Algorithmic Visibility, Caste, and the Double Erasure of India’s TikTok.” Media, Technology and Governance. Forthcoming.

Sharma, Pawan. “Circulating Politics: Digital Media and the Making of Political Subjectivities in Provincial India.” In Digital Leisure and the Work of Nation Building, edited by Prerna Subramaniam and Kanu Parikshit. Oxford India. Forthcoming November 2026.

Article manuscripts

“The Logics of Visibility: Improvisational Labor and Algorithmic Hacking in India’s Provincial Digital Spaces.” Manuscript in preparation for journal submission.

“The Seasons Are Becoming Homeless: Climate Change and the Lost Seasonal Vocabulary of the Hindi Film Song.” Under review, BioScope.

Conference abstract

Sharma, Pawan. “Algorithmic Visibility and the Subaltern: Examining TikTok’s Ban and Its Impact on Marginalised Creators in India.” Pramana Research Conference Compendium, 2025. Conference abstract.

Grants, Fellowships, and Awards

External support

2024–2025. Dissertation Fieldwork Grant, Wenner-Gren Foundation.

2023. Humanities Without Walls Fellow, University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign and University of Minnesota.

2020–2022. AAS–SSRC Dissertation Workshop Grant, Association for Asian Studies and Social Science Research Council.

2018. Shastri Indo-Canadian Research Fellowship, University of Alberta.

University fellowships and project awards

2026–2027. Shohara Mathur Graduate School Fellowship, University of Minnesota.

2024–2025. CLA Doctoral Dissertation Fellowship, University of Minnesota.

2023–2024. Harold Leonard Memorial Fellowship in Film Study, University of Minnesota.

2023–2024. Summer Dissertation Writing Award, RIDGS, University of Minnesota.

2022. Human in the Data Fellowship, Institute for Advanced Study, University of Minnesota.

2020–2025. Research and Creative Collaborative Grant, Memory, Movement, Montage, Institute for Advanced Study, University of Minnesota.

2020. Sustainable Development Goals Rapid Response Grant, GPS Alliance, University of Minnesota.

2018. India Explorer Fellowship, Indian Institute of Technology Gandhinagar.

2017. Graduate Exchange Student Award, The New School and IIT Gandhinagar.

Conference Activity

Panel organization and chairing

Organizer, chair, and presenter. “Creative (In)Visibilities: Ethnographies of Labor from Production to Platform.” International Communication Association Annual Conference, Denver, 2025.

Chair. “On/Behind the Screen: Ethnographies of Labor in Creative Media Production.” Society for Cinema and Media Studies Annual Conference, Chicago, 2025.

Selected papers

Scheduled for October 31, 2026. “Circulating Politics: Digital Media and the Making of Political Subjectivities in Provincial India.” 54th Annual Conference on South Asia, Madison.

2025. “The Logics of Visibility: Improvised Labor in India’s Provincial Digital Spaces.” International Communication Association Annual Conference, Denver, and Society for Cinema and Media Studies Annual Conference, Chicago.

2024. “Horror Subsumed within the Ridiculous: Stree, a Narrative of Inversion of Gender Roles and Spatial Representation.” Society for Cinema and Media Studies Annual Conference, Boston.

2019. “Language Dynamics and Authenticating Spaces in Small-Town Hindi Cinema.” Region/Nation/Trans-Nation: Literature–Cinema Interface, BITS Pilani, K. K. Birla Goa Campus.

2019. “Masculinity and Sexuality in Small-Town-Based Popular Hindi Films.” International Conference on Feminist and Gender Studies, Pondicherry.

2018. “Expressions of the North: Free Speech, Censorship, and Protest in India and Canada.” IITRAM.

Invited Talks and Workshops

2022. “Cinema Crossroads: Understanding Migration Through Film.” Asian Art Lecture Series, Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin.

2022. Exhibition talk, South-Asian Migrant Identity: Narratives, Spaces and Constructs. Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin.

2021. Photography and Visual Media Arts. South Asian Hindi-Urdu Summer Program, University of Minnesota.

2019. “Material Memory and Migration through Visual Arts.” University of Minnesota.

2019. “Understanding Cinema.” Guest lecture, Ambedkar University Delhi.

2019. Week-long Film and Media Workshop. Gandhi Ashram at Sabarmati and IIT Gandhinagar.

Research Leadership and Service

2025–present | Advisory Board Member

Liberal Arts Engagement Hub, University of Minnesota.

2020–2025 | Co-Founder and Convener

Memory, Movement, Montage Research and Creative Collaborative, Institute for Advanced Study, University of Minnesota. Secured multi-year support and organized exhibitions, workshops, screenings, and public conversations.

2023–2025 | Lab Development Collaborator

Virtual Reality and New Media Lab, Walter Library, University of Minnesota. Worked with faculty and technology partners to expand access to immersive and new-media tools.

Additional lab development: Contributed to development of a virtual reality and new media lab at IIT Gandhinagar.

Methods, Production Skills, and Languages

Methods: Media ethnography; qualitative interviews; digital observation; platform and interface analysis; institutional and policy analysis; visual ethnography; documentary filmmaking.

Production: Adobe Premiere Pro, Photoshop, Lightroom, After Effects, and InDesign; video editing, color grading, sound design, digital photography, and analog photography workflows.

Languages: Malwi (native); Hindi (native/fluent); English (fluent); Urdu (working proficiency); German (beginner).

Additional Work in Development

Instagram documentary series with Sahan Journal. Developing fifty video narratives on immigrant families' economic circumstances and health in the aftermath of Operation Metro Surge in Minnesota.

Book project on AI and regional media production. Extends the dissertation to AI-assisted editing and synthetic image and voice tools, with attention to skill, attribution, compensation, and control over cultural material.