

TYPOSPHERE - KOLKATA

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Kolkata, India

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The locally known *Pavement Typists* outside the High Court in Kolkata, India, have often spent their entire working days on the sidewalks in front of the courthouse. An era is drawing to a close. The majority of the Typists working there are already of retirement age, and their typewriters – frequently American-made *Remington* models – have accompanied them as tools of their trade for thirty to forty years. Lived history and countless written stories are bound up with these faithful and reliable companions, which are surely as aged as the low worktables the Typists use, where the machines, fetched daily from a nearby depot, find their place.

It is a modest income, earned under economically precarious conditions outdoors, in all weather – during the monsoon as well as in forty-degree heat. Not infrequently, the earnings constitute the sole source of income for an entire family, which explains the often long daily journeys to the workplace. The Typists' clients are mostly lawyers employed at the Kolkata High Court. They require their handwritten notes to be transcribed in typed form, in the English court language still used at the High Court. These professional relationships often extend over decades – the parties know each other well.

Before the digital age gradually displaced the need for analog skills and machines, up to sixty Typists could be found outside the courthouse; today, on a good day, there are around twenty people.

The Tables series from the *Typosphere* project shows images of the worktables, typewriters, some of the work tools, and personal belongings of the respective owners. For the photographs, the tables and machines were temporarily brought into a rented room near the High Court in consultation with their owners and photographed there.

At Kolkata's Lal Bazaar, too, primarily men, and occasionally women, work for the local police and carry out various clerical tasks for authorities and associations. The sidewalk there is so narrow that the often decades-old, large, and robust Indian typewriters made by *Godrej & Boyce*, which are primarily used in this location, are placed on small stools, with a board clamped underneath serving as an additional surface for papers. The portraits of the *Pavement Typists* at Lal Bazaar were taken outdoors using a mobile studio in a nearby quiet side street.