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# Asian Photography

AND IMAGING

Vol. 38 - No. 3

## GUEST WRITER

**READING THE WILD:  
UNDERSTANDING  
ANIMAL BEHAVIOUR  
THROUGH THE LENS**

- Latika Nath

## PRO-PROFILE

**TRUST AND  
THE POWER  
OF SLOW  
JOURNALISM**

- Arati Kumar-Rao

## REVIEW

**VIVO V70  
ELITE REVIEW**

## TIPS AND TECHS

**ARCHIVE  
DIVE: THE  
FORGOTTEN  
ASIAN  
PIONEERS**

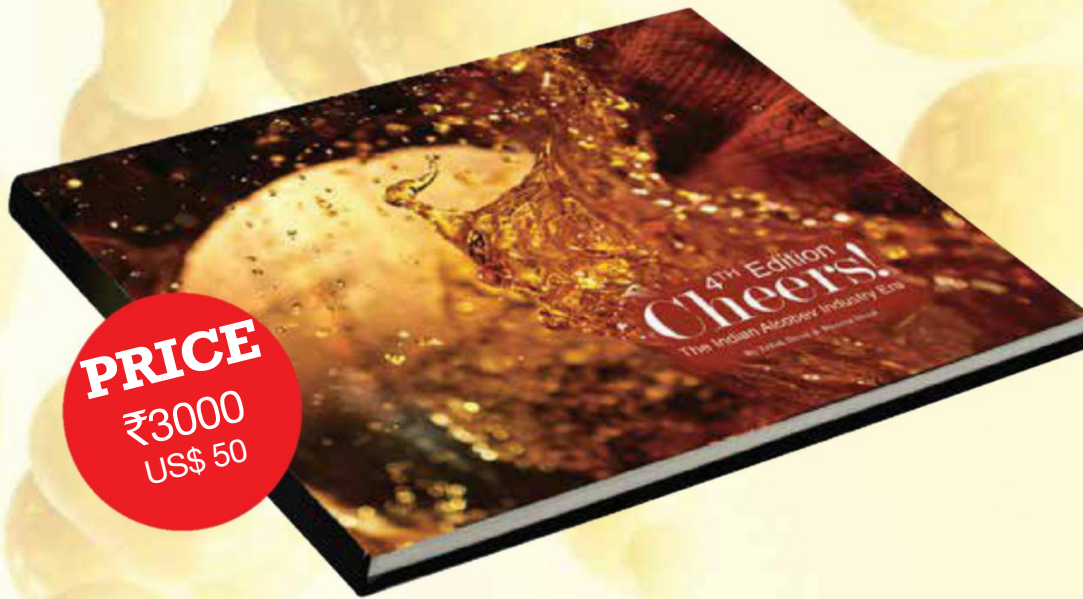
**RECLAIMING  
BODY POLITICS**

**THE RISE  
OF WOMEN  
IN SPORTS  
PHOTOGRAPHY**



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## Let's Not *Just* Celebrate Women Photographers

I remember when we first started the Women's Special issue. Much of the conversation then revolved around how women photographers were not getting their share of the limelight. In many ways, that sentiment was one of the reasons this special issue came into being.

While some of that conversation still exists today, I feel the narrative has moved forward. It is no longer about *just* celebrating women photographers or demanding recognition. The conversation today is about applauding their success.

Women photographers are no longer asking for a seat at the table—they are shaping the table itself.

Across genres—from fashion and wedding photography to wildlife and photojournalism—what was once a small group has grown into a vibrant and formidable community. And they stand tall not simply because they are women, but because of the extraordinary work they produce. Their achievements speak for themselves—often setting benchmarks that anyone in the field would admire.

In this issue, that is exactly what we set out to do: celebrate women and their art.

Through conversations with trailblazers such as *Arati Kumar-Rao*, *Deepti Asthana*, and *Sasha Jairam*, we explore not only their journeys, but also the depth, maturity, and perspective that define their work. Their stories reflect resilience, creativity, and an unwavering commitment to visual storytelling.

At the same time, we have not forgotten the pioneers who helped make this moment possible. While the stories of many international women photographers are widely known, this issue also shines a light on Asian masters whose contributions have shaped the photographic landscape and paved the way for the generations that follow.

Because celebrating women in photography today is no longer about filling a gap—it is about recognising a force that continues to redefine the craft.

Bhavya Desai

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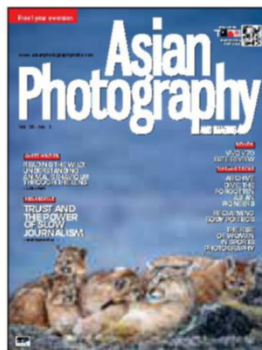


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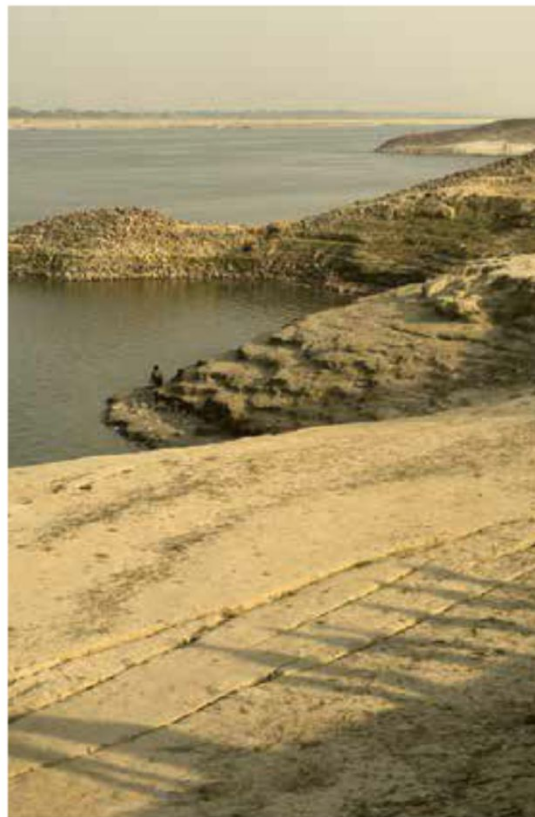
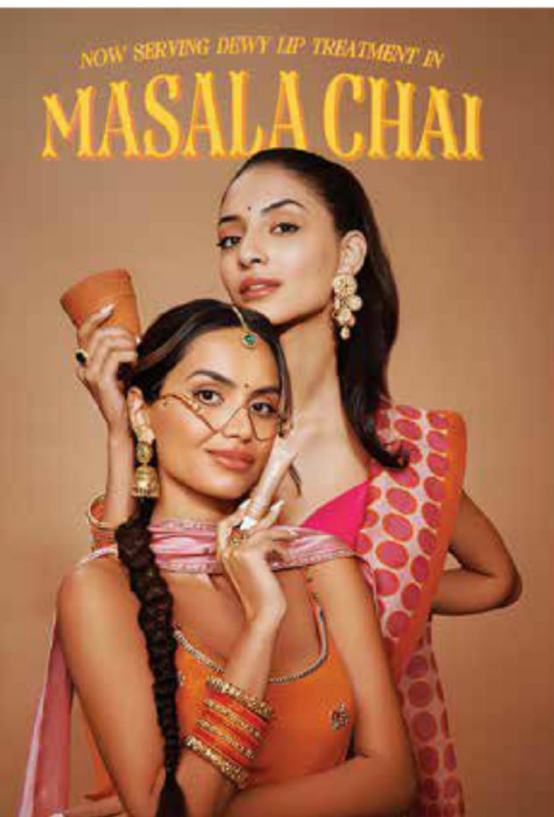
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### RECLAIMING BODY POLITICS

#### The Female Gaze and the Radical Act of Being Seen

For nearly two centuries, the camera has been a tool of both revelation and restriction. In the history of art and photography the "Male Gaze"—a term coined by film critic Laura Mulvey—has functioned as the default setting: a perspective that views the female body as an object to be consumed, cataloged, and corrected. From the soft-focus pin-ups of the 1930s to the hyper-Photoshopped "heroin chic" of the 1990s, mainstream beauty standards have been dictated by a lens that prioritizes performance over personhood. However, a quiet revolution is taking place behind the glass. Female and non-binary photographers are reclaiming body politics, shifting intimate portraits, beauty, and fine art to dismantle these legacy structures. By centering diverse body types, the natural features of skin, and the intricate beauty of aging, they are shifting the narrative from how a woman looks to how a woman feels.



**The Mid-Century Moment**  
The Rise of the Pin-Up (1940s–1950s)  
Mid-century pin-ups solidified the ideal of the female body as an object to be consumed. Images of Marilyn Monroe, Audrey Hepburn, and Elizabeth Taylor became icons of beauty, sex, and desirability. The aesthetic emphasized youth, glamour, and a specific type of femininity. The rise of the pin-up was also a reflection of the war effort, as women took on roles in factories and offices, and the media sought to provide a sense of normalcy and idealized beauty.



**The Second Wave Shift**  
The Body as Subject (1970s–1980s)  
The feminist movement and second-wave feminism led to a re-examination of the female body. Artists like Judy Chicago and Shiraz Durrani used photography to explore themes of identity, power, and the female experience. The focus shifted from the male gaze to the female gaze, emphasizing the body as a site of personal and political expression.

### THE RISE OF WOMEN IN SPORTS PHOTOGRAPHY

Sports photography has seen an upsurge of women participating in the role of photographer. The latest evidence we have is the Milano Cortina 2022 Winter Olympics that happened in Italy where about 25% of all photographers were women. This shift isn't just about optics of inclusion for inclusivity's sake, it's about the depth and texture of sports storytelling. "Women often see the game differently," notes veteran sports photographer Amy Sorenson. "We might be drawn to the smaller interactions, the quiet moments of assistance, or the raw emotion that defines competitive sport, adding a layer of storytelling that might otherwise be missed."




### A Dive into the Asian Archives

History has a funny way of erasing the things that define the narrative of photography's birth and subsequent evolution. In the early days, male photographers were the primary storytellers of the world. As the industry grew, women began to enter the field, but their contributions were often overlooked or minimized. This issue explores the rich and diverse photographic archives of Asia, from the early days of photography in the region to the present. It highlights the work of pioneering female photographers who have shaped the visual landscape of Asia through their lenses. The archives are a treasure trove of stories, capturing the essence of a continent's culture, history, and people. From the bustling streets of modern cities to the serene landscapes of rural areas, these images tell a story of a continent in constant evolution.





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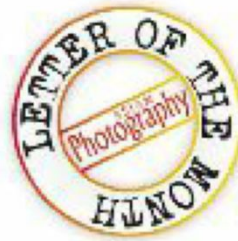


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# LETTERS TO EDITOR

Readers' Comments and Suggestions...

Send your letters at [apindia.feedback@gmail.com](mailto:apindia.feedback@gmail.com)



**Hi,**

I read your review of the Oppo Find X9 and wanted to know about its video stabilisation performance.

**Regs,  
Shatru Yadav**

**Hi Shatru,**

For its price segment, the video performance and stabilisation are decent. Yes, you can notice some shake and jerks in a high impact scenario, but the chances are that the users might not use it like that. There is also an ultra-stabilisation mode, which works on 4k albeit a crop. However, the crop isn't as significant as on some other devices. But yes, it is digital stabilisation and not optical.



**Hi,**

I wanted to upgrade to the OnePlus Buds Pro 3, and I'm currently using the OnePlus Buds Pro 2. I really like the sound and comfort, but the earbuds tend to fall out when I laugh, smile, or eat. How are the size and fit of the Buds Pro 3?

**Regs,  
Karthik Sonu**

**Dear Karthik,**

Overall, in comparison with the OP Buds Pro 2 —the 3 are better. Interestingly I also had similar issues with 2 —but 3 are still better. I wouldn't say it's completely resolved. But a very big improvement for sure. Combine this with a better sound, battery and latency —the 3 are just better overall. So surely you should upgrade.



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PRODUCT PAGE



# LETTERS TO EDITOR

Readers' Comments and Suggestions...

Send your letters at [apindia.feedback@gmail.com](mailto:apindia.feedback@gmail.com)



**Dear Sir,**

I have a very specific question based on my interest. In your opinion, how does the 3x zoom on the Oppo Find X9 compare to the 5x zoom on the Pixel 10? Also, which one would be better if I want to print images? They are my choices because they are both in the same price range. Any advice would be appreciated—thanks!

**Regs,  
Accent**

**Dear Accent,**

This is a very interesting question and also a very good comparison. I haven't used the Pixel 10 extensively, but here's my suggestion. Oppo has 6x lossless detail—although 3x optical zoom—whereas pixel relies on AI to deliver sharper results.

And that has always been Pixel's strong point. Having used the X9 it does have a decent zoom performance. But I think in this case, purely on zoom the pixel should be better. As for printing the pics. Depends on what you want to do and also the size that you want to print at.

Ideally they both should be able to do it—until a respectable size.



A photograph of a winter landscape. In the foreground, several bare tree trunks are heavily laden with snow. The background shows a calm body of water, possibly a lake or a wide river, with a snow-covered shoreline on the right. The sky is a pale, overcast blue. The text 'SIGMA AIZU JAPAN' is overlaid in the center in a white, serif font.

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## vivo India launches V70 and V70 Elite

vivo India has introduced the vivo V70 and V70 Elite in India, focusing on camera upgrades, performance, and software support.

Both phones feature a 50MP main camera with optical image stabilisation (OIS) and a 50MP ZEISS Telephoto camera with up to 10x zoom. They support 4K 60fps video recording on both front and rear cameras, with zoom recording options. A 50MP front camera with autofocus and a 92° field of view handles selfies and group shots. Portrait modes offer multiple focal length options ranging from 23mm to 100mm.

The V70 Elite runs on the Snapdragon 8s Gen 3 processor, while the V70 uses the Snapdragon 7 Gen 4. Both devices include LPDDR5X RAM, UFS 4.1 storage, and a 4200 mm<sup>2</sup> vapour cooling chamber. A 6500mAh battery with 90W fast charging is



standard on both models. They are rated IP68 and IP69 for dust and water resistance and include an ultrasonic in-display fingerprint sensor.

Each phone has a 6.59-inch 1.5K OLED display with slim bezels and peak brightness of up to 5000 nits. The V70 is available in Passion Red and Lemon Yellow, while the V70 Elite comes in Passion Red, Sand Beige, and Authentic Black.

Both run OriginOS 6 and will receive four OS updates and six years of security patches. The devices are manufactured in India.

### Prices:

V70: ₹45,999 (8GB+256GB), ₹49,999 (12GB+256GB)  
 V70 Elite: ₹51,999 (8GB+256GB), ₹56,999 (12GB+256GB), ₹61,999 (12GB+512GB)

## Honor partners up with ARRI

Arri has partnered with Honor to bring its imaging science and cinematic colour technology to Honor smartphones, starting with the upcoming Honor Robot Phone.

Describing the move as a “landmark partnership”, Arri says it aims to extend established cinematic standards into the fast-evolving mobile imaging space. Honor CEO James Li called the collaboration a step toward empowering creators with professional-grade storytelling tools, blending Arri’s visual legacy with Honor’s mobile innovation.

The partnership comes at a pivotal time for Arri. Facing mounting pressure in the high-end cinema market, the company has been exploring new directions, including the launch of its Film Lab OpenFX plugin for professional colour workflows. Integrating its image science into smartphones marks another strategic expansion into broader creator segments.

According to Arri Managing Director David Bermbach, core elements of Arri Image Science will now be embedded directly into a consumer device for the first time. Rather than simply applying filters, the collaboration focuses on translating Arri’s foundational imaging principles—including natural colour rendering, smooth highlight roll-off, and cinematic depth—into mobile hardware.



The Honor Robot Phone, set to launch later this year, will reportedly feature a 200MP sensor, three-axis gimbal stabilisation, AI-driven interaction, and robotic motion capabilities designed for dynamic video capture. Arri says the goal is seamless integration between mobile shooting and professional post-production workflows.



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## Godox unveils Cheapest Wireless Mic for Cameras and Phones

Godox has unveiled Alink, a compact wireless microphone system built for creators working across cameras, computers, and smartphones. Branded “One Mic, Fits All”, Alink is designed to support hybrid workflows, whether recording to a mirrorless camera, livestreaming via computer, or shooting vertical video on a phone.

The system offers both mono and stereo modes, allowing users to switch between solo recordings and two-person interviews without extra gear. It also supports direct digital audio transmission through compatible Sony and Canon hot shoes, reducing cable clutter and avoiding analogue signal loss.

App-based controls enable adjustments to 10 levels of noise reduction and three gain settings, helping users adapt to different recording environments.

Weighing just six grams, the transmitter is built for all-day wear and delivers up to 30 hours of battery life. Alink records at 48kHz/24-bit resolution, with a signal-to-noise ratio above 65dB and a maximum SPL of 115dB, aiming to capture clear dialogue while handling louder sounds.

Alink will be available in two kits: a single-transmitter Kit 1 priced at \$40, and a dual-transmitter Kit 2 for \$70.



## Harman launches A Colour-Switching Film!

Harman Technology has introduced Harman Switch Azure, a creative colour film that deliberately shifts and remaps colours for unusual visual effects.

The ISO 125 film, available in both 35mm and 120 medium format, alters the way colours appear by switching two of the three colour couplers in the emulsion. As a result, blues can appear orange, yellows turn into vibrant azure tones, and reds shift toward purple or blue hues. According to Harman Sales and Marketing Director Giles Branthwaite, this change in colour couplers creates a different contrast response across the color channels, producing the film’s distinctive palette.

Like most modern colour negative films, Switch Azure is processed using the standard C-41 development process. However, Harman notes that the final colour rendering can vary depending on the scanning system used. Fuji scanners tend to produce more intense colours, while Noritsu scanners render slightly more muted blues.

Switch Azure joins Harman’s growing lineup of experimental films, including Harman Red and Harman Phoenix 200, alongside more conventional offerings like Kentmere Pan 200 and Harman Phoenix II.

The new film is available now through Harman’s retail partners and online store—and also seeks to reinforce the idea that film, indeed, is not dead.



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## CP+ 2026 breaks Attendance Records, Companies Debut Diverse Gear

CP+ 2026 wrapped up in Yokohama with record-breaking momentum, drawing 58,924 visitors over four days at Pacifico Yokohama—up from 55,791 last year. The show featured 149 exhibitors, including 45 first-timers, marking the largest edition yet. With the continued absence of Photokina, CP+ has firmly positioned itself as the global focal point for the imaging industry.

Rather than one headline-grabbing flagship camera, this year's event emphasised variety, experimentation, and creative flexibility. Canon teased a prototype SLR-style concept camera with a waist-level viewfinder, signalling interest in tactile, slower-paced shooting experiences.

Lens makers were especially active. Sigma announced multiple optics, including an 85mm f/1.2 DG Art, a lighter



35mm f/1.4 DG II Art, and a 15mm f/1.4 DC Contemporary, alongside its upcoming AF Cine 28-105mm T3 FF. Brightin Star introduced a 35mm f/1.7 for Leica M and a creative 50mm f/2 Tri Sight lens with interchangeable rendering elements. Schneider-Kreuznach and Samyang unveiled the AF 60-180mm f/2.8 telephoto zoom, while 7Artisans continued its affordable autofocus push.

Accessories and hybrid tools also stood out, from Panasonic's 32-bit float on-camera mic to Atomos's Ninja RAW monitor.

With rising shipments and growing show attendance, CP+ 2026 underscored renewed energy across photography driven not by one breakthrough product, but by creative diversity and momentum industry-wide.

## Tamron announces 35-100mm F/2.8 Lens for Nikon & Sony

Tamron has announced the 35-100mm f/2.8 Di III VXD, a standard zoom lens for Sony and Nikon full-frame cameras, launching on March 26, 2026.

Designed as a lighter alternative to the company's popular 35-150mm f/2-2.8, the new lens focuses on commonly used portrait focal lengths while maintaining a constant f/2.8 aperture. It measures 119.2mm in length and weighs 565g for the Sony E-mount version, aiming to balance performance with portability.

The lens features an optical design of 15 elements in 13 groups and is intended to deliver high resolution and smooth background blur. Tamron says this makes it suitable for portraits, travel photography, and everyday shooting.

Autofocus is powered by Tamron's VXD (Voice-coil eXtreme-torque Drive) linear motor system, designed to provide fast and precise focusing. The lens also supports close-up photography, with a minimum object distance of 0.22 meters at the wide end.



Additional features include compatibility with the Tamron Lens Utility software for customisable functions, a unified 67mm filter size, and a nine-blade circular aperture. The lens also incorporates moisture-resistant construction and a fluorine coating to help protect the front element.

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# Apple unveils A18 Pro-powered MacBook Neo, M5-powered MacBook Air, Pro and New Studio Display XDR

Apple has introduced updated pro displays and refreshed Mac notebooks, with major gains in connectivity, AI performance, and storage.

## Studio Display Lineup

Replacing the last generation displays, the new 27-inch Studio Display retains its 5K panel but adds Thunderbolt 5, faster I/O, and a new 12MP Center Stage camera with Desk View. Audio is improved with a six-speaker Spatial Audio system and upgraded studio-quality mics. A nano-texture glass option is now available, alongside 96W charging over Thunderbolt 5.

The new Studio Display XDR replaces the 32-inch Pro Display XDR with a 27-inch 5K panel powered by mini-LED backlighting. It delivers up to 2000 nits peak HDR brightness, 120Hz refresh rate, and enhanced colour accuracy—a significant leap for filmmaking, 3D, and print workflows. The Studio Display costs ₹1,89,900 and the Studio Display XDR costs ₹3,99,900.



## MacBook Pro with M5 Pro and M5 Max

The 14- and 16-inch MacBook Pro models now feature M5 Pro and M5 Max chips with next-gen Fusion architecture, up to an 18-core CPU and 40-core GPU. Neural Accelerators in each GPU core dramatically boost AI tasks, with up to 4x faster performance over the previous generation. SSD

speeds reach up to 14.5GB/s, and base storage increases to 1TB (M5 Pro) and 2TB (M5 Max).

New additions include Wi-Fi 7 and Bluetooth 6 via Apple's N1 chip, Thunderbolt 5, 8K HDMI output, and support for up to four external displays. The Macbook Pro starts at ₹2,49,900.

## MacBook Air with M5

The updated MacBook Air gains the M5 chip with a faster 10-core CPU, improved GPU, and per-core Neural Accelerators. Unified memory bandwidth rises to 153GB/s, and base storage doubles to 512GB. It also adds Wi-Fi 7 and Bluetooth 6 while retaining its thin design and up to 18 hours of battery life. The new MacBook Air starts at ₹1,19,000.

## New Entry-Level MacBook "Neo"

Apple also introduced the MacBook Neo, its most affordable laptop yet, starting at \$599 (approx ₹55,000). Powered by the A18 Pro chip, the 13-inch notebook is designed as an accessible entry point into the Mac ecosystem while still supporting everyday creative and productivity workflows.



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All-in-One Outdoor Flash

**NEW**



**2 YEAR OFFICIAL WARRANTY TRUSTED SINCE 2004**

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Godox  
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**NEW**



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PGYTECH  
**OneMo Lite Backpack**  
A Starter Bag for the Next Pro

**NEW**



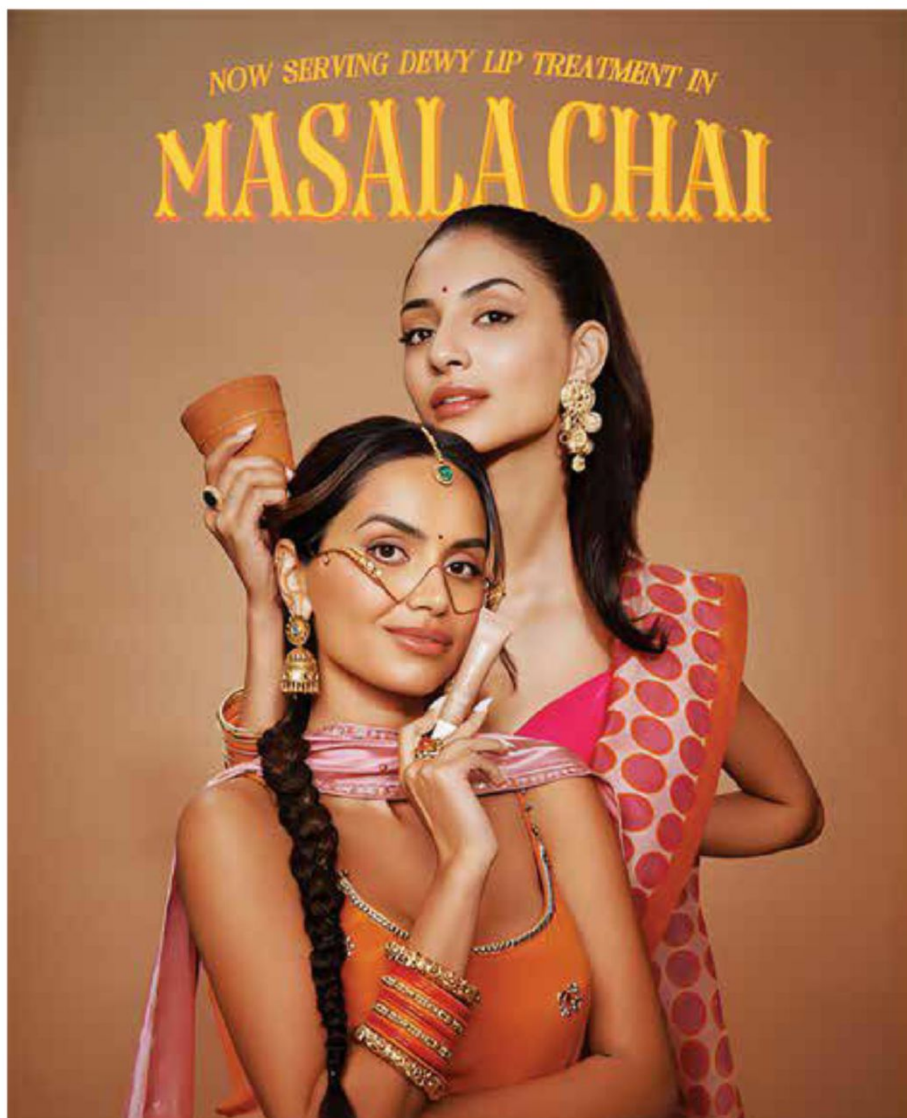

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# The Intelligent Future Of *Photography*

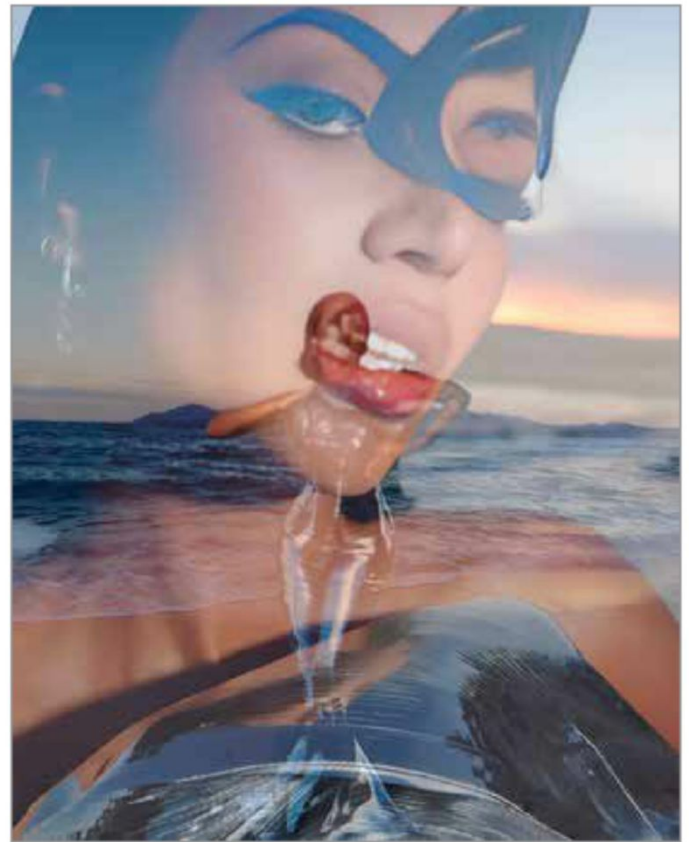


Sasha Jairam



For **Sasha Jairam**, the act of seeing has never been a passive endeavour; it is a deliberate, almost-visceral engagement with the world that began long before she ever held a professional camera. In the high-octane world of fashion and commercial photography, where the “scroll” often dictates the “soul” of an image, Jairam has carved out a niche that prioritises the “pause.” Her shooting philosophy is built upon a foundation of emotional resonance, where light is not merely a technical requirement but the primary protagonist—a character that flirts, hides, and reveals the essence of her subjects. This commitment to mood over cold technicality defines her work, yet she remains one of the industry’s most vocal proponents of modern evolution. **Asian Photography** spoke to her about creative risks, the involvement of AI in the creative process, and best advice she’d like to pass on. Excerpts:





**S**asha realised photography was always more than just a passing interest, she looked back and understood she had been “doing it” since she was a child. She recalls herself as the student in a mathematics class who wasn’t daydreaming out of boredom, but rather because she was captivated by the way dust particles floated through the shafts of light in the room, mentally framing them as art. Even then, she imagined her eyes functioned as camera lenses, constantly zooming in and out to capture the minutiae of her surroundings. Growing up in a traditional business environment in a small town, she felt an early, persistent tug toward a path that didn’t align with the conventional expectations of her upbringing. She possessed “*big city dreams*” before she could fully articulate what they entailed, feeling that photography wasn’t a hobby she was learning, but rather a memory she was recovering. For Jairam, the craft feels less like a chosen career and more like an echo from a past life.

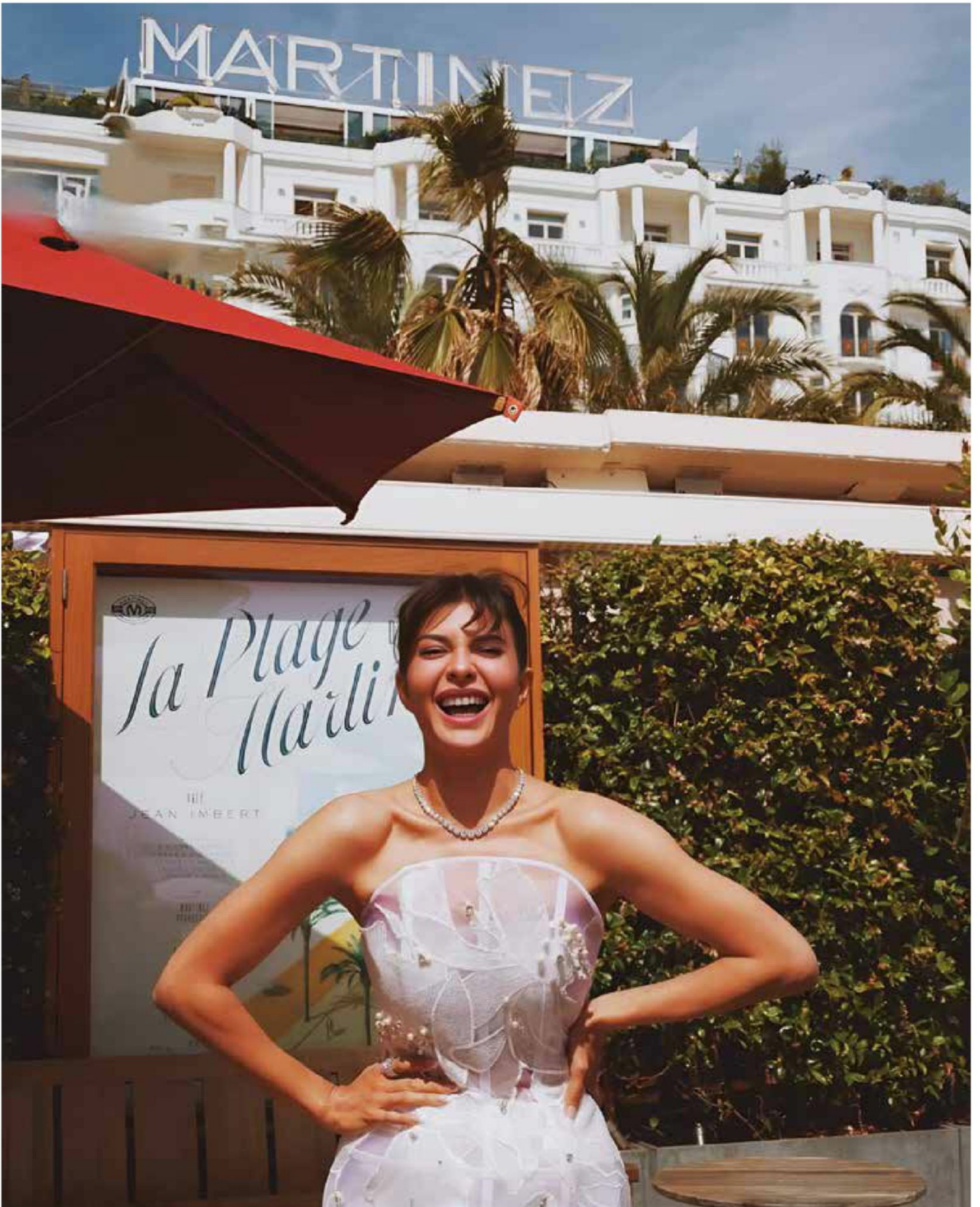
Speaking of the biggest creative risk she has taken so far, Sasha responded that her greatest risk was the conscious decision to lean into her own “difference” rather than trying to smooth it out for the sake of conformity. This was a particularly difficult journey, given that she faced intense bullying at the vulnerable age of 17. That experience initially forced her to shrink, severely damaging her self-esteem and making her want to blend into the background. However, she

eventually reached a turning point where she realised that the very attributes she was once insecure about were, in fact, her creative edge. The risk involved owning her gaze, learning to charge appropriately for her value, saying no to projects that didn’t resonate, and trusting her own taste even when it didn’t match the homogenised aesthetic of popular mood boards. The payoff has been profound: today, clients seek her out not just for “nice pictures,” but for her specific, unapologetic perspective.

When asked about the conscious role of sculpting light in her imagery, Sasha responded that light is essentially the main character in every shoot she conducts. She describes her relationship with light as a form of styling for the soul of the image, using it to flirt with the subject or to hide and reveal specific elements of the frame. Her approach to lighting is fluid and instinctive; sometimes it is soft and dreamy, while other times it becomes dramatic and, in her words, “a bit unhinged”. She avoids overthinking the technical aspects, choosing instead to “feel” the light. If a setup feels too safe or lacks energy, she isn’t afraid to move the equipment or shake up the entire composition. For Sasha, every technical choice is subservient to the mood, which remains the ultimate goal of her work.

When asked how her work has evolved since she first began her career, Sasha responded that the shift has been from a place of “proving” herself to a place of “expressing” herself. In her early days, like many emerging artists, she





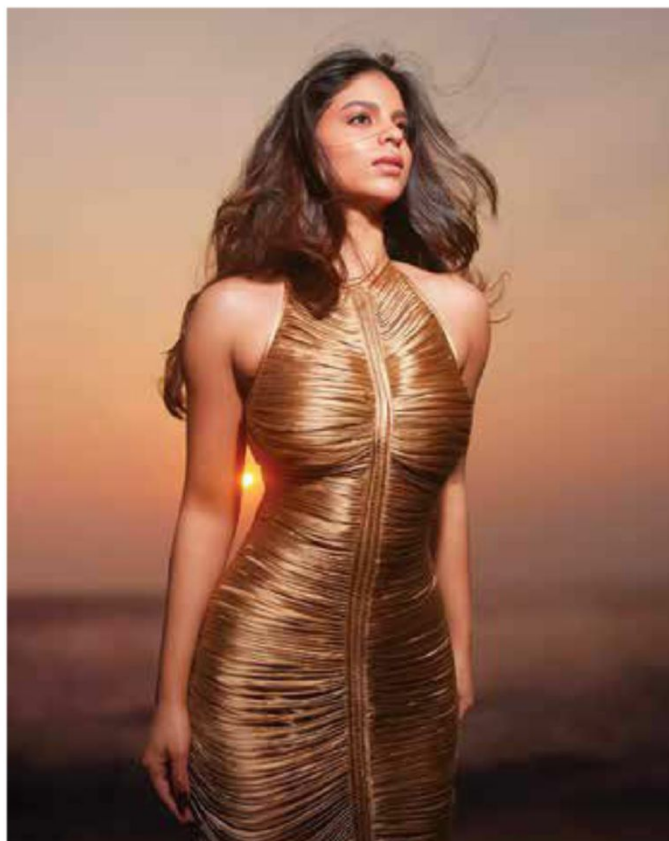
was focused on perfection and maintaining a rigid sense of control over every element of the process. As she has matured, however, that need for external validation has been replaced by a desire for presence and feeling. She is now far less interested in the act of impressing others and more focused on the long-term impact of her imagery. She has fully embraced her identity as an unconventional creator, rejecting the idea of “safe” work in favour of images that feel alive and carry a sense of urgency and personality.

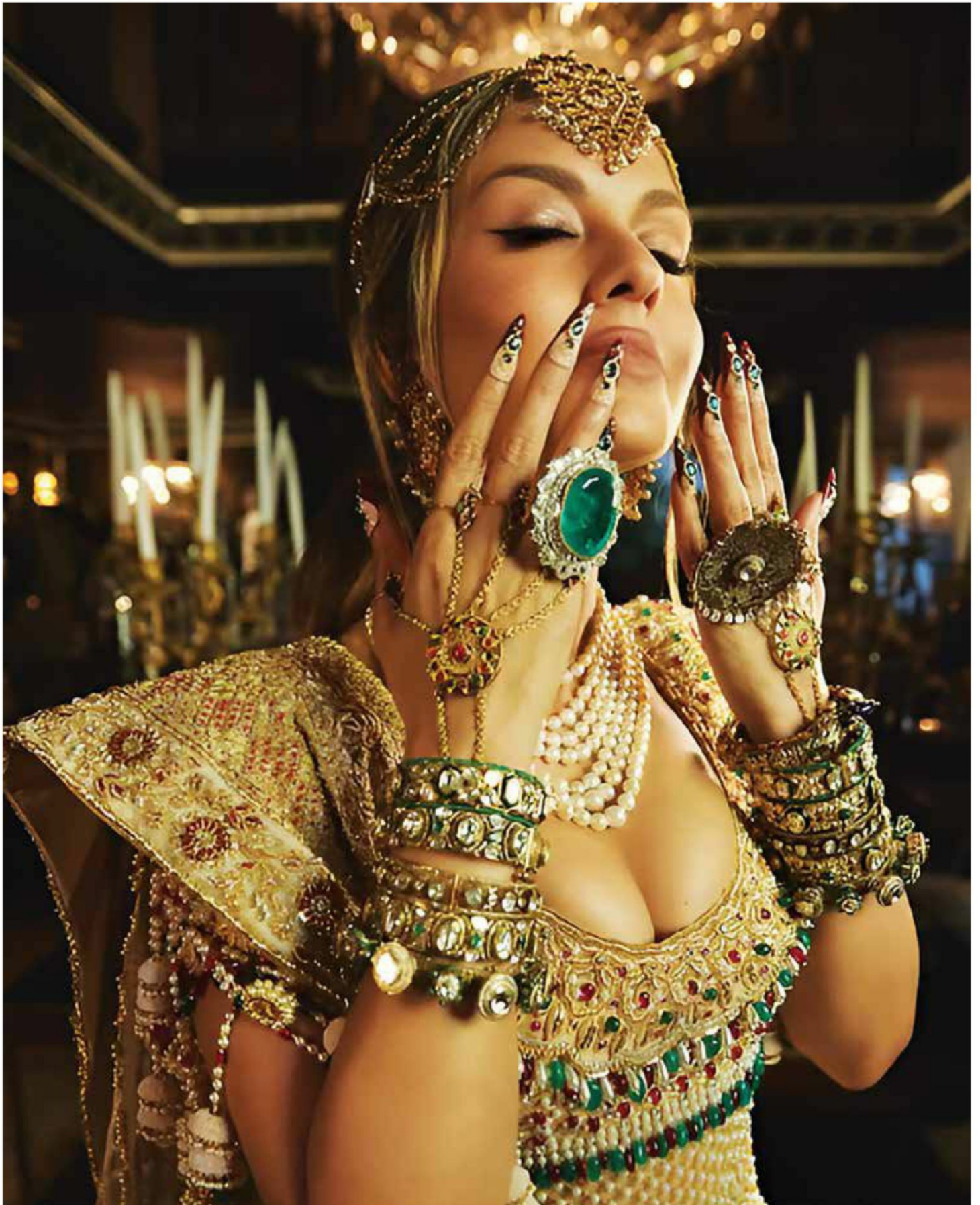
When asked if the digital age—characterised by short-form media, AI, and the demand for faster delivery—has fundamentally changed her process, Sasha responded with an enthusiastic affirmation of modern tools. While she acknowledges that we are living in the “*scroll era*”, she maintains a clear distinction between creating for the speed of social media and creating for the “pause” of a truly impactful image. She described her love for AI as a tool that simplifies her life, noting that anything that makes the creative process easier is a welcome addition to her arsenal. However, she was quick to point out that while AI can handle the mechanics and short-form media can dictate the format, neither can replace “taste”. In her view, taste is an inherently human quality that remains undefeated by any algorithm. She is willing to adapt and move quickly when the industry

**“Short-form is a format. Neither replaces taste. And taste is human. That’s still undefeated.”**

demands it, but she refuses to dilute the depth of her work just to keep up with the accelerating pace of consumption. Unlike those who view the advent of Artificial Intelligence with skepticism, Sasha embraces AI as a liberating force. To her, these tools are the bridge to a more efficient creative process, allowing the artist to bypass the mundane and focus entirely on “taste”. In her worldview, while technology can replicate pixels, it can never replicate the human eye’s unique currency—a currency minted from personal history, pain, and triumph.

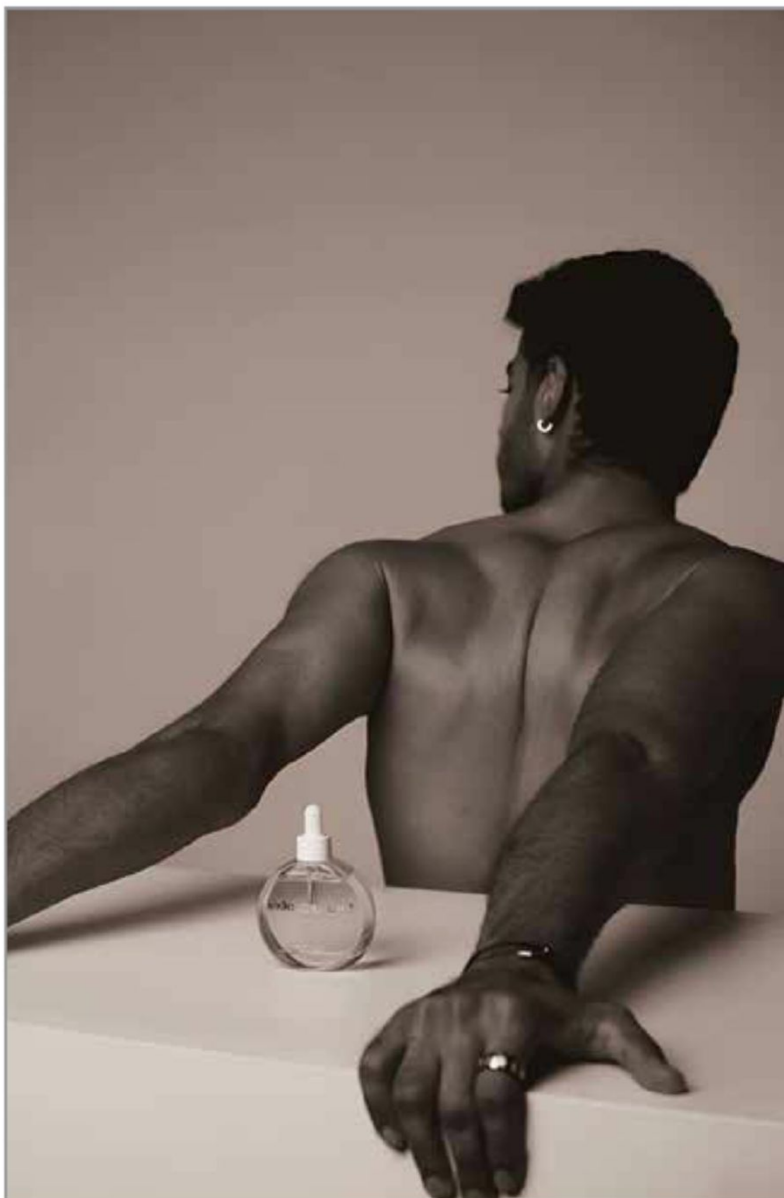
When asked about the changes she is looking forward to in the industry and the trends she would like to see revived or discarded, Sasha responded that she is far from being “anti-polish”. She expressed a deep appreciation for the beauty of a perfectly retouched, elevated, and intentional image. To her, perfection can be a powerful tool when it is wielded with taste. Her excitement for the future of photography lies in the intersection of “beauty with personality”—an aesthetic that is glossy and high-end but still retains a human character. She enjoys the duality of the current landscape, where on some days she might crave softness and imperfection, and on others, she wants to lean into a hyper-glossy, “main-character energy”. She believes both of these extremes can coexist, and that diversity of style is what makes the current era of photography so engaging.







**“Don’t erase your difference to fit in. That difference is your currency. And if you feel a little ‘lost’? You’re probably just zooming in.”**



When asked about the best advice she received early in her career that she would pass on to the next generation of photographers, Sasha responded with a simple yet profound directive: *“Trust your eye”*. She emphasised that a photographer’s eye is not just a biological tool, but something shaped by their entire life experience—their childhood, their pain, their dreams, and their environment. Reflecting on her own journey, she noted how growing up in a traditional setting while dreaming of something larger, combined with her experience of overcoming bullying, allowed her to use her lens as a tool to empower other women. She encourages upcoming photographers not to erase their differences in an attempt to fit in, because that very difference is their most valuable currency. In a final, poetic nod to her childhood in the classroom, she added that if a young artist ever feels a little “lost”, they are probably just busy “zooming in” on something the rest of the world has yet to notice.

Through this lens, Sasha Jairam’s work becomes more than just fashion photography; it is a testament to the power of a singular vision. By marrying the speed of the digital age with the slow, deliberate cultivation of personal taste, she has created a body of work that stands as a defiance against the disposable nature of modern media. Her acceptance of AI and her mastery of light serve as the twin pillars of a career built on the courage to be different. For Sasha, the camera is merely the instrument; the music comes from the life lived behind it.

TEXT: ANIRUDH IYER

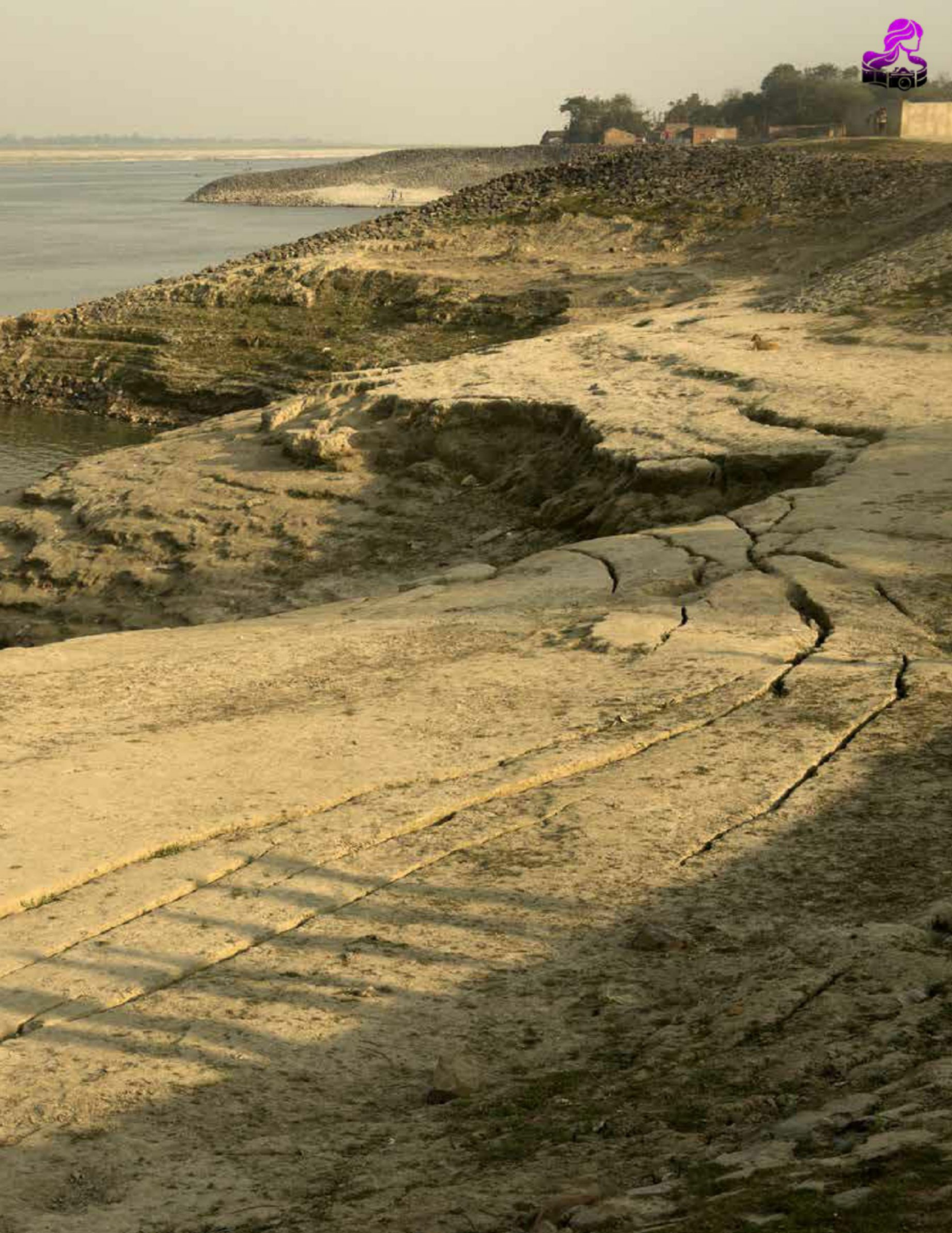
# TRUST AND THE POWER OF SLOW JOURNALISM

In an age of AI-generated imagery, viral social media posts and shrinking attention spans, the role of the photojournalist is undergoing a profound shift. But there are still ones that are holding the mantle high—Environmental photographer and writer **Arati Kumar-Rao** believes that the answer lies not in chasing speed, but in embracing depth. Through her philosophy of slow journalism, she advocates for spending time with landscapes, communities and ecosystems in order to truly understand the stories that unfold within them. **Bhavya Desai** speaks to her as she reflects on the changing nature of photojournalism, the challenges of truth and neutrality, and why patience and integrity remain the most powerful tools for storytellers today. Excerpts:



Arati Kumar-Rao







**P**hotojournalism has changed dramatically in recent years, particularly with the explosion of social media and the rapid development of artificial intelligence. One of the biggest questions today is simple yet unsettling: how does anyone know what is real? Even in earlier times, staged photographs were always a possibility, but the technology available today allows AI to generate images and videos that can appear remarkably authentic. As these tools become more sophisticated, distinguishing between reality and fabrication will only become harder. Trust, therefore, will become an increasingly valuable commodity. Without robust methods of verification, it may become extremely difficult to believe what we see in the media—whether on mainstream platforms or across social networks.

For Kumar-Rao, the antidote to this crisis of trust lies in what she calls slow journalism. When photographers and journalists spend extended periods in landscapes, with communities and in wild spaces, they begin to notice things deeply. Engaging all the senses—not just the visual—allows them to absorb layers of information that may not be immediately apparent to someone who simply arrives, captures a quick image, and leaves. Slowing down creates the

conditions for understanding. Information gradually transforms into knowledge, and when approached with care and integrity, that knowledge can help illuminate possible paths forward. At its core, slow journalism is about cultivating insight into how we might reclaim a better relationship with the world around us.

While photography remains central to Kumar-Rao's work, she often incorporates other mediums such as sketching, soundscapes and writing. The choice of medium depends entirely on the nature of the story. Some issues are complex and nuanced, requiring extensive writing to unpack their layers. Others may be conveyed more powerfully through a photograph or a short video. In certain cases, sound becomes an essential element of storytelling, while moments that resist digital capture may be illustrated through sketches. Once a storyteller becomes deeply immersed in an issue and has multiple tools at their disposal, the most effective medium often reveals itself intuitively.

The question of neutrality in journalism is another area Kumar-Rao examines critically. Is true neutrality even possible? She points to a simple analogy: if two people in a room disagree about whether it is raining outside, should a journalist merely report both claims and leave it there? Or should they look outside and verify the truth? In an era marked by propaganda and misinformation, reporting what

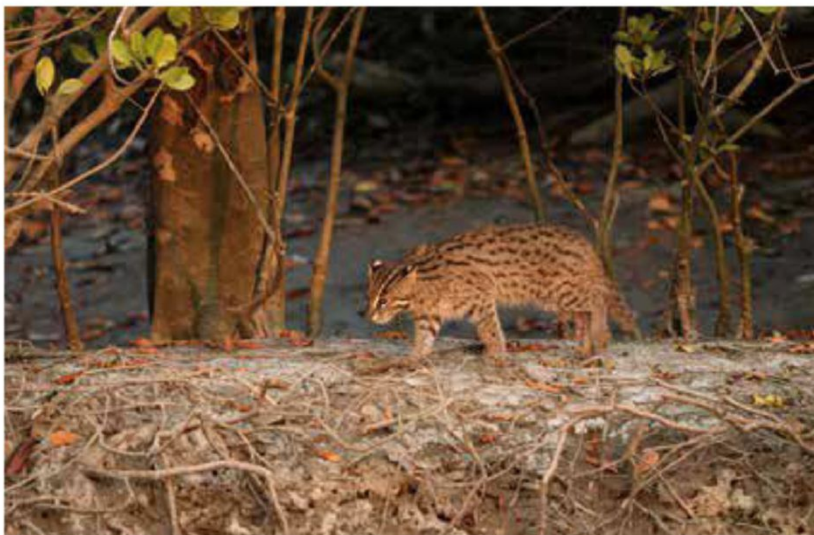




is rather than what someone claims or believes is more important than ever. At the same time, journalists must acknowledge that every piece of storytelling carries a human perspective. Choices about language, framing, focus and omission all reflect the storyteller's biases. Readers and viewers, therefore, must recognise that every image or narrative is filtered through a human lens.

Understanding complex issues also means recognising that different groups may experience different truths. Kumar-Rao stresses the importance of empathy toward those most affected by environmental and social challenges, while remaining analytical and skeptical of statements made by those in power, regardless of political affiliation. Equally critical is understanding the land itself: what strengthens its resilience, what damages it, and how human activity shapes these dynamics. Only by triangulating multiple verified sources and perspectives can journalists approach a deeper, more responsible form of storytelling.

When she works on environmental projects, Kumar-Rao's guiding principle is clear: her allegiance lies with the landscape and with the people and biodiversity that depend upon it. Every scene, interaction and observation is evaluated through the lens of long-term viability rather than short-term gains. The focus is not merely on what produces immediate results or profits, but on what sustains ecosystems and communities over time.



Environmental photography, however, is not a path to quick commercial success. Kumar-Rao is candid about the challenges. For anyone seeking luxury or financial extravagance, this is unlikely to be the right profession. Instead, it demands integrity, intellectual honesty and a deep curiosity about the world and its interconnected systems. Much of the work involves writing grants, pitching ideas and

navigating uncertain funding cycles. Payments can be irregular, and the journey is rarely easy.

Yet for those who are passionate about making a difference, the rewards lie elsewhere. Kumar-Rao's advice to aspiring environmental storytellers is simple but profound: start by buying a good pair of walking shoes and take things slowly. Meaningful work cannot be created by parachuting into a location for a quick story. Instead, it requires patience, research and immersion. Understanding the science behind an issue is essential, but so is studying the socio-economic history of a place. Only then can one begin to understand how current situations came to be.

Perhaps the most important question any storyteller should ask is whose voice is missing. Who stands to gain from the narrative being told,

and who stands to lose? Approaching these questions with humility, clarity and the willingness to learn creates a powerful framework for bearing witness to the world. For Kumar-Rao, this commitment to observation, empathy and truth is what ultimately defines meaningful journalism in an increasingly noisy and uncertain age.

# STORIES IN THE SLOW LANE



Deepthi Asthana

The work of **Deepthi Asthana** exists in the quiet, expansive spaces between moments—the kind of photography that refuses to be rushed or consumed in a fleeting glance. Known for her profound commitment to “slow” documentary storytelling, her images are less about the spectacle and more about the steady, rhythmic pulse of human existence, particularly within the rural landscapes of India. In an industry often dominated by the immediate and the flashy, her practice stands as a testament to the power of patience, focusing on the nuances of girlhood, the resilience of women, and the spiritual intersections between the self and the natural world. **Asian Photography** delved into the philosophy behind this deliberate pace, exploring the pivotal projects that shaped her perspective, the weight of the “female gaze” in a modern context, and her recent transition toward conceptual work that mirrors her own internal journey. Excerpts:







**W**hen exploring what first motivated her to embrace the arduous path of long-term documentary photography, especially the “long and slow” variety, Deepti explains that her journey began with an insatiable curiosity about the lives of others—specifically the narratives that simmer beneath the visible surface. She has always felt a magnetic pull toward the layers of life that only reveal themselves over time, believing that the passing of years acts as a solvent, stripping away the performative to reveal the essential. For her, the act of photography is often secondary to the act of living; she describes moments spent simply being present with her subjects, where the camera remains idle until a true connection is forged. This sense of camaraderie is the bedrock of her process. She believes that the most valuable photographs are those born from relationships where the barrier between the observer and the observed has dissolved entirely. This motivation is as much an inward journey as it is an external exploration; by observing the strength and resilience of others, she finds herself reflecting on her own life, using the lens as a tool for self-discovery and a way to absorb the lessons of navigating life’s complexities. This depth, she insists, cannot be manufactured in haste; it requires the kind of presence and care that only a slow, dedicated approach can provide.

Regarding whether there was a specific body of work that acted as a definitive turning point in her professional trajectory, Deepti notes that while no single project stands alone, two concurrent explorations deeply anchored her practice. Developed over several years, *A Tale of Two Girls* and *A Thousand Thorns* allowed her to witness the divergent yet rhyming lives of young women in the lush mountains and the arid Thar Desert, respectively. These projects became more than just assignments; they evolved into annual rituals of return. By revisiting the same individuals year after year, she was able to document the slow evolution of their identities, seeing how their personal growth mirrored the broader experiences of girls across India. These young women, navigating the transition into womanhood while seeking safety in sisterhood, became symbols of a quiet, persistent courage in the face of social and personal challenges. While these works garnered significant professional acclaim, Deepti emphasises that their true impact was personal. Witnessing their resilience firsthand fundamentally altered her own worldview, teaching her lessons in tenderness and bravery that helped her grow not just as a photographer, but as a human being.

When asked to define authenticity within a genre that eschews the “flashy” for the foundational, Deepti responds by grounding her philosophy in the idea of seeing people as they truly are, in their own element. To her, an authentic image is



one that refuses to perform for the camera or cater to the expectations of editors and award juries. She feels a profound sense of responsibility toward the women she photographs, particularly because of the deep personal bonds she has formed with them over the years. This responsibility manifests as a commitment to representation that is faithful to their multi-faceted realities—capturing not just their vulnerabilities and the social challenges they face, but also their innocence, their humor, their playfulness, and the simple, radiant joy of youth. In the context of India, where women often navigate complex layers of societal expectation, she strives to ensure these nuances remain visible. Authenticity, in her view, is the act of doing justice to a story so that, years later, the photograph remains a sincere tribute to a person's presence and history, something she can look back on with pride and care.

In terms of whether her overarching focus on the “Women of India” has a definitive end-point or remains a lifelong commitment, Deepti suggests that while it may not be an active project at this moment, the act of engaging with women's stories will always remain a pillar of her practice. However, she describes a recent and significant shift toward the conceptual and the internal. This evolution is perhaps most evident in her project *A True Story*, which was born



during a period of solitude near a forest in Meghalaya. During a difficult chapter of her life, she began to photograph the forest and herself in tandem, creating a visual dialogue about healing and a quiet departure from the noise of society. This work represents a turning point where her gaze turned inward, using the landscape as a mirror for her own vulnerabilities. Similarly, *A Sweet Kiss of Monsoon* explores the experience of the night from a female perspective, moving away from outward documentation and toward an evocative, sensory



exploration of the self. For her, the work is a living thing, sometimes moving outward to capture the world, and at other times retreating inward to explore the questions of the soul.

When the conversation shifts to the definition of the “female gaze” within her work, Deepti responds that it is a concept rooted deeply in lived experience. It is not a theoretical framework but a way of moving through the world—an inherent understanding of space, relationships, and safety that comes from being a woman. For her, the female gaze is synonymous with empathy and a rejection of the

spectacle. She is interested in the everyday truths of women—their shyness, their strength, their casual playfulness—without forcing them into the roles often demanded by society. This is particularly poignant in her exploration of the night. Rather than romanticising the darkness with moonlight and longing, she portrays the night as a space of inherited fears and quiet unease. She acknowledges the heavy reality that women and children in India carry—a world where headlines of violence settle into the body long before they are fully understood. In her work, the night is not simply beautiful; it is heavy with what is carried, reflecting a shared reality where safety is often fragile and darkness is navigated with a learned, protective caution that is personal yet echoes the experiences of many.



Regarding the challenges of protecting depth in an era characterised by the rapid-fire consumption of visuals on platforms like Instagram, Deepti admits that she thinks often about the devaluation of the medium. While she acknowledges that social media has democratised photography, she laments how it has reduced complex stories into a format that often receives less than a second of attention. The constant pursuit of validation through “likes” and quick engagement can easily strip away the patience and reflection necessary for meaningful art. Her defence against this trend is a conscious move in the opposite direction: holding her ground and respecting her own rhythm of seeing. She poses a vital question for the modern artist: should one comply with the algorithm’s demand for constant production,



or remain faithful to the rhythm of their own heart? She made a clear choice—preferring the depths of a story to the shallow waters of easy consumption, choosing to honour the integrity of the art form over the fleeting metrics of digital engagement.

When asked about her current creative focus and projects, Deepti reveals that her most important ongoing project is actually the pursuit of self-knowledge and spirituality. This journey has led her to the banks of the Narmada River for a project titled *Flowing Like a River*. Here, the river itself becomes the central protagonist, a silent witness to the cycles of construction and destruction that have defined human history along its banks for centuries. Through this work, she

has found a profound teacher in the water. She observes that much of human suffering stems from the resistance we create within ourselves—our insistence on specific outcomes and our inability to let go of expectations. The Narmada, however, continues to flow despite the injustices and disruptions it encounters. It serves as a powerful metaphor for her own life: a lesson in moving forward with grace and learning to flow rather than constantly resisting the current of existence.

In offering a final word to photographers seeking to build an authentic voice, Deepti encourages a return to the self, though she admits she usually refrains from giving advice. Rather than seeking guidance from external trends or trying to imitate the successes of others, she believes that true authenticity is found in what one can uniquely contribute from their own specific experience of life. Every photographer carries a distinct reservoir of memory, emotion, and perception; tapping into that personal well is what creates resonance. She suggests that it is far more meaningful to pay attention to what genuinely moves the heart than to follow the prescribed paths of the industry. Ultimately, she believes that people are not just looking for beautiful photographs; they are looking for the person behind the lens. They want to see the world through the artist's unique eyes, and the most powerful tool any creator has is the courage to simply be themselves.



TEXT: ANIRUDH IYER

# READING THE WILD:

## UNDERSTANDING ANIMAL BEHAVIOUR THROUGH THE LENS

GUEST WRITER



Latika Nath

**Latika Nath** is a wildlife biologist and photographer whose work deeply explores the relationship between animals, landscapes, and behaviour. Having spent decades studying wildlife in India and across the world, her photography remains rooted in deep field observation and ecological understanding. Rather than focusing solely on traditional portraits of animals, her work seeks to capture the vital behaviours that define life in the wild—predation, social bonds, territoriality, and survival. Ultimately, her images reflect not only the inherent beauty of wildlife but also the fragile ecosystems that sustain it.

“**T**he most important skill in wildlife photography is not the camera you carry, but the ability to read the quiet language of the wild.”

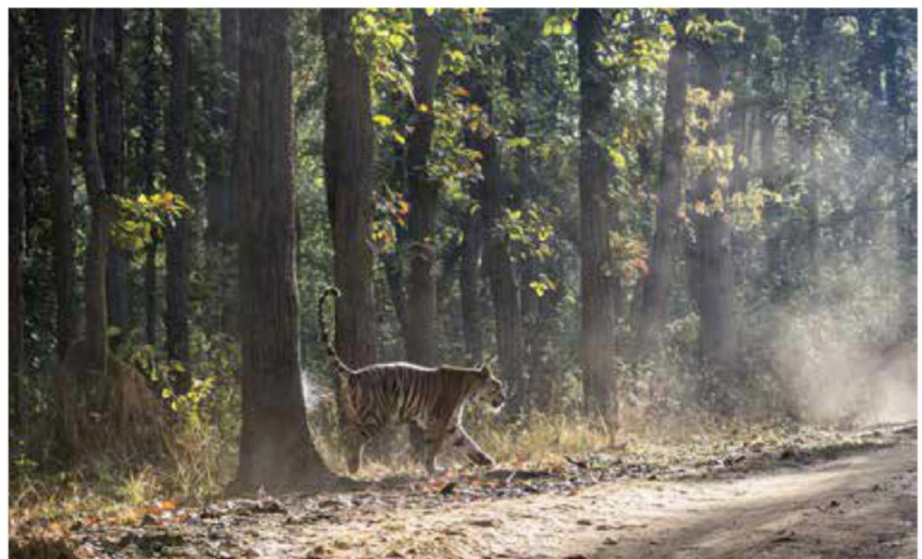
Wildlife photography is often misunderstood. To many people, it is about rare sightings, dramatic chases, or the thrill of encountering powerful animals in remote landscapes. But the truth is much quieter than that. The real work begins long before the photograph is taken; it begins with observation - learning to interpret the subtle signals hidden within the everyday behaviour of animals.

Whether it is a chital’s alarm call echoing through a forest, a langur suddenly staring into the distance, or a herd of elephants pausing mid-step in shallow water, these moments often appear ordinary to someone unfamiliar with the forest. Yet, to an observer who spends time watching carefully, they reveal the invisible conversations constantly unfolding in the wild. Ultimately, my photography begins with learning to listen.

### The Forest As A Classroom

The forest has a unique way of humbling you. In my early days of photographing wildlife, I believed success depended on being in the right place at the right time, but I soon realised that luck plays a much smaller role than patience. Hours may pass without anything dramatic happening. However, in those quiet hours, the forest slowly begins to reveal its underlying patterns.

Predators move along predictable paths, prey animals listen constantly for danger, and birds, monkeys, and deer act as sentinels for the entire ecosystem. Over time, you begin to understand that the forest is never random. Rather, it is an intricate network of signals, responses, and relationships, making photography less about chasing moments and more about anticipating them.



A tiger pauses beside a tree to spray scent—a territorial signal that communicates dominance and presence to other tigers moving through the forest.



**A cheetah subdues its prey in the open grasslands—a moment that reflects the delicate balance between predator and prey.**

### **Behaviour Before Beauty**

While wildlife photography is frequently celebrated for its sheer beauty, beauty alone rarely tells the full story. The most powerful images go further to reveal behaviour—those fleeting moments when animals are actively interacting with their environment, with each other, or with the invisible forces shaping their lives.

A cheetah grappling with its prey in the grasslands, a pride of lions resting beside a waterhole, or a matriarch elephant leading her herd across a flooded plain; these moments remind us that animals are not simply subjects to photograph. They are intelligent decision-makers navigating highly complex worlds.

### **Landscapes That Shape Life**

Crucially, animals cannot be separated from the landscapes they inhabit. Forests shape how predators move, oceans determine where seabirds nest, and floodplains dictate the seasonal migrations of elephants. In many ways, the landscape acts as the silent protagonist in every wildlife photograph.

A tiger walking through shafts of morning light tells us as much about the forest as it does about the animal itself, just as thousands of seabirds nesting along windswept cliffs reveal the immense productivity of the ocean



**Seabirds reclaiming a wreck in Antarctica** Cormorants and other seabirds nest on the rusted remains of a shipwreck, illustrating how wildlife adapts to unexpected structures within marine ecosystems.

below. Ultimately, understanding behaviour inherently means understanding a place.

### **Families Of The Wild**

Of course, not all wildlife behaviour is dramatic; some of the most meaningful moments are profoundly quiet ones. Whether it is a mother mountain lion surrounded by her curious cubs, young predators learning how to stalk and play-fight, or elephants moving protectively around their calves, these scenes resonate deeply.

They remind us that many of the essential bonds that shape animal societies—care, teaching, and protection—are remarkably familiar. Watching them unfold, it becomes almost impossible not to recognise quiet echoes of ourselves.



**Ocean colony of Black Browed Albatross** A vast gathering of seabirds along coastal cliffs demonstrates the social complexity and density of nesting colonies.

### **The Drama Of Survival**

However, the wild is not always gentle. Predation, competition, and conflict are unavoidable parts of life in natural ecosystems. Photographing these raw moments requires confronting a reality that is often difficult to witness, yet absolutely essential to understand.

Without predators, ecosystems inevitably collapse; without competition, species lose their delicate balance. Therefore, the stark drama we witness in the wild is not cruelty—it is simply survival.



**Mountain lion family** A mother Puma rests with her cubs, offering a rare glimpse into the intimate world of predator families.



**Lion coalition** Male lions resting together near water demonstrate the social alliances that help them defend territory and dominate rivals.

### **The Privilege Of Witnessing**

Wildlife photography is frequently described as a great adventure. Yet, for those who spend long periods in the field, the greatest reward is something far quieter: the profound privilege of just being present.

Being present when a polar bear crosses drifting sea ice in the Arctic, when elephants move silently through shallow wetlands beneath a vast sky, or when the heavy silhouettes of lions

emerge from tall grass at sunset. These moments are true gifts from the wild, serving to remind us that the photographer's role is never to dominate nature, but simply to witness it.

### **A Responsibility Beyond The Image**

Consequently, every wildlife photograph carries a weight of responsibility. Many of the animals

we photograph today face shrinking habitats, increasing human pressure, and rapidly changing climates. Our images serve as crucial reminders that these species are not abstract symbols of wilderness, but living beings navigating increasingly fragile ecosystems. If a photograph can successfully inspire curiosity, respect, or a genuine sense of wonder, then it transcends being mere art—it becomes advocacy.



**Lion's roar** A male lion vocalises across the grassland, announcing his presence and asserting control over territory.



**Zebras in motion** A herd of zebras reacts collectively to potential danger, demonstrating the protective power of group behaviour.



**Polar bear on sea ice** A solitary polar bear navigating fragmented melting ice—an image that reflects both resilience and the changing Arctic landscape.



**Lion pride at dusk** Young lions silhouetted against a burning sunset—an image that reflects both the mystery and vulnerability of the wild.



**Elephants crossing wetlands** A herd moves across seasonal floodplains, illustrating the powerful relationship between wildlife and water.

### **Learning To Listen**

Ultimately, the greatest lesson wildlife has taught me is patience: the ability to slow down, to watch carefully, and to understand that the most important moments often happen quietly.

When you spend enough time in the wild, you begin to realise that animals are constantly communicating through posture, movement, sound, and even silence. While the camera merely records those moments, the deeper story lies in learning to recognise them long before they happen. Because the wild is always speaking; you simply have to learn how to listen.

# THE RISE OF WOMEN IN SPORTS PHOTOGRAPHY

Sports photography has seen an upsurge of women participating in the role of photographer. The latest evidence we have is the *Milano Cortina* aka Winter Olympics that happened in Italy where about 25% of all photographers were women. This shift isn't just about optics or inclusion for inclusion's sake; it's about the depth and texture of sports storytelling. "Women often see the game differently," notes veteran sports photographer Amy Sanderson. "We might be drawn to the smaller interactions, the quiet moments of resilience, or the raw emotion that defines competitive spirit, adding a layer of storytelling that might otherwise be missed."



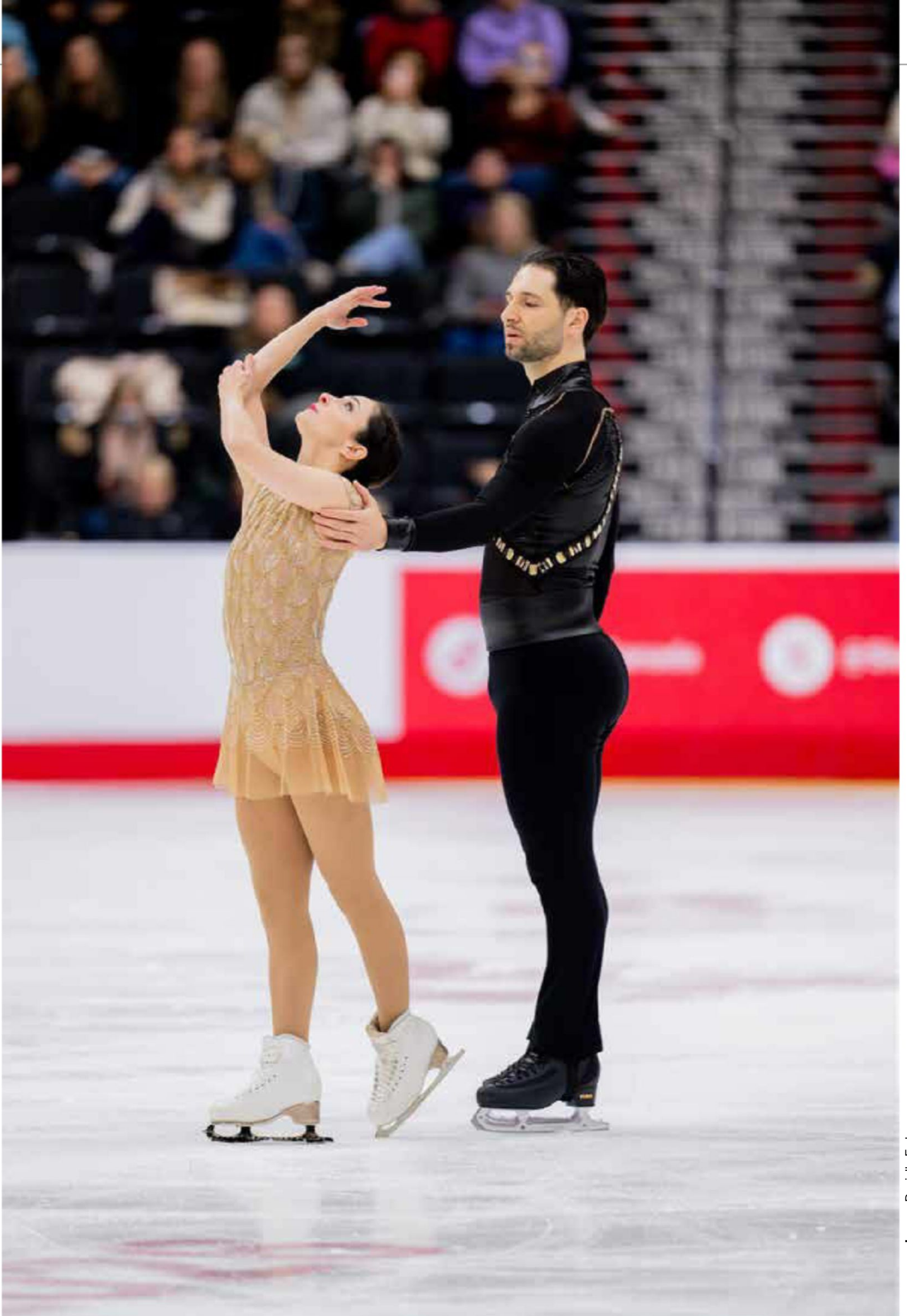


Image: Danielle Earl



Image: Natacha Pisarenko / AP

**T**his increase isn't just anecdotal. Data from major sporting events underscores the growing presence of female professionals. The 2022 Winter Olympics in Beijing served as a microcosm of this trend. While precise global statistics are complex to track, anecdotal and organisational reports highlighted a noticeable uptick in accredited female photographers compared to previous Games. In Beijing, approximately 15% of accredited photographers were women—a number that, while still pointing to a significant imbalance in the industry, represents a marked improvement from the near-exclusion of decades past.

This progress isn't accidental. Initiatives from major photographic agencies and governing bodies are focusing on providing opportunities and addressing systemic barriers. The International Olympic Committee (IOC), for example, has actively promoted gender balance across all aspects of the Games, including media representation.

To truly understand this evolution, it's essential to look at the trailblazers who paved the way and the modern masters defining the field today. Their work not only captures athletic brilliance, but also reflects the changing landscape

of sports photography itself. Let's deep dive into how sports photography is becoming an increasingly inclusive space for women to participate in worldwide.

### **Pioneering Voices (The 1970s - 1980s)**

This era was marked by the foundational presence of women who dared to enter an almost entirely male-dominated space. They faced skepticism and structural hurdles, but their work laid the groundwork for future generations, bringing new perspectives to how athletic competition and athletes were documented.

#### **Annie Leibovitz**

Early in her career at Rolling Stone, Annie photographed major sporting figures such as Muhammad Ali and Arnold Schwarzenegger, helping blend sports portraiture with editorial storytelling.

Another important figure is Neil Leifer's contemporary Hy Peskin's successor generation of women photographers, including Mary DeCicco and Susan Mullane, who began covering professional sports in the late 1970s and 1980s and paved the way for women in press boxes and on sidelines that had long excluded them. In tennis photography, Susan Mullane became especially influential for her dynamic images



Image: Elsa Garrison / Getty Images

at events like Wimbledon Championships and the US Open, capturing the speed and emotion of the sport with a distinctive courtside perspective. Through persistence in gaining access and developing their own visual approaches, these photographers helped open the field of sports photojournalism to women and expanded how athletes and sporting culture were visually represented.

**Building the Bridge (The 1990s - 2000s)**

As sports media expanded, a dedicated cohort of female photographers began to secure permanent positions at major news organisations and agencies, bringing consistent representation to the field.

**Suzanne Plunkett**

A highly respected photojournalist who frequently covered major sporting events, including multiple Olympics, for agencies like *Reuters* and *AP*. Plunkett's ability to capture pivotal moments under intense pressure became a hallmark of her work.

**Elsa Garrison**

One of the most decorated sports photographers working today, Garrison (often referred to professionally

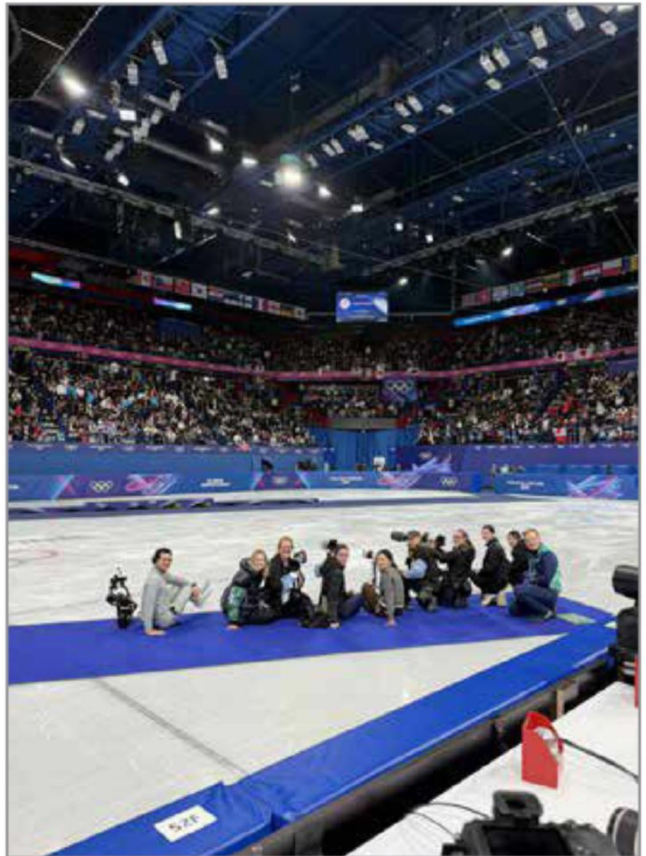


Image: Source Danielle Earl Twitter



Image: Elisa Garrison / Getty Images



Image: Sarah Stier



Image: Jacquelyn Martin / AP

as “Elsa”) has been a lead photographer for major agencies and publications. Her body of work is extensive, covering everything from the Super Bowl to the Olympics with remarkable versatility.

### The Modern Masters (The 2010s - Present)

The current era is seeing not only an increase in numbers, but a broadening of creative approaches. This generation is often highly skilled in social media and digital platforms, engaging with fans while delivering world-class imagery.

#### Steph Chambers

A staff photographer for *Getty Images*, Chambers’ work stands out for its dramatic use of light and emotion. She excels at finding unconventional angles and intimate details that convey the physical and emotional weight of elite sports.

#### Maddie Meyer

Another standout *Getty Images* staffer, Meyer is known for her vibrant, often celebratory compositions. She has a talent for capturing the joy and exuberance of victory, balanced by a sharp eye for peak action.

#### A Turning Point

The 2026 Winter Olympics in Milano Cortina served as a historic benchmark for this evolution. While the Beijing 2022 Games saw only 12% of accredited photographers as women, the 2026 Games saw a significant push toward parity.

The International Olympic Committee (IOC) achieved a record 47% female athlete participation, and this drive for balance trickled behind the camera as well. Organizations like Olympic Broadcasting Services (OBS) reported that 54% of their commentators were female—the first time they outnumbered men—while major agencies like *Getty Images* placed women at the forefront of their most experimental creative projects.

From using thermal imaging to capture the “heat” of athletes against the snow to reviving 70-year-old Graflex cameras, female photographers weren’t just present in 2026, they were the ones defining the visual aesthetic of the Games. Not only that, but the most impactful and well-remembered image from the Games of Lindsey Vonn’s crash was shot by a female photojournalist—Jacquelyn Martin.

#### Looking Ahead

The increasing inclusion of women in sports photography is a victory for the field as a whole. It’s not just about diversifying the press box; it’s about enriching the visual language of sports. The examples provided—from pioneers like Pabel to modern masters like Chambers and Meyer—demonstrate that different perspectives lead to more complete, nuanced storytelling. As the trend toward greater representation continues, the future of sports photography promises to be as dynamic, diverse, and compelling as the athletes they capture.

TEXT: ANIRUDH IYER

# RECLAIMING BODY POLITICS

## The Female Gaze and the Radical Act of Being Seen

For nearly two centuries, the camera has been a tool of both revelation and restriction. In the history of art and photography, the “*Male Gaze*”—a term coined by film critic Laura Mulvey—has functioned as the default setting. It is a perspective that views the female body as an object to be consumed, curated, and corrected. From the soft-focus pin-ups of the 1940s to the hyper-Photoshopped “*heroin chic*” of the 1990s, mainstream beauty standards have been dictated by a lens that prioritises performance over personhood. However, a quiet revolution is taking place behind the glass. Female and non-binary photographers are reclaiming body politics, utilising intimate portraiture, boudoir, and fine art to dismantle these legacy structures. By centering diverse body types, the natural textures of skin, and the inevitable beauty of aging, they are shifting the narrative from *how a woman looks to how a woman feels*.

### The Victorian & Edwardian Era: The Posed Property (1860s – 1910s)

In the early decades of photography, women were often treated as ornamental subjects. The “*Male Gaze*” was literal: male studio photographers directed women into rigid, idealised poses that emphasised corseted waists and passive expressions.

The Aesthetic: The “*Gibson Girl*” ideal, which was an unattainable standard of fragile elegance. Women were often photographed in profile or looking away, reinforcing their status as objects of observation rather than active participants.

The Rebellion: Even then, pioneers like Julia Margaret Cameron began to break the mold. Using a soft-focus technique that many male critics of the time dismissed as “sloppy”, she captured the inner intensity and intellectual depth of her female subjects, moving away from the mere “*pretty picture*”.

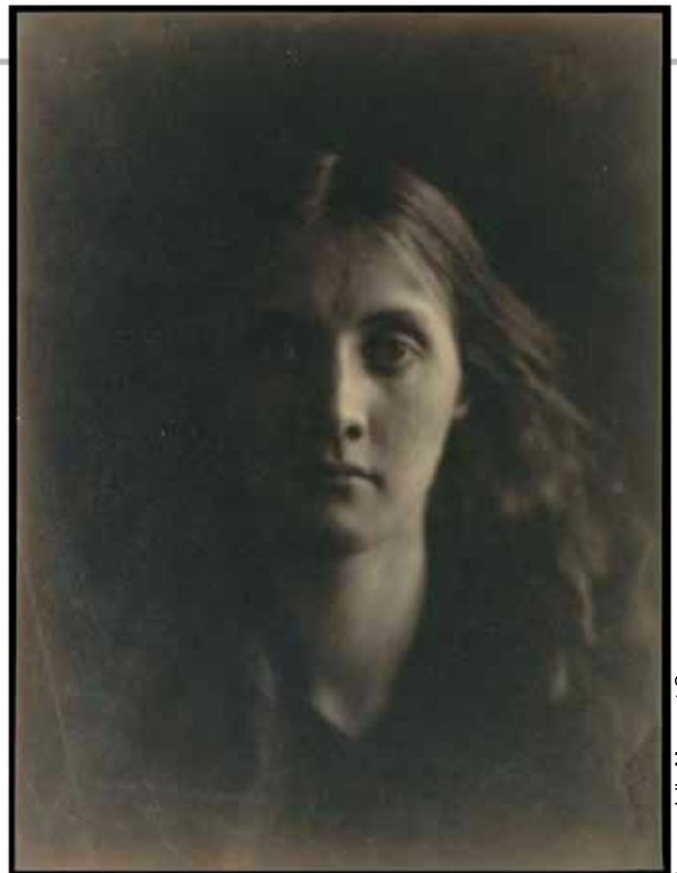


Image: Julia Margaret Cameron



### **The Mid-Century Polish: The Rise of the Pin-Up (1940s – 1950s)**

Post-war photography solidified the “standard”. The rise of fashion magazines and advertising created a monolithic image of femininity: young, white, able-bodied, and perpetually cheerful.

**The Aesthetic:** High-contrast lighting, heavy retouching (even in the analogue era through airbrushing), and a focus on the “hourglass” figure. Boudoir photography in this era was designed primarily for the male partner’s wallet or the soldier’s locker.

**The Historical Gaze:** Commercial photography during this era served to “tame” the female image after women had entered the workforce during the war, pushing them back into roles of domesticity and decorative glamour.



Image: Dorothea Lange Migrant Mother

### **The Second Wave Shift: The Body as Battleground (1970s – 1980s)**

As the feminist movement gained momentum, photographers began using their cameras to critique the very standards the industry had spent decades building.

**The Aesthetic:** Raw, unshrinking, and often “uncomfortable” by mainstream standards. The focus shifted to the physical realities of the female experience—menstruation, childbirth, and domestic labour.

**The Turning Point:** Jo Spence, a British photographer, became a seminal figure in this movement. When diagnosed with breast cancer, she used photography to document her aging, scarred, and non-idealised body. Her work was a direct middle finger to the “perfect” bodies seen in *Vogue*, reclaiming her autonomy from both the medical establishment and the fashion industry.



Image: Jo Spence

### The Digital Distortion & The Backlash (1990s – 2010s)

The advent of Photoshop in the 1990s took the “Male Gaze” to a digital extreme. Bodies could now be “liquified” — waists thinned, skin texture erased, and limbs lengthened beyond biological possibility.

**The Aesthetic:** “The Glazonette” — a skin so smooth it looked like plastic. This era saw the height of “Anti-Aging” culture, where a single wrinkle was treated as a photographic failure.

**The Subversion:** In response, photographers like Nan Goldin and Rineke Dijkstra captured the “unvarnished” body. Dijkstra’s series of women immediately after giving birth stripped away the glamour of motherhood, showing the exhaustion, the blood, and the sagging skin with a profound, quiet dignity.



Image: Nan Goldin

### The Modern Renaissance: Radical Self-Love & The Female Gaze (2020 – 2026)

We are currently in an era of “reclaiming”. Photography is no longer a top-down industry; social media and accessible digital tech have allowed diverse voices to build their own galleries.

#### The New Boudoir: From Performance to Empowerment

Modern boudoir photography, led largely by female-identifying photographers, has undergone a radical transformation. It is no longer about “looking sexy for him”; it is about “feeling powerful for me”.

**The Focus:** Photographers are now celebrating “flaws” as features. Stretch marks (often called “tiger stripes”), cellulite, and surgical scars are not edited out; they are lit with the same reverence once reserved for a Dior gown.



Image: Mihaela Noroc

**Diverse Bodies:** The lens has finally widened to include plus-size bodies, disabled bodies, and trans bodies, documenting them not as “other”, but as the standard of beauty itself.

#### The Art of Aging

In a culture obsessed with youth, photographing the aging female body is a political act.

- **The Aesthetic:** High-detail, “macro” portraiture that celebrates the geography of a life lived.
- **Key Movement:** Photographers are increasingly rejecting “skin smoothing” filters. Instead, they use side-lighting to emphasise the texture of silver hair and the wisdom etched into the skin. This isn’t just “inclusion”; it is an intentional dismantling of the “expiration date” previously placed on female visibility.

### **The Impact: Changing the Internal Monologue**

Why does this shift in photography matter? Because the images we consume dictate the way we talk to ourselves in the mirror.

When a photographer like Zanele Muholi documents the Black queer experience, or Mihaela Noroc captures “*The Atlas of Beauty*” across every continent and age, they are providing a mirror for those who have been invisible for a century. The “Male Gaze” sought to narrow our definition of beauty until it was a needle’s eye that almost no one could pass through. The “Female Gaze” seeks to widen it until it encompasses everyone.

Through intimate portraiture, we see that the body is not a project to be finished, but a story to be told. The scars of a C-section are the opening chapter of a family; the wrinkles around the eyes are the evidence of a thousand laughs; the weight of a body is simply the space it has earned the right to occupy.



Image: Zanele Muholi

### **Conclusion: The Future of the Frame**

As we move further into 2026, the boundaries between “fine art” and “social activism” in photography continue to blur. We are moving toward a world where the camera is no longer a judge, but a witness. By reclaiming body politics, female photographers aren’t just changing the industry; they are healing the collective psyche of a generation that was taught to hide.

The most radical thing a woman can do in 2026 is to be seen—exactly as she is.

TEXT: ANIRUDH IYER

# A Dive into the Asian Archives

History has a funny way of cropping the frame. For decades, the narrative of photography's birth and adolescence was a strictly Western, male-dominated affair. We've all seen the daguerreotypes of stern-faced European explorers, but if you look into the peripheral shadows of the archives, a more complex and much more interesting picture emerges. Across Asia, from the bustling studios of Tokyo to the sun-drenched streets of Nazareth and the political heart of Delhi, women were not just posing for portraits; they were the ones adjusting the aperture. They were pioneers who navigated the volatile chemistry of early film and the even more volatile social structures of their time. This is a dive into the archives to recover the stories of the women who captured Asia's transformation through the lens.



Image: Shima Ryū



Image: Shima Ryū

## The 1860s – 1890s: Chemistry, Glass, and the “Invisible” Studio Hand

In the mid-to-late 19th century, photography was less an art form and more a grueling physical labour. To be a photographer was to be a chemist, a carpenter, and a weightlifter. You weren't just “snapping a pic”; you were coating glass plates with sticky collodion, rushing them into a camera while wet, and developing them in a cramped, vinegar-scented darkroom before the emulsion dried.



Shima Ryū

### Shima Ryū (Japan)

While history books often highlight her husband, Shima Kakoku, as a pioneer of Japanese photography, Shima Ryū was a full partner in the craft. In 1864, Ryū became what is widely considered the first Japanese woman to produce a professional photograph—a portrait of her husband.

Working in their studio in Tokyo (and later Kiryū), Ryū was a master of the wet-plate collodion process. This wasn't a hobby; it was a grueling professional endeavour. Because the cultural norms of the *Edo* and early *Meiji* periods often relegated women to the background, much of her work was likely attributed to the “Shima Studio” generally. However, her technical proficiency was undeniable. She navigated a world where “proper” women were expected to be subjects of art, not the creators of the technical gaze. Her legacy serves as a reminder that for every famous male studio owner of the 19th century, there was often a woman behind the curtain managing the precise chemical timing that made the image possible.



## The 1900s – 1930s: The Rise of the “Lady Photographer”

By the turn of the century, the “*New Woman*” movement was sweeping across Asia. Education for women was expanding, and the introduction of more portable cameras—like the Kodak Brownie—began to democratise the medium. Photography moved from the laboratory to the street.



Karimeh Abbud

### Karimeh Abbud (Palestine)

In the 1920s, Karimeh did something radical: she opened a professional studio and advertised herself openly as a “Lady Photographer” (*Musawwirat al-Shams*). Based in Bethlehem and later Nazareth, Abbud offered a stark alternative to the “Orientalist” photography common at the time.

While European photographers often travelled to the Middle East to capture staged, exoticised images of “biblical” landscapes, Abbud captured the reality of Palestinian life. Her work was intimate. She photographed families in their homes, children in their Sunday best, and the burgeoning middle class. Her style was defined by a naturalism that was decades ahead of its time. By removing the “tourist gaze”, she gave her subjects back their dignity. Technically, she was known for her hand-colouring techniques, adding delicate hues to black-and-white prints to bring a sense of vibrancy to the local landscapes.

### Zhang Jingqiu (China)

Simultaneously in China, women were beginning to break into the commercial photography scene. Zhang Jingqiu operated a successful studio in Chengdu during the late 1920s. This was a period of intense cultural shift in China, where the traditional gave way to the “Modern Girl” (*modeng shaonü*). Zhang’s studio became a sanctuary where women could experiment with their identities—posing in both traditional qipaos and Western-style furs—capturing a generation caught between two worlds.



Image: Karimeh Abbud



Image: Karimeh Abbud



Image: Karimeh Abbud

## The 1940s – 1960s: The Frontlines and the Birth of Nations

As the mid-century arrived, the world was on fire. World War II and the subsequent decolonisation movements across Asia turned photography into a vital political tool. The “studio” was no longer enough; women took their cameras into the streets to document the birth of new nations.



**Homai Vyarawalla**

Her chance Vyarawalla took it. Her presence was an anomaly—a Parsi woman in a sari, lugging a heavy camera through crowds of men. Her work was characterised by a brilliant sense of timing and a refusal to be intimidated. She didn’t just document politics; she documented the emotion of a country gaining its soul. When she retired in 1970, she did so because she felt the “new” era of paparazzi-style photography lacked the dignity and craft she had spent decades perfecting.

### Homai Vyarawalla (India)

Perhaps the most iconic figure of this era is Homai Vyarawalla, India’s first female photojournalist. Working under the pseudonym “*Dalda 13*”, Vyarawalla was a fixture in the Indian independence movement.

If you see a classic photo of Mahatma Gandhi, Jawaharlal Nehru, or the first hoisting of the Indian flag, there is a high



Image: Homai Vyarawalla



**Tsuneko Sasamoto**

never become lazy. It’s essential to remain positive about your life and never give up.” This tenacity allowed her to continue shooting well into her 100s, becoming a bridge between the analogue past and the digital present.

### Tsuneko Sasamoto (Japan)

In post-war Japan, Sasamoto became the nation’s first female photojournalist. She documented a Japan in the throes of total transformation—from the stark poverty of the immediate post-war years to the student protests of the 1960s. Her work is a masterclass in social documentary. She famously said, “You should

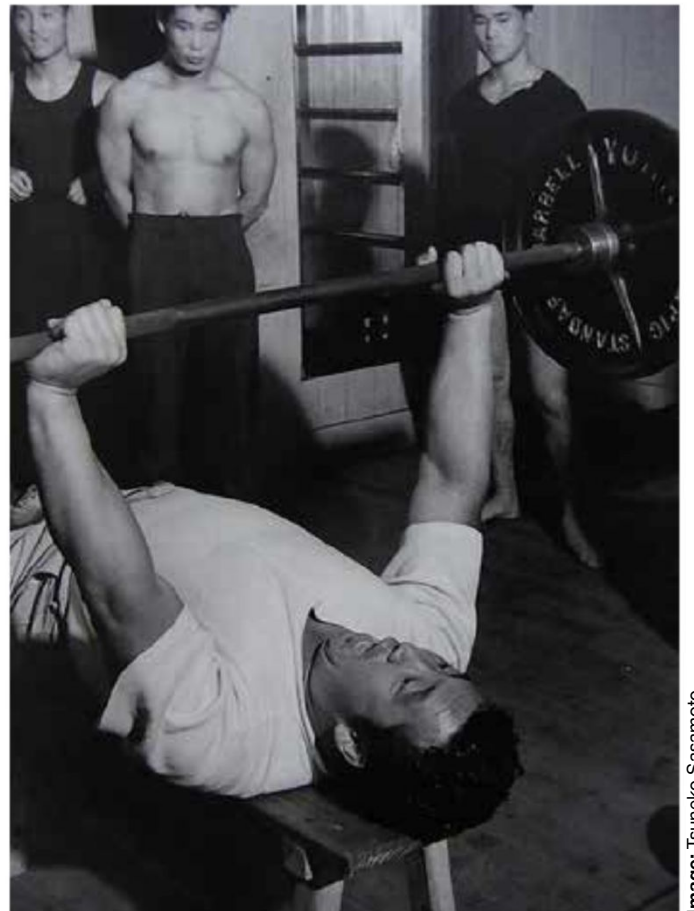


Image: Tsuneko Sasamoto



Image: Tsuneko Sasamoto

**The 1970s – 1990s:  
Shifting the Focus to Identity and Subjectivity**

By the late 20th century, the “pioneering” phase of Asian photography shifted from mere documentation toward profound artistic and social commentary. The camera was no longer just a tool for capturing the world as it was, but a means to explore what it meant to be Asian in a rapidly globalising, often turbulent world.



**Dayanita Singh**

serves as a primary art object. Through her “Mobile Museums”, she challenged the static nature of gallery walls, allowing her exploration of the Indian upper-middle class and vast organisational archives to become portable, living histories.

Simultaneously, in Japan, **Miyako Ishiuchi** was using her lens to investigate the physical manifestations of time, memory, and trauma. Her work moved beyond the surface to capture the “scars” of history—quite literally. In her series 1-9-4-7, she photographed the hands and feet of women born in the same year as herself, turning the aging body into a map of experience. Her most poignant contribution remains her macro-photography



**Miyako Ishiuchi**

In India, **Dayanita Singh** began to fundamentally redefine the traditional documentary style. Moving away from the conventional “decisive moment” popularised by Western photographers, Singh treated the photograph as a physical object rather than just an image. Her work eventually evolved into what she calls “book-building”, where the photo book itself



Image: Dayanita Singh



Image: Dayanita Singh

of objects left behind by victims of the atomic bomb in Hiroshima. By focusing on the intimate details of a worn dress or a pair of glasses, she transformed historical tragedy into a tactile, deeply personal narrative.



Image: Miyako Ishiuchi



Image: Miyako Ishiuchi



**Sheba Chhachhi**

Meanwhile, Sheba Chhachhi was documenting the burgeoning women's movement in India with a uniquely collaborative approach. Chhachhi rejected the idea of the photographer as a detached observer. Instead, she worked closely with activists to create staged, conceptual portraits where the subjects had agency over their representation. This shift from

documentary to social installation allowed her to capture the internal strength and complexity of the movement, moving the medium into the realm of activist art.



Image: Sheba Chhachhi



Image: Sheba Chhachhi

## Why Were They Forgotten?

It is a valid question: if these women were so influential, why are their names often missing from the “*Great Masters*” lists? The reasons are as much about the medium as they are about society.

- 1. The “Studio Name” Trap:** In the 19th and early 20th centuries, the business was the brand. Many women worked in family studios where the male patriarch’s name was the only one on the letterhead.
- 2. Archival Bias:** For a long time, Western institutions (the primary keepers of “Art History”) focused on Asian photography through the lens of ethnography where they saw photos as “specimens” rather than “art”, and the photographers as workers.
- 3. The Domestic Label:** Women who photographed families or domestic scenes were often dismissed as “amateurs” or “hobbyists”, while men taking similar portraits were labelled “portraitists”.

## Looking Back, To the Future

Reclaiming the stories of Shima Ryū, Karimeh Abbud, and Homai Vyarawalla isn’t just about “correcting” the record, it’s about enriching our understanding of what photography is. These women didn’t just take pictures; they negotiated their way into rooms they weren’t supposed to be in. They handled toxic chemicals, braved war zones in saris and kimonos, and looked at their own cultures with a clarity that outsiders could never replicate.

The archive is no longer a static place of the past. Every time we research a “forgotten” pioneer, we are essentially “re-developing” an old negative, allowing a hidden image to finally come into the light.

TEXT: ANIRUDH IYER

# Asian Photography AND IMAGING

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# vivo V70 Elite Review

We're diving into one of the most-anticipated midrange flagship phones of 2026—vivo V70 Elite. With a launch price starting around ₹51,999 and packed with flagship-grade features, vivo is positioning this phone as a camera-centric all-rounder. But does it really deliver? Let's find out.



## Cameras

The V70 Elite pushes a triple camera setup tuned with ZEISS optics:

- **Main Camera:** 50MP (Sony IMX766 with OIS)
- **Telephoto:** 50MP (Sony IMX882 OIS, 3x optical and up to 100X digital zoom)
- **Ultrawide:** 8 MP (no info on sensor)
- **Front:** 50 MP (Samsung JN1)
- Video wise, it can shoot 4K up to 60 fps from the main and telephoto camera.

## Look, Body & Feel

The V70 Elite immediately feels premium, thanks to its frame and refined, sleek design. Up front, the flat 6.59-inch 120 Hz AMOLED display.

The camera island is tastefully designed, highlighted by subtle ZEISS branding and a clean, symmetrical layout that adds to the phone's polished look. Also notice how many phones nowadays are moving towards an iPhone-ish look, where at first glance even to me it looked like an iPhone when the third camera and Zeiss logo were covered by a finger?

Weighing around 194 grams, it strikes a solid balance which is solid-in-hand without feeling heavy. The V70 Elite also comes with IP68 & IP69 ratings and a new ultrasonic fingerprint sensor but its placement may bother some people, at least until they get

used to it. Overall, the build quality is one of the best for its price segment.

## Daylight Main Camera

Features a 50MP Sony LYT-700V sensor giving you 14MP output. You



Daylight Main

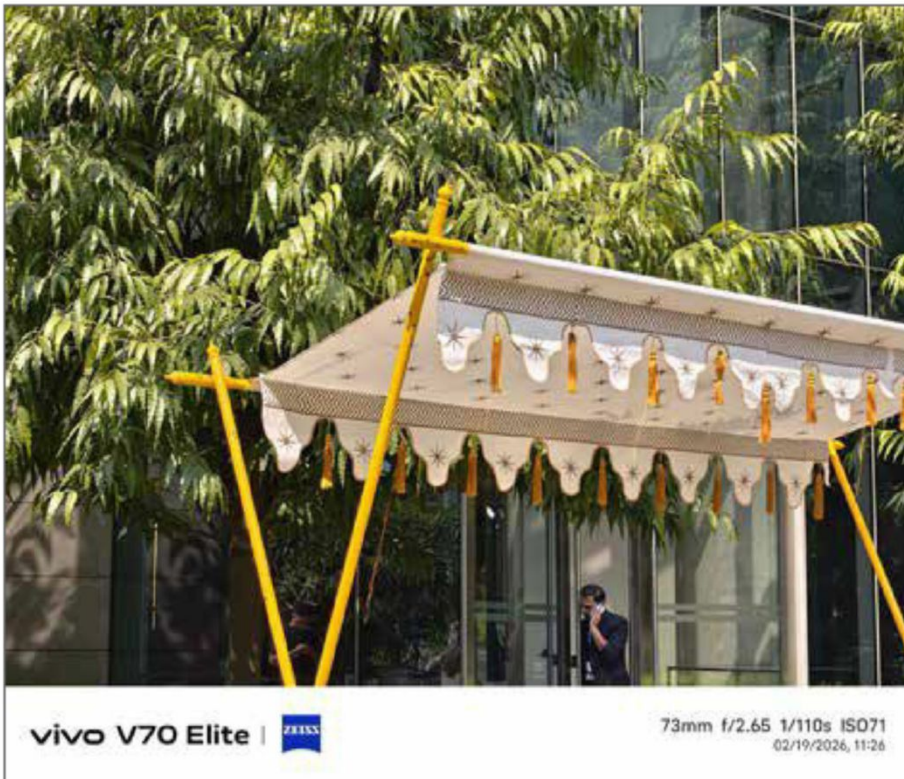
recommendations, we'd suggest you to stay in the 3 to 10x range.

**Lowlight**

In low light, the main camera does a good job holding onto detail and managing noise without overcooking the scene. Night shots are usable and expressive, though the ultrawide still lags behind as the images are slightly under as compared to the other cameras. In telephoto, the images aren't tack-sharp, in fact you can see that when you zoom into faces, but the images are still usable and definitely can be put out on social media—especially the pictures shot with the optical zoom.

**Front**

Upfront is also a 50MP shooter that delivers a 14MP image, and gives you three lenses to shoot from—0.8x, 1x and 2x. Image quality is decent, no excessive processing is seen, which is a plus and skin tone is preserved. But the same can't be said about the front camera portrait, where occasionally the skin tone felt off compared to a regular front picture. The bokeh is decent, with edge detection also working pretty well. Overall, a more than decent performance out of this camera.



**Daylight Telephoto**

have two options to shoot with, 1x and 2x, where 2x is a digital zoom from the main camera.

Captures natural, well-balanced, but vibrant colours with plenty of detail. In good light, shots are sharp and pleasing with accurate dynamic range. There's not too much to complain about.

**Daylight Ultrawide**

The ultrawide camera gives you a 0.6x lens featuring an 8MP sensor giving you 8MP images. Image quality wise, it holds its own in daylight—colours stay true to the ZEISS signature and distortion is present but is well-controlled but the lack of detail is noticeable even if you zoom in a little bit. You'll get solid landscape and group shots, if you're okay with the detail being a bit behind the main sensor, but like we recommend with all phones, you're better off without using this one, unless it's the final resort.

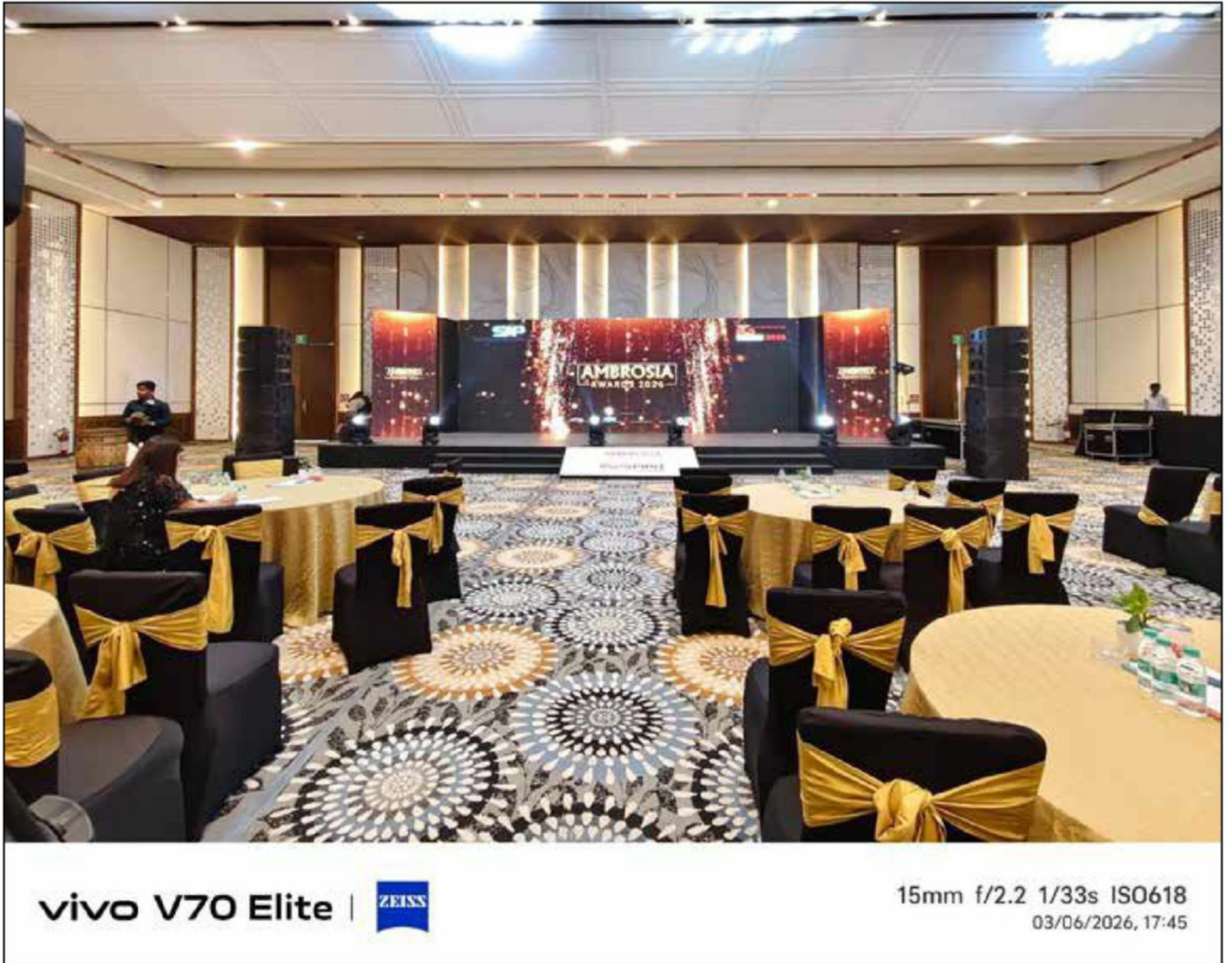
**Daylight Telephoto**

The telephoto lens features a 50MP Sony IMX 882 sensor, giving you 14MP images. The dual periscope telephoto really shines for zoomed shots up to 3x optical zoom, offering crisp, usable

results up to 10x. Beyond that you can see processing becoming more visible and colour fringing evident. At max focal range of 100x, obviously the image is unusable, and like our previous



**Daylight Wide**



vivo V70 Elite | ZEISS

15mm f/2.2 1/33s ISO618  
03/06/2026, 17:45

Lowlight Wide



vivo V70 Elite | ZEISS

70mm f/5.6 1/100s ISO52  
03/12/2026, 16:50

Macro

### Portrait Mode

Portrait mode gives you five lenses to shoot with, and each of them have a distinct visible signature. It is up to personal preference as to which one you'd like, but you can choose your own bokeh types after as well. Image quality wise, images are sharp, well-saturated and pleasing to the eye in terms of colours. Edge detection is improved from past vivo mid-range models, although occasionally fine edges around hair and backgrounds can still look slightly unnatural if taken in cluttered scenes but the accuracy has improved. But there is some difference in colours as you move from one lens to another, but the subject is well-exposed in each case.



Lowlight Telephoto

### Video

Video capture supports 4K 60 fps but only on main and telephoto cameras. Since the ultrawide is an 8MP sensor, it can only shoot at 1080p. The main camera video looks clean with good colour consistency. Stabilisation is alright, although extreme motion can still introduce shake. Telephoto is the same, and the shake is a bit more prominent, but footage from the rear cameras have good dynamic range, definitely usable. There are no pro modes, but the dual screen recording feature, where the front and rear cameras record simultaneously is present and records at a weird 27 frames per second.

Up front, again the phone supports shooting 4K up to 60fps.

### Battery Life

Packed with a 6500 mAh battery, the V70 Elite delivers excellent endurance comfortably lasting through a full day of moderate to heavy usage. With 90W fast-charging support, you get a fast top-up when needed, but there's no wireless charging.

### Conclusion

So, is the vivo V70 Elite worth your money?

Overall, it's a highly competitive package in the mid-premium segment.

There are some trade-offs—the ultra-wide camera and zoom detail aren't class-leading, and video could be stronger but for photography enthusiasts and everyday users alike, this phone ticks most boxes for most people at its price point. Overall, this still feels like a solid package, and we give it our thumbs up.

TEXT AND IMAGES: ANIRUDH IYER

# PHOTO SCAPE

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or  
Send in your entries to *asianphotographyindia@gmail.com*



**Name:** Dhriya H  
**Camera & lens:** Nikon Z7ii & nikon 85mm  
**Focal length:** 85mm  
**Shutter speed:** 1/200  
**Aperture:** F 6.3  
**ISO:** 1000  
**Instagram ID:** dhriya\_haridas



**Name:** Manaswita Jigar Doshi  
**Camera & Lens:** Nikon Z 5, Nikkor 24-70 mm  
**Focal length:** 36mm  
**Shutter Speed:** 1/200s  
**Aperture:** F/5.6  
**ISO:** 1600  
**Instagram ID:** @manas\_phototales



**Name:** Banhisikha Banerjee  
**Camera & Lens :** Sony a7IV Sony 400-800mm F6.3-8 GOSS  
**Focal Length:** 678 mm  
**Shutter Speed:** 1/2500  
**Aperture:** F8  
**ISO:** 800  
**Instagram:** @banhisikhabanerjee\_wildlife



**Name:** Kabita Saha  
**Camera & Lens:** NIKON Z6(2), 24mm-120mm  
**Focal Length:** 24MM  
**Shutter Speed:** 1/200  
**Aperture:** F/4.5  
**ISO:** 100  
**Instagram ID:** @kabita257photo



**Name:** Moumita Chaudhuri Dutta  
**Camera & Lens:** Nikon D7200  
(Nikkor 200mm-500mm)  
**Focal length:** 210 mm  
**Shutter Speed:** 1/640 sec  
**Aperture:** F/7.1  
**ISO:** 1600  
**Instagram ID:** @  
dizneydiaries1\_2102



**Name:** Swati Nema  
**Camera & Lens:** SONY ILCE-6100  
FE 200-600mm F5.6-6.3 G OSS)  
**Focal length:** 448 mm  
**Shutter Speed:** 1/1000 sec  
**Aperture:** F/8  
**ISO:** 200  
**Instagram ID:** @  
swatinphotography



**Name:** Pratibha Khanna  
**Camera and Lens:** Samsung  
Galaxy S22 Ultra  
**Focal length:** 13mm  
**Shutter speed:** 1/1576 sec  
**Aperture:** F/2.2  
**ISO:** 50  
**Instagram ID:** @  
pratsphotography



**Name:** Shwetha R  
**Camera & Lens:** Canon 200D with 55-250mm.  
**Focal length:** 250  
**Shutter Speed:** 1/4000  
**Aperture:** F/ 5.6  
**ISO:** 1600  
**Instagram ID:** @shwetha\_7photography



**Name:** Sreeparna Choudhury  
**Camera & Lens:** Canon EOS R6 Mark III & RF28-70 f/2  
**Focal Length:** 28mm  
**Shutter Speed:** 1/250s  
**Aperture:** F/5.6  
**ISO:** 100  
**Instagram:** @sreeparna.photography



**Name:** Deepa Godkhindi  
**Camera & Lens:** Canon R5 body and RF70-200mm F2.8 L IS USM Z  
**Focal length:** 163mm  
**Shutter Speed:** 1/250 sec  
**Aperture:** F/2.8  
**ISO:** 8000  
**Instagram ID:** deepa.godkhindi

# PHOTO MONTAGE

Looking to get your portfolio featured??  
Send your entry to [asianphotographyindia@gmail.com](mailto:asianphotographyindia@gmail.com) and tell us why we should feature it



I am Ramya, a Chennai-based travel and culture photographer and an independent social worker working in the areas of child sexual abuse awareness and the welfare of HIV-affected communities. My journey with photography began in childhood, watching my father handle film rolls and cameras with care and patience. He was my first inspiration. Over time I taught myself, slowly finding my own way of seeing. Today, alongside my practice, I also mentor emerging photographers and share what I have learned along the way.

For me, photography is about creating stories that stay, stories that are felt long after the image is seen. I have always been drawn to people and lived culture: the quiet strength in faces, gestures that speak without words, and everyday moments carrying depth and dignity. Festivals and cultural rituals especially move me, as they reveal the roots of collective memory, belief, emotion, and celebration within communities. My work grows from spending time with people and environments, allowing familiarity and trust to shape what unfolds in front of my lens. I am especially drawn to documenting living traditions such as *Theyyam*, *Mayana Kollai*, transgender festivals, and tribal celebrations across India and beyond. I am deeply interested in people and their ways of life, and I hope to bring these long-term cultural narratives together as a published body of work.

My role as a social worker keeps me closely connected to lives often overlooked or misunderstood. That experience shapes how I photograph—with patience, empathy, and respect. I do not see photography as observation from distance, but as witnessing from within. I believe photographs should be seen, felt, and framed.

I have been recognised in international and national photography contests, with work exhibited and published in newspapers. I was honoured to be selected as a National Geographic India Calendar Photographer for 2026. Across my work, one belief stays constant: *every person carries a story worth seeing, feeling, and remembering.*

Instagram: [@ramyasgraphy](https://www.instagram.com/ramyasgraphy)



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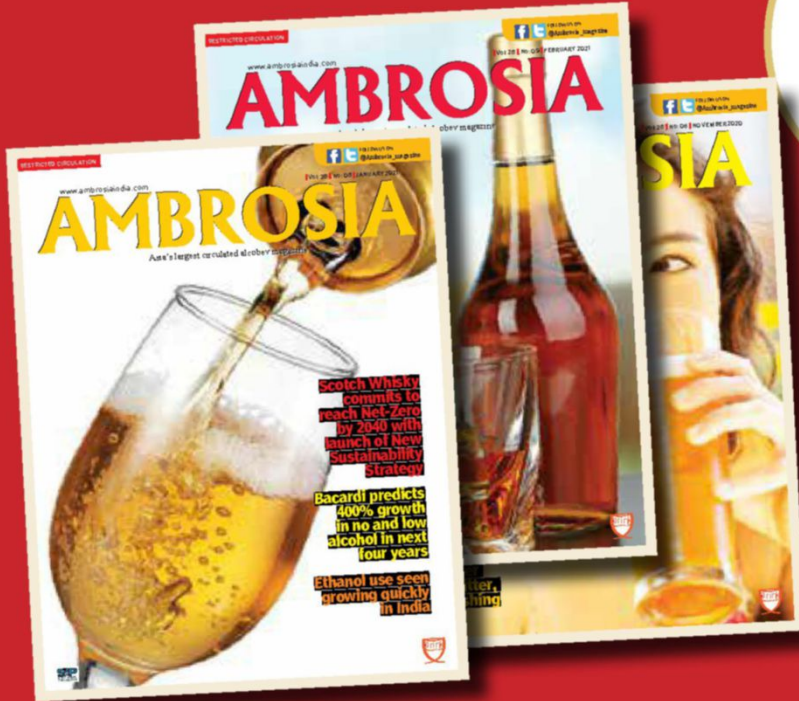
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