

Smart Photography

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Photo Feature**Postcards from Annecy****Showcase**

- **H. Satish**
- **Shubhadeep Das**

Special Feature**Photography in the
Age of AI, Part II****Learning**

- **Culling images using
Lightroom Classic**
- **Creating 'Soft', Progressively
Unsharp Backgrounds**
- **Tips for Photographing
Sunrise/Sunsets**

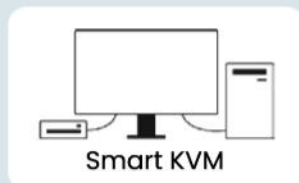
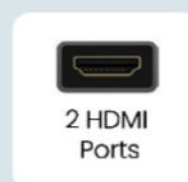
Printing & Beyond**Perspectives, by Vimal Parmar**



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WELCOME

Smart Photography

INDIA'S NUMBER 1 IMAGING MAGAZINE!

Are professional photographers in the business just because it is a job like any other? I very much doubt it. Millions of hobbyists take up photography as an interest or hobby but very few succeed in producing images that are truly worth treasuring. Professional photographers emerge out of this small finite lot. It would therefore be safe to state that photographers become 'professional' not only because they are good at what they do but also because they love what they do.

Imagine what would happen if individuals took to photography only as a job and without a creative bent of mind. The result would be millions of pictures no one would want to see.

■ H. S. Billimoria



HERE'S WHAT MAKES US #1

WE ARE GLUED TO THE GLOBAL IMAGING INDUSTRY

Our team is updated with all the benchmarks and road blocks that the field of photography and imaging across the globe experiences. This helps us record the changes in the global perspective, thus making us the first to predict which products will be a rage in the Indian markets.

WE'RE IMPARTIAL

Loyalty towards our readers is a given, and their best interests are always on our mind. Every verdict is honest and not influenced by advertisers or personal favourites. So when we say a product is a 'BEST BUY', then, it is just that!

OUR TESTS ARE CONDUCTED BY EXPERTS

All equipment go through a series of tests at the hands of our experts. Our reviewers are experts in the field of photography across the country and have many years of experience. That gives us the foresight to distinguish between a passing trend and a big change in the field of photography and imaging. And finally, our reviews are not extended to just fill up the pages!

WE ARE HERE TO HELP YOU

There is no debate on why we are here. Our sole goal is to provide you options and better your judgement in product purchase while, sharing tips and tricks to improve your images. Our biggest joy is in building a bridge between you and your perfect picture!

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Editor - Hoshang S Billimoria

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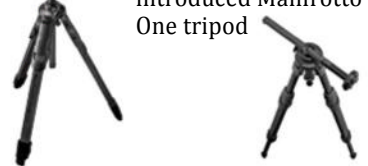
Photographer : H. Satish



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FIRST LOOK

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Olympus is now **OM SYSTEM**

SNIPPETS

- Thypoch has released the Simera 50 mm F 1.4 lens for the Leica M mount. The lens weighs a mere 280 gms. For a M mount lens, the indicative price of 750 dollars seems a steal.
- Meike has announced a new 85 mm F 1.4 II full frame autofocus lens for Nikon's Z mount. Indicative price is under 500 dollars.
- Meike has also released an AF 56 mm F 1.7 APS-C lens for Nikon's Z mount. The lens carries a wow price of 159 dollars.
- Venus Optics has announced a new Laowa 4.5 – 10 mm fisheye zoom lens for Nikon's APS-C users. Price is under 400 dollars.
- Viltrox has announced the Z1 Pro retro inspired compact flash for Canon, Nikon, Sony and Fujifilm cameras. This is the pro version of the existing Z 1. The Z 1 Pro offers up to 1/8000 high speed sync for greater shooting flexibility.
- Godox has announced a new V 480 TTL flash for Sony, Nikon, Fujifilm, Olympus and Panasonic cameras. The new flash provides high capacity studio quality light and has a guide number of 50.
- 7 Artisans has announced three new lenses: 1. 18mm F 2 pancake, 2. 10 mm F 4 pancake, 3. 10 mm F 2.5 full frame fisheye
- Thypoch has released its first full frame AF zoom christened the Voyager 24 – 50 mm F 2.8. A price of around 600 dollars has been indicated.
- An 8 year old has won the Jamie Oliver Youth prize in the World Food Photography Awards. The photographer, Ariel Owliasi captured a picture of a Romanesco cauliflower on his smartphone.
- HSG, formerly known as Sequoia Capital China is a hot contender to buy Leica AG. A valuation of around 900 million pounds is being rumoured.
- New firmware update fixes autofocus issues on Nikon's Z 70 – 200 mm F 2.8 VR S II lens. Autofocus response was slow when using teleconverters.



10 Best Selling Cameras in April 2026

Major Japanese retailer Kitamura has released its list of best selling cameras for the month of April 2026.

1. Sony a7cII
2. Sony ZV-E10 II lens kit
3. Sony a 7 IV
4. Sony a 6700
5. Nikon Z 30 double zoom kit
6. Fujifilm X-T 5
7. Sony A 7 V
8. Canon EOS R 50 zoom kit
9. Fujifilm X-T 30 III
10. Canon EOS R 6 MK II

10 Best Selling Mirrorless Cameras in May 2026

Major US retailer B & H Photo has revealed their best selling mirrorless cameras for the month of May 2026.

1. Sony a7R VI
2. Sony a7 V
3. Sony a 7 VI with 100–400 mm F 4.5 kit
4. Canon EOS R 5 II
5. Canon EOS R 6 III
6. Canon EOS R 6 II
7. Sony a 6700
8. Canon EOS R 7
9. Canon EOS R6 V
10. Nikon Z 8

US retailer, B & H Photo has released its list of best selling compact cameras for the month of May 2026

1. Kodak Charmera
2. Panasonic Lumix L 10 (black)

3. Panasonic Lumix L 10 (silver)
4. Canon Powershot G 7 X III 30th Anniversary Edition
5. Fujifilm X 100 VI (black)
6. Canon Powershot G 7 X III
7. Fujifilm X 100 VI (silver)
8. Ricoh GR IV
9. Kodak Charmera (6 pack)
10. Sony ZV-1

BCN+R, Japan's best selling cameras for May 2026

1. Sony ZV-E10 II double zoom kit in black
2. Canon EOS R10 + RF-S 18–150 mm IS STM lens kit
3. Canon EOS R 50 double zoom kit black
4. Nikon Z 50 + 16–50 mm VR lens
5. Nikon Z 50 II double zoom kit
6. Canon EOS R 50 double zoom kit in white
7. Sony a 7 V
8. OM System Olympus Pen E-P 7 EZ kit in silver
9. Fujifilm X-T 30 III + XC 13–33 lens kit silver
10. Sony ZV-E 10 II + power zoom kit



Viltrox introduces pancake lens for Panasonic S 9

Viltrox has launched a new 28 mm F 4.5 pancake lens specially designed for Panasonic Lumix's full frame S 9. Earlier, Lumix had introduced a diminutive 45 mm F 2.



SNIPPETS

- 7 Artisans and Seagull of China have joined hands to produce a 35 mm F 1.7 lens for the Leica M mount.
- Viltrox has announced two new APS – C Evo lenses viz a 75 mm F 1.8 and a 90 mm F 2.2. These lenses will be available in Fujifilm X, Nikon Z and Sony E mounts.
- Sony has developed a new sensor, the IMX 949, which is a global shutter sensor shooting 4096 x 3072 at 502 fps in 12 bit.
- Sony is currently the largest single shareholder in Tamron. Its position is likely to be threatened by an activist fund, Effissimo Capital Management who threatens to buy a larger stake.
- DJI and Insta 360 are suing each other alleging patent infringements in their gimbal camera models.
- Panasonic Lumix's L 10 compact MFT camera seems to have clicked in a big way in Japan and the U S and the camera is in short supply.
- S G Images of China has launched a new autofocus 25 mm F 1.8 lens for Micro Four Thirds Cameras. The lens comes with a metal barrel and weighs only 145 gms.
- Nikon is rumoured to release a new firmware update for the Z 9. The new update seeks to improve AF problems in heavy snow or rain even further.



Sigma announces 85 mm F 1.2 DG Art lens

At the CP Plus show, Sigma announced the new 85 mm F 1.2 Art lens. Initially, the lens will be available only in Sony's E mount and Panasonic's L mount.



F1.2 PRIME LENSES
FOR FULL-FRAME

SIGMA



BenQ Expands Its Mac Monitor Portfolio with the New MA320UG

Building on the Success of the Flagship MA270S, the MA320UG Brings Ultra-Smooth 4K Visuals and Professional-Grade Color to Mac Creators

BenQ announced the MA320UG, a new addition to its Mac-focused MA Series. As creative workflows become increasingly visual, collaborative, and multi-device, the expectations from an external display have evolved far beyond additional screen space. Today's Mac creators require displays that integrate seamlessly into their ecosystem while delivering the visual fidelity, fluidity, and productivity needed to keep pace with modern content creation.

Designed specifically for video creators, motion designers, multimedia professionals, and content creators, the MA320UG combines a large 32-inch 4K display, a 120Hz refresh rate (ProMotion supported), Mac-tuned color performance, and intelligent workflow tools to create a more responsive and immersive creative environment.

"The launch of the MA270S established a new benchmark for Mac-first displays,

bringing 5K precision and true Mac color to creators who demand the highest level of visual accuracy," said Rajeev Singh, Managing Director, BenQ India. "Today, creators are no longer looking for displays that simply connect to a Mac, they expect displays that work as a natural extension of their creative workflow. With the MA320UG, we are addressing this shift by combining fluid visual performance, seamless connectivity, and Mac-native experiences in a way that reflects where creative work is headed. As the role of the display continues to evolve from a peripheral to a productivity hub, we believe the future belongs to solutions that are purpose-built around how creators work."

The BenQ MA320UG is available now across leading gadget and electronics retail stores, authorized BenQ partners, and online platforms across India at a special launch price of INR 84,998.





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Postcards from **Annecy**

Srini Swaminathan's curiosity has taken him to 50 countries. He began his career on oilfield rigs and is now a marathoner and long-distance cyclist who has cycled from Kashmir to Kanyakumari and Bhuj to Assam. An author and translator, he lives in Chennai and hopes to travel the world carrying his Indie dog, Oreo, in a backpack. He is @srini091 on Instagram and X.



Srini Swaminathan

Annecy, in southeastern France, feels like a town that was built for slow walks and long conversations. Canals run through the old town, flower boxes spill over bridges, and the mountains never seem far away. At its heart is Lake Annecy, often described as one of Europe's cleanest lakes, its blue-green waters framed by the Alps. Whether you arrive on foot, by bicycle, or simply wander without a plan, Annecy has a way of making you stay longer than intended.



A bicycle leaning beside a canal feels perfectly normal in Annecy. The town seems designed for people who prefer to move slowly and notice things.



The ride around Lake Annecy is as memorable as the destination itself. Every turn seems to bring another view worth stopping for.



French pastries are dangerous in the best possible way! You walk in planning to buy one and leave wondering why you stopped at three.

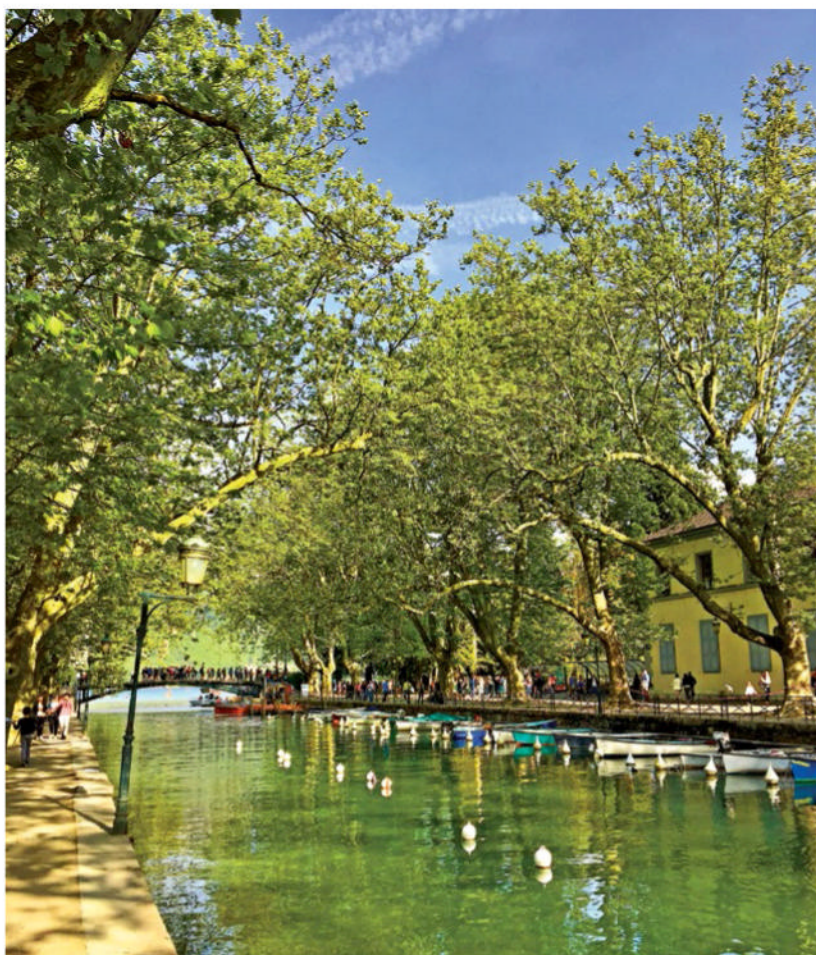


On a sunny day, half the town seems to gather by the Lake Annecy. Nobody appears to be in a hurry, and that feels like the right way to experience Annecy.



The canals are lovely on their own, but Annecy adds flowers just to make sure you keep reaching for your camera.

The lakeside paths are lined with old trees that create their own cathedral of shade. Even a simple walk feels special here.



Clear water, small boats, and rows of trees. Some places try very hard to be beautiful; Annecy simply gets on with it.



A narrow canal, a stone bridge, and elegant old buildings. This is the kind of view that makes you slow down without realising it.



Even a drinking fountain in Annecy seems to have character. The details are everywhere if you pause long enough to look.



I must have crossed a dozen bridges in Annecy and stopped on every one of them. The canals have a way of making you pause, look around, and forget where you were supposed to be going.



Spring arrives gently here. A flowering tree against old walls is enough to brighten an entire street.



The cafés along the canal are perfect for people-watching. Order a coffee, find a seat, and let the afternoon drift by.

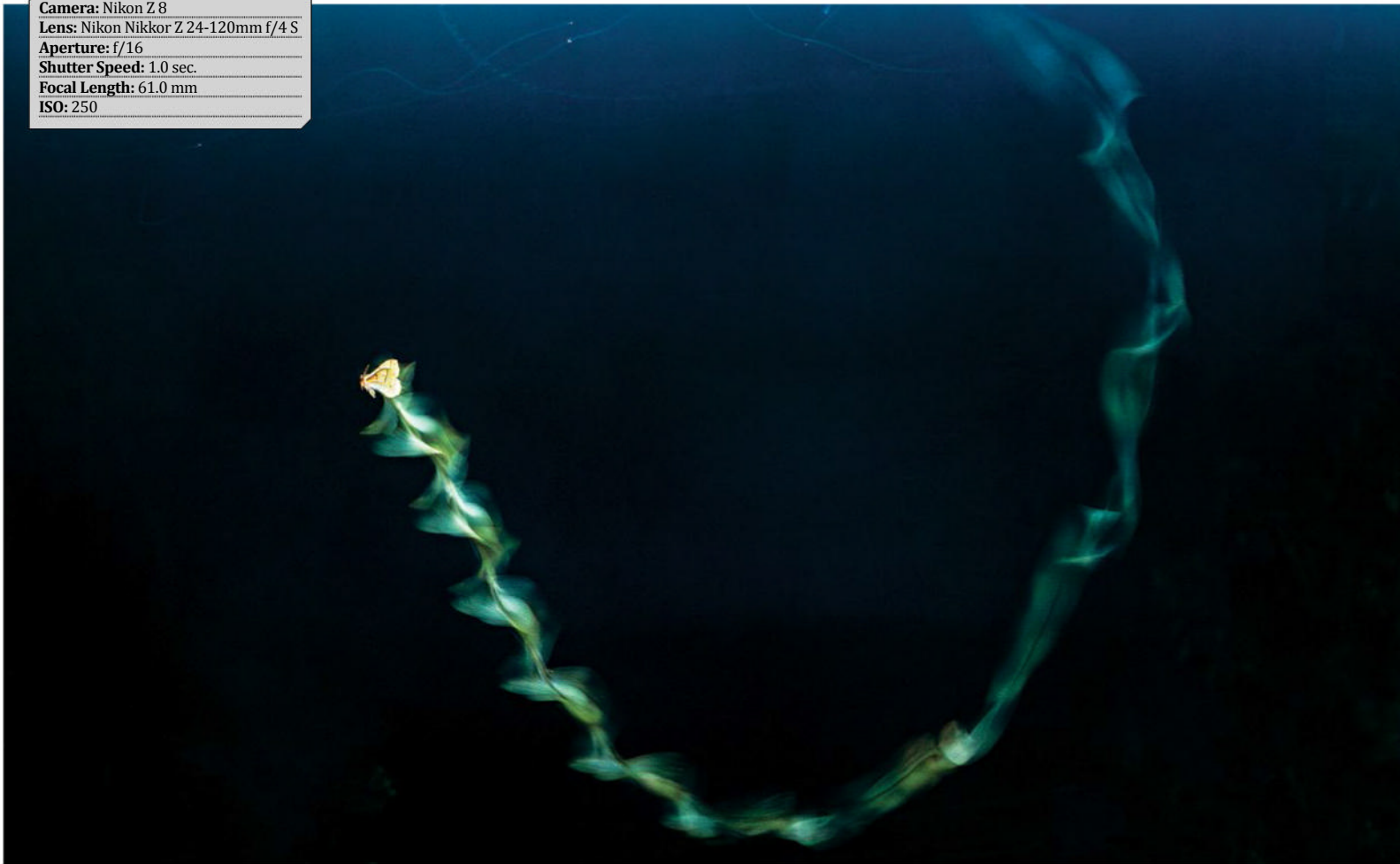
A bench facing the lake is an invitation to do absolutely nothing. In Annecy, that can be a very good plan.



The lake, the mountains, and the open sky come together in one frame. It is the view that explains why so many people fall in love with Annecy.

A Masterclass in Closeup Nature Photography

Camera: Nikon Z 8
 Lens: Nikon Nikkor Z 24-120mm f/4 S
 Aperture: f/16
 Shutter Speed: 1.0 sec.
 Focal Length: 61.0 mm
 ISO: 250



Flight path of a Moth

H. Satish hails from Bengaluru. He started pursuing serious photography in 1981 and has 44 years of experience in the subject. Satish has to his credit seven photographic distinctions – MFIAP, MICS, MPSA, ARPS, cMoL, ENPS and GPA.PESGSPC as well as 13 Honorary club memberships! He is the first Indian to receive a 'Master of Photography' distinction from three world nature photography bodies.

Satish has 1375 photography awards and over 5600 of his photos have been exhibited in numerous national and international salons / exhibitions. He has so far been a judge in 72 international and 53 national photographic exhibitions.

Satish conducts regular nature and wildlife photography workshops. He can be contacted at <https://www.instagram.com/hsatishblr> <https://www.facebook.com/hsatishblr>



H. Satish

For the benefit of our readers, we asked Satish to explain how he took the photo 'Flight Path of a Moth'. Here is his reply:

The photo -- Flight Path of a Moth -- required a highly technical approach. I used a multiple flash setup -- Godox V1 flash on the camera, and a Nikon SB910 flash positioned from the side. Shutter speed set on my camera was 1-second along with 'rear-curtain sync'. **When using a rear-curtain sync, the flash fires at the end of the set time** (which was 1 second in this case). The ambient light recorded the flutter of the wings as a rhythmic ghosting motion trail, while the flash froze the subject. This technique requires a couple of frames to be shot (may be 8-10 frames) as the unpredictable and erratic movement of the moth makes it challenging to keep the moth in sharp focus. This requires lots of patience and general knowledge of photography and using electronic flash". **[SP]**



Bicoloured Frog



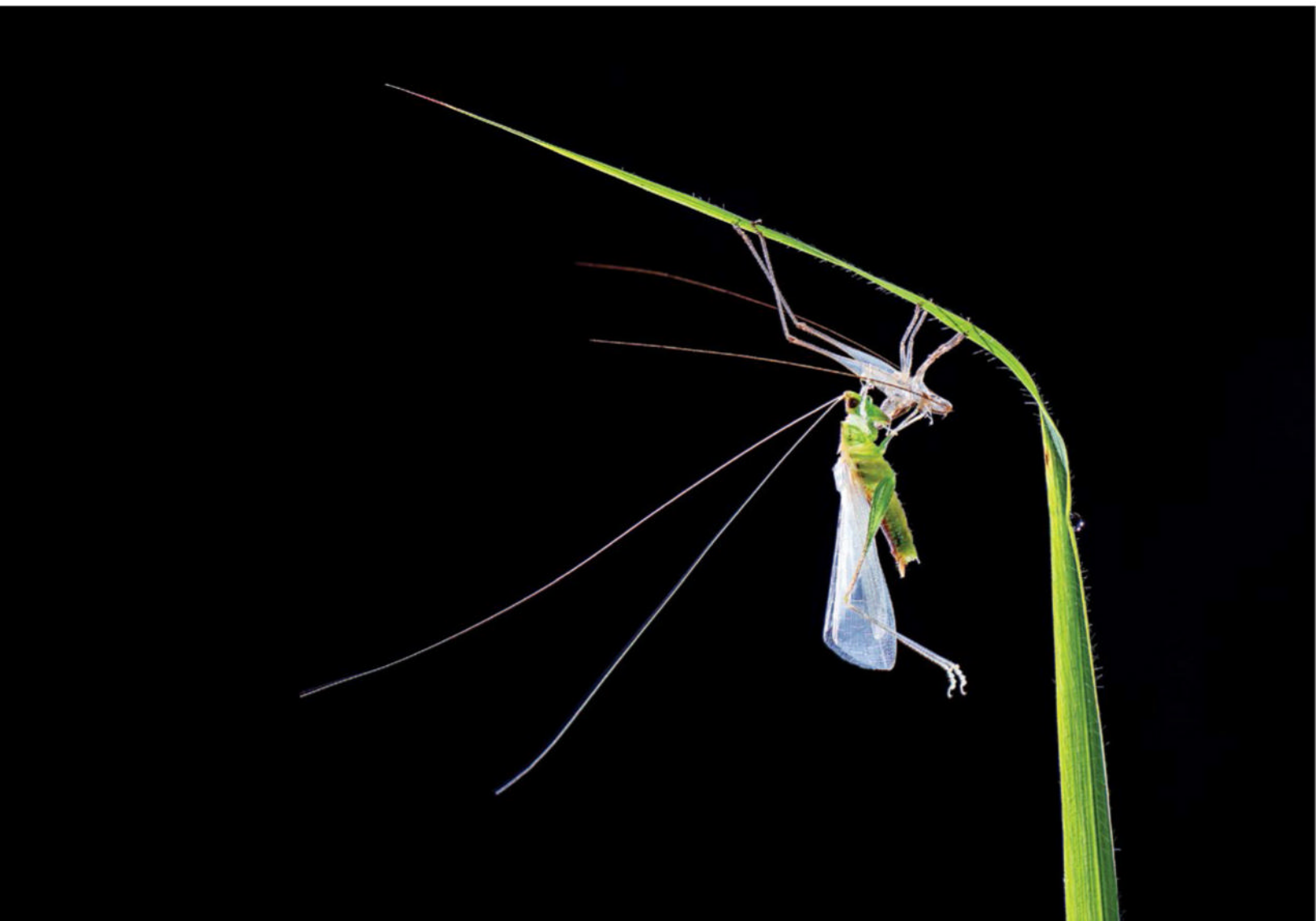
Common Indian toads mating



Stick Mantis



Cicada in Rain



Moulting Long horned grass hopper



Snail feeding on Mushroom



A Moth Caterpillar



Snail in Back light



Malabar Pit viper in Rain

A Landscape Photographer's Delight



Jurassic World

Shubhadeep Das is a distinguished national-level Table Tennis player. He discovered his passion for photography in his formative years, nurtured under the expert guidance of his father, a seasoned still photographer based in Kolkata, India. In 2020, Shubhadeep ventured into the enchanting realm of Astro-Landscape & Landscape photography, adding a new dimension to his artistic repertoire.



Shubhadeep Das

His Instagram handle:

https://www.instagram.com/shubhadeepdas_photography?igsh=MXZncm42Zjl1eGNkdw%3D%3D&utm_source=qr



*Dramatic
Sunset*



Colour of Autumn



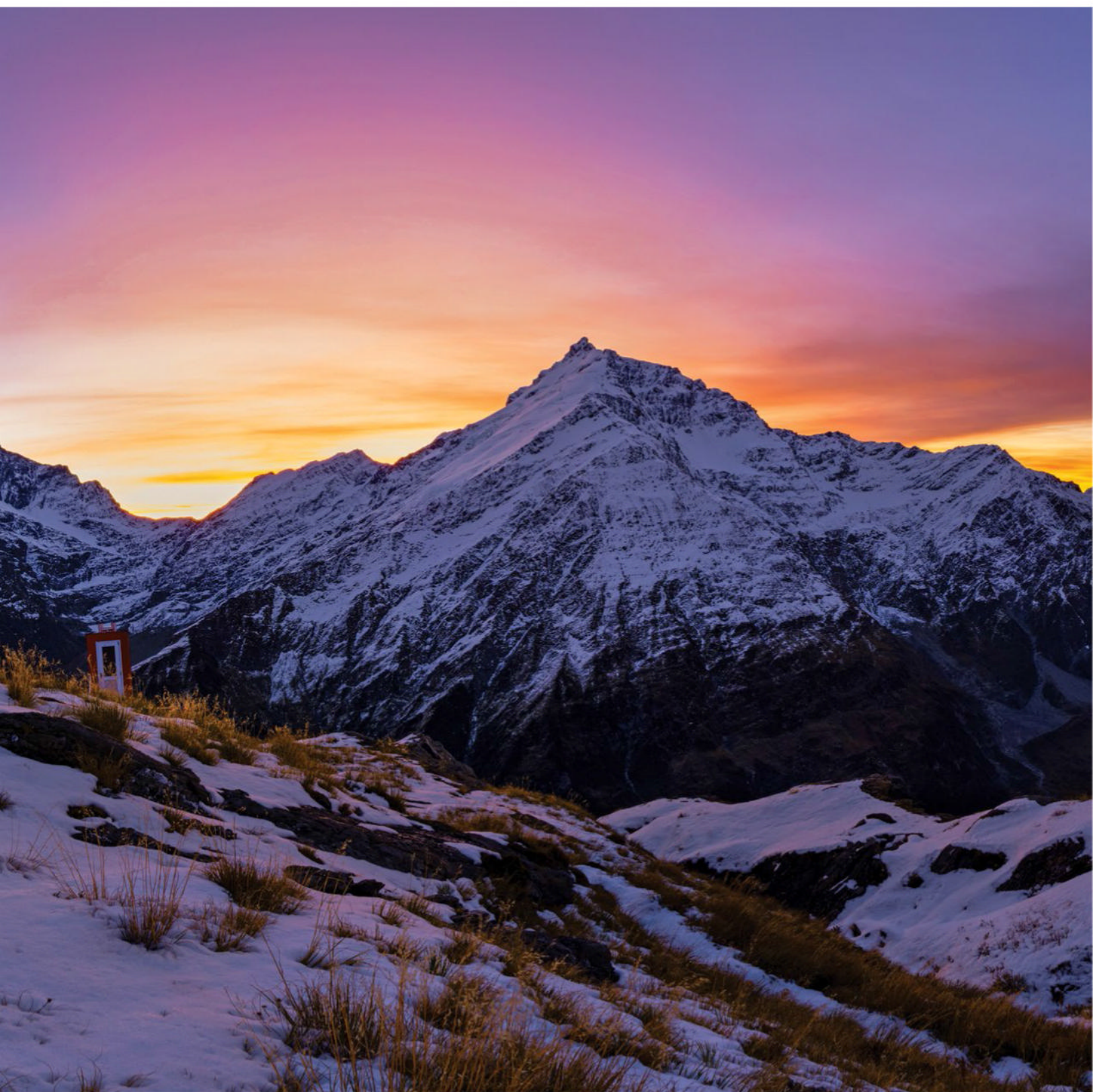
Dragon Egg



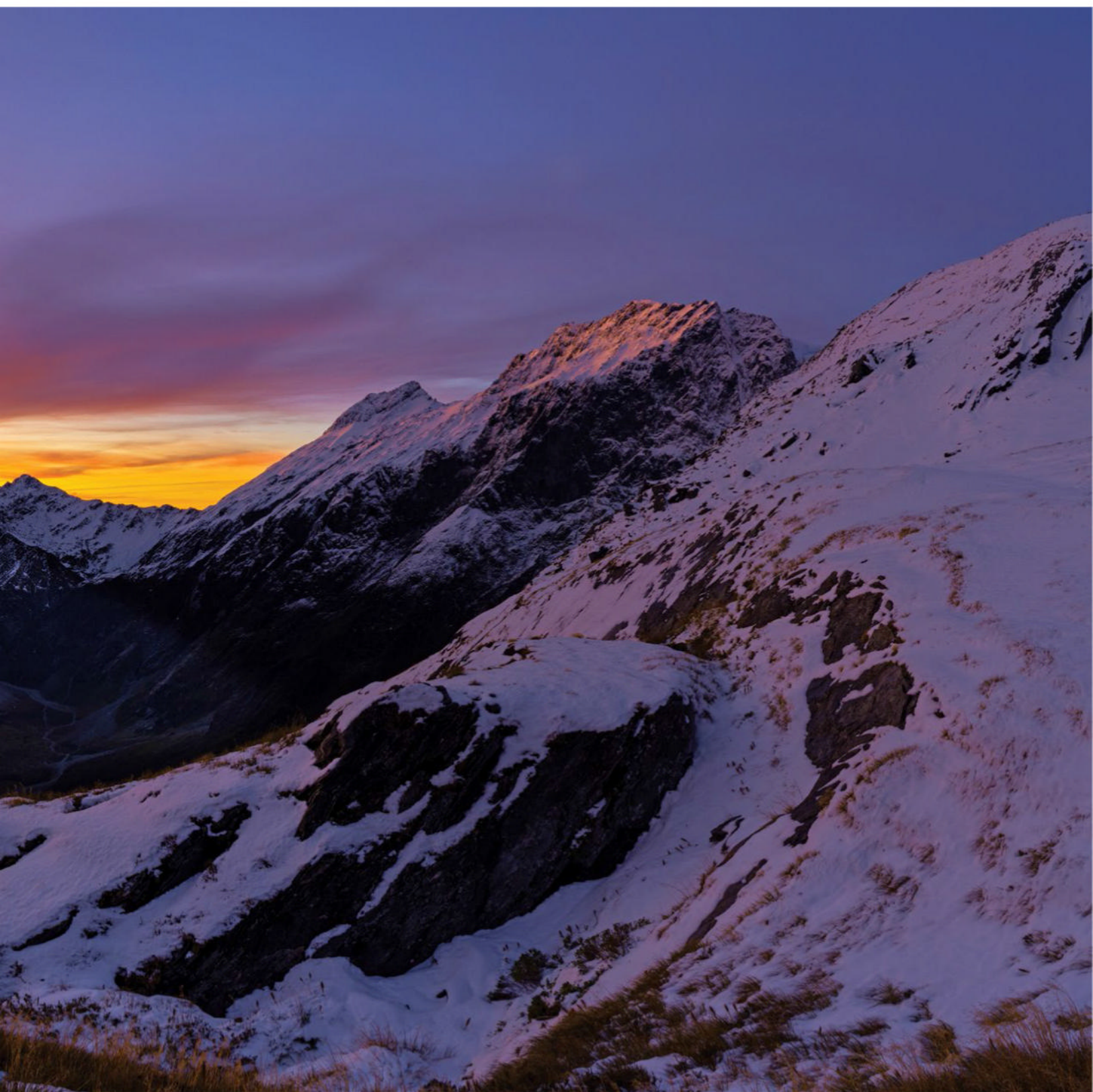
Morning Saga



The Lonely Tree



Calmness of Mountain





Sunset Vibes

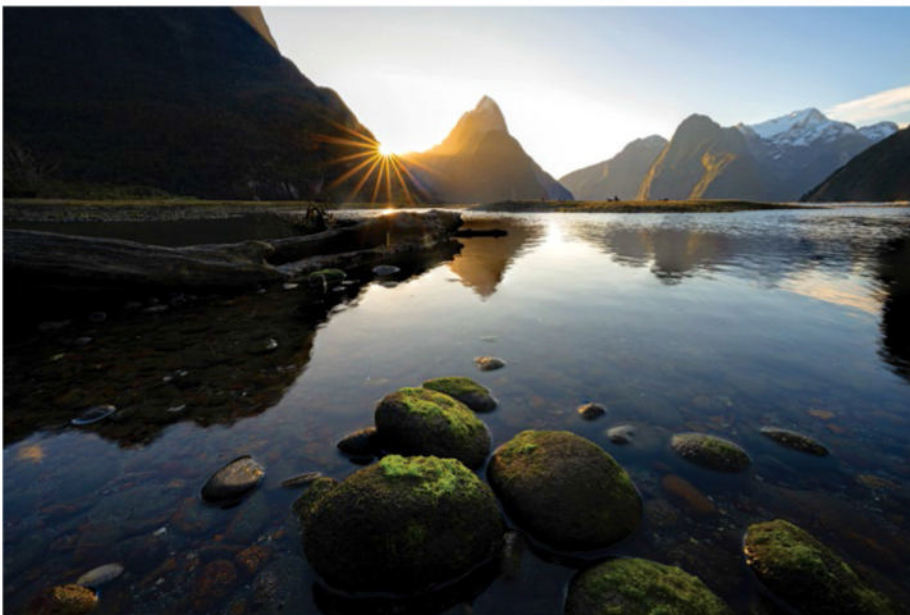


Galactic Night



Mountain of Gold

Rotation of Earth



Last Rays



Final Destination



Magical Rainbow



First Light

Photography in the Age of AI

Part 2

Authenticity, Creativity and the Changing Nature of the Image

Anitha Mysore, a tech whiz hailing from the bustling hub of Bengaluru, India, had her fascination for photography kindled in her youth. Initially, her lens was fixated on



Anitha Mysore

personal mementos, but it was the moment she acquired her first digital SLR that her passion blossomed into a captivating voyage through the diverse genres of photography. Amongst all subjects, it was the enchanting realm of avian life that truly captured her heart. As her IT career sent her on journeys to various corners of the globe, it ignited her creativity for travel and street photography, weaving her unique stories with every click.

In 2016, Anitha Mysore's path intersected with the Youth Photographic Society (YPS), an enchanting world where she not only entered the realm of Salons but was also initiated into the captivating universe of Fine Art Photography, thanks to her interactions with YPS luminaries. In the timeless words of Henry Ford, who once said, "Anyone who stops learning is old, whether at twenty or eighty. Anyone who keeps learning stays young," Anitha Mysore remains a steadfast advocate that age never dims the spark of curiosity. In her view, each new day presents an opportunity for enlightenment. Over the course of more than eight years, Anitha has actively participated in National and International Salons, reaping laurels and accolades for her photographic prowess. Her works have graced exhibitions in over 80 countries, earning her a remarkable tally of over 9000 acceptances and 900 prestigious awards. Her expertise has led her to serve as a discerning jury member in both national and international salons.

A proud moment came when three of her photographs from Shravanabelagola were chosen to adorn the domestic transfer corridor of T2 at Kempegowda International Airport, Bengaluru—a fitting tribute to her creative vision. Embracing her role as Interclub Representative of YPS since the last four years, Anitha Mysore has been a tireless advocate for the art, a creative spirit intertwined with the very heart of the photography community. She has been actively involved in organizing the National and International Salons of YPS since the last four years. Currently, she serves as one of the Directors on the Executive Committee of YPS.

When Images No Longer Need Cameras

Perhaps the most dramatic shift comes from fully AI-generated imagery.

Today, a person can type a prompt describing a scene — for example, "a snow leopard walking across a Himalayan ridge in golden morning light" — and within seconds receive a highly detailed image that resembles professional wildlife photography. No camera is required.

No travel is required.

No moment ever occurred.

The image is generated through prediction. AI systems analyse enormous datasets of photographs and learn relationships between shapes, textures, lighting and composition. Based on those learned patterns, they synthesize entirely new imagery. And in many cases, the results are visually stunning.



Camera created



A Photograph
Vs an AI
generated
image –
Human
interaction

AI generated



Camera
created



AI generated

A Photograph Vs an AI generated image – Landscape



Camera
created



AI generated

A Photograph Vs an AI generated image – Architecture

This naturally raises a difficult question. If AI can generate technically impressive images, what remains uniquely human in photography?

Part of the answer lies not only in the final image, but in the process behind it.

A wildlife photographer may spend days waiting for a brief encounter. A documentary photographer may work in emotionally intense and unpredictable environments. A street photographer may respond instinctively to fleeting human interactions that last only a fraction of a second.

None of that effort or experience is directly visible in the final frame. And yet it remains deeply connected to the photograph. AI can generate appearance. Photography can still carry experience. That distinction may sound philosophical, but it has practical implications. Consider a wildlife photograph. The final image may show only a bird perched beautifully in soft light. What the viewer does not see is the waiting, the uncertainty, the failed attempts, the changing weather and the emotional excitement when the moment finally comes together.

The photograph is connected not only to the final frame, but to the lived experience behind it.

An AI system can recreate the visual result. It cannot recreate the experience of being there.



AI generated image from a prompt

The Challenge for Salons and Competitions

For salons and photographic competitions, AI introduces both practical and philosophical challenges. Salon photography has traditionally valued originality, observation and authenticity. While post-processing has long been accepted within reasonable limits, fully AI-generated imagery fundamentally changes the relationship between the photographer and the image. Most salons now prohibit AI-generated submissions. However, the boundaries are becoming increasingly difficult to define clearly. Is noise reduction acceptable? Most photographers would probably say yes.

What about sky replacement?

What about removing distracting elements?

What about extending the frame slightly using generative fill?

The challenge is not simply technological — it is conceptual.

Not all uses of AI are equivalent.

Using AI to identify a bird's eye for autofocus is fundamentally different from adding a bird that was never present. Similarly, reducing noise differs significantly from generating new visual content.

The difficulty is that the line between assistance and generation is becoming increasingly blurred. Detection itself is also becoming more difficult. AI-generated images are improving rapidly, and without access to original files or contextual evidence, convincing fabrications may become hard to identify reliably.

In this environment, integrity becomes increasingly important.

Rules alone cannot fully protect authenticity. Ultimately, photographers themselves must decide how far they wish to go and what relationship they want their work to have with reality. Technology creates possibilities. Intent defines boundaries. This is perhaps where the future

of salons and competitions will become increasingly complex. Detecting AI manipulation may become harder over time, especially as generated images continue improving rapidly.

In the long run, the discussion may move beyond simple rule enforcement toward questions of trust, transparency and intent.

What relationship should a competition image have with reality?

How much alteration is acceptable before photography becomes digital illustration?
These are no longer hypothetical questions.

Will AI Kill Photography?

This question appears frequently in discussions about AI, and the answer is probably more nuanced than either extreme.

AI will undoubtedly change photography. Certain kinds of commercial imagery may increasingly be replaced by generated visuals. Generic stock-style content, conceptual advertising imagery and simple illustrative photographs may become faster and cheaper to produce synthetically. But photography has never been only about technical perfection.

A photograph often carries meaning because of presence — because someone was actually there to witness, respond and record a moment that truly happened.

A pilgrimage at Kumbh Mela. A fleeting expression in a crowded street. A snow leopard emerging briefly from a mountain ridge after days of waiting. These moments derive significance not only from how they look, but from the fact that they happened.

A generated image may look real. But it did not happen.

An encounter with Craig

(Craig's pictures on pages 44-45)

We had travelled to Amboseli with one goal — to see the mighty Craig. Word had spread that he had been

spotted inside a private conservancy, and we drove long distances through the dusty landscape in search of him, our curiosity and excitement building with every passing minute. And then, suddenly, there he was — the gentle giant himself. The guide encouraged me to step down from the jeep and photograph him from ground level. As Craig slowly began moving towards a moat, we hurried around it in the vehicle and climbed down again, this time into the moat itself, managing to make a few frames as he descended towards us. Moments later came the urgent instruction to retreat quickly. I could hear my heart thudding loudly in my ears. Once Craig reached level ground, I knelt very close to him and photographed him from a low angle, overwhelmed by both awe and nervous excitement. Looking at the final images today, one would never fully know the story, tension and emotion behind that encounter.

Craig passed away earlier this year, and with his passing, those frames have taken on an entirely different meaning for me. They are no longer just photographs of a magnificent tusker, but memories of a rare and deeply personal encounter with one of Africa's great giants — moments that can never be recreated again. Ironically, as AI-generated imagery becomes more common, authenticity itself may become more valuable. When visually perfect images are easy to create, originality, observation and personal perspective may matter even more than before. In a world saturated with synthetic imagery, photographs connected to real experience may acquire renewed significance.

This does not mean photographers should reject AI entirely. Many AI-assisted tools are already integrated into cameras and editing software, often in genuinely useful ways. Understanding these tools is not the same as misusing them.

The challenge for photographers is not whether to use technology, but how to use it without losing the essence of what makes photography meaningful. Perhaps this is also where photographers still retain something uniquely valuable.

A camera may eventually focus better than humans. AI may eventually edit faster than humans. Generated

imagery may even become visually indistinguishable from photographs. But curiosity, emotional response, patience, interpretation and the desire to witness the world remain deeply human qualities. Photography, at its best, has always been more than visual perfection. It is also about connection.

Photography After AI

Photography has always evolved alongside technology. The transition from film to digital transformed workflows and aesthetics. Autofocus changed how photographers worked in the field. Editing software altered post-processing forever.

Artificial Intelligence represents the next major transformation — perhaps the most profound yet.

The question today is not whether AI belongs in photography. It already does. The real question is how photographers choose to respond. Some may embrace synthetic image creation fully, exploring AI as a new artistic medium.

Others may move toward more documentary or experience-based photography, emphasizing authenticity and observation.

Most photographers will probably exist somewhere between these extremes, integrating AI-assisted tools while still valuing the reality captured through the camera. What seems increasingly clear is that photography is no longer defined solely by visual appearance. The process behind the image — the intent, the experience and the relationship to reality — is becoming part of how photographs are understood and valued.

In a world where images can be generated without being there, the act of witnessing may itself become meaningful again.

AI can generate images.

But it cannot experience the moment. | SP



Camera created



Camera created



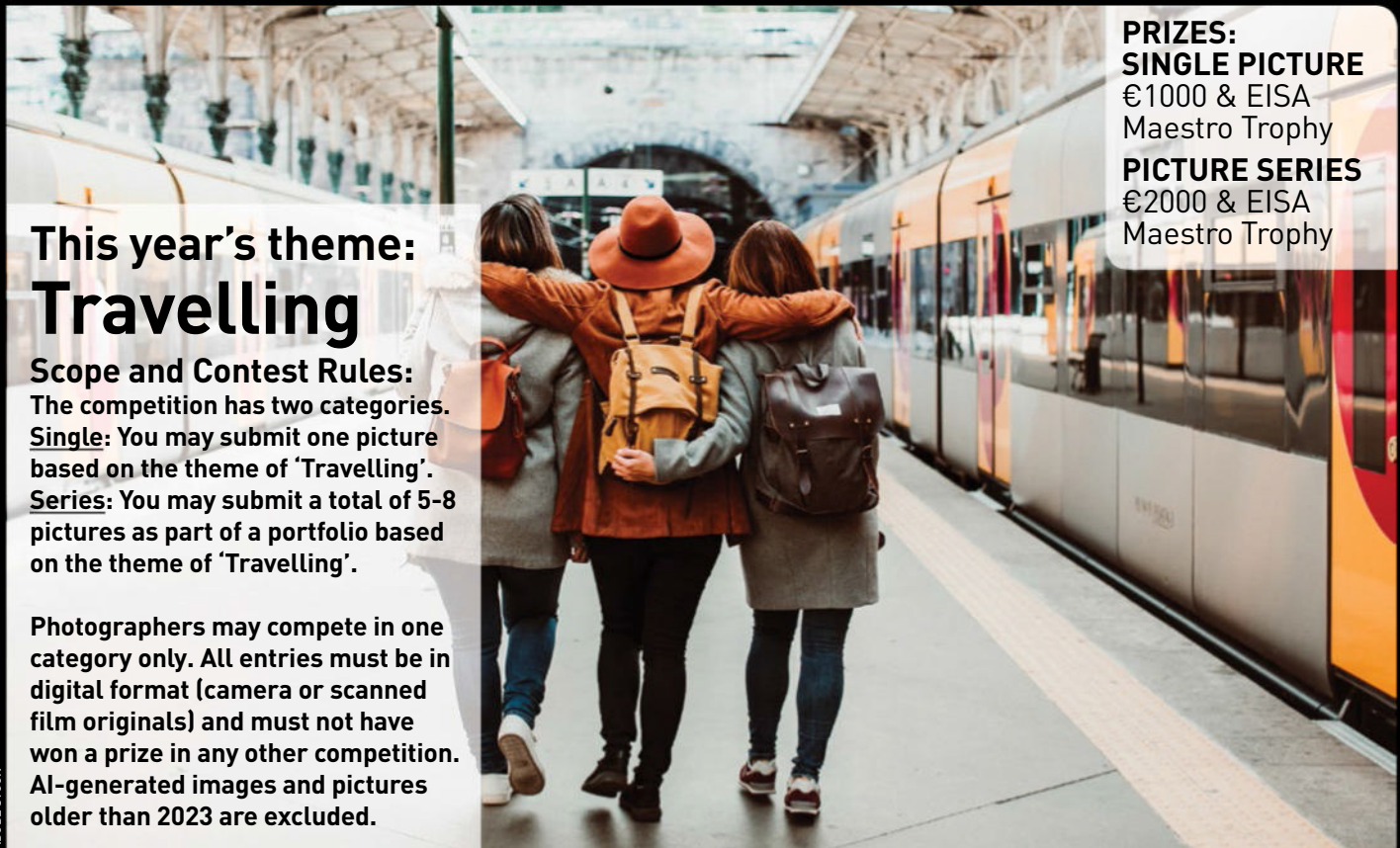
Camera created



Camera created



THE EISA PHOTOGRAPHY MAESTRO CONTEST 2026



PRIZES:
SINGLE PICTURE
€1000 & EISA
Maestro Trophy
PICTURE SERIES
€2000 & EISA
Maestro Trophy

This year's theme: **Travelling**

Scope and Contest Rules:

The competition has two categories.

Single: You may submit one picture based on the theme of 'Travelling'.

Series: You may submit a total of 5-8 pictures as part of a portfolio based on the theme of 'Travelling'.

Photographers may compete in one category only. All entries must be in digital format (camera or scanned film originals) and must not have won a prize in any other competition. AI-generated images and pictures older than 2023 are excluded.

NATIONAL DEADLINE: MAY 15TH 2026

All entries must be received by this date. The winners (and runners-up) in each category will be chosen by the editorial staff of Smart Photography and the National results will be published in the July/August issue.

National Maestro winners will also be published on Facebook at the end of June for the EISA Public's Choice competition. Prize for Single and Series winners: €500



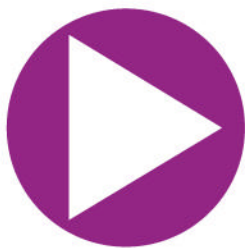
INTERNATIONAL JUDGING: JUNE 2026

The winning entries from each of the 15 participating EISA countries will then be judged together at the Association's General Meeting in June 2026. The final results of the International Maestro contest will be celebrated at the EISA Awards Gala in September 2026 and revealed, online, alongside the EISA product Awards on August 15th 2026.

The winning photographs will be published in the Sept/Oct issues of all 15 EISA photo magazines/websites.



For further details, terms and conditions visit www.eisa.eu/maestro and <https://smartphotography.in/contest-eisa-maestro2026/>



THA R N I N G S

LEARNING

CULLING IMAGES USING LIGHTROOM CLASSIC



Ashok Kadamalla

Ashok Kadamalla has been in the photography field for over 10 years. He has worked with both digital and film cameras and has been an instructor for many years. He has published over 100 articles on photography and has been featured in several books and magazines. He is currently working on a book about the history of photography and is also working on a book about the future of photography.

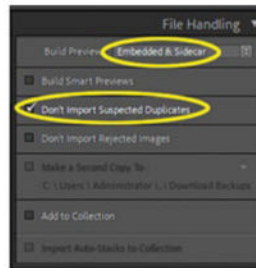
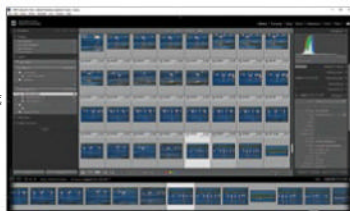
Wildlife, sports and other action photographers return with hundreds or even thousands of images after a photo session. While 'spraying and praying' does not guarantee that very precisely timed capture you are aiming for, it surely increases the probability of getting one. Modern cameras that shoot at very high release rates (FPS) coupled with high-speed memory cards ensure that your camera never stalls. This turns photographers to shoot lengthy bursts some running to hundreds of images. After you download the images, you will be confronted with long sequences of nearly identical images (Picture 1).

One view is that storage is cheap and hence, we should keep all the images. Another view, to which the author subscribes to, and feels that keeping hundreds of nearly similar images you will never see again is only wasting storage while cheap, it still not free. Another disadvantage is that the higher the number of unwanted images you have, the more difficult it will be to search for the needed ones. Assuming that you want to store and process only 'keepers' leave to get rid

of those unwanted ones? This process is called culling and we will see how we can do it efficiently using **Lightroom Classic**. For brevity we will just call it LrC. Unfortunately, culling if not properly executed can consume an enormous amount of time, perhaps even exceeding the shooting time. The problem gets exacerbated if your camera has a very large number of pixels (like 45 MP or above) and/or a very high frame rate as these together can tax any computer.

Some important points. This article assumes that the reader is well versed with LrC and the concept of a Catalogue, and the use of the Library module. If not, please refer to the previously published articles in Smart Photography on LrC. How many images you want to cull versus you want to keep is an individual's choice and will also depend on the subject. For example, I keep only 10 to 15% of a birding session. On the contrary I retain 40% or more for a session on architectural photography where I would shoot at a more leisurely pace. Personally, on average I cull on an average 60% to 70% of all my images.

Picture 1: Sequence of nearly identical images



Picture 2: Import settings

- The sequence of operations that you can follow to:
1. Create folders, copy images and take a backup.
 2. Import files to your LrC catalogue, sort/setting order and stack.
 3. Scan, colour label and segregate - trash, keep, process, short.
 4. Move images to sub-folders.
 5. Complete processing of images.
 6. Remove discarded the images from catalogue and delete from disk.

Let us look at these in more detail.

Create folders, copy images and take a backup:

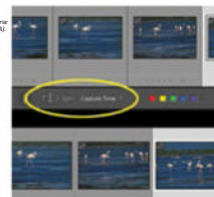
Let us say you are back from a trip to the Pulicat bird sanctuary in the month of June 2020. In your library (the master folder with your images), create a folder on the hard disk where you will be processing the images, with the name -

2020-06_Pulicat

In this folder create a subfolder **Images Not Processed**. Copy all the images from your memory card to this subfolder. Crosscheck if all the images have been copied and then create one more copy. This is your backup. Once again crosscheck and now you can format the card in the camera where you will be using it and not anywhere else. Repeat the procedure if images are on multiple cards.

Import images, sort and stack:

Readers may recollect that, all images need to be imported into the LrC catalogue to perform any operation. This has



to be done with the import function in the Library module. While importing choose (Picture 2), choose preview build as **Embedded & Sidecar** and also tick the box **Don't Import Suspected Duplicates**. Once imported switch to Grid view (shortcut - press 'G' key). Next is to sort data. While you can sort images in many ways, the best way is to sort based on capture time (Picture 3) but in the reverse chronological order. Most photographers start shooting as soon as they are the subject and then move to get better pictures, till they are satisfied with what they captured. This usually means that better pictures are at the end of the sequence. By sorting in the reverse order you will get to see the

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LEARNING

CREATING 'SOFT', PROGRESSIVELY UNSHARP BACKGROUNDS

Robinton Mehta

A few questions that come to mind are 'why do we need to have a soft background and do we even need this all the time? What happens if the background is also sharp?'

The background and foreground parts that are soft (that is, unsharp) are termed as defocused areas. It is important to note that the defocus is not the same as bokeh though it is often mistakenly said so. The latter is a Japanese term used to describe not the amount of defocus but the character of it and this can vary from lens to lens based on the design.

In this small write-up, to keep things short and simple, we shall only consider what creates a soft background. We will also not consider issues relating to bokeh as it is subjective.

Most photographers feel that a very wide lens aperture is the only criteria for achieving a soft background, and they are not entirely wrong. But there are other reasons as well. You'll notice that as soon

as a 'fast' lens (a lens having a very wide aperture) is announced, the Internet goes abuzz with speculations. Will a 1/1.8 aperture give me the background softness I need? Should I opt for a 1/1.4 lens instead? Or should I wait till a 1/1.2 lens is announced?

Of the three apertures mentioned above the 1/1.2 lens, used wide open, should provide the best background softness, when used correctly.

The most important point to remember is that there must be a distance between the subject and the background.

Let us take some practical cases to show this with the following assumptions in mind. In each case, we will be comparing two setups. Since our interest is in comparing the softness of the defocused areas based on focal length, subject distance and subject to background (or just background) distance, we will keep the aperture large as the lenses permit, but more importantly the same for both the setups so as not to complicate our case studies.

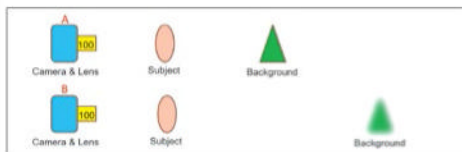
Once we keep aperture the same, the depth of field (DOF) is controlled by magnification which is dependent on focal length and subject distance. Magnification increases when focal length increases and/or subject distance decreases. DOF itself decreases when magnification increases and vice versa. This is a very important point.

Case 1

Focal length same, subject distance same, background distance changes. Photographer 'X' and photographer 'Y' are both using a 100mm lens at wide open aperture. Both have the same subject at the same distance.

'X's background distance is say 1 foot, whereas 'Y's background distance is say, 6 feet. Photographer 'Y' will have a softer background compared to 'X' even though they are using the same lens having the same aperture.

We can see from the above that, other things being identical, background distance plays a very important role. The greater the background distance, softer the defocused areas.



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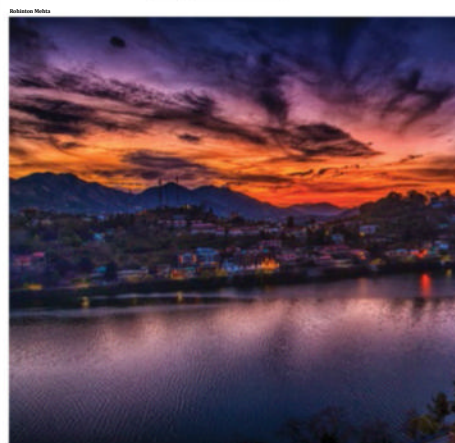
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TIPS ON PHOTOGRAPHING SUNRISE/SUNSETS

Robinton Mehta



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CULLING IMAGES USING LIGHTROOM CLASSIC



Ashok Kandimalla

Ashok Kandimalla has been in the photographic field for over three decades and has extensive experience in both film and digital photography. Being an electronics engineer by profession and a photographer, he possesses a unique and deep insight into the technical aspects of digital photography and equipment. He has published more than a 100 articles on photography and some of his writings have also been published in the well-known international magazine *Popular Photography*. An avid collector of photographic books and vintage cameras, Ashok has a keen interest in the history of photography and a passion for sharing his knowledge on photography through teaching and writing. He is the only Indian photographer to be featured on the Nikon Centenary website. He is presently working as a Management and Engineering consultant. He can be reached at kashokk@gmail.com.

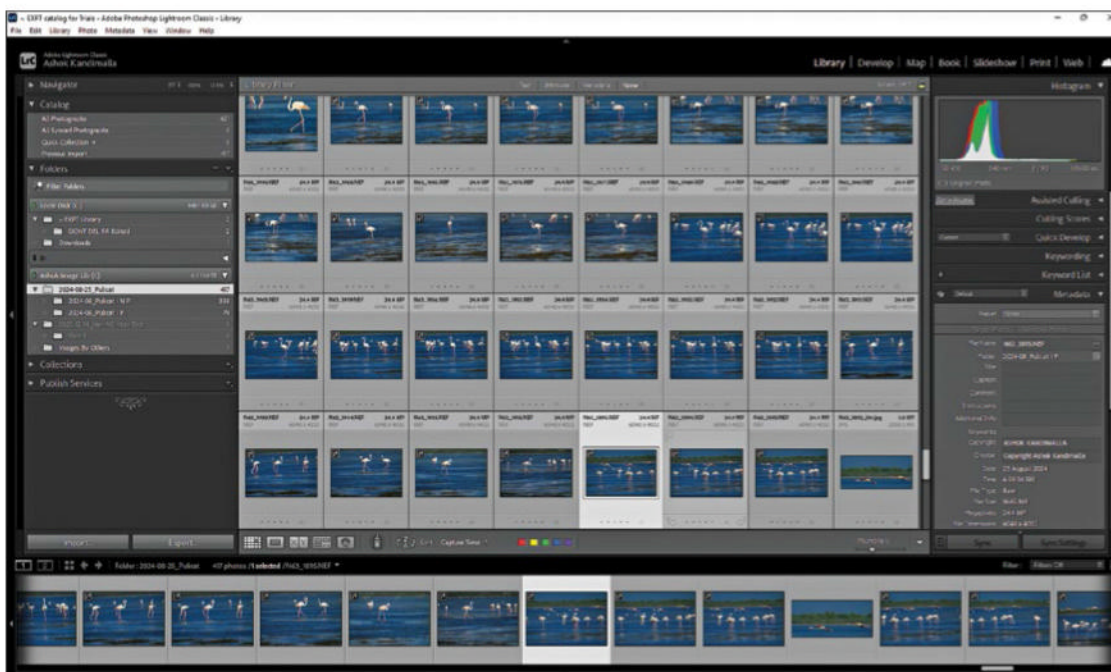
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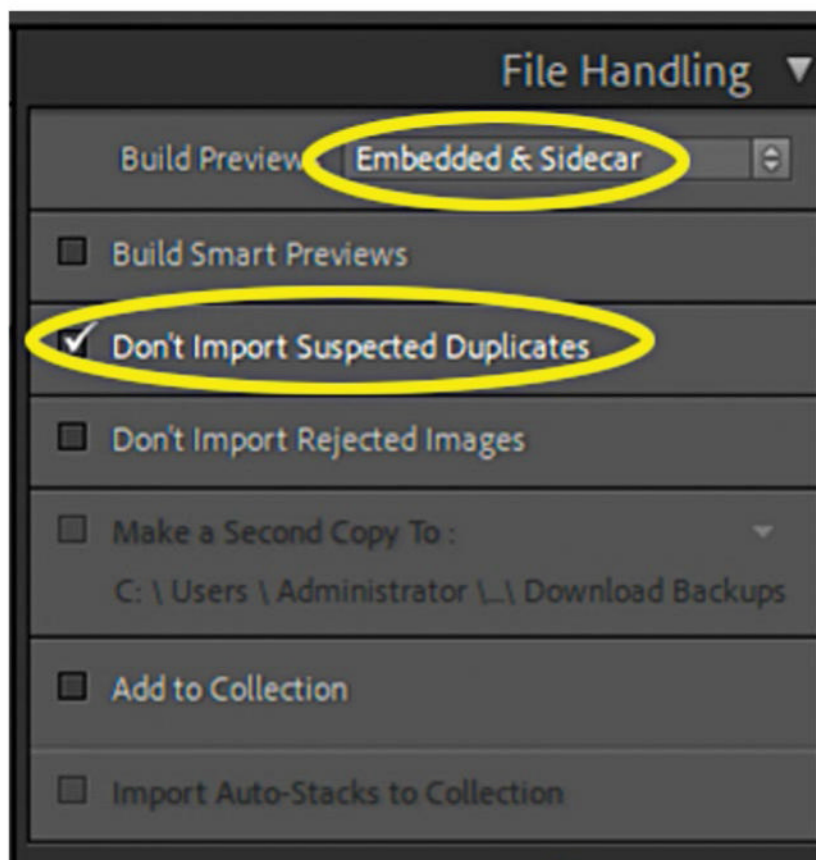
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of those unwanted ones? This process is called culling and we will see how we can do it efficiently using **Lightroom Classic**. For brevity we will just call it **LrC**. Unfortunately, culling if not properly executed can consume an enormous amount of time, perhaps even exceeding the shooting time. The problem gets exacerbated if your camera has a very large number of pixels (like 45 MP or above) and/or a very high frame rate as these together can tax any computer.

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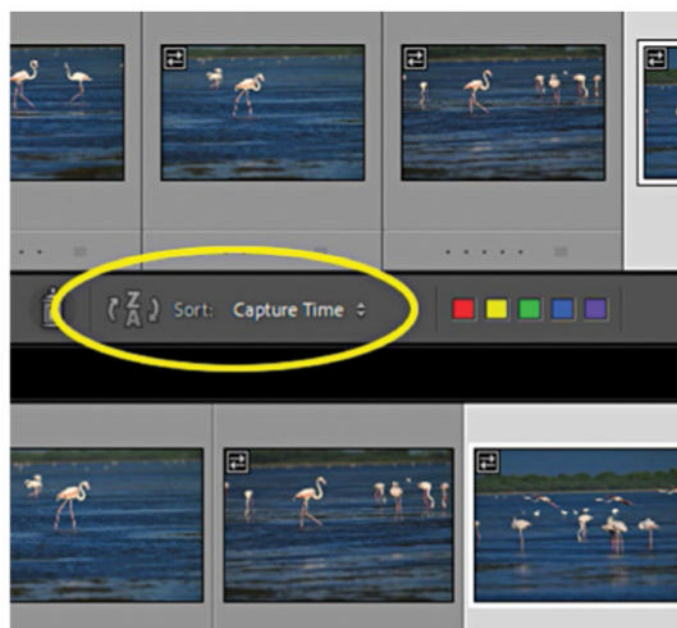
Picture 1:
Sequences
of nearly
identical
images.





Picture 2:
Import settings.

Picture 3:
Sort based on the reverse
of capture time (Z to A).



The sequence of operations that you can follow is -

1. Create folders, copy images and take a backup.
2. Import files to your LrC catalogue, set sorting order and stack.
3. Scan, colour label and segregate – trash, keep, process, share.
4. Move images to sub-folders.
5. Complete processing of images.
6. Remove discarded the images from catalogue and delete from disk.

Let us look at these in more detail.

Create folders, copy images and take a backup:

Let us say you are back from a trip to the Pulicat bird sanctuary in the month of June 2026. In your library (the master folder with your images), create a folder on the hard disk where you will be processing the images, with the name -

2026-06_Pulicat

In this folder create a subfolder

Images Not Processed

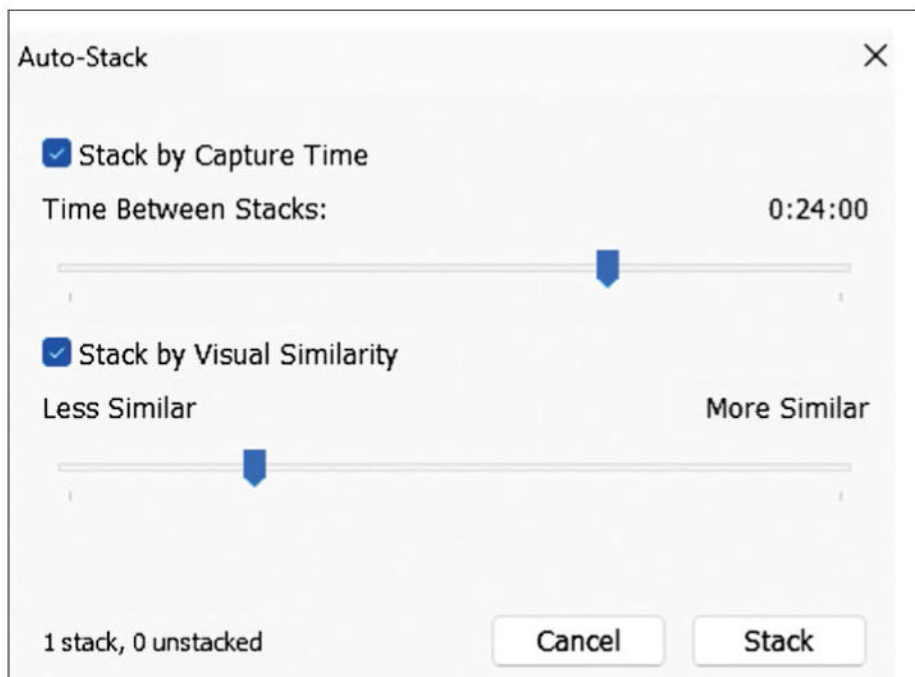
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to be done with the Import function in the Library module. While importing choose (Picture 2), choose preview build as **Embedded & Sidecar** and also tick the box **Don't Import Suspected Duplicates**.

Once imported switch to Grid view (shortcut – press 'G' key). Next is to sort data. While you can sort images in many ways, the best way is to sort based on capture time (Picture 3) but in the reverse chronological order. Most photographers start shooting as soon as they see the subject and then move to get better pictures, till they are satisfied with what they captured. This usually means that better pictures are at the end of the sequence. By sorting in the reverse order, you will get to see the



Picture 4

better images first and if you get what you want then you can skim through the rest very fast or even stop looking further.

The next step which is optional, but recommended is **stacking**. Readers may recall that LrC has long had a feature called 'stacking' which allowed sets of images to be displayed as a stack (like a pack of cards). Stacks greatly reduce the clutter on the screen, keep the display tidy and also keep the images of a particular sequence collated as a group. While you can select a set of images and stack them manually, you can use a feature called Auto-stack to create stacks depending on the conditions you have set. (For full details refer to the article "New Features of Lightroom Classic Ver. 15", Smart Photography, January, 2026). Briefly, go to the **Assisted Culling*** tool in the Library module (right panel), and click on the **Auto-Stack** button. You will see a popup window giving you the choice of stacking by **Capture Time** or by **Visual Similarity**. You can even choose both, to apply both conditions simultaneously. Selecting one or both will show a window (Picture 4).

****Note:** Why are we not using the Assisted Culling tool? That is because it works only for portraits and nothing else, whereas the process described here works for all subjects.*

For our application **Stack by Capture Time** works best. With the help of the associated **Time Between Stacks** slider, we can adjust the time interval between two stacks. The interval can be set from zero seconds to one hour. If the gap is set to zero, no stacks can be formed, and as we increase the time between stacks, the number of images in a stack will increase.

We can use this slider to automatically form the stacks we want. Clicking on each stack will unstack the images temporarily so that you can see the individual images for selection. They can be stacked again

to reduce clutter. Stacking is also useful for organizing HDR, panorama and focus shift capture sequences.

Scan, colour label and segregate:

This is the most important step in the whole process, because we will be segregating images to trash (meaning discard for good), keep, process, and share. We can do this by giving colour labels to the images. Consider these labels as attributes that you can attach to the images. These can later help in segregating the images. Before we go deeper let us look at a few shortcuts (Table I) to speed up operations.

At this stage we need to create two subfolders inside 2026-06_Pulicat using only LrC.

These are:

Images to be processed

Images to be trashed

Why did we not create these two earlier when we created the subfolder **Images Not Processed**? That is because if we create folders with Windows Explorer, they will not be visible in LrC unless at least one image from that folder is imported.

Now, we are all set to start the job of culling. We will do this in **two** passes. As suggested already, start in the reverse chronological order. Unpack or unstack a stack if needed, select the first image and

Table I	
Some Shortcuts	
Click on image	Select or deselect an image
Control + Click	Select or deselect multiple images
Shift + Click	Select block of images
E Key or double click on image	Loupe view to fill the central preview area of screen with the image
G Key	Grid view
6 Key	Attach a RED colour label to the image
7 Key	Attach a YELLOW colour label to the image
8 Key	Attach a GREEN colour label to the image
9 Key	Attach a BLUE colour label to the image
→ Key	Select the next image on the right
← Key	Select the next image on the left
Shift key or Caps lock on	If one of these active, pressing the keys 6 to 9 will colour label the selected image, and then select the next image

double click on it to zoom in. Keep Caps Lock on. Give colour labels as shown in Table II.

Table II	
Colour labels and Action	
Red (Key 6)	Reject and move to trash
Yellow (Key 7)	Shortlisted for further consideration
Green (Key 8)	Selected for post-processing
Blue (Key 9)	Good for sharing, printing

See the image, and depending on what you want to do, give a colour label. If you would like to trash the image hit Key 6. The image will be labelled red and the next image will be selected. If you want to shortlist an image hit Key 7. Unless you are very sure that you got 'that particular' image, Keys 8 and 9 need not be used in this pass.

A couple of important points here.

- You need not be very precise in shortlisting at this stage. You can scan rapidly and if you have any doubt, label it yellow.
- To shortlist look at these three criteria – pose/posture, sharpness and size of the subject. These are no doubt subjective, so you need to decide yourself on the thresholds. Coming to size, I crop to get the size of the subject that I want and then

see the image dimensions (in pixels). I discard an image if its size after cropping is less than 6 MP. I should add that my starting point (the uncropped image) is 24 MP. You can arrive at your own criteria using this a guideline.

- While you need not be aggressive in rejecting images do not be too liberal either.

Move images to subfolders:

Once you have made a pass and colour labelled with red and yellow, you are now ready to remove all the images labelled red and clean up the screen. Go to the Grid view (hit Key G), and hit **Control +F** or backslash “\” to open the filter bar at the top.

On the filter bar (Picture 5) choose the red label (only this one) and you will see that all the other images you have labelled as yellow (or any other colour) will be hidden. Select all the images labelled red with **Control+A** and drag and drop them in the sub folder -

Images to be trashed

With this step all the rejected images will be removed from active consideration and will not be visible. However, they are still on your hard disk, should you need them later.

We are ready for the second pass. Select the subfolder **Images Not Processed**. This will now have only those images that you have not trashed. In this pass, go through the images more slowly giving the Green label (Key 8) to those you want to post-process. If you can identify some that you are definitely better than the rest, label them blue (Key 9).

Go back to the filter bar and now filter on **green + blue** labels. Now the screen will show only the images thus labelled. Select all and move them to the subfolder–

Images to be processed

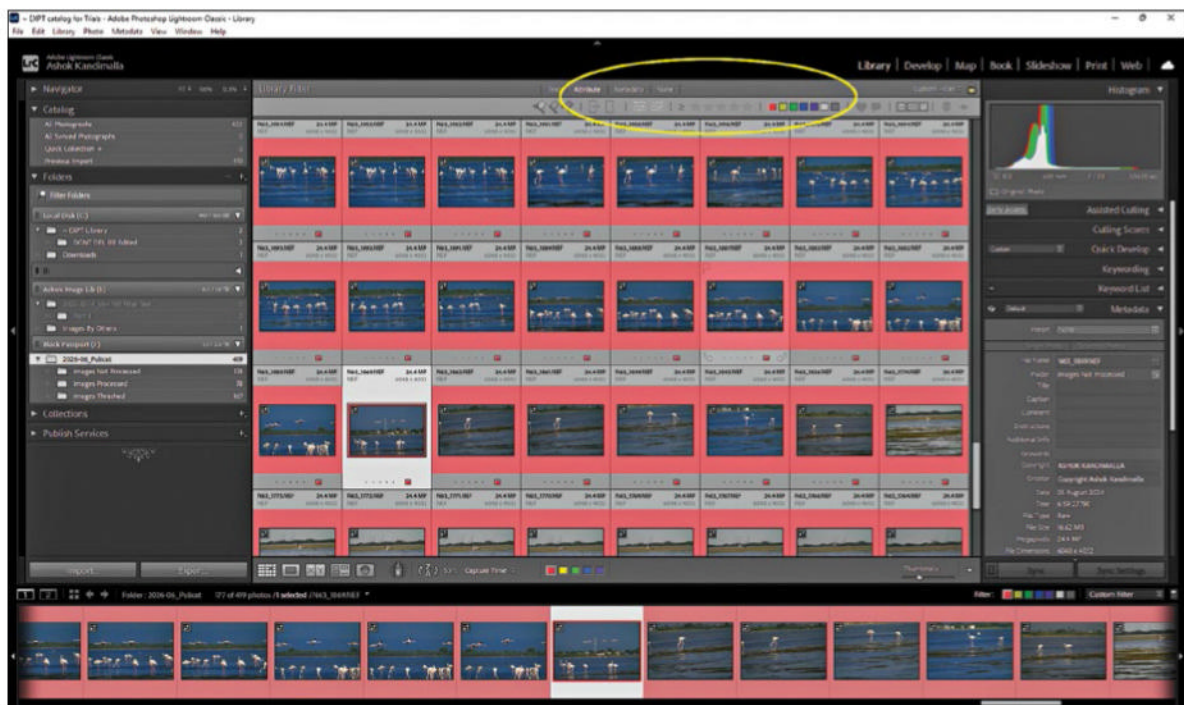
At this stage, the folder structure now looks like Picture 6:

Images Not Processed (yellow label):

Shows images that you have not discarded but you are also not going to post-process. Maybe some of them can be salvaged or post-processed at a later date but currently they are neither bad enough to be trashed or nor good enough to be processed (yellow label).

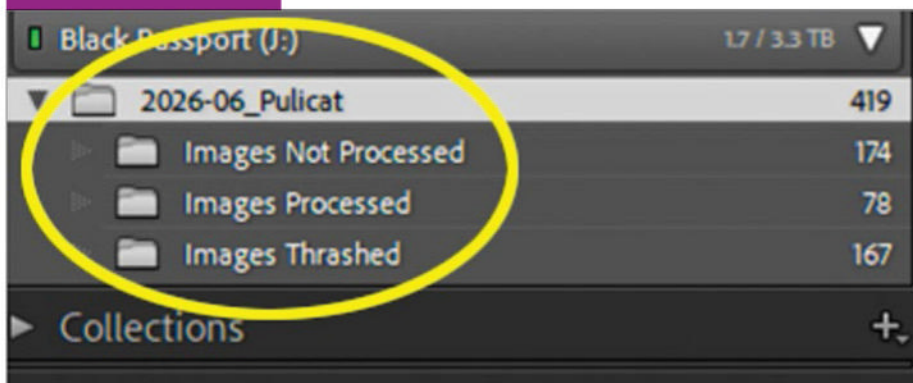
Images to be processed (green and blue labels): These are the ones that you are going to post-process.

Images to be Trashed (red label): Shows the images that are to be deleted. Note that you can alter the labels freely whenever you change your mind.



Picture 5: Filter bar is marked here.

LEARNING



Picture 6

Just remember that once you alter the labels make sure that you move the images to the appropriate subfolders depending on the newly given labels. It is very important that you have to move the images only using the LrC Library module. If you do this operation using any file manager, you will get an error message saying the image cannot be found. If you click on any of these subfolders on the left panel of the Library module, you will see only those images in the respective subfolders. If you click on the folder **2026-06_Pulicat**

you will see all the images including those in the three subfolders. However, you will know which image is in which subfolder since they are appropriately labelled with colours (Picture 7).

Process the images:

Now you can pick up the images from the subfolder **Images to be processed**. During or after processing you may find something wrong with a particular image and decide that it is not worth proceeding further. In these cases, look for images adjacent to this image that might be good enough from the other two subfolders. Once you decide, change the colour label to green or blue as you decide and move the image to the **Images to be processed** subfolder

Removing the images:

What should you do with the images in the subfolder **Images to be Trashed**? After I complete the processing of all the images that I have chosen, I wait for 2 to 3 months to make sure there are no bad surprises. After this I remove this

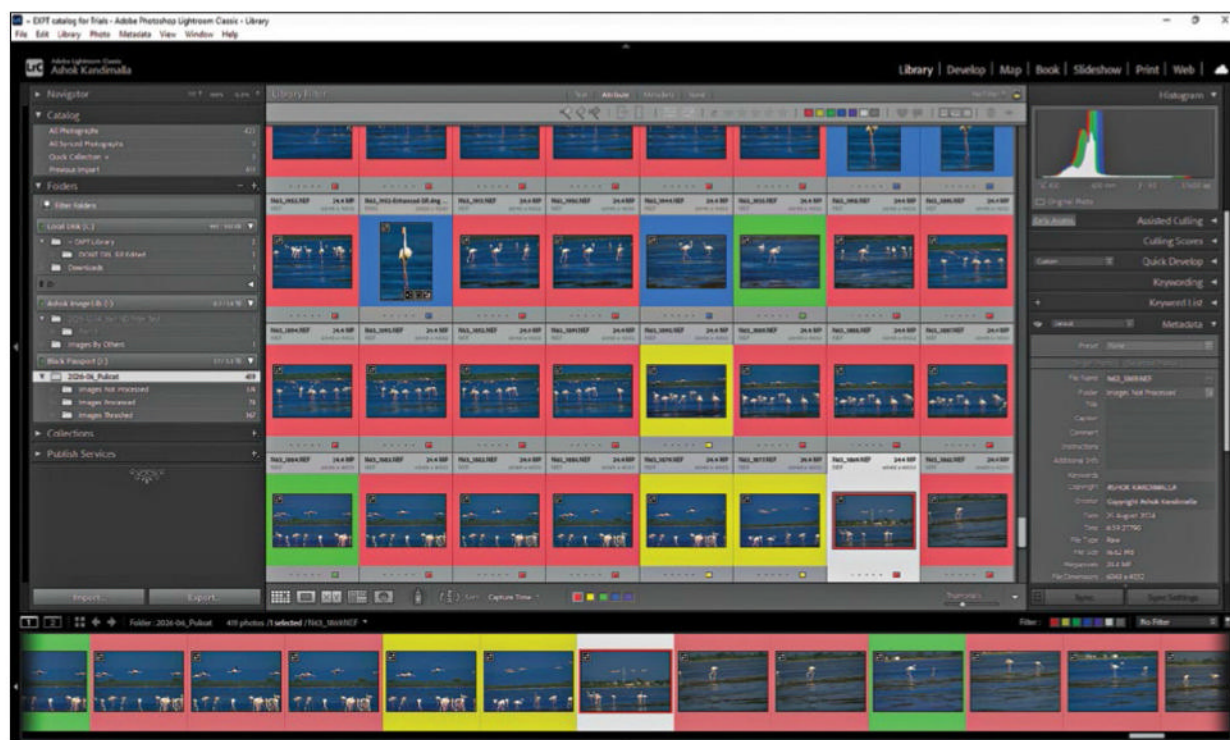
subfolder from the LrC catalogue and then delete it from the hard disk for good thus freeing up the space.

So, that sums up the process. One question that you might ask is, how fast can one cull images? There are some claims that you can cull thousands of images per hour. My suggestion is - avoid trying to break any speed records. Rather, follow a procedure systematically and as you gain experience, speed will come automatically. |SP

CONCLUSION

Capturing many images increases your chances of getting that elusive perfectly timed shot, but it also produces far more unwanted frames. Culling the unwanted ones gives many advantages as mentioned – including conserving disk space and eliminating unwanted images thus reducing clutter.

The workflow described here is what I have been using and refining over many years. However, that does not mean it is the one you must follow. I suggest you look at this as a starting point and improvise based on your needs. Good luck.



Picture 7: Thumbnails images with subfolders included.

All text, diagrams, and images © Ashok Kandimala.

CREATING 'SOFT', PROGRESSIVELY UNSHARP BACKGROUNDS

❏ Rohinton Mehta

A few questions that come to mind are 'why do we need to have a 'soft', progressively unsharp background and do we even need this all the time? What happens if the background is also sharp?

The background and foreground parts that are soft (that is, unsharp) are termed as defocused areas. It is important to note that the defocus is not the same as bokeh though it is often mistakenly said so. The latter is a Japanese term used to describe not the amount of defocus but the character of it and this can vary from lens to lens based on the design.

In this small writeup, to keep things short and simple, we shall only consider what creates a soft background. We will also not consider issues relating to bokeh as it is subjective.

Most photographers feel that a very wide lens aperture is the only criteria for achieving a soft background, and they are not entirely wrong. But there are other reasons as well. You'll notice that as soon

as a 'fast' lens (a lens having a very wide aperture) is announced, the Internet goes abuzz with speculations. Will a f/1.8 aperture give me the background softness I need? Should I opt for a f/1.4 lens instead? Or should I wait till a f/1.2 lens is announced?

Of the three apertures mentioned above the f/1.2 lens, used wide open, should provide the best background softness, when used correctly.

The most important point to remember is that there must be a distance between the subject and the background.

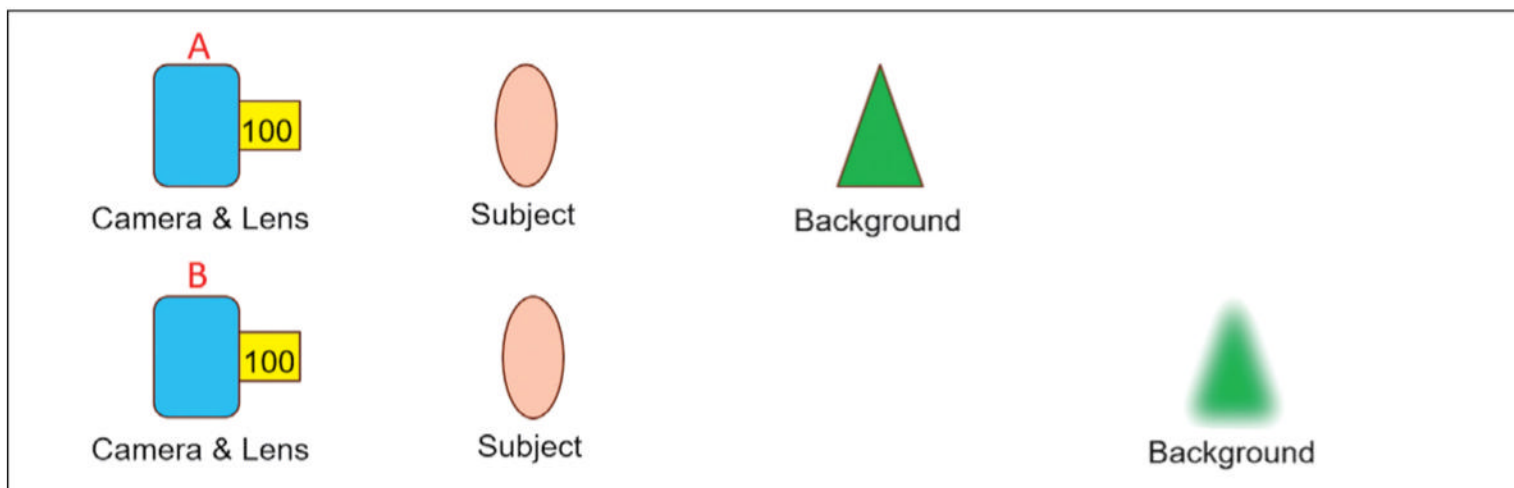
Let us take some practical cases to show this with the following assumptions in mind. In each case, we will be comparing two setups. Since our interest is in comparing the softness of the defocused areas based on focal length, subject distance and subject to background (or just background) distance, we will keep the apertures large as the lenses permit, but more importantly the same for both the setups so as not to complicate our case studies.

Once we keep aperture the same, the depth of field (DOF) is controlled by magnification which is dependent on focal length and subject distance. Magnification increases when focal length increases and/or subject distance decreases. DOF itself decreases when magnification increases and vice versa. This is a very important point.

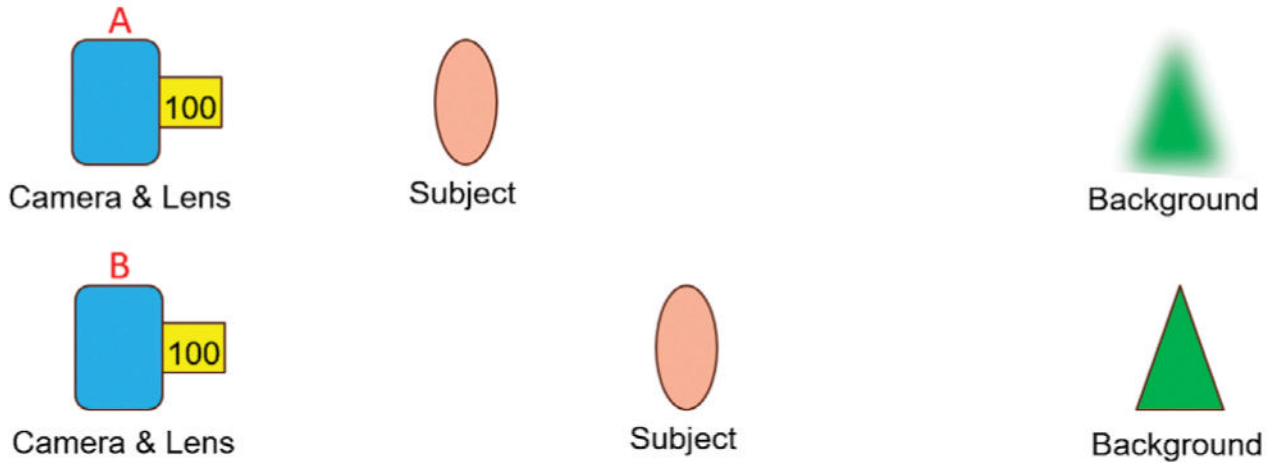
Case 1

Focal length same, subject distance same, background distance changes. Photographer 'A' and photographer 'B' are both using a 100mm lens at wide open aperture. Both have the same subject at the same distance. 'A's background distance is say, 1 foot, whereas 'B's background distance is say, 6 feet. Photographer 'B' will have a softer background compared to 'A' even though they are using the same lens having the same aperture.

We can see from the above that, other things being identical, background distance plays a very important role. The greater the background distance, softer the defocused area.



Case 1



Case 2

Case 2

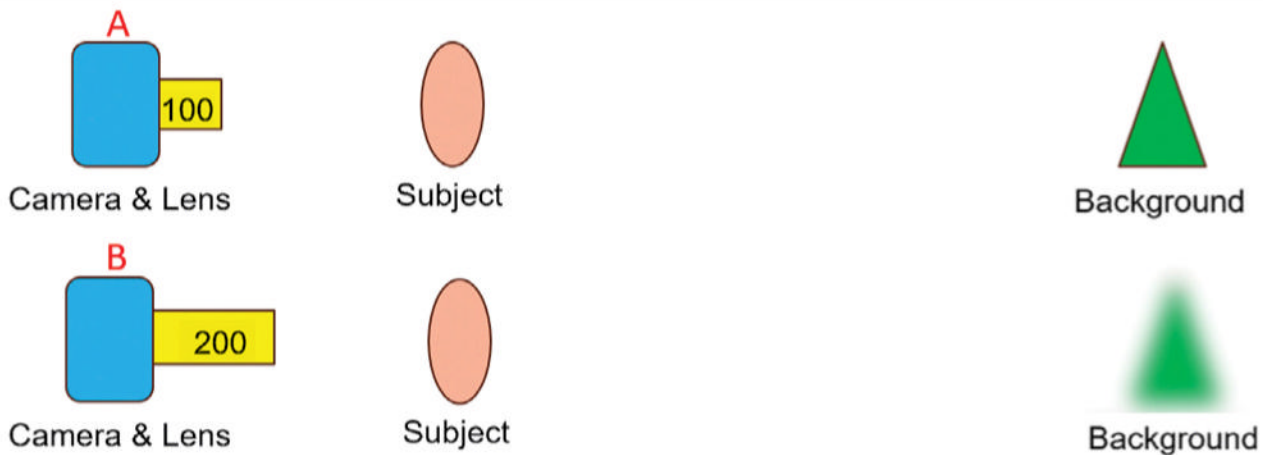
Focal length same as in Case 1, subject distance different, background distance same. Same two lenses as above. Same background distance for both the lenses but not the subject distance. Photographer 'A' is shooting from 5 feet while the other, 'B' is shooting from, say, 10 feet. The closer-to-the-subject lens will obviously give a softer background.

The closer the lens is to the subject, the higher the magnification and narrower the DOF. So, photographer A will see softer, and B less soft backgrounds.

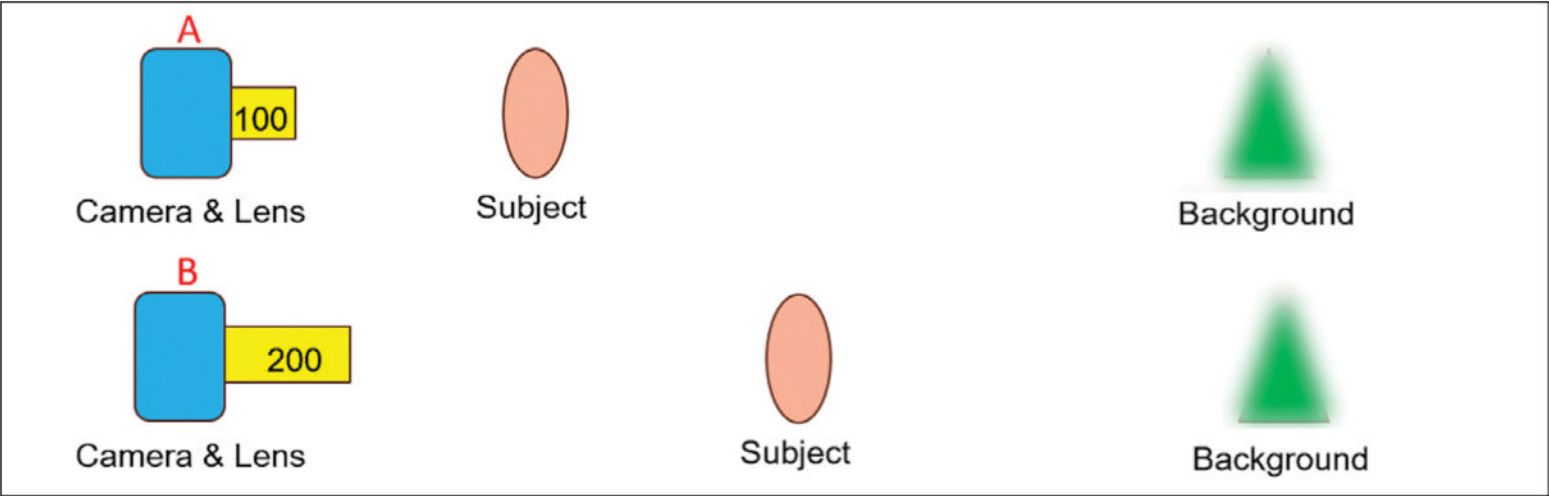
Case 3

One photographer 'A' is using, say, a 100mm lens, at a wide aperture and another one 'B' is using a 200mm lens (also set to the same aperture). Both are shooting the same subject from identical distance. And both have the same background distance. Who will get a softer background? Obviously, the 200mm lens will have the softer background since the focal length is longer.

The longer focal length with the same subject distance increases magnification resulting in a shallower DOF.



Case 3



Case 4

Case 4

Now let's try to complicate the matter using the same two lenses. The background distance is identical, say 15 feet. The only difference is that the subject distance for the 100mm lens is 5 feet whereas the subject distance for the 200mm lens is double -- 10 feet. Who will have a softer background?

In this case the magnification has not changed so, the DOF will not change either as other conditions are the same. However, since the focal length is longer the background will be rendered larger and will be softer.

Case 5

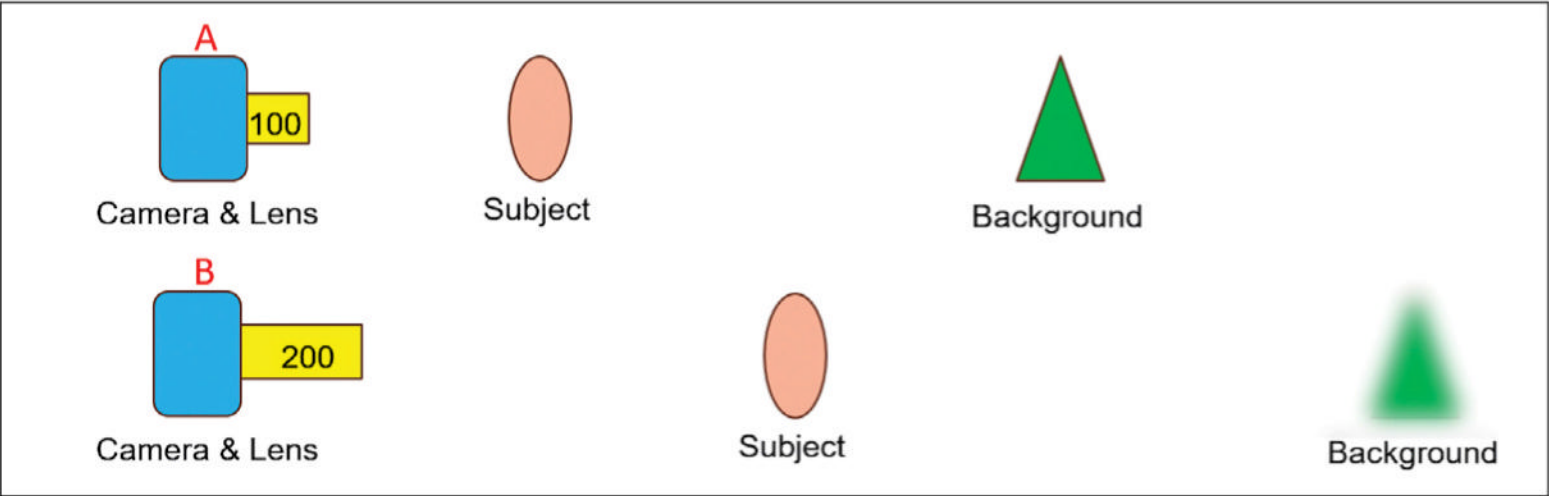
Let us look at another case, using the same lenses as above. Here, the 100mm guy 'A' has his subject distance of 5 feet and background distance of 10 feet. The 200mm user 'B' is shooting from 10 feet but has a background distance of 25 feet. Who should get a softer background?

Applying the same logic as in Case 4, the DOF is again the same. The background is now farther so it will be more defocused and hence even softer compared to Case 4.

In conclusion, we can see that it is not just how fast the aperture is, other conditions also play a role in achieving a soft defocused background.**|SP**

Note: The diagrams are schematic in nature and hence not drawn to scale.

	Focal length	Subject distance	Background distance	Effect on defocused area
1	Same	Same	Increases	Softer
2	Same	Increases	Same	Less soft
3	Increases	Same	Same	Softer
4	Increases	Increases	Same	Softer
5	Increases	Increases	Increases	Softer



Case 5

TIPS ON PHOTOGRAPHING **SUNRISE/SUNSETS**

📷 Rohinton Mehta

Rohinton Mehta



Everyone loves sunrise and sunsets. Let's say, that you take a photo trip to an exotic location. Unless you know that area well, you may not know where exactly to go for the best sunrise/sunset experience.

Do your homework. Find out the sites where sunrise/sunsets generally are the best. You could check dedicated apps, check on the Net or better still, take a

local guide with you. Be at the location at least 20 minutes before the sunrise. This will give you a chance to scout around for the best shooting position.

Consider a good tripod as a must. If it has a centre column, remember not to extend the centre column to its maximum height as that can cause camera movement during exposure. Instead, use the centre column only for

minor adjustments in height. Ideally, a tripod height should be such that the mounted camera is at your eye level (without the use of the centre column). Set your ISO to 100 (unless the base ISO in your camera is different).

If you are using a D-SLR, consider locking up the reflex mirror after you have focussed, if your camera has that facility. This prevents the loss of sharpness

Dr. Mangal Parihar, DCP Expeditions



Rohinton Mehta



due to the mirror slap. Alternately, if your camera supports it, use the self-timer with 2-3 second delay. I prefer being on Manual Focus mode when photographing sunrise/sunsets. Warning: Never look at the sun through a long telephoto lens as that could permanently damage your eye. If you have any difficulty looking at the sun with your naked eyes, do not look at it through a telephoto lens.

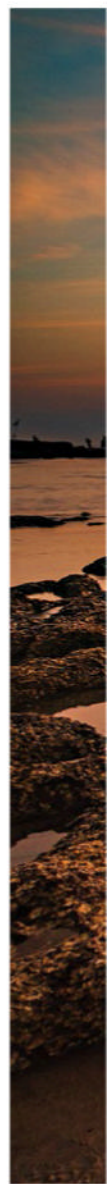
Do not set the White Balance to Auto. If you do so, the warm sunrise/sunset colours will tend to wash out. Of course, if you are shooting in Raw

(recommended), then changing the WB in post processing is very easy. (But, I would still like to start my editing on a picture that looks as close to what I saw when I took the shot).

When photographing sunsets, make it a point to stay there for up to 30 minutes after the sun has gone under the horizon. Often, the sky gets its beautiful colours after 20 minutes after the sun has set. Try not to place the sun in the centre of your composition; consider the Rule of the Thirds. Also, try not to place the horizon line passing through the

centre of the frame. (I am aware that some photographers do not heed this advice. If you are a beginner, you may be better off following my advice.)

Consider creating High Dynamic Range (HDR) images, especially if the lighting contrast is high. If recording for HDR, set your camera on Continuous Firing Mode – High. The idea is to not allow time between the frames, since the sun changes its position continuously. I am assuming that you know how to set up the camera for HDR images. Know some basic editing to warm up the photos to your liking. **|SP**





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PRINTING AND BEYOND



Vimal Parmar

An independent marketing consultant and digital print evangelist with over 40 years of experience in the imaging industry.

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

Beyond the Screen

Why some photographs deserve to become a book

Dear Readers,

Most of us take more photographs today than at any other time in history. Our phones, cameras and memory cards are filled with family moments, holidays, celebrations, street scenes, landscapes, wildlife encounters and countless memories that seemed important enough to photograph at the time.

Yet very few of those images ever leave our screens. They remain scattered across devices, hidden in folders, or forgotten in cloud storage. Occasionally we revisit them, but more often than not, they simply accumulate.

As always, even this month's Print & Beyond column is about an alternative fate for those photographs. It is the story of Hyderabad-based photographer Gujunuru Chandra Teja and his self-published photobook *Hums in the Wind*, inspired by a journey through the dramatic landscapes of Leh-Ladakh. What makes this project particularly interesting is that it was not created for a client or a commercial purpose. It was created because the photographer wanted to preserve a personal experience in a form that could be held, shared, and revisited. As I read his story, I was reminded that a photobook is not merely a collection of photographs. It is a carefully curated memory. It is a way of transforming a series of individual images into a meaningful narrative.



Gujunuru Chandra Teja

Perhaps it is no coincidence that Teja is also an avid film photographer and a collector of vintage tools such as a Hermes Baby typewriter. Both pursuits reflect an appreciation for slower, more deliberate forms of creativity. In a world dominated by instant capture, instant sharing and instant gratification, there remains something deeply satisfying about processes that demand patience, thought and commitment.

The process itself can be surprisingly rewarding. Selecting photographs, deciding their sequence, choosing a format, adding text, and finally seeing the finished book in print often helps us appreciate our own work in ways that a screen never can. You do not need to be a professional photographer to create a photobook. A family holiday, a pilgrimage, a wildlife safari, a child's growing-up years, a personal project, or even a collection of favourite photographs from a single year can become a book worth preserving.

In many ways, creating a photobook is one of the most personal forms of printing. It transforms photographs from files into keepsakes. As you read Teja's story, I invite you to think about the photographs that matter most to you. If you had to create a book from your own images, what story would it tell? Perhaps your next photobook is already waiting inside your camera.

Happy Printing,
Vimal Parmar

Hums in the Wind

How a journey through Leh-Ladakh became a self-published photobook



Cover and back cover

GUJUNURU CHANDRA TEJA, HYDERABAD

- **Instagram:** chan_teja
- **Title of the Photobook:** Hums in the wind
- **Year of Publication:** 2026

There is a moment in every photographer's journey when images begin to demand more than a place on a hard drive or an Instagram feed. They ask to be seen together, sequenced, printed, and experienced as a complete story. That moment arrived for me after a journey through the breathtaking landscapes of Leh-Ladakh.

Photography has been a major part of my life for over a decade. Although I work as a scientific research professional in the healthcare sector, photography has always been my creative outlet. I started with a smartphone, photographing anything and everything that caught my attention. Curiosity led me to experiment with macro photography using microscope eyepieces from my college laboratory. Over the years, I worked on documentaries, independent projects, events, commercial assignments and freelance work. Each experience helped shape my photographic vision.

I have always believed that a photograph is the closest thing we have to time travel. Long after a moment has passed, a photograph allows us to revisit it, experience it again, and perhaps even feel what we felt in that instant. Maybe that is why I photograph. To create something that future generations can look back upon and connect with.

Film photography has also been an important part of my creative journey for the past four years. While I rotate between several cameras, the Minolta SRT 101 and Nikon F2 remain my favourites. What I love about film is that it slows me down. With a limited number of frames on each roll, every photograph demands greater thought and intention. Film also offers a unique character. Its colours, tones and grain are difficult to replicate digitally. Most of all, I enjoy the anticipation of seeing a roll after it has been developed. The satisfaction of getting a good set of negatives never fades; it still feels as exciting as buying my first camera.

My photobook, *Hums in the Wind*, was born from a desire to preserve the emotions I experienced while travelling through Leh-Ladakh. The region left a profound impression on me. Its immense landscapes, endless horizons, dramatic mountains and quiet solitude created a feeling that was difficult to express in words. I wanted to capture that sense of vastness and transform it into something tangible.

Mountains have always fascinated me. Combining my love for travel with photography felt completely natural. What attracted me most to Ladakh was not just its beauty but its character. The region feels vast, empty, minimal, rugged, and resilient. Those qualities influenced every aspect of the book, from image selection and sequencing to design and layout.

The project took approximately two months to complete, from selecting the photographs to holding the finished printed book in my hands. While that may not sound like a long time, the process involved some difficult decisions.

One of the greatest challenges was choosing which photographs would make the final cut. Like most photographers, I had many favourites and several images that carried personal memories. However, I realised that a photobook is not about including every good photograph. It is about selecting the photographs that contribute to the story.

In the end, I trusted my instincts. If an image resonated deeply with me, it stayed. If it did not, it was removed, regardless of its technical merit.

Looking through the selected images brought back vivid memories of the moments when they were made. I could recall the weather, the silence, the emotions, and even the thoughts running through my mind. Once again, photography proved its ability to transport us through time.

Two photographs in particular hold special significance for me: *Unbothered* and *Poetry of the Everyday*. Both were made during moments of complete calm and presence. They remind me that meaningful photographs often emerge when we stop trying too hard and simply allow ourselves to experience a place.

Interestingly, I did not follow a strict chronological sequence while designing the book. Instead, I focused on instinct, colour relationships, visual rhythm, and how the accompanying text interacted with the images. Sometimes storytelling is less about dates and locations and more about emotions and atmosphere. I designed and laid out the entire book myself.



While a professional designer helped ensure there were no technical issues before printing, the creative decisions remained entirely my own. The finished book is an A4-format publication containing 22 sheets (44 pages) and 32 photographs. It was printed locally in Hyderabad on 300 GSM glossy paper, with a print run of 150 copies.

The idea for creating a photobook emerged unexpectedly. Friends often told me that they rarely saw my work because I was not particularly active on social media. Their comments made me realise that many of my favourite photographs existed only on storage drives. A photobook seemed like the perfect way to give those images a permanent home. In today's digital world, some people question whether printing photographs is still necessary. For me, the answer is simple. Certain photographs deserve to exist on paper.

Viewing photographs in a book is fundamentally different from viewing them on a screen. There are no notifications, no distractions, and no endless scrolling. The experience becomes slower, more intentional and more immersive. You can touch the pages, spend time with an image, and absorb it at your own pace. That physical connection changes everything. The response from viewers has been deeply rewarding. Many people told me that after seeing the book, they wanted to pack their bags and travel to Ladakh themselves. Knowing that the photographs inspired a sense of curiosity and wanderlust made all the effort worthwhile.

Perhaps the greatest lesson I learned from creating *Hums in the Wind* was the art of storytelling through photographs. A photobook forces you to think beyond individual images. It challenges you to consider pacing, mood, transitions, and narrative flow. It teaches you how photographs can work together to create something larger than themselves. If you are a photographer considering your first photobook, my advice is simple: do not overthink it. Just begin.

You will make mistakes. Every photographer does. But you will learn invaluable lessons about your work, your vision, and your creative process. Most importantly, you will finally experience your photographs in the form they deserve: a physical object that can be held, shared, revisited and treasured.

Every photographer owes themselves that experience at least once. Because photography does not truly end when the shutter clicks. Sometimes, it reaches its fullest expression when the images find their place on paper and begin telling their story. **[SP]**

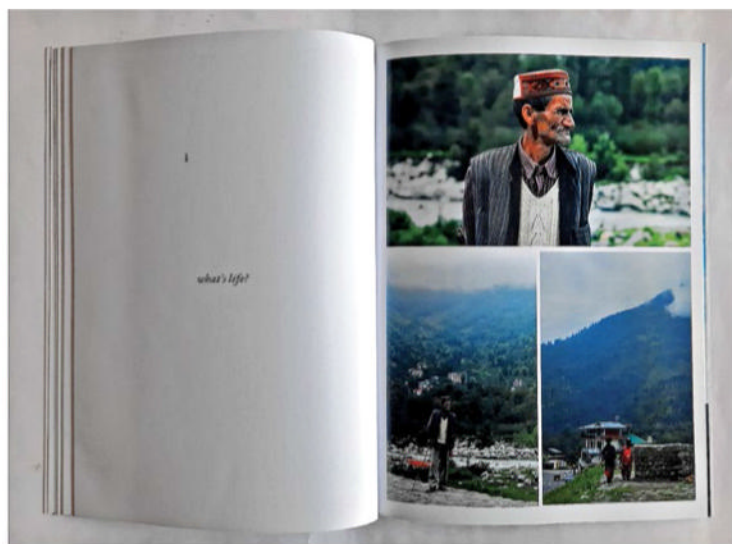


Inside pages





Inside pages



“

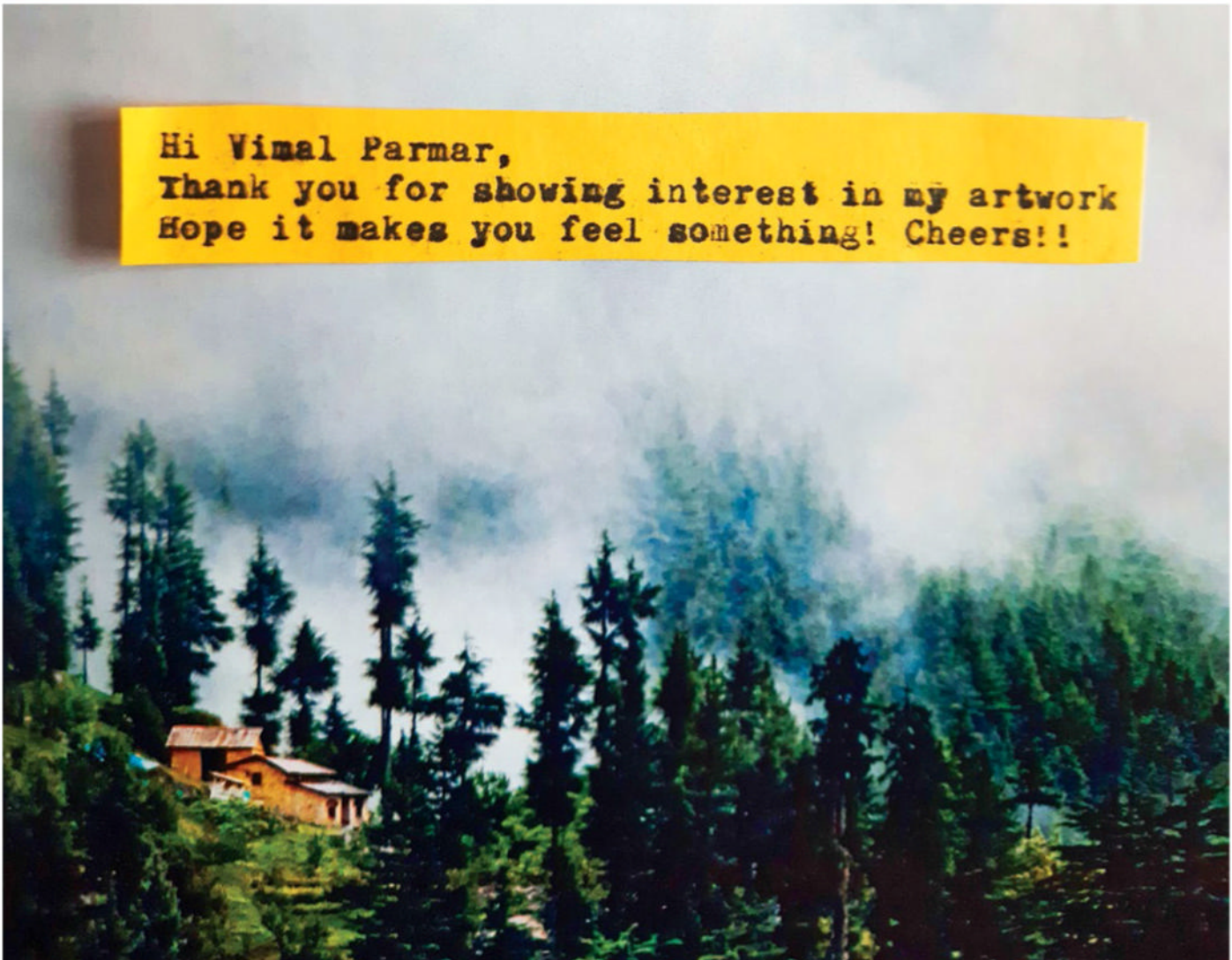
Film photography has not been my only analogue pursuit. A couple of years ago, I bought a vintage Baby Hermes typewriter from a collector. I had always been drawn to typewriters because they felt surprisingly similar to film cameras. Mechanical, tactile and authentic. Unlike a computer, there is no easy undo button. Once you type something, it is there. That permanence makes the process more thoughtful and intentional. I also love the old-world charm of the machine. Much like film photography, using a typewriter slows me down and makes me appreciate the act of creating.”

— Gujunuru Chandra Teja

”



Hermes Baby typewriter



A note typed on a vintage Hermes Baby. Like a photograph on film, every keystroke is deliberate, permanent and beautifully imperfect.



REVIEWS

FINAL RATING

The final ratings given in the reviews are not an indication of the performance or features of the reviewed device in isolation. It is a combination of all parameters including the price of the product.



68

Lens Review

**M.Zuiko Digital ED 90mm
1:3.5 Macro IS PRO**

Smartphone Review
vivo X 300 Ultra



72



76

Smartphone Review
Xiaomi 17T

M.Zuiko Digital ED 90mm 1:3.5 Macro IS PRO ₹1,24,990/-

King of Kings

In the Box

- ✓ Lens
- ✓ Lens hood, with lock (LH-66E)
- ✓ Lens front cap (LC-62G)
- ✓ Lens rear cap (LR-2)
- ✓ Wrapping cloth (CS-53)
- ✓ Instruction manual
- ✓ Warranty card

Rohinton Mehta

The M. Zuiko Digital ED 90mm F3.5 Macro IS PRO is a high magnification, high performance medium telephoto macro lens by the OM System (previously Olympus) and is designed for the Micro Four Thirds (MFT) format. It offers a maximum magnification of 2x and its equivalent focal length in the 35mm format is 180mm. It was introduced in India in February 2023. Let's put the lens to a grueling test.

Design & Build Quality

The M.Zuiko Digital ED 90mm f/3.5 Macro IS PRO lens is well built though the outer body uses plastic to reduce cost and weight. The lens mount is made of metal. The lens mount has a rubber ring to prevent dust or water splashes to enter. The lens is dust-proof, freeze-proof and splash-proof (IP 53 rating). As far as I know, this is the only lens with a 30-month warranty in India. Filter size is 62mm and the lens weighs 453g. The lens is made in Vietnam.

Key Features

I would like to clear a misconception that is floating around, that the M.Zuiko Digital ED 90mm f/3.5 Macro IS PRO becomes 4x when compared to the 35mm format. This needs some clarification. Because of the difference between the two sensor sizes and the consequent change in angle of view, it appears that the magnification is 4x on a 35mm format (equivalent). Note that a 2x

magnification on the MFT format remains 2x magnification on any sensor format.

The lens is constructed with 18 elements in 13 groups that include 2 Super ED elements, 4 ED elements, 1 Super HR element and 1 HR element. These special elements help to improve the overall optical performance, including colour accuracy and lens sharpness. When used on an OM-3 body, you get a 7.5 stops advantage in using slower shutter speeds due to the Sync IS.

The lens offers a sliding 3-position switch for Super Macro, 0.25 - 0.5m, and 0.25m - infinity distances. Next to it is the IS (Image Stabilisation) ON/OFF switch. Below that is the programmable L-Fn (Lens Function) button that works in combination with the camera body in use. A simple but efficient design!

Ergonomics

The lens is comfortable to use and carry along the whole day without breaking the back. The push-pull AF/MF ring allows for super quick changes.

Performance

The lens was reviewed on an OM-3 body, with auto corrections enabled.

The lens autofocussed quickly and accurately on non-macro distances. At very close distances (like when photographing the wristwatches you see in this review) I did notice the lens hunting but that could possibly be due to the loss of light/contrast at the point of focus. At such close distances, I prefer setting up a magnification scale and then moving towards the subjects in Manual Focus mode till the subject appears in sharp focus. I am not sure if the hunting at macro distances was due to the lens or the body.

Images were sharp throughout the format, even when used at wide open f/3.5 aperture. Stopping down the lens



to f/4.5–5.6 improved on critical sharpness and contrast. I felt that the lens was sharpest between f/5.6–6.3. On macro subjects, note that using these apertures can cause certain areas of the subject to be out of sharp focus due to the limited DoF. On flat surfaces, keep the sensor plane as parallel to the subject plane as possible. By f/8, some diffraction seeps in and certainly at f/11 onwards. So, does this mean that one should never use f/11 to f/22? When DoF is more important, of course use narrower apertures. This is a compromise we must make; the entire image will be 'softer' but we can always use judicious sharpening during post processing.

I saw no lens distortions or chromatic aberrations – which is a good thing. Flare was well controlled. Overall, a superb performer.

Value for Money

The OM-SYSTEM 90mm f/3.5 Macro IS PRO is available at an MRP of Rs.1,24,990/- Though the price seems high for a 90mm f/3.5 macro lens, the outstanding performance makes up for the price. **|SP**

Camera: OM-3
Lens: M.Zuiko Digital ED 90mm
1:3.5 Macro IS PRO
Aperture: f/3.5 (wide open)
Shutter Speed: 1/100 sec.
Focal Length: 90.0 mm
ISO: 500



Rohinton Mehta

Camera: OM-3
 Lens: M.Zuiko Digital ED 90mm
 1:3.5 Macro IS PRO
 Aperture: f/3.5 (wide open)
 Shutter Speed: 1/100 sec.
 Focal Length: 90.0 mm
 ISO: 2000



Rohinton Mehta

FINAL SCORE



Design and Build Quality



Key Features



Ergonomics



Performance



Value for Money



Overall



KEY SPECIFICATIONS

Focal length: 90mm

Angle of view: 14°

Aperture range: F/3.5 - 22

L x Dia.: 136 x 69.8mm

Max magnification: 2x

Diaphragm blades: 7 (Circular)

Lens Function Button: Yes

Lens sync IS: 5-axis

Filter dia.: 62mm

Weight: 453g

PLUS

- Extremely sharp lens.
- Fast and accurate AF in non-macro modes; slows down a wee bit in macro
- No visible lens distortions
- Compact and lightweight
- Macro ratio scale shown in manual focus mode
- Push-pull AF/MF focus ring makes it quick to change the focus mode
- Up to 7.5-stop image stabilization with the OM-3
- Compatible with 1.4x and 2x Teleconverters
- CA and flare well controlled
- The first autofocus macro lens with 2:1 magnification

MINUS

- In Super macro mode (2x magnification), the widest aperture is f/5.

VERDICT

Macro lenses are manufactured by almost all camera manufacturers. But this is the first macro lens that provides autofocus even at 2:1 magnification.

I am not an OM-SYSTEM user, but from all the macro lenses that I have reviewed till now, this is probably the sharpest macro lens that I have come across! When using the Super Macro mode, the widest aperture shifts from

f/3.5 to f/5. This is not a defect though. When any lens is super close to the subject, there is a certain amount of light loss and that is why the shift in the aperture size. The overall performance is superlative. Though several users use this lens handheld, I strongly recommend that to get the most out of this lens, please use a good tripod. The depth of field is very shallow at higher magnifications and even a very minor movement forward or backward can rob you of the maximum sharpness the lens is capable of – remember,

the IS system is designed to reduce camera movement during exposure, but it cannot help you if you are bobbing even a millimeter forward or backward.

Aside from the macro part, the 90mm lens (180mm equivalent in the 35mm format) is great for close portraits, table-tops, landscapes and most other genres (besides birding!). Considering its superb all-round performance, I have no hesitation in awarding it a Best Buy!

Camera: OM-3
Lens: M.Zuiko Digital ED 90mm
1:3.5 Macro IS PRO
Aperture: f/3.5 (wide open)
Shutter Speed: 1/80 sec.
Focal Length: 90.0 mm
ISO: 500



Rohinton Mehta

All the three photos were taken handheld at f/3.5 (wide open aperture) and in a room lit only by fluorescent lights

vivo X 300 Ultra ₹1,60,000

Super smartphone!

In the Box

- ✓ Device
- ✓ 100W wired charger
- ✓ USB Type-C to Type-C cable
- ✓ Protective case
- ✓ SIM ejector tool
- ✓ Documentation
- ✓ The Photography Kit
(ZEISS telephoto lenses 200mm and 400mm, camera grip/rig with SmallRig collaboration, straps, adapter rings, etc.) not included in the standard box.

Hoshang Billimoria

Not so long ago, the photography industry scoffed at the prospect of phones intruding into their fiefdoms. Along came smartphones circa 2010 and instead of speaking about their cameras, smartphone manufacturers stressed the optical capability of these smartphones and quickly stole the lower end of the camera market from the camera makers. Every year the optical capabilities of the smartphones improved and so did the quality of

images produced. However, convenient as the smartphones were, they could not compete with cameras that flaunted bigger sensors, boasted great dynamic range and offered a huge variety of zoom lenses. vivo has been a prime mover in the smartphone market and now seeks to extend its sphere of influence with the newly launched X 300 Ultra. Uniquely, apart from several lenses embedded into the camera body, vivo also offers two attachable teleconverters to achieve higher magnification. Will vivo's giant step work? Let's see.

Our review, of course, is limited to the imaging capabilities of





Camera: vivo X 300 Ultra
Aperture: f/2.67
Shutter Speed: 1/303 sec
Focal Length: 1411 mm
ISO: 50



Camera: vivo X 300 Ultra
Aperture: f/2.67
Shutter Speed: 1/127 sec
Focal Length: 159 mm
ISO: 50

Camera: vivo X 300 Ultra
Aperture: f/1.85
Shutter Speed: 1/543 sec
Focal Length: 35 mm
ISO: 50



ZEISS Telephoto Extender Gen 2 (200mm equivalent):

This compact 2.35x teleconverter lens mounts onto the vivo X300 Ultra's built-in 85mm periscope telephoto camera (200MP HP0 sensor). It features ZEISS T* coating, multi-group high-transmission glass elements, and OIS support. It extends the focal length to a native 200mm equivalent (around 8.7x optical zoom from the base), delivering sharp 200MP images with maintained optical quality up to higher digital crops (e.g., 5400mm range). It adds a versatile mid-to-long telephoto dimension, enabling better portrait compression, stage/event shooting, and wildlife photography with improved reach and subject isolation while keeping the setup lightweight and pocketable.



ZEISS Telephoto Extender Gen 2 Ultra (400mm equivalent):

This larger 4.7x teleconverter (often called the G2 Ultra) attaches to the same 85mm 200MP telephoto module and brings advanced optics including ultra-low dispersion elements and aspherical glass for reduced aberrations. It provides a native 400mm equivalent focal length (about 17x optical zoom), supporting 200MP straight-out images with OIS and high-refresh focus tracking, extending digitally up to extreme ranges like 8100mm. It adds professional super-telephoto capability to the phone's main camera system, unlocking distant wildlife, sports, and landscape detail capture that rivals dedicated cameras, with exceptional clarity and stabilization for handheld long-range shooting.



Both lenses integrate seamlessly via a dedicated photography kit case/grip and the camera app's Telephoto Extender mode.

the smartphone and does not seek to comment on other features.

Design & Build Quality

The vivo X 300 Ultra is available in Victory Green, Silver or Eclipse Black finishes and is beautifully finished in chrome (our sample). Three Zeiss lenses are neatly embedded inside the rear plate of the vivo. There is a 14 mm ultra wide angle, a 35 mm, and a 85 mm APO periscope lens. There is also a selfie lens. Using the screen, one can smoothly transition between different focal lengths. Dimensions of the smartphone are 163 mm x 77 mm x 8 mm and the phone weighs 232 gms. The X 300 Ultra has a glass back and front housed in an aluminium frame. The vivo is both dust and water resistant. The smartphone is supplied with a case.

vivo undertake to give seven years of security updates and system maintenance. Aesthetically, the vivo with its four lenses embedded in a circle, is probably the prettiest smartphone on the market.

Key Features

The X 300 Ultra relies on a 200 MP Sony LYTIA 901 sensor; the sensor size is 1/1.28. The vivo X300 Ultra offers 6.5x image stabilisation as per CIPA Standard. The vivo uses a Snapdragon 8 Elite Gen 5 processor. The 6.82 inches AMOLED display has a refresh rate of 144 Hz and a resolution of 1440 X 3168 pixels. The operating system used is the Origin OS 6 based on Android's 16. vivo has used a 6600 Ah battery that promises improved battery life. The battery can be charged with a cable or wirelessly. The X 300 Ultra can be bought with 12 or 16 GB RAM. Storage can be extended up to 1 TB.

A strong USP of the vivo X 300 is the Zeiss lenses built into the body. These are quality lenses designed for vivo by Zeiss. Whilst the ultra wide angle and the selfie lens operate at 50 MP, the 35 mm and the 85 mm boast a stunning 200 MP. On the video front, multi focal 4 K 120 fps 10 bit video is available with OIS and slow motion. Continuous fixed frame video recording for five hours and six minutes is possible at 35 degrees centigrade. The vivo supports Dolby Vision.



The X 300 Ultra comes with a number of useful accessories including a handgrip, a case and two optional teleconverters (200 mm & 400 mm) that can be attached through an adapter. A filter adopter ring, a tripod collar ring, a shoulder strap and lens caps are supplied as well.

Ergonomics

The vivo evokes a 'wow' factor for its looks when the box is opened. Handling, in general is very good. However, when the teleconverters are attached, the whole outfit looks a little 'strange'. We are not sure that the vivo will attract mirrorless camera buyers. A strong plus factor is the battery both in the phone and in the handgrip. Battery life is very good. The nicely designed handgrip is also a serious plus point.

Performance

The X 300 Ultra's performance straight out of the camera is very good. Colours are vivid, contrast is good. Both low light performance and dynamic range are amongst the best for smartphones. The same applies to video recording and you can record for long periods without the smartphone heating up. We are not big fans of teleconverters; however the vivo teleconverters do give decent results and improve the versatility of the camera. Obviously, Zeiss has given their best in designing these lenses. Overall performance for a smartphone camera is very good indeed.

Value for Money

The vivo X 300 Ultra smartphone carries an indicative price of nearly Rs 160000. This is for the 16 GB + 512 GB version. The phone along with the teleconverters and grip is listed at Rs 210000. Expect prices to ease with time. At these prices, the vivo is fair value for money. | **SP**

VERDICT

The indicative price of the vivo is a tad high. However, the camera gives super results. As long as you are realistic about the performance of the teleconverters, it should make a good purchase. BEST BUY!

FINAL SCORE



Design and Build Quality



Key Features



Ergonomics



Performance



Value for Money



Overall



PLUS

- Aesthetically beautiful
- Sharp Zeiss lenses
- Grip aids handling considerably
- Good low light performance
- Teleconverters increase versatility

MINUS

- Results with teleconverters a shade lower than with the Zeiss lenses
- Price
- Who has vivo aimed the phone at?

KEY SPECIFICATIONS

Display: 6.82-inch LTPO AMOLED, 1440x3168 resolution, 144Hz refresh rate.

Processor: Qualcomm Snapdragon 8 Elite Gen 5 (3nm).

RAM/Storage: 12GB/16GB LPDDR5X RAM with 256GB/512GB/1TB UFS 4.1 storage.

Rear Camera: Triple setup - 200MP main + 200MP telephoto + 50MP ultrawide.

Front Camera: 50MP.

Battery: 6600mAh with 100W wired and 40W wireless charging.

Build: 163 x 76.8 x 8.2mm, 232-237g, glass front/back, aluminum frame, IP68/IP69.

OS: Android 16 with OriginOS 6.



In the Box

- ✓ 67W Fast Charger
- ✓ USB-C Data cable
- ✓ SIM Ejector Tool and guides
- ✓ Protective case
- ✓ Pre-applied screen protector

Periscope Telephoto camera, and a 12MP Leica Ultra-Wide camera. The primary sensor features a large 1/1.55-inch sensor size, f/1.7 aperture and OIS, while the telephoto camera combines a 115mm equivalent focal length, OIS and 5x optical zoom. Xiaomi also claims up to 10x optical-grade zoom and AI-assisted zoom reaching 120x.

The Leica Summilux optical lens and UltraPure Optical Design play an equally important role. Xiaomi employs a 1G+6P hybrid lens structure, multiple anti-reflective coatings and a spin-coated infrared filter to reduce flare, ghosting and colour cast. These are specifications photographers appreciate because they directly influence image quality rather than merely looking impressive on paper.

The real star of the show is the Leica 5x Periscope Telephoto camera. In daily use it quickly becomes the lens you reach for most often. Street scenes, architecture, wildlife, concerts, portraits and distant subjects benefit enormously from the 115mm focal length. Unlike digital zoom systems, the optical telephoto preserves detail and delivers pleasing background compression that gives images a more professional look. Xiaomi's Telemacro capability adds further versatility, allowing photographers to focus on subjects from as close as 30cm. Flowers, textures, food and small objects become surprisingly engaging subjects.

Display and Performance

Up front sits a 6.59-inch 1.5K AMOLED display with a 120Hz refresh rate. Colours are vibrant, contrast is excellent and the display is bright enough for outdoor photography work. Whether reviewing images, editing photographs or consuming HDR content, the screen performs admirably.

Powering the device is MediaTek's Dimensity 8500-Ultra chipset paired with LPDDR5X RAM and UFS 4.1 storage. Performance remains consistently fast whether shooting bursts of high-resolution photographs, processing images, multitasking or gaming. The large 6500mAh battery comfortably lasts a full day of photography-heavy use while 67W HyperCharge minimises downtime.

Xiaomi 17T ₹59,999 mi.com/in

Leica Legacy

Flagship photography without compromises

Srini Swaminathan

The Xiaomi 17T arrives in a crowded premium smartphone market where most devices promise excellent cameras, powerful processors and all-day battery life. Yet Xiaomi's collaboration with Leica continues to give its smartphones a distinct photographic identity. The Xiaomi 17T is not merely another flagship smartphone; it is a camera-first device designed for travellers, creators and photography enthusiasts who want versatility without carrying dedicated camera gear.

Design & Build Quality

The Xiaomi 17T follows Xiaomi's modern design language with a premium construction and a clean, understated appearance. The camera module immediately draws attention with its

Leica branding, signalling the phone's imaging ambitions. Despite packing a large 6500 mAh battery and advanced camera hardware, the device remains comfortable during extended shooting sessions. The balance in hand is excellent, whether capturing street scenes, landscapes or portraits during a long day of travel photography.

Key Features

Photography is undoubtedly the defining story of the Xiaomi 17T. Xiaomi's partnership with Leica continues to mature, resulting in one of the most interesting camera systems available in its segment.

The Leica professional triple-camera setup consists of a 50MP Leica Main Camera built around Xiaomi's Light Fusion 800 sensor, a 50MP Leica 5x

Camera: Xiaomi 17T
Aperture: f/3.0
Shutter Speed: 1/400 sec
Focal Length: 115 mm
ISO: 400

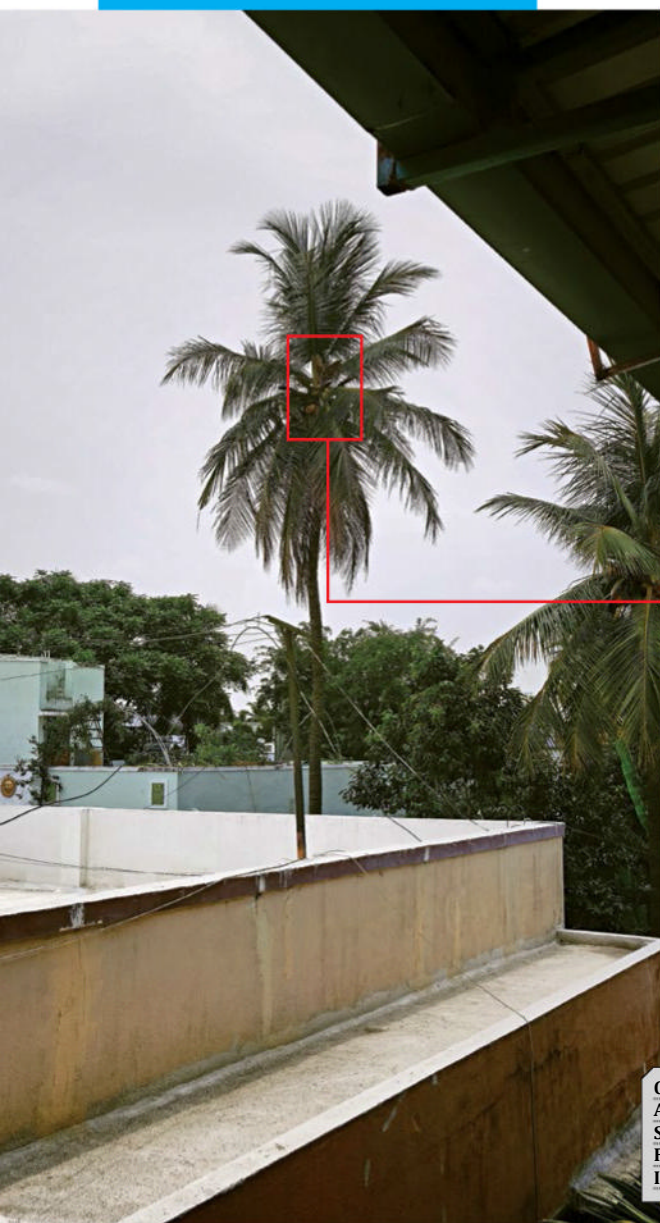
Girish Mallya



Camera: Xiaomi 17T
Aperture: f/1.7
Shutter Speed: 1/167 sec
Focal Length: 46 mm
ISO: 50

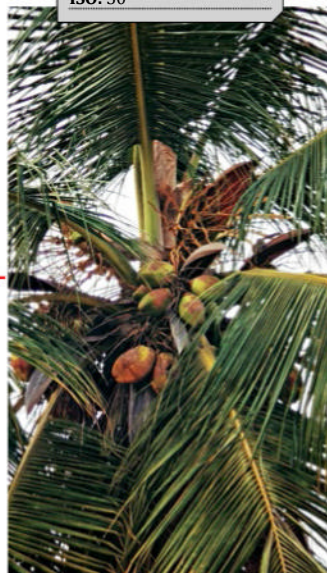


Girish Mallya



Srini Swaminathan

Camera: Xiaomi 17T
Aperture: f/3.0
Shutter Speed: 1/498 sec
Focal Length: 305 mm
ISO: 50



Srini Swaminathan

Camera: Xiaomi 17T
Aperture: f/1.7
Shutter Speed: 1/2610 sec
Focal Length: 35 mm
ISO: 50

Ergonomics

One of the biggest strengths of the Xiaomi 17T is its balance. The combination of a compact 6.59-inch display and a capable telephoto system makes it easier to handle than many larger flagship devices. During long shooting sessions, the phone remains comfortable and confidence-inspiring.

Performance

The Xiaomi 17T excels when photographing real-world subjects. Landscapes are rich in detail, portraits benefit from Leica's refined rendering, and the telephoto camera opens creative possibilities unavailable on most competing devices. The Light Fusion 800 sensor captures impressive

dynamic range, while Leica Portrait and Master Portrait modes produce natural subject separation and attractive bokeh. Video capabilities are equally competent, supporting HDR10+ recording, LOG recording and Stage Video modes at up to 4K 60fps. Content creators will appreciate the flexibility these options provide.

Value for Money

What makes the Xiaomi 17T compelling is not a single specification but the complete package. A flagship-grade telephoto camera, Leica colour science, capable performance, excellent battery life and premium build quality come together in a device that feels purpose-built for photography enthusiasts. **|SP**

FINAL SCORE



Design and Build Quality



Key Features



Ergonomics



Performance



Value for Money



Overall



- PLUS**
- Outstanding Leica 5x Periscope Telephoto camera
 - Excellent Light Fusion 800 main sensor
 - Strong battery life and fast charging
 - Compact, travel-friendly design
 - 60% value buyback guaranteed after 1st year

- MINUS**
- No wireless charging
 - Ultra-wide camera lags behind the main and telephoto cameras
 - AI zoom beyond optical range can appear over-processed

KEY SPECIFICATIONS

Processor: MediaTek Dimensity 8500-Ultra
RAM: 12GB LPDDR5X
Storage: 256GB / 512GB UFS 4.1
Battery: 6500mAh Silicon-Carbon Battery
Rear Camera System: 50MP Leica Main Camera (Light Fusion 800 Sensor), 50MP Leica 5x Periscope Telephoto Camera, 12MP Leica Ultra-Wide Camera
Front Camera: 32MP
Display: 6.59-inch 1.5K AMOLED, 120Hz Refresh Rate
Charging: 67W HyperCharge
Durability: IP68 Rating

VERDICT

The Xiaomi 17T successfully combines flagship-level performance, a capable Leica camera system and excellent battery life into a polished package. For users seeking a balanced premium smartphone with a strong focus on photography, the Xiaomi 17T is an impressive and highly competitive option. The 'Leica look' feature is a bonus!

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MANFROTTO ONE tripod

A unique, high-performance tripod

 **Ashok Kandimalla**

Manfrotto is a venerable name in the world of tripods along with its stablemate Gitzo. They have been a bit quiet for a while, but now have come out with the Model ONE, that is a near revolutionary product. A clue to that comes from the name itself - ONE meaning that it is one tripod capable of performing a variety of tasks.

Cleverly designed (and made) in Italy, it is a superbly engineered tripod that can be used for photography or videography or hybrid workflows seamlessly. In this First Look article, we will concentrate on its unique features. The first and the most distinctive feature is the XCHANGE Quick Release system. Please do not confuse this with the normal QR systems (like Arca-Swiss) that are used to attach a camera to the head. This is different, and facilitates the instant change of the head itself. Swapping a head with another (say, a pan-head with a ball-head) or with other accessories like sliders takes just seconds! It is precision made with no play or wobble, much like a lens bayonet mount, but stronger.

The next new and exciting feature is a completely redesigned leg-lock system, called the XTEND, for rapid release and locking of leg sections (there are three per leg). There is only one lock per leg and it releases all the sections simultaneously. Just hold the tripod over the ground you want to place it and then release the locks so that the legs can find their own level, even when you are on an uneven terrain. Simple as that! The last section of each leg has a rubber foot that can be removed to reveal a spike. Together, these provide hassle free operation on any surface. The leg angles can be adjusted and locked as well. This feature allows you to go as low as 19 cm. The maximum height is 170 cm. The leg sections are large and rectangular in cross-section to give maximum torsional rigidity for smooth panning.

Finally, we have the very smartly designed centre column with easy height adjustment.

You can also tilt it at right angles. In addition, you can level the centre column (and hence the head) smoothly and rapidly, using its built-in half-ball by releasing a lever. This is a boon for both photographers who use gimbal and pano heads and videographers.

The ONE is available in both aluminium and CF versions with or without a head. The recommended head is the 500X hybrid (photo+video) fluid head. This has the XCHANGE system built-in and has a unique lockable hinge to facilitate the rotation of the camera by 90° (to orient from landscape to portrait and vice versa). The 500X comes with a dovetail QR system and has a load capacity of 5 Kg. The ONE can be purchased with different types of heads from Manfrotto or used with heads from different manufacturers that come with the standard 3/8" threaded socket.

Any cons? The ONE is a heavy hitter and in fact it is a heavy heavy hitter! Even the carbon-fibre version tips the scales 3.15 kg (3.55 kg for the aluminium one) and to that you need to add 500X weighing another 1.2 kgs. The legs can take a max load of 15 kg when in normal position. The positive takeaway from this is that you get a bulletproof tripod that will last forever.

The Manfrotto ONE platform redefines the modern tripod, blending speed, precision, ruggedness and modular flexibility into a single system. Whether in the controlled environment of a studio or the rough outdoors, ONE delivers a stable, adaptable platform that helps creators of all types to concentrate on their work.

This product is available from Srishti Digital who are the pan-India distributors for Manfrotto products. This tripod is available in multiple configurations; hence the price will depend on the chosen configuration. You can get more details and pricing information from:

Email: contact@srishtidigilife.co.in
Phone: +91-96001-66698 **SP**





■ Hoshang Billimoria

1. Kodak is the best selling compact camera brand in Japan. However, the cameras have nothing to do with the original Kodak and the name 'Kodak' is merely licensed. Who has licensed it?
 - a) Fujifilm
 - b) Ilford
 - c) J k Imaging
 - d) Konica
2. In which year did Kyocera cease production of all Contax, Kyocera and Yashica cameras.
 - a) 1999
 - b) 2001
 - c) 2003
 - d) 2005
3. Who has bought the Yashica brand name?
 - a) Zeiss
 - b) Schneider
 - c) Samyang
 - d) M F Jebsen Group
4. Who said the following? "Why did I need a photograph? I knew I'd been there?"
 - a) Edmund Hillary
 - b) Rohinton Mehta
 - c) Ansel Adams
 - d) Raghu Rai
5. Name two big camera brands that ceased production of cameras in the early 2000s.
6. In which year did Konica and Minolta merge?
 - a) 1999
 - b) 2001
 - c) 2003
 - d) 2005
7. Who makes Voigtlander branded lenses?
 - a) Cosina
 - b) Tokina
 - c) Tamron
 - d) Samyang
8. Which of the following manufacturers still do not make autofocus lenses with the Nikon Z mount?
 - a) Tokina
 - b) Samyang
 - c) Sigma
 - d) Tamron
9. One action camera manufacturer is on the brink of insolvency. Which one?
 - a) DJI
 - b) Insta 360
 - c) Go Pro
 - d) IZI
10. According to Map Camera, which of the following was the best selling camera in Japan in May 2026?
 - a) Fujifilm X-100 VI
 - b) Sony a 7 V
 - c) Ricoh GR IV
 - d) Fujifilm X-T 30 III

ANSWERS : 1(c), 2(b), 3(d), 4(a), 5(Minolta and Yashica), 6(c), 7(a), 8(b), 9(c), 10(a).

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