

THE HINDU

# Order your digital picture online

## Indian players offer Net-based photo storage and processing

Anand Parthasarathy

**BANGALORE:** Now, you can click the bride and groom, upload their picture and have that 'shaadi ka photo' printed and delivered by courier — to as many people you choose: With the growing use of digital cameras by amateur photographers, Internet-based services, where one can store entire albums online and upload those that one wants to print, have come to India.

### Desi version launched

Last week, Hewlett Packard, the world's printer leader, launched a 'desi' version of its international online retail photo service that already serves over 40 million registered users and provides free web-based storage for 2 billion of the photos they clicked.

Called "Snapfish," the service allows Indian customers who have clicked photos with digital cameras to upload pictures to their own virtual Internet album at [www.snapfish.co.in](http://www.snapfish.co.in), tweak them to improve the quality, order online, the standard size (6 inch by 4 inch) prints at Rs.2.95 each — and have them delivered to their

homes by courier.

Interestingly, Snapfish, the biggest such Net Photo service worldwide, is the brainchild of an Indian, Bala Parthasarathy — an alumnus of IIT, Madras, and the University of California in Santa Cruz. He co-founded a U.S.-based company of the same name in 2000 and later sold it to HP five years later.

### Brainchild of Indian

"I am thrilled that people in my own country will now be able to use Snapfish to manage and share their digital photos," Mr. Parthasarathy told *The Hindu*.

He is now based in Bangalore as HP's global vice-president for Online Imaging.

HP is only the latest to tap the burgeoning Indian market in online photo services.

Already operating are: One of India's most venerable names in the photo trade, G.K. Vale, has an online upload and print service, which complements its roll

collect and deliver service in Bangalore ([www.gkvale.com](http://www.gkvale.com))

### EasyShare site

There is an Indian edition of Kodak's global EasyShare site, which offers free upload software and promises delivery of prints within seven days ([www.win.kodak.com](http://www.win.kodak.com)).

IIT Bombay roommates Manish Agrawal and Kartik Jain joined to start another online digipix service last year ([www.picsquare.com](http://www.picsquare.com))

Another service based in Bangalore is MeraSnap, started by V.V. Kadam and Ravi Urs of the information management company, KnowledgeWorkz ([www.merasnap.com](http://www.merasnap.com))

The Mumbai and the United States-based ZoomIn has been around for about a year and promises to deliver with equal ease in both countries. ([www.zoom.in](http://www.zoom.in))

Most of these services also offer some amount of online storage and a range of printing options on other media.

Prices for a 6 by 4 print range from Rs. 2.99 to Rs. 10 each.

In another offering to tap the booming retail photo printing market here (which sees Indians order 3 billion prints every year, through some 70,000 odd outlets), HP has created a self-service photo kiosk that will soon appear in the major malls and shopping centres. It will allow customers to upload photos from the memory chips of their digital cameras and have them printed instantly.

### Micro labs

The company is also launching all-in-one micro labs which small entrepreneurs can use to offer competitively priced printing services that go beyond glossy prints. V. Narayanan, HP's director for Photo and Printing Services, says these corner photo shops will offer to transfer your photos to tee shirts, calendars, and coffee mugs — whatever.

To dramatise the possibilities the company served its first "customer" at the launch event in Mumbai — TV personality Mandira Bedi — and promptly froze her well-known visage for posterity — on a porcelain mug.

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