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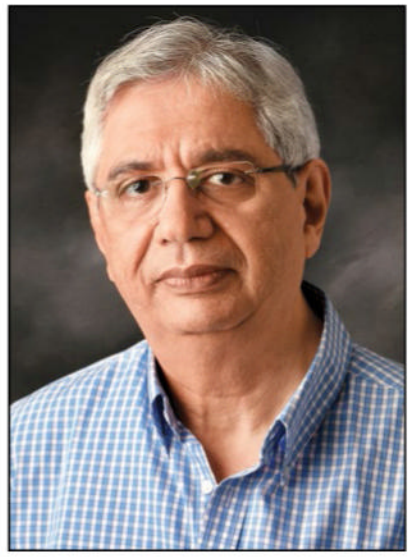
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We, at SP, are keen that our readers enjoy the hobby of photography without breaking the bank. With the current state of the world economy, it pays to be extra careful in how you spend your hard earned rupee. Afer all, expensive equipment cannot guarantee a good picture.



H. S. Billimoria

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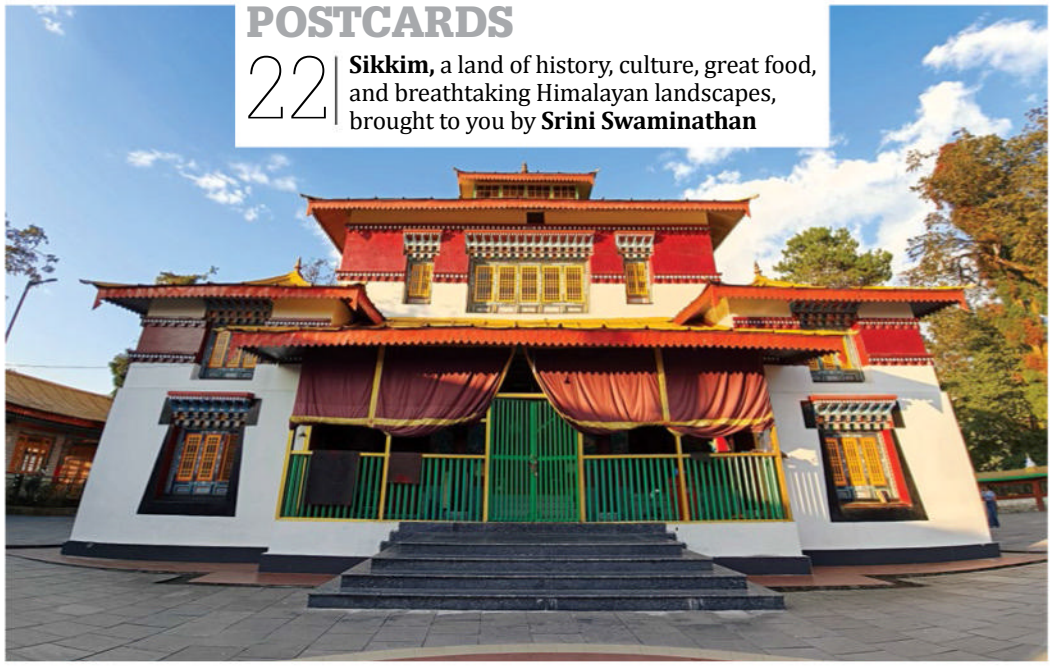
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All equipment go through a series of tests at the hands of our experts. Our reviewers are experts in the field of photography across the country and have many years of experience. That gives us the foresight to distinguish between a passing trend and 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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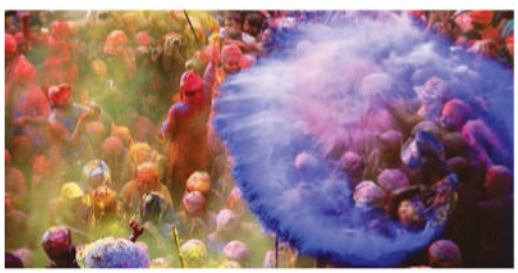
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Fujifilm launches Instax Mini EVO cinema camera

With the new Instax Mini Evo cinema camera, Fujifilm has targeted the Instagram and Tik Tok market. Equipped with a 28 mm F 2 lens, the Mini EVO is a true hybrid camera that shoots stills, video and prints pictures.

Ergonomically designed for one handed operation, the Mini Evo also features a grip attachment for better handling. A Finder Attachment that fits over the LCD screen further enhances the shooting experience. The camera has a 5 MP 1/5 inch sensor and weighs 270 gms.





Exhibition Report

The Bengal Photography Institute (BPI), Kolkata, proudly informs the 13th edition of LENSVISION, its prestigious annual photography exhibition, was held from 13th January to 15th January 2026 at the prestigious Gaganendra Shilpa Pradarshasala, Kolkata. The exhibition was open to the public every day from 2:00 PM to 8:00 PM, offering art lovers, students, and the general public for an immersive experience into the world of artistic photography.

The inauguration ceremony of 13th LENSVISION was held on 13th January 2026 at 5:00 PM at Gaganendra Shilpa Pradarshasala. The opening ceremony has been graced by a distinguished panel of eminent personalities from the fields of theatre, cinema, and photography – Chief Guest Sri Chandan Sen (eminent stage, television, and film actor, playwright, and director), Guest of Honour Sri Arghyakamal Mitra (one of India's most respected film editors), and Special Guest Sri Suman Bhattacharyya (an acclaimed photo



artist) has inaugurated the exhibition. One of the most significant attractions of the 13th LENSVISION was the Focus Country, which for 2026 was Turkey. As part of this international segment, the exhibition has showcased 40 exceptional photographic works by 20 Turkish photo artists.

Additionally, the exhibition displayed 73 printed photographic works by 38 BPI students, reflecting their creative growth, technical proficiency, and individual visual expression. And there was a digital presentation of 175 photographic works by BPI students in this exhibition.
Reported by: Sanjoy Bhattacharya, Director- Bengal Photography Institite, Kolkata, **M:** 85829 04905

Map Camera's best selling lenses for 2025

Map Camera's list of 10 top selling lenses for 2025 makes interesting reading.

1. Nikon Nikkor Z 24-20 mm F 4
2. Nikon Nikkor Z 24-70 mm F 2.8 S II
3. Canon RF 45 mm F 1.2 STM
4. Sony FE 24–70 mm F 2.8 GM II
5. Sony 70–200 mm F 2.8 GM OSS
6. Canon RF 100-400 mm F 5.6-8 IS USM
7. Sigma 20-200 mm F 3.5–6.3 DG C
8. Nikon Nikkor Z 50mm F 1.8 S
9. Tamron 25-200 mm F 2.8- 5.5 Di III VXD G2
10. Nikon Nikkor Z 26 mm F 2.8

Yodobashi sales chart for December 2025

Yodobashi's list of best selling cameras in the second half of December 2025 is shown below.

1. Sony a 7 Mk V
2. Fujifilm X-T 30 III
3. Sony a7 C II zoom kit
4. Canon EOS R 5 II
5. Canon EOS R 6 III
6. Nikon Z 6 III
7. Nikon Z 5 II
8. Hasselblad X2D II 100 C
9. Fujifilm X-M 5 kit
10. Canon EOS R 50 double zoom kit



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DCP Grand Annual Photography and Film Festival 2026

A Grand Celebration of Visual Storytelling

The DCP Grand Annual Photography and Film Festival 2026 marked yet another milestone in India's visual arts calendar, celebrating photography and short films through a powerful convergence of creativity, community, and conservation-driven storytelling. Presented by OM System India and co-sponsored by PhotoStop by Honeycomb, the festival was further supported by valued partners Unicom Retails, Canon India, Hey Jimmy, Leofoto India, GP Pro, and Swarovski. Hosted at the prestigious Bombay Art Society, Mumbai, the festival showcased over 270 curated photographic frames, including 250 prints sized 20 x 14 inches and 15 large-format prints of 32 x 22 inches, representing some of the finest works across wildlife, travel, portraits, landscapes, macro, birds, astro, food, and fine-art genres. Alongside the exhibition, the festival featured a special screening of eight top-nominated short films, presented over two days in the Bombay Art Society auditorium, offering audiences an immersive cinematic experience across wildlife and non-wildlife storytelling categories.





Esteemed Jury Panel

The festival was honoured by an exceptional jury panel comprising: Mr Rafique Sayed, Padmashree Sudharak Olwe, Mr Mukesh Parpiani, Mr Rohinton Mehta, Mr Akash Das, Mrs Hridgandha Mistry, Mr Jaideep Oberoi, Dr Anish Andheria, Mr Nayan Khanolkar, Dr Parvish Pandya, Mr Digant Desai, Mr Kedar Bhide, Mr Ganesh Bagal, Mr Vijay Bedi, Mr Akshay Rajput, Mr Shantibhushan Roy, Mr Kenneth Lawrence, and Miss Aishwarya Sridhar. Their expertise, fairness, and deep commitment to visual storytelling ensured a transparent and inspiring evaluation process across all categories.

Award Winners and Runners-Up

- **Short Films, Non-Wildlife Films**

Runner-Up: Chandrasekhar Singh Chauhan
Winner: Vinayak Sutar

- **Wildlife Films**

Runner-Up: Avinash Khemka
Runner-Up: Ravalnath Joshi
Winner: Anirban Dutta

Photography Categories

- **Food**

Runner-Up: Nayana A R
Winner: Basil Hashmi

- **Portraits**

Runner-Up: Ramanathan Iyer
Winner: Anand G Krishna

- **Travel**

Runner-Up: Sagar Mondkar
Winner: Prakash Tilokani

- **Astro**

Runner-Up: Santanu Majumdar
Runner-Up: Arjun Palit
Winner: Pankaj Joshi

- **Landscapes**

Runner-Up: Vijay Rawale
Winner: Himadri Bhuyan

- **Macro**

Runner-Up: Indranil Basu Mallick
Winner: Geetesh Patil

- **Birds**

Runner-Up: Viral Thakkar
Winner: Tanmoy Das Karmakar

- **Wildlife**

Runner-Up: Parag Bhat
Runner-Up: Kallol Mukherjee
Winner: Dr Soumen Chanda

A Festival Beyond Awards

The DCP Grand Annual Festival 2026 was not merely an exhibition or competition, but a celebration of storytelling, learning, and community. From meaningful interactions between photographers and viewers to thought-provoking conversations sparked by images and films, the festival reaffirmed DCP's vision of building India's one of the strongest and largest photography and filmmaking community platform. With eleven years of legacy behind it, DCP continues to strengthen its commitment to nurturing talent, encouraging ethical storytelling, and creating opportunities for visual artists to be seen, heard, and celebrated.



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PSI Members' Exhibition 2026

The Photographic Society of India celebrated its Members' Exhibition 2026 at the Jehangir Art Gallery in Mumbai from 27th Jan. – 2nd Feb. 2026. The exhibition was inaugurated by Chandrakant Shah, Hon. Secretary, AIPTIA. The highlight of the programme was the Lifetime Achievement Award to Photojournalist and Padma Shri Awardee Sudharak Olwe. Padma Shri Awardee Achyut Palav (President of the PSI), and other PSI Committee Members were present.



(L to R): Nitin Pawar (Jt. Hon. Secretary), Prasad Dalvi (Vice President, PSI), Achyut Palav (President, PSI), Chandrakant Shah (Hon. Secretary, AIPTIA), Sudharak Olwe (Photojournalist), Arun Chavan (Jt. Hon. Secretary).

Winners of the exhibition, along with PSI members who achieved their LPSI (Licentiate of the Photographic Society of India) honours, and winners of the monthly contests at PSI, were awarded their certificates.

Beautiful images from various genres of photography, like Landscape, Waterscape, Nature, Story Telling, Abstract, Portrait, Street Photography, Creative, Travel, etc. were on display.

SNIPPETS

- 7 Artisans new Lite line of prime AF lenses has now hit the market. The range includes AF 25mm , 35 mm and 50 mm f 1.8 APS -C lenses for Sony's E mount and Fuji's X mount. Expect very aggressive pricing.
- The web is rife with rumours that Canon is about to outsource entry level cameras , lenses and printers.
- Yet another Chinese manufacturer, Brightin Star has launched a 35 mm f 1.4 full frame lens with mounts available for Sony, Nikon and Panasonic. The List Price is a mouth watering 150 US dollars.
- Nikon's new compact Shotgum Mic for the ZR camera is now available.
- Are expos losing their lustre? Nikon has announced that the company will not take part in the 2026 CES show to be held in Las Vegas.
- Two new manual focus APS -C lenses have been announced by Brightin Star. The first one is a 50 mm f 1.05 and the second one is a 60 mm f 2.8 macro lens. Mounts available include Sony, Panasonic, Nikon and Fujifilm.
- Leica, it appears, is planning a brand new sensor from Germany for its M 12 camera. The current M 11 uses a sensor developed by Sony.
- Godox has introduced the AD 100 Proll Pocket Flash, a 100Ws pocket flash that is light, versatile and built to perform.
- Meike has announced a new autofocus telephoto, the 85 mm F 1.8 SE Mark II . The lens is available in both Nikon's F and Z mounts.
- Nikon has started construction of a new factory to manufacture all types of lenses. This plant is coming up at Otawara City in Japan.
- Samsung has unveiled the smallest ever 200 MP image sensor for smartphones at CES 2026.
- Viltrox has now launched its 56 mm F 1.2 Pro APS-C lens with a Nikon Z mount.
- The Sony A 7 Mk V seems to have taken off like a rocket. Both BCN+R and Yodobashi Camera have shared that the Sony debuted higher on the sales chart than Canon's EOS R 6 Mk III but in fact was the best selling camera in the second half of December.
- Amazon's top ranked full frame camera in December is Nikon's ZR cinema first camera.
- To break Leica's monopoly, Ricoh has released the GR IV Mono.
- Cosina has announced a new Voigtlander Portrait Heliar 75 mm F 1.8 manual focus lens. The lens comes with a bokeh control ring and is available in Nikon's Z mount and Sony's E mount. Cosina now has 14 Voigtlander lenses for the Z mount of Nikon.
- Unconfirmed reports from Chinese social media claim that Nikon is planning to sue Viltrox for violation of its licensing terms for the Z mount.
- The owners of Leica AG have put the company up for sale. Prospective buyers include Xiaomi and Panasonic.

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CEIF 2026 : India's Premier Imaging Expo

Consumer Electronic Imaging Fair (CEIF) 2026, held January 16–18, 2026, at Jio World Convention Centre, Mumbai.

Images : Girish Mallya



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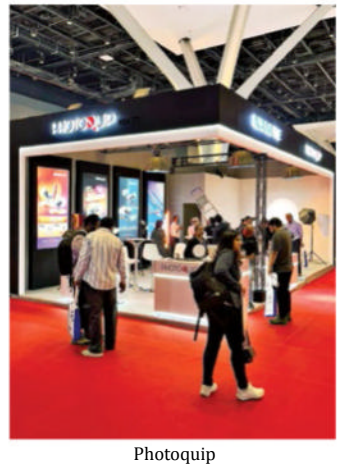
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Echoes of the North Pole

Mumbai witnessed some captivating photographs of the North Pole through the lens of Padmashri Dr. Mukesh Batra. Dr. Batra is one of the leading homoeopaths of the country. Besides, he has a great eye for the beauty of nature – which he showcased once again through his 57th photography exhibition – Echoes of the North Pole, under the banner of Magic Moments.

The exhibition was held at The Free Press House at Nariman Point, Mumbai. The exhibition was inaugurated by Ashok Karnani (owner of Free Press Journal) and Abhishek Karnani (Director at Free Press Journal and the President of the IAA). There were about 52 exhibits in varying sizes, and the exhibition was open from 15th – 31st January 2026.







Sony a7 V debuts higher on sales charts than Canon"s R 6 MK III



Japanese market analyst BCN+R's digital camera sales rankings for December 2025 show that at least initially, the Sony a7 Mk V is selling better than Canon's R 6 Mk III.

In fact, BCN reveals that the Sony a 7 Mk V is outselling both Canon's R 6 Mk III and Nikon's Z 6 Mk III combined.



Nikon Launches Nikkor Z 24-105 mm F4 –7.1 Macro Standard Zoom Lens

Nikon has launched a new lightweight everyday zoom with the 24 -105 mm F 4 – 7.1 Macro standard zoom. Nikon already had a Z 24 -120 mm F 4 lens in its arsenal. The new lens is aimed at the beginner/ enthusiast market. The lens uses an integrated stepping motor to achieve quick autofocus and provides magnification upto 0.5 X. A 12 element 10 group optical design, the lens weighs just 350 gms. The lens accepts 67mm filters. Expect competitive pricing from Nikon for this new optic.



CONTEMPORARY
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SIGMA

Redefining the All-Rounder: Sony's Vision for the Next Generation of Hybrid Imaging

Mukesh Srivastava, Head of Imaging Business at Sony India, *speaks with* ***Ellora Dasgupta*** *on imaging leadership, the Alpha 7 V philosophy, the role of AI and speed, and how Sony is shaping the future of photography and video for India's evolving creator ecosystem.*

As told to **Ellora Dasgupta**

- **The Alpha 7 series has always been Sony's most versatile full-frame line. With the ILCE-7V, what core philosophy guided the fifth-generation upgrade?**
The newly launched ILCE-7V sets a new benchmark for an all-around full-frame camera. Designed to deliver an exceptional imaging experience, it pushes creative boundaries through speed, AI integration, and seamless hybrid performance. By making advanced technology accessible, it allows creators to focus on storytelling rather than settings.

- **Sony has introduced a newly developed partially stacked Exmor RS CMOS sensor in the ILCE-7V. How does this sensor architecture translate into real-world advantages for photographers and filmmakers?**
The partially stacked Exmor RS CMOS sensor delivers 4.5 times faster readout with minimal distortion. Photographers benefit from a 33MP sensor with excellent dynamic range and 30 fps AF/AE tracking, while filmmakers gain reduced rolling shutter in 7K oversampled 4K 60p and 4K 120p modes.

- **The new BIONZ XR2 engine integrates enhanced AI processing functions. In what ways does this elevate autofocus performance compared to the previous generation?**
The new BIONZ XR2 engine significantly enhances autofocus by combining enhanced AI processing with high-speed data handling, enabling faster, more accurate, and reliable subject detection and tracking for both stills and video. Beyond AF, it improves tonal reproduction,



Mukesh Srivastava, Head of Imaging Business at Sony India

extracting richer detail from shadows and highlights. Paired with the partially stacked sensor, it delivers up to 16 stops of dynamic range, offering cleaner shadow recovery and smoother highlight roll-off, even in challenging lighting conditions.

- **Speed is a recurring theme with this launch. Beyond continuous shooting, where will creators most noticeably experience this performance boost?**
Beyond continuous shooting, creators will experience the speed boost most clearly in overall camera responsiveness. Autofocus acquisition and tracking react faster and more confidently, AF/AE calculations keep pace with unpredictable subjects, and features like pre-capture ensure decisive moments aren't missed. Faster sensor readout also reduces rolling shutter and improves real-time performance for video, enabling smoother high-resolution and high-frame-rate recording. Together, these improvements make the camera feel quicker and more fluid in everyday shooting, not just in bursts.

- **Color science has been an area of increasing focus for Sony. How has color accuracy and tonal reproduction evolved in the ILCE-7V, especially for portrait and lifestyle photographers?**
With the ILCE-7V, Sony's evolving colour science delivers more natural colour accuracy and smoother tonal reproduction, particularly for portrait and lifestyle photography. Improved skin tone rendering ensures warmth and consistency across varied light sources, while enhanced gradation preserves subtle highlight and shadow transitions. AI-powered auto white balance, using deep learning for light-source estimation, offers accurate, stable results even in mixed lighting. Together, these refinements produce balanced, true-to-life images straight out of the camera, reducing reliance on heavy post-processing and keeping the focus on emotion and storytelling.

- **The Alpha 7 line is often called the ultimate hybrid camera. How does the ILCE-7V strengthen Sony's leadership in stills–video versatility?**
The ILCE-7V reinforces Sony's hybrid leadership by combining major advances in stills and video within a single, cohesive system. For photography, fast sensor readout, enhanced Real-time Recognition AF, and high frame rates deliver speed and precision across genres. For video, high-resolution oversampled 4K, robust AF tracking in motion, and professional tools such as

Active Stabilization and advanced colour profiles reduce rolling shutter and enhance overall footage quality, ensuring a seamless hybrid shooting experience.

- **With content creators increasingly demanding professional video tools, what standout video features make the ILCE-7V a compelling choice in its segment?**
As creators demand more professional video capabilities, the ILCE-7V stands out by combining cinema-quality recording with creator-focused intelligence. It offers oversampled 4K, high frame rates for slow motion, and advanced colour profiles for flexible grading. AI-powered Auto Framing and effective in-body stabilisation simplify solo shooting and vlogging, while built-in USB livestreaming enables high-quality broadcasts without additional hardware, making the ILCE-7V a compelling choice for streamlined, professional hybrid workflows.

- **Alongside the camera, Sony has launched the FE 28-70mm F3.5-5.6 OSS II. What role does this lens play in completing the ILCE-7V ecosystem for everyday creators?**
The Sony FE 28–70mm f/3.5–5.6 OSS II is designed as a versatile everyday zoom that seamlessly complements the ILCE-7V ecosystem. Optimised for high-speed performance, it supports up to 120 fps AF/AE tracking on compatible bodies, AF during zooming, coordinated body–lens stabilisation, and breathing compensation for video. Compact and lightweight, with a practical 28–70mm range, it is well suited for street, travel, portraits, events, and run-and-gun video, delivering reliable responsiveness and flexibility for everyday creators across real-world shooting situations.

- **Compactness and mobility are important for modern photographers. How does Sony balance high-end performance with portability in the ILCE-7V system?**
Sony balances performance and portability in the A7 V by integrating flagship-level technology into a compact, lightweight body. The partially stacked 33MP full-frame sensor and BIONZ XR2 processor deliver fast autofocus, high-resolution video, and extended shooting without added bulk. Weighing under 700 grams with battery and card, it remains comfortable for long sessions, while improved ergonomics, a vari-angle screen, and efficient thermal design enhance real-world usability across hybrid workflows.

- **Who is the primary target audience for the ILCE-7V—professionals, enthusiasts, or emerging creators—and how does the camera cater to each group?**
The ILCE-7V is designed primarily for enthusiasts and emerging professionals, while meeting the evolving needs of modern content creators. Professionals gain reliable performance with advanced AI autofocus, strong low-light capability, and wide dynamic range. Enthusiasts benefit from high-speed shooting, pre-capture, and intuitive handling. Creators and vloggers are supported by AI auto framing, livestreaming, and seamless hybrid photo-video performance, making the ILCE-7V a versatile bridge across user segments.

- **Beyond products, how is Sony strengthening its professional support, education, and service infrastructure in India to support advanced users of cameras like the a7R V?**
Beyond hardware, Sony is strengthening its ecosystem in India through comprehensive professional support, education, and service initiatives. The Alpha Community platform offers extended warranties, exclusive workshops, and learning programs such as Alpha Classroom, where experts share practical insights. The Alpha Community App simplifies product registration, updates, and access to local events, while "Ask an Expert" enables free one-on-one consultations. The Creators' App streamlines image and video transfer from camera to smartphone. These initiatives are supported by expanded Pro Support programs, priority service, and a growing network of authorised service centres and camera lounges, ensuring long-term reliability for serious creators.

- **Computational photography and AI are reshaping imaging across devices. How does Sony balance these advancements while preserving the creative control that professional photographers' value?**
Computational photography and AI are reshaping imaging, but Sony treats these technologies as assistive tools, not creative decision-makers. AI is mainly used for autofocus, subject recognition, exposure accuracy, and noise control, helping photographers capture intended moments reliably in challenging conditions. Real-time Tracking precisely follows subjects, while proprietary algorithms process colour, pattern, and spatial data at high speed. At the same time, full manual control and unprocessed RAW output ensure creative authority remains with the photographer.

- **Where does Sony India currently stand in the Indian camera market, and how does the company plan to strengthen or expand its ranking in the coming years?**
Sony India continues to lead the country's digital imaging market, with a strong presence across mirrorless cameras, cinema, broadcast, and professional imaging. This leadership is built on deep technological expertise, a robust product ecosystem, and long-standing trust among photographers, filmmakers, broadcasters, and creators.

Content creation is rapidly evolving, with storytelling becoming social-first, vertical, and mobile-driven. Platforms like the WAVES Summit reflect India's ambition to become a global hub for digital storytelling. Micro-drama—short, episodic, mobile-first narratives in local languages—are among the fastest-growing formats, while broadcasting and digital journalism remain vital. Equally important is India's vast amateur market, from students and first-time creators to small businesses and educators. Through the Farak Padta Hai campaign, Sony reinforces the value of cameras over smart phones. As India's creative influence grows globally, 2026 marks Sony's renewed commitment as a long-term partner in the nation's creative and media journey. |SP

Nature's Canvas : A Wildlife Photographer's Odyssey with Sony Alpha 7 V

Toehold stands as one of India's leading travel and photography platforms, curating immersive experiences for photographers of all levels. From expertly guided photography tours and workshops to professional equipment rentals, kids' programmes, and bespoke travel itineraries. Toehold has built a thriving ecosystem around visual storytelling. With a strong focus on learning, exploration, and creative expression, the company has inspired thousands of photographers to discover the world through a more thoughtful and meaningful lens.

Sony Alpha 7 V full-frame hybrid camera



Jayanth Sharma

Jayanth Sharma began his professional journey in the IT industry before following his true calling into wildlife and natural history photography in 2004. A Sony Artisan, Jayanth has travelled extensively across the globe, creating compelling imagery and narratives that spotlight the beauty and fragility of the natural world. Deeply committed to conservation, his work consistently advocates for the protection of India's vulnerable wildlife. Under his leadership, Toehold has grown into a globally respected photography travel brand, with expeditions spanning destinations such as Canada, Finland, Norway, Brazil, Russia, Africa, and Southeast Asia. An award-winning photographer, Jayanth continues to inspire photographers worldwide through both his work and mentorship.



The Sony Alpha 7 V continues the Alpha 7 legacy by refining what has long been regarded as one of the most versatile full-frame mirrorless camera lines. Designed as a true hybrid tool, the Alpha 7 V blends speed, intelligence, and image quality into a compact body that appeals equally to photographers and content creators.

At the heart of the camera is a newly developed 33MP partially stacked Exmor RS CMOS sensor paired with the latest BIONZ XR2 processor. This combination delivers noticeably faster readout speeds, excellent dynamic range, and improved rolling shutter control. Stills photographers benefit from high-resolution files with rich detail and up to 30fps continuous shooting with full AF/AE tracking, making it capable across genres ranging from portraits and landscapes to wildlife and action.

Autofocus is a major highlight. Sony's enhanced AI-driven Real-time Recognition AF is faster, smarter, and more reliable than ever, accurately tracking humans, animals, birds, and vehicles. In real-world use, subject acquisition is instant and tracking remains locked even in complex or low-light situations. For videographers, the Alpha 7 V offers oversampled 4K recording with high frame-rate options, reduced rolling shutter, and dependable continuous autofocus in motion. Features such as Active Stabilisation, advanced colour profiles, and AI-assisted tools like Auto Framing make it particularly attractive to solo shooters and hybrid creators.









Colour science sees a welcome evolution, with more natural skin tones, smoother tonal transitions, and improved auto white balance performance in mixed lighting. Images look pleasing straight out of the camera, reducing reliance on heavy post-processing.

Despite its performance, the Alpha 7 V remains compact and comfortable to use, with improved ergonomics, a vari-angle touchscreen, and efficient thermal management for longer shooting sessions.

Overall, the Sony Alpha 7 V stands out as a refined, future-ready all-rounder, one that successfully balances professional-grade performance with everyday usability, reinforcing Sony's leadership in the full-frame hybrid segment. |SP

"I was genuinely impressed by the Alpha 7 V's pre-capture feature, which makes capturing fast-moving action, especially birds, remarkably effortless. Shooting at up to 30 frames per second with pre-capture and a blackout-free EVF ensures you never miss the decisive moment, unlike earlier-generation cameras. It's a brilliantly executed feature that elevates real-world shooting, making the Alpha 7 V a truly next-level camera for photographers."

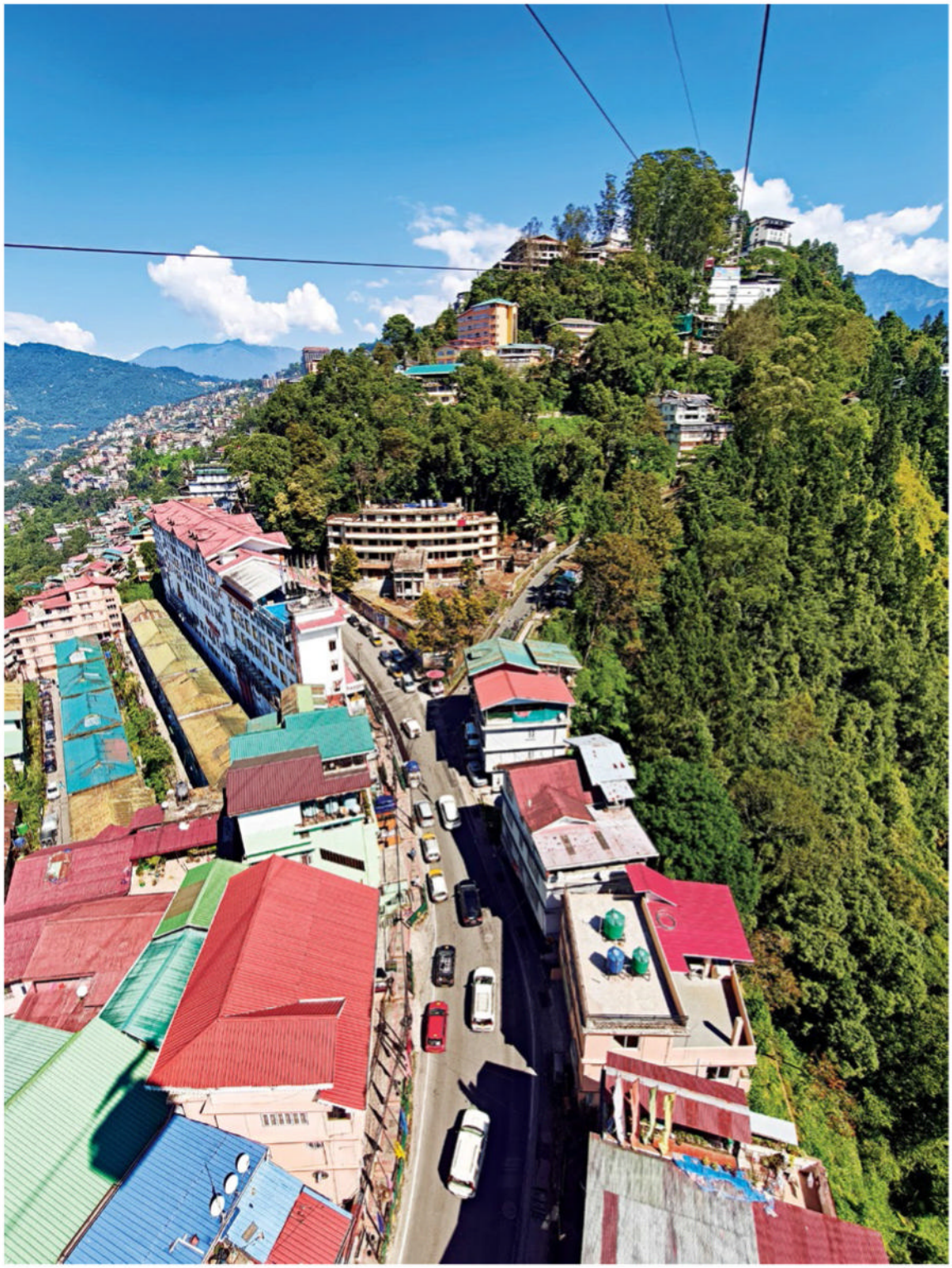
Postcards from **Sikkim**

Sikkim feels like a mountain kingdom that never really lost its magic. Every valley carries stories from its royal past till 1975 and its deep-rooted traditions. Monasteries, forests, and winding hill towns give it an air of mystery and calm. For travellers, it is a beautiful blend of history, culture, great food and breathtaking Himalayan landscapes.



Srini Swaminathan

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.



The beautiful city of Gangtok unfolds beneath the ropeway, offering a sweeping hillside view from one of its most iconic rides.

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We found this beautiful fern catching the soft mountain light at a forest in Pakyong. It offers a m small glimpse of Sikkim's rich and thriving biodiversity.



We found many varieties of such citrus fruit plants thriving in the cool hills of Sikkim



A small climber tracing its own pattern across a quiet wall in Pakyong. It stands testimony to nature's simple geometry standing out in the Sikkim hills.

THE EISA PHOTOGRAPHY MAESTRO CONTEST 2026



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SINGLE PICTURE
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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.

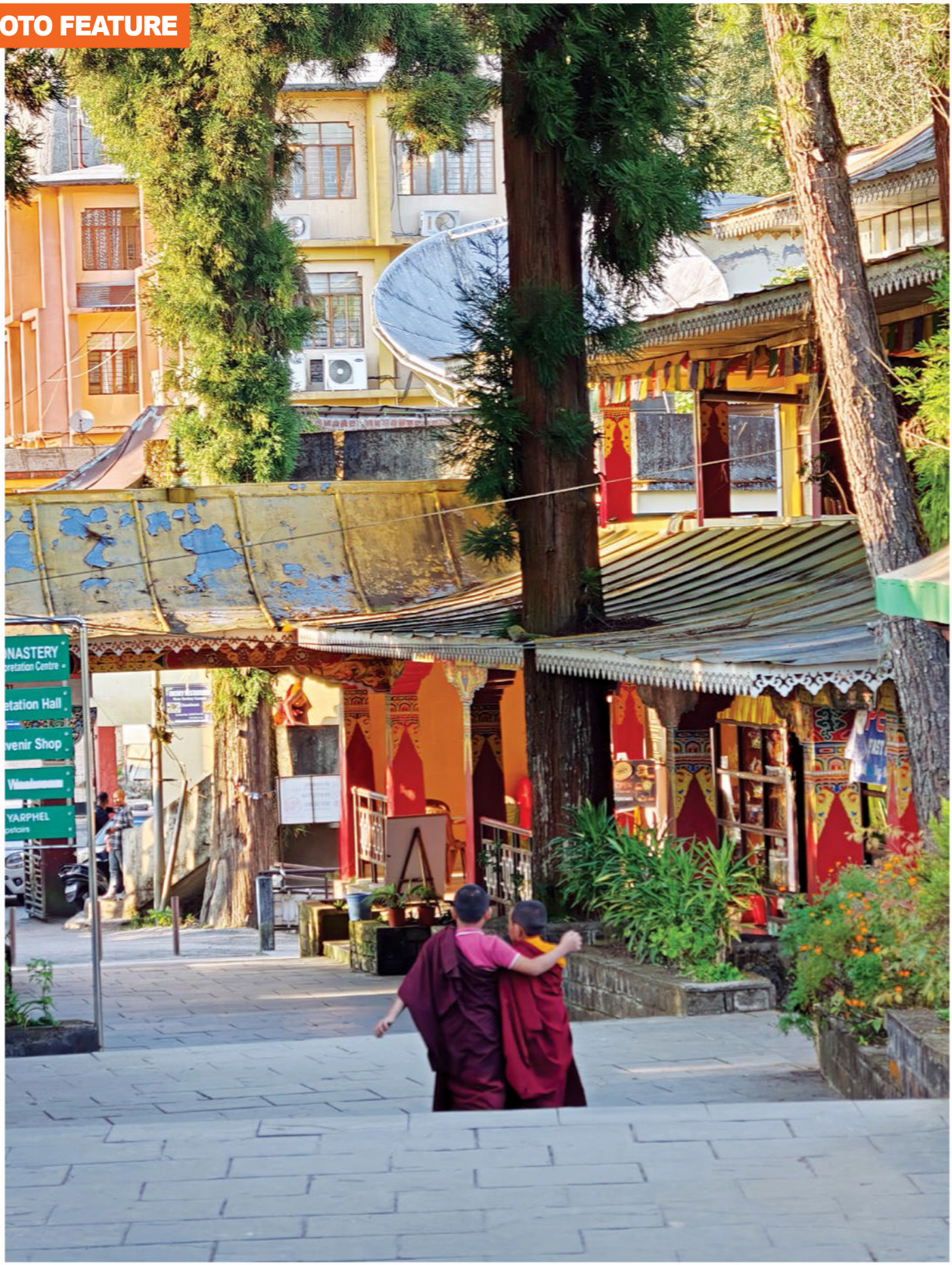
National Maestro winners will also be published on Facebook at the end of June for the EISA Public's Choice competition. Prize for Single and Series winners: €500

EISA EXPERT IMAGING AND SOUND ASSOCIATION
Maestro Photo Contest
2026
Travelling

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/



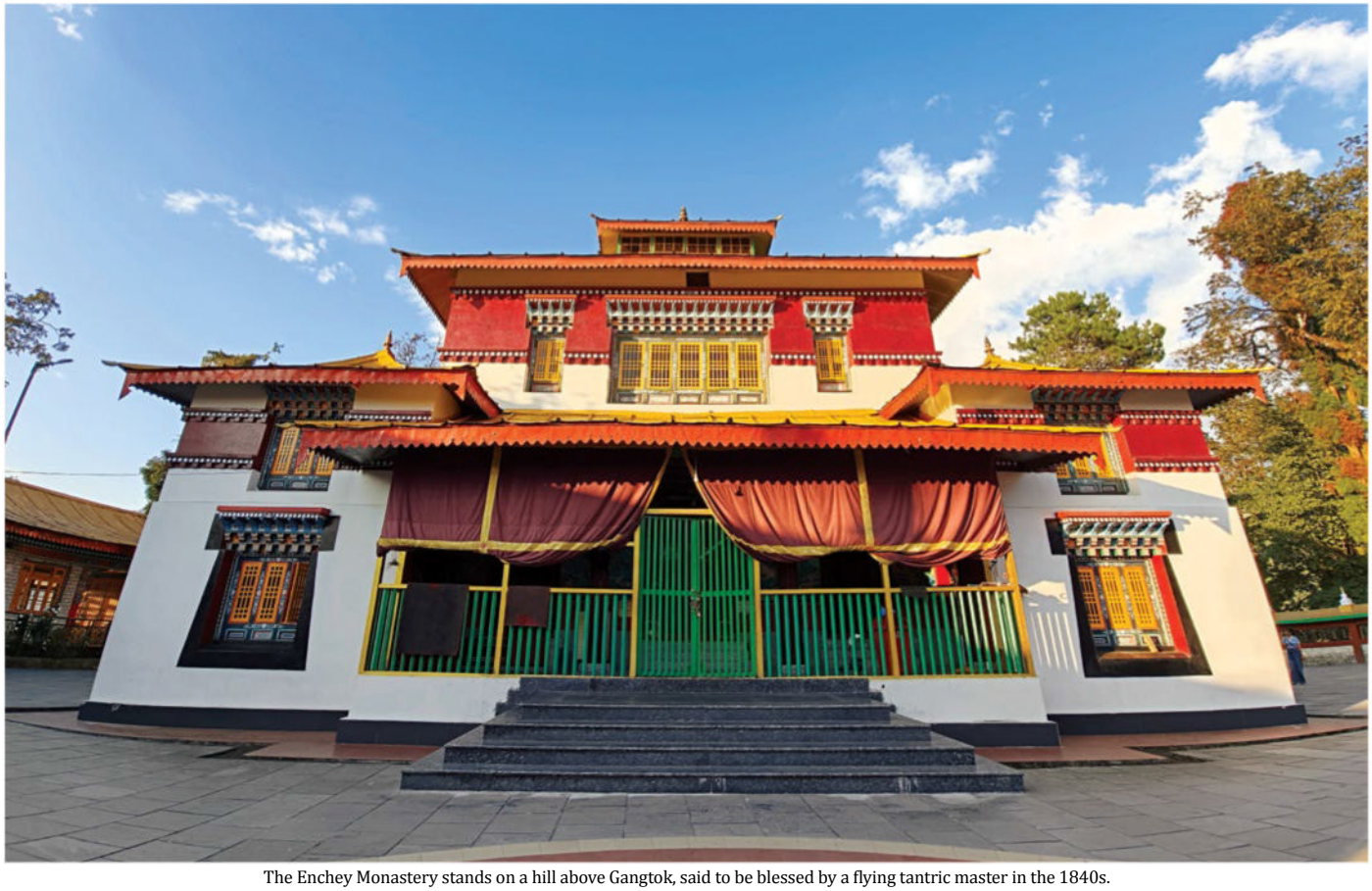
Two young monks walk back through Enchey Monastery, arms around each other. A small moment of friendship in a place built for silence and reflection.



Known as a Chorten in Sikkim, this Buddhist Stupa stands tall against the clear mountain sky, watching over the valley with quiet grace.



This is a colourful pillar we saw at the Enchey Monastery in Gangtok. These intricate guardian carvings, glowing with colour and symbolism are vivid reminders of the artistry and protective spirits woven into Sikkim's Buddhist heritage.



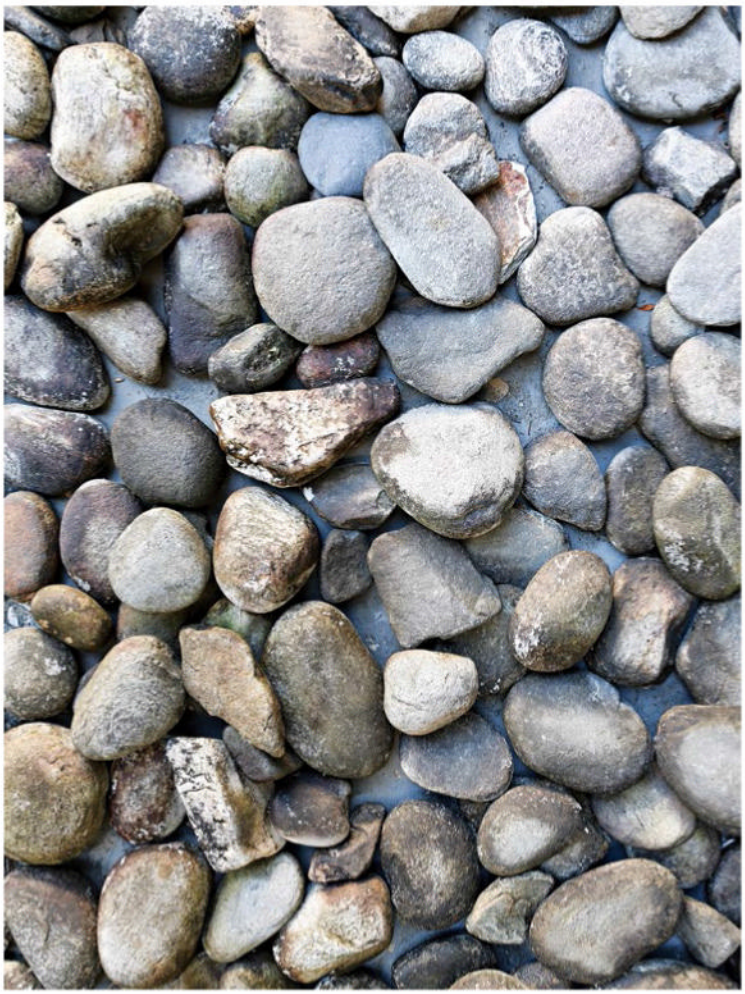
The Enchey Monastery stands on a hill above Gangtok, said to be blessed by a flying tantric master in the 1840s. It is a quiet place where history, legend, and Buddhist tradition continue to shape the city's spiritual story.



Metal prayer wheels like these have been part of Himalayan Buddhist practice for centuries. Each spin is believed to release prayers and mantras into the world, carrying blessings outward. You can find these in most Buddhist shrines in Sikkim



A quiet forest path at the Namgyal Institute of Tibetology, wrapped in soft mountain light. It is a peaceful space where nature, learning, and Sikkim's Tibetan heritage come together.



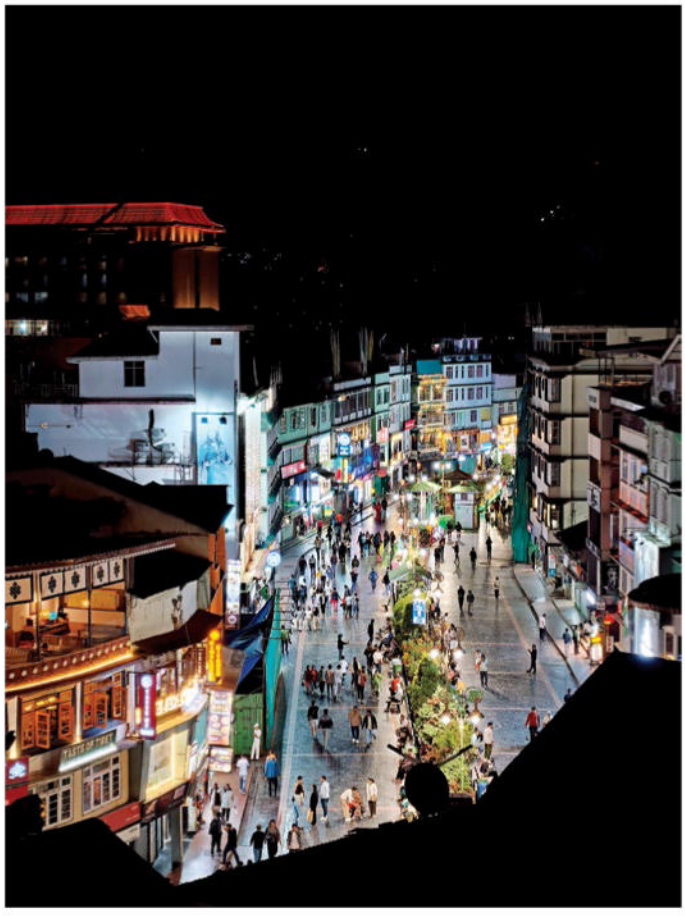
Pebbles in Sikkim's rivers, especially the Teesta, are shaped by a long and dynamic Himalayan history. They originate from some of the world's youngest and fastest-rising mountains, where powerful monsoon rains, landslides, and glacial melt break larger rocks from high cliffs and shape them into such pebbles



A beautiful monastery in the town of Pakyong in Sikkim.
You can step in for some peace time and meditation in this premises

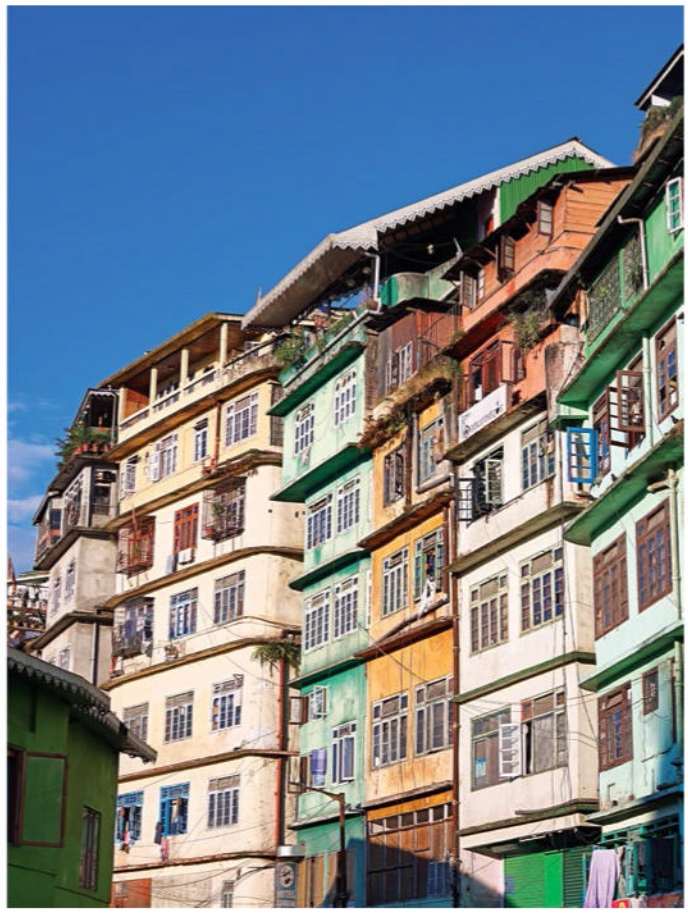


Prayer wheels at the Nangyal Institute of Technology. These prayer wheels carry the ancient mantra Om Mani Padme Hum, written in Tibetan script, a core part of Himalayan Buddhist tradition.They are spun clockwise so the prayers inside are released in harmony with the universe.



MG Road in Gangtok. This road comes alive as a fully pedestrian zone, free from traffic and noise. Its vehicle-free design has turned it into a vibrant evening hangout, lined with cafés, shops, and street life.

Gangtok's hillside buildings rise in colourful, stacked layers, shaped by the steep terrain and limited space. Their mix of old wooden frames, pastel facades, and practical add-ons tells a story of a city that has grown organically.





A view of the hills of Sikkim as seen from Pakyong. On a very clear day, you can even see the Kanchendzonga and other Himalayan peaks from Sikkim.

A Smartphone Photographer





Tejas Sawant

Tejas Sawant is a mechanical engineer by profession and a passionate street photographer based in Mumbai. He is a smartphone photographer and his photography focusses on everyday life, human moments, and stories that often go unnoticed in busy urban spaces. He enjoys capturing candid scenes that reflect emotions, cultures, and rhythms of the streets. Through his work, he aims to present authentic narratives that connect viewers with real-life moments.








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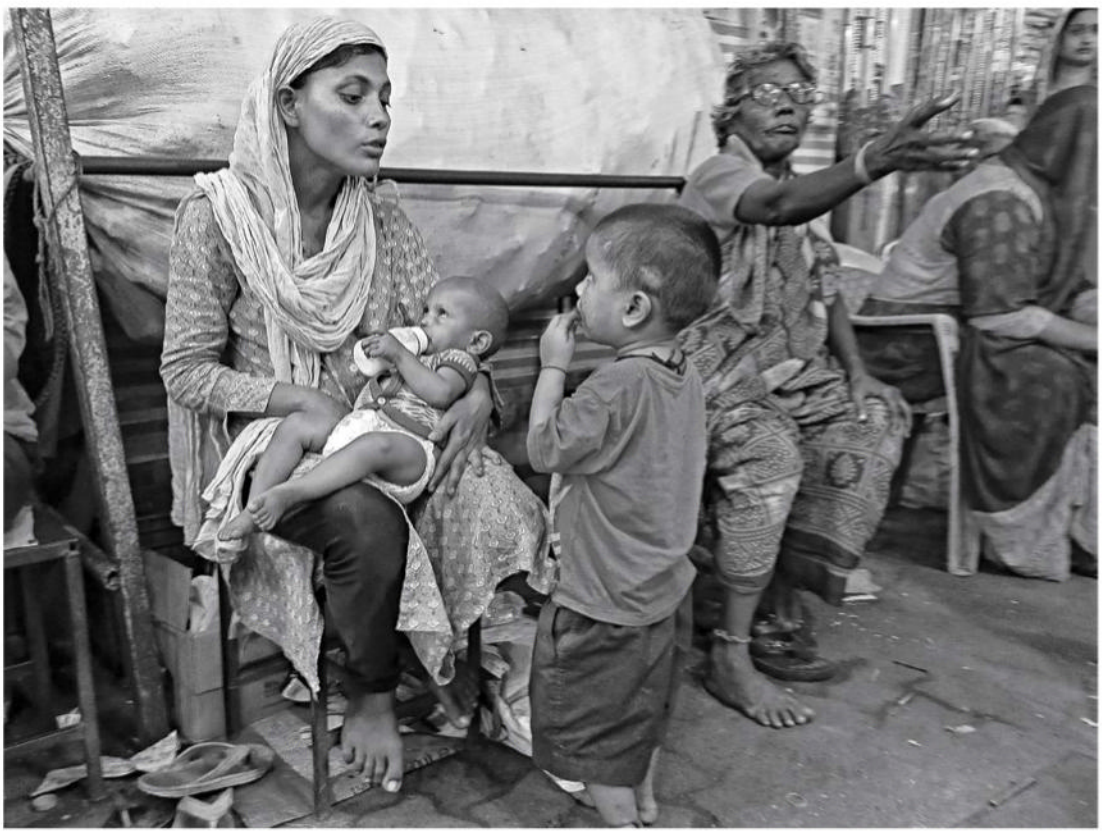


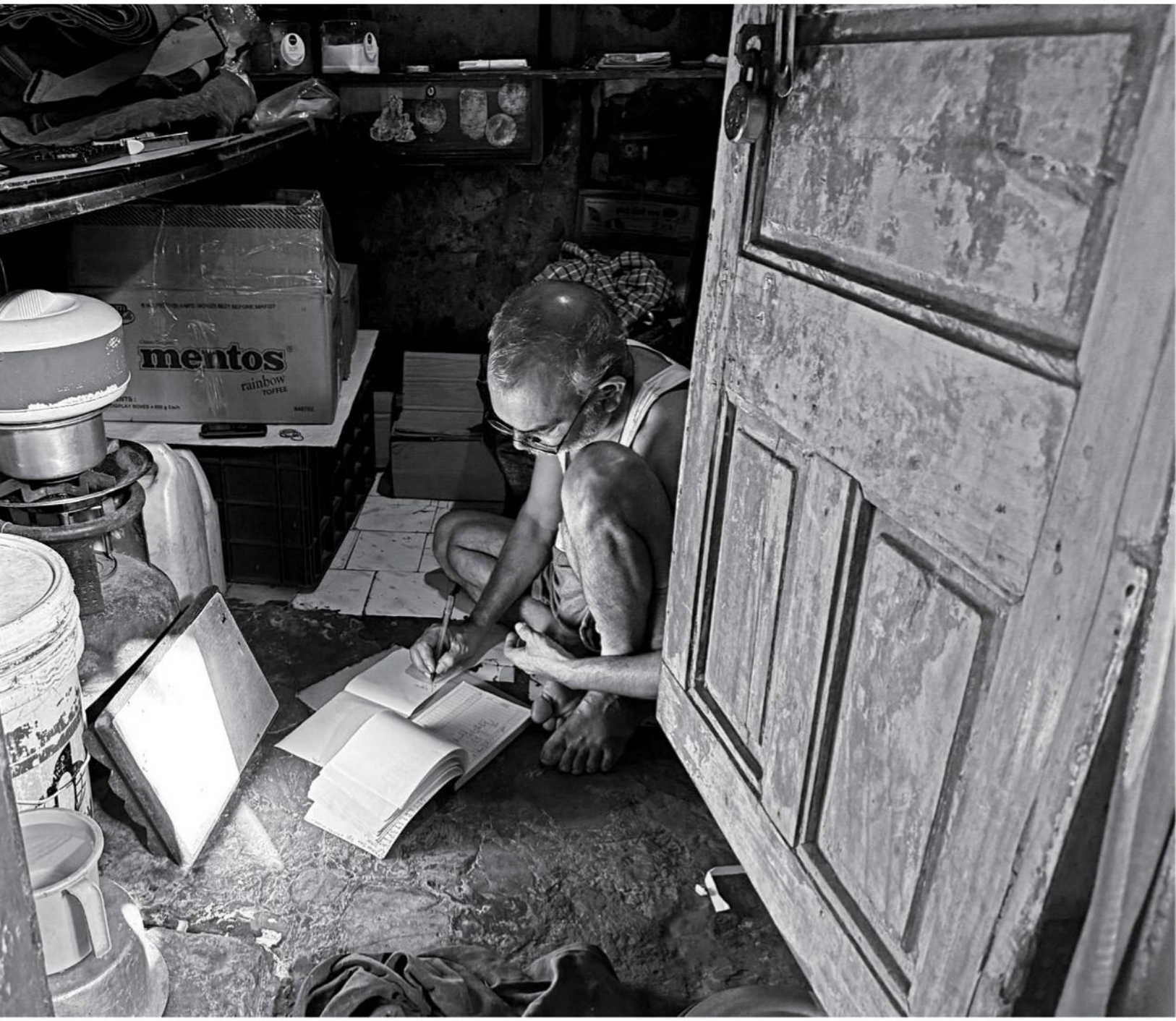











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Holi of **Braj Bhoomi**



Dr. Pankaj Sharma

Born and brought up in Bareilly, U.P (India), **Dr. Pankaj Sharma's** penchant for photography had developed at a very young age. He used to click the scenic places whenever he got opportunity during his trips with family or friends. Gradually it became his passion. He did a photography course in 1993 from MJP Rohilkhand University, Bareilly which helped him understanding the essential basics. In subsequent years photographic activities became integral part of his life. He has to his credit 6 solo, 2 joint and around 25 group exhibitions in different cities of India. He has got a number of reputed awards, including National Photography Award-2012 by Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, Govt. of India and U.P State Lalit Kala Academy Award, 2011. He is amongst a few in India, who have been honoured with Fellowship of India International Photographic Council, New Delhi, India, Fellowship of Federation of Indian Photography, India, Associateship of The Royal Photographic Society, Great Britain, EFIAP distinction from Federation Internationale De L'art Photographique (FIAP), Luxembourg and Fellowship of Image Colleague Society-California-USA. Dr. Pankaj has been invited as a member of jury in many prestigious contests of photography art. He has got acceptances and awards in the contests of around 27 countries for his pictures. Many of his works have been appreciated by National Geographic. His photographs have featured in various reputed publications. A dissertation (Research) has been done on his photography-work by Miss Mamta Shekhawat, a student of Master of Fine Arts and Applied Arts from Kurukshetra University, India under the guidance of Dr. Pawan Kumar.

He has been running his blog (Abhivyakti: Expressions through Photography) for a couple of years. The sole purpose of this blog is to impart knowledge among the art lovers. He organises photography workshops for art lovers free of cost on regular basis. Photography for him is a fine medium of expression. He loves to help the beginners.

Holi is a popular Indian festival, full of colours, pomp and joy. It denotes arrival of spring, and symbolises the divine love of Lord Krishna and Radha. Celebration of Holi on the 'Braj Bhoomi' (Mathura-Vrindavan region) is of special significance. The objective of my portfolio is to portray the festivities in Nandgaon and Barsana towns. People and devotees rejoice it by singing, dancing, and sprinkling colours on each other which turns the whole atmosphere into a joyous occasion.

Profound love for their culture reflects in celebrants at first glance. 'Lathmar Holi' needs a special mention here. Women dominate men during the celebration by hitting them with sticks. As a protective gesture, men cover themselves with shields. To succinctly put, the guiding objective and the main purpose underlying the present portfolio are to capture fusion of emotions, love and joy during a unique festival, and to document the cultural heritage for posterity. |SP





















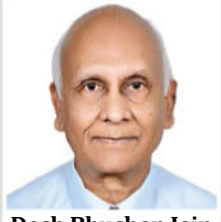






Gajasimha - Lion head on elephant body

Rhythm in Stones Sun Temple, Konark



Desh Bhushan Jain

Desh Bhushan Jain, EFIP, EFIAP, loves wildlife, landscape, travel and still life photography. He has several acceptances and awards to his credit. He is the past Vice President of The Photographic Society of India.

The Sun Temple at Konark (also spelled Konārka) is a 13th century Hindu temple dedicated to Surya, the Sun God. It is located in Konark, on the eastern coast of Odisha, India, near the Bay of Bengal. It is famous for being designed in the form of a colossal chariot, complete with stone wheels and horses. Because of its grandeur, artistry, and symbolic layers, it is regarded as one of the highest achievements of the Kalinga style of architecture. In 1984, it was declared a UNESCO World Heritage Site.

Konark Sun Temple was built by Narasimha Deva I in 12th Century AD. Dedicated to the Hindu god Surya, Konark Sun Temple was designed in the form of a gorgeously decorated chariot mounted on 24 wheels (12 pairs), each about 12 feet in diameter, and drawn by a set of 7 mighty horses. The 12 pairs of wheels represent the 12 months of the year; the 7 horses represent the 7 days of the week. When viewed from inland during the dawn and sunrise, the chariot-shaped temple appears to emerge from the depths of the blue sea carrying the sun.

Architectural Features & Symbolism:
According to local lore and tradition, a large number of craftsmen and artisans were involved (some say 1200 artists over many years) to create a structure of very high complexity. The temple was constructed using stone (various types including sandstone) and follows traditional Odisha temple planning.

Jagamohana (Audience Hall / Porch):
The Jagamohana or assembly hall is one of the surviving significant structures, with a pyramidal roof. It is richly ornamented.



A side view of Jagmohan



Beauty in Ruins

Nata-mandira (Dance Hall):
A separate structure built in front of the original temple, used for ritual dance performances.

Wheels: The wheels are elaborately carved; many of them are nearly 12 ft in diameter. Some function like sundials: the spokes and their shadows can be used to measure time. Eight wider spokes represent eight prahars or time division of the day.

Orientation & Light: The temple faces east, so that the first rays of sunrise would fall upon it. The sun rays come to this temple from corner.

Vimana (Sanctum/Main Tower):

The central sanctuary tower ("vimana" or "rekha deul") was once enormous (estimated to be ~200+ ft high), but it had collapsed (by the 19th century). The cause of the collapse remains a subject of controversy, with theories ranging from natural causes (such as weak soil, lightning, or an earthquake) to deliberate destruction by Muslim armies.

Cultural and Religious Significance:
The temple was not only a place of worship but also a cultural center: dance, music, ritual performance, and festivals would have been integral. The presence of Nata-mandira suggests performances of dance were important.

Decline, Damage, and Preservation:
Over centuries, parts of the temple were damaged by natural forces (coastal weather, salt air, storms), and possibly by invasions. The Vimana (Sanctum / Main Tower) collapsed by the 19th century. The temple was also partially buried under sand at times. In modern times, restoration and preservation have been undertaken by the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI), and international bodies, especially since it is a World Heritage site.

In recent years (2022), a project was started to clear sand from and restore parts of the entrance hall i.e Jagamohana (Audience Hall / Porch).

Legacy & Why It Still Matters:
Architecturally, it is considered one of the pinnacles of Indian temple architecture, especially in the eastern region (Kalinga style). Many later temples drew inspiration from its layout, ornamentation, motifs. It is a powerful symbol of Odisha's heritage, identity and craftsmanship. For many, it is a source of pride. Its aesthetic appeal (the play of light and shadow, movement in stone, narrative carvings) still draws artists, scholars, tourists.

It's rooted in Hindu cosmology, symbolism of time, seasons, light, and the daily movement of the sun. The architectural layout, the wheels as months/hours, etc., all reflect this deep symbolic layering. I had the opportunity to visit this unique temple in January, 2024. |**SP**



A Panormic View of Sun Temple with Nata Mandir on the right



Simha or Lion on a padestial



Entry to Jagmohana or assembly hall - Sun Temple





Sculptures of Chayadevi Temple - Sun Temple - Konark



Fashion Gallery



Chariot wheel - some can function as accurate sun dial.



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Camera choices for Tablet to Silver Screen

Ashok Kandimalla has been in the photographic field for over three decades and has extensive experience in both film and digital photography. Being an engineer-turned-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 memorabilia, he has a deep 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 **kashok8@gmail.com.**



Ashok Kandimalla

Whether you're recording a short birthday clip or creating a cinema, the world of cameras offers a rich spectrum of options. Today, even a smartphone can serve as a capable tool for shooting video. But as we move up the ladder, we encounter mirrorless cameras, compact video cameras derived from them, professional-grade video equipment, and ultimately, the high-end cinema cameras favoured by Hollywood and Bollywood studios for theatrical releases.

So, what distinguishes these different types from one another? This article takes you on a deep dive to explore the distinctions—and help you choose the right gear for your creative vision.

Smartphones

Let us start at the entry level - the simple and ubiquitous smartphone that can record video, even in 4 K resolution. Anyone who owns one must have recorded a video clip, perhaps of a family event, and some serious users have even produced award-winning short documentaries using smartphones. The advantages are well known. They are always with you and are easy to set up. The powerful processors inside the phone, which pack a huge amount of computational power, are now backed up by AI technology. The result is a fully processed video needing minimal editing, ready to be uploaded on social media as reels or even longer videos. Here is a summary of the pros and cons of smartphones for video capture:

Pros:

- Built-in High Dynamic Range (HDR) video, image stabilisation
- Multiple lenses seamlessly integrated to give a smooth, wide-to-tele zooming without a bulky zoom lens
- Add-on apps to give manual control over shutter speed, aperture, ISO and other parameters
- High-resolution video with 4K or even 8K is now possible
- High quality and colour accurate displays
- Portable, ready and always with you
- Remember that the best camera is the one in your hand when you need it



Picture 1: A high-end smartphone capable of 8K video recording.

Cons:

- Small sensor yields limited dynamic range and depth of field control
- Not system-oriented - no interchangeable lenses, external mic connections
- Poor low light performance
- Highly compressed video output on most phones
- Poor ergonomics
- Limited battery life
- Less onboard memory
- Thermal limitations restrict prolonged use

Examples: iPhone 16 and 17 Series, Samsung S25 (Picture 1), Sony Xperia VII, Google Pixel 10 Pro Series, etc.

Mirrorless Cameras

Moving up to the next level, we have mirrorless cameras (MLCs). Perhaps readers of Smart Photography will be most familiar with this type. Sometimes called 'hybrid cameras', these are primarily meant for still photography, but as technology evolved, more and more video features were added. Also, many features, especially in the area of AF (autofocus) have migrated from still photography, thus bringing previously unavailable features to videography. By and large, MLCs eliminate most of the drawbacks of smartphones, but have limitations of their own. Let us look at their plus and minus points.

Pros:

- Full-frame sensors in mirrorless cameras deliver excellent video quality, though cropped sensors can also produce good results
- All the benefits associated with larger sensors – higher dynamic range, controllable DOF, and better low light performance
- IBIS – In body stabilisation
- Log recording for increasing the dynamic range
- Prosumer-grade codecs/formats
- Support for high-quality 4:2:2 recording
- ProRes RAW and other proprietary RAW formats
- Internal RAW recording with 12 bits
- Support a wide range of resolutions up to 8K and frame rates
- Slow motion up to 4x (equivalent to 100/120 fps)
- System Cameras with a large range of lenses and accessories



Picture 2: Nikon Z6III, a mirrorless still camera that excels in videography.

- Ready availability of videography accessories like cages, microphones, remote control grips, and many others
- Sophisticated AF features like subject detection and tracking eliminate the need for focus pullers
- Excellent performance-to-cost ratio

Cons:

- Limited battery life and thermal issues limit continuous, high-resolution, long-duration recording
- Ergonomics, optimised for still photography, are not ideal for videography
- Some cameras offer only shutter speed control, not the more cinema-oriented shutter angle approach
- Some cameras may need external recorders when shooting RAW footage

Examples: Nikon Z8 and Z6III (Picture 2), Sony A7S Series, Canon R5 and R6 Series, Panasonic GH6, etc.

Compact Video Cameras

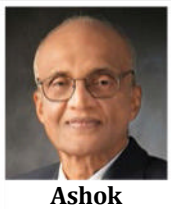
Still not satisfied? No problem. Just as mirrorless cameras evolved to support videography, they later morphed into video cameras. These are more suitable for videography than still photography. They use the same large sensors, lens mount and, being a part of the family, have access to the same extensive range of lenses and accessories. A feature that is usually eliminated is the mechanical shutter, as it has no relevance for videography, but new features and functions are added to make them more consummate video cameras. These cameras can be used for still photography, but with some limitations. These are relatively new, so the range of choices remains limited, but this segment is quickly expanding. Let us see where they shine and where they don't.

Pros:

- Essentially morphed MLCs, these are just a step lower than the dedicated video cameras
- Inherit all the good video features mentioned under the MLC section
- Improved thermal management with some having built-in fans
- Superior ergonomics with more video-oriented controls
- Strong AF performance due to their lineage
- Tougher build quality
- Enhanced audio, support for XLR, etc.
- Internal or external recording of high-resolution RAW recording
- Simpler and more standardised workflow
- Great for gimbal work due to lightweight
- Many specific video features like tally lights, shutter angle control, multiple 1/4"threaded sockets for fixing

Camera choices for Tablet to Silver Screen

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 consutant. He can be reached at **kashokk@gmail.com.**



Ashok Kandimalla

Whether you're recording a short birthday clip or creating a cinema, the world of cameras offers a rich spectrum of options. Today, even a smartphone can serve as a capable tool for shooting video. But as we move up the ladder, we encounter mirrorless cameras, compact video cameras derived from them, professional-grade video equipment, and ultimately, the high-end cinema cameras favoured by Hollywood and Bollywood studios for theatrical releases.

So, what distinguishes these different types from one another? This article takes you on a deep dive to explore the distinctions—and help you choose the right gear for your creative vision.

Smartphones

Let us start at the entry level - the simple and ubiquitous smartphone that can record video, even in 4 K resolution. Anyone who owns one must have recorded a video clip, perhaps of a family event, and some serious users have even produced award-winning short documentaries using smartphones. The advantages are well known. They are always with you and are easy to set up. The powerful processors inside the phone, which pack a huge amount of computational power, are now backed up by AI technology. The result is a fully processed video needing minimal editing, ready to be uploaded on social media as reels or even longer videos. Here is a summary of the pros and cons of smartphones for video capture:

Pros:

- Built-in High Dynamic Range (HDR) video, image stabilisation
- Multiple lenses seamlessly integrated to give a smooth, wide-to-tele zooming without a bulky zoom lens
- Add-on apps to give manual control over shutter speed, aperture, ISO and other parameters
- High-resolution video with 4K or even 8K is now possible
- High quality and colour accurate displays
- Portable, ready and always with you
- Remember that the best camera is the one in your hand when you need it



Picture 1: A high-end smartphone capable of 8K video recording.

Cons:

- Small sensor yields limited dynamic range and depth of field control
- Not system-oriented - no interchangeable lenses, external mic connections
- Poor low light performance
- Highly compressed video output on most phones
- Poor ergonomics
- Limited battery life
- Less onboard memory
- Thermal limitations restrict prolonged use

Examples: iPhone 16 and 17 Series, Samsung S25 (Picture 1), Sony Xperia VII, Google Pixel 10 Pro Series, etc.

Mirrorless Cameras

Moving up to the next level, we have mirrorless cameras (MLCs). Perhaps readers of Smart Photography will be most familiar with this type. Sometimes called 'hybrid cameras', these are primarily meant for still photography, but as technology evolved, more and more video features were added. Also, many features, especially in the area of AF (autofocus) have migrated from still photography, thus bringing previously unavailable features to videography. By and large, MLCs eliminate most of the drawbacks of smartphones, but have limitations of their own. Let us look at their plus and minus points.

Pros:

- Full-frame sensors in mirrorless cameras deliver excellent video quality, though cropped sensors can also produce good results
- All the benefits associated with larger sensors – higher dynamic range, controllable DOF, and better low light performance
- IBIS – In body stabilisation
- Log recording for increasing the dynamic range
- Prosumer-grade codecs/formats
- Support for high-quality 4:2:2 recording
- ProRes RAW and other proprietary RAW formats
- Internal RAW recording with 12 bits
- Support a wide range of resolutions up to 8K and frame rates
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- Superior ergonomics with more video-oriented controls
- Strong AF performance due to their lineage
- Tougher build quality
- Enhanced audio, support for XLR, etc.
- Internal or external recording of high-resolution RAW recording
- Simpler and more standardised workflow
- Great for gimbal work due to lightweight
- Many specific video features like tally lights, shutter angle control, multiple 1/4"threaded sockets for fixing

accessories, etc.
- More portable and affordable than dedicated high end video cameras

Cons:
- More expensive than MLC counterparts
- Not well suited for still photography as compared to MLCs
- Usually lack gen-lock features
- Lack internal ND filters
- Adapters to use lenses with non-native mounts can cause back focus issues

Examples: Canon R5C, Nikon Zr (Picture 3) and Sony FX3

High-end Video Cameras

What next? Well, we have high-grade video cameras that extend the features of compact video cameras. While including all the features of the previous category, they add more professional capabilities and are built to be more robust. A key feature in this class is the built-in ND (neutral density) filter. The pros and cons in brief:

Pros:
- Built-in ND electronic filters
- Recording of 16-bit RAW
- Global shutters in some cameras eliminate rolling shutter distortion
- Faster frame and bit rates for higher quality
- Support for many professional-grade codecs
- Broadcast level quality
- Gen-lock feature
- Better ergonomics due video oriented menus and more buttons for direct control
- Well-supported workflows
- Rugged construction
- Availability of a large range of video-oriented accessories

Cons:
- Meant for videography, hence limited or no support for still photography
- Expensive
- Limited power distribution features for follow focus and other devices
- Lack of multiple video feeds
- Large Size and weight

Examples: Sony FX-6 (Picture 4), RED Komodo X, Blackmagic URSA



Picture 3: Evolved from the popular Nikon Z6III, the Zr dispenses with the mechanical shutter and the electronic viewfinder. Features new or improved for videography are: a large and bright monitor, superior thermal management, XLR audio support, tally light, better ergonomics, new codecs, including the RED R3D NE, etc. This picture shows the camera fully kitted out.



Picture 4: The Sony FX-6 is a popular high-end video camera

Cine Cameras

We now reach the pinnacle of performance and price. These are the cameras used to create the Hollywood and Bollywood films you see in theatres. As expected, they deliver the highest quality footage. So, what justifies their astronomical price—so high that many studios rent rather than buy?

Before we go into the pros and cons, there are two things that you must be aware of.

First, the usage of autofocus is non-existent or minimal at best. Focusing is done manually, not by the cinematographer, but by another person called a 'focus puller' who continuously adjusts focus depending on the subject movement – a job that needs skill.

Second, cine cameras use what is called "PL-Mount", a type of lens mount where PL stands for Positive Lock. It uses a breech lock mechanism for secure mounting with precise alignment. The PL mount has a very large flange back distance, and consequently, none of the mirrorless lenses can be used on these cameras, though the reverse is possible with suitable adapters. For details on the lenses used for cine and video work, refer to Smart Photography, October 2025, issue. Let us see the special features of these cameras in addition to what dedicated video cameras offer, as well as the drawbacks they have.

Pros:

- Advanced sensors, though some may be smaller than the usual full frame
- Extensive dynamic range going beyond 17 stops
- Very high resolution and frame rates going up to 8K at 120 fps
- Excellent low-light performance
- Advanced colour science and smooth highlight roll-off
- Superb colour fidelity
- High error latitude to support extensive colour grading
- Well established colour grading workflows
- Very advanced codecs
- Standard PL mount ensures a wide choice of top grade optics from multiple manufacturers
- Metadata transfer from lenses through PL mount

Picture 5: The Arri Alexa 35 is a class leading camera favoured by most large studios.



- Extensive power distribution features for follow focus and other devices
- Support for a vast array of accessories
- Bulletproof construction and thermal management for long shoots in extreme conditions
- Variety of power sources
- Multi-channel audio
- Multiple video output streams
- Advanced low pass filters
- Higher quality full spectrum ND filters
- Highly streamlined cine-oriented menus
- Extensive remote control capabilities that can manage several cameras at once.

Cons:

- Very expensive
- Power hungry and slow boot up time
- Not meant for single users or even small teams
- Expensive lenses and accessories
- Very heavy, so need heavy duty support accessories like gimbals, dollies, etc.

Examples: Arri Alexa 35 (Picture 5), Sony Venice, RED Raptor series |SP

What is best for you? The standard answer is - it depends, but we at Smart Photography will not leave it at that! So, here is a table that summarises it all:

Camera Type	Key features	Suited for
Smartphones	It is the always ready, "Swiss Army Knife" of videography capture: edit, and communicate, all with ease	Casual content creators, vloggers
Mirrorless cameras	Dual use, capable of high quality video, ideal for YouTube work while retaining still photography capability	Photographers venturing into video, low-budget shooters, short film and solo creators
Compact Video Cameras	Ergonomic design, extended recording capability, professional quality audio	Small productions, including low budget movies, and independent filmmakers
High-end Video Cameras	Superior RAW recording, better workflows, built-in ND filters, and higher frame rates	Commercial / advertisement work, documentaries, broadcast studios, short films, small production houses with moderate staff
Cine cameras	The very best that technology can offer	Large Hollywood/Bollywood studios with matching budgets for creating feature films

CONCLUSION

Starting from smartphones and going up to cinema cameras used for creating professional productions spans an enormous range in price, capabilities and ease of use. Contrary to popular belief, the choice depends less on budget and more on the desired footage and creative approach.

Acknowledgement: My thanks to Mr. Keshav Raja for his valuable inputs.

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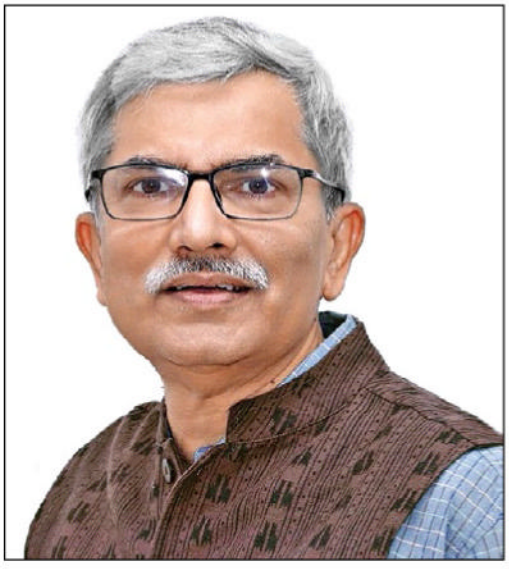
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PRINTING AND BEYOND



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An independent marketing consultant and digital print evangelist with over 40 years of experience in the imaging industry.
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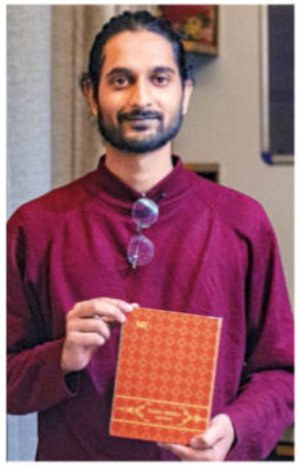
From Silver Halide Prints to a Hand-Bound Photobook

This month's feature explores analogue photography through a young practitioner whose process moves from film and silver halide prints to handwritten text and a hand-bound photobook, later reproduced digitally.

Dear Readers,

January has slipped past faster than expected. Between settling into the new year and spending time at the Consumer Electronic Imaging Fair (CEIF) 2026 in Mumbai, it became clear just how closely photography and print remain intertwined. Walking the exhibition floor and speaking with photographers and print professionals alike, one message surfaced repeatedly—print still matters, perhaps now more than ever.

For this February issue, I am pleased to feature the work of Rijul Gupta, a young photographer from Shimla whose practice embodies this belief in the most honest way possible. Rijul does not begin with digital images arranged on a screen. His starting point is film. Photographs made deliberately, developed patiently, and printed traditionally on silver halide paper in the darkroom. From there, his work moves forward at an unhurried pace, gathering meaning through careful sequencing, handwritten text, and finally, the act of binding the photobook by hand. Rijul's photobook Footnotes from a Train Journey is not just a collection of photographs; it is a physical diary. The images are accompanied by handwritten notes that are scanned and reproduced, retaining the intimacy of the original marks. The pages are then assembled and bound manually, transforming the book into an object that carries time, labour, and intent. In an age where photobooks can be ordered with a few clicks, this approach feels refreshingly grounded.



Rijul Gupta

What struck me most was how naturally the process flowed—from exposure on film to darkroom print, from personal reflection to a finished book. Had these photographs remained digital files, they might have been seen once and forgotten. As a printed, hand-bound object, they invite return visits. They ask to be held, revisited, and lived with. As you read this feature, I hope it encourages you to think beyond screens. Whether through a photozine, a photobook, or even a single framed print, consider giving your photographs a physical form. After all, memories deserve more than storage… they deserve presence.

Happy Printing,
Vimal Parmar

When Photographs Slow Down: Why the Photobook Still Matters

While images multiply endlessly on screens, photographer Rijul Gupta makes a compelling case for print. Drawing from his analogue practice, darkroom experiences, and his photobook Footnotes from a Train Journey, he reflects on why photography finds its deepest meaning not in scrolling, but in holding.



Preparing large prints for an exhibition

RIJUL GUPTA
Shimla
@not_rijulgupta

I was born and brought up in Shimla, and for as long as I can remember, photography has existed for me not as a screen-based activity but as something tactile and physical. My earliest memories of photography are tied to my father and his Yashica camera. I remember him saying, almost like a rule of life, "We only have 36 photos to click." That single sentence shaped the way I see images even today. Each frame felt precious. Nothing was casual, nothing was wasted. Long before megapixels and memory cards, photography taught me restraint. It taught me to look carefully, to wait, and to choose. Those lessons have stayed with me even as photography has become faster, cheaper, and endlessly reproducible.

From Self-Taught Curiosity to Analogue Commitment

I began my journey as a self-taught photographer, learning through observation, experimentation, and mistakes. Eventually, that curiosity led me to formally study photography through the M.Des Photography Design programme at the National Institute of Design in Gandhinagar, Gujarat. While education gave structure to my thinking, my commitment to analogue photography came from something more instinctive. I work entirely with film. I spend long hours in the darkroom, printing by hand, and understanding photographs not merely as images but as objects. In Shimla, I run a small homegrown film lab and darkroom called *Negative Ghar.*

Why Photography Must Exist as an Object

Today, images are everywhere. From billboards and social media feeds to endless WhatsApp forwards, we no longer just consume images; we live inside them. And yet, very few photographs stay with us.

I often think of the pre-smartphone era, when visiting someone's home meant opening a family album together.

Photographs were touched, passed around, and talked about. They became reasons to sit longer. Today, many of those albums lie forgotten, replaced by the infinite scroll. Printing, for me, is a way of restoring presence and permanence to photographs.

Footnotes from a Train Journey

This belief took form in my photobook *Footnotes from a Train Journey* (Published in 2025), centred around the Kalka–Shimla railway line, a UNESCO World Heritage site built between 1898 and 1903. For most people, it is a scenic route. For me, it is memory.

Growing up, the tracks were our hangout spaces. Sunday mornings meant long walks alongside them. Platforms felt like small pockets of time, disconnected from the rest of the world. The project began as documentation of Shimla's colonial past but slowly evolved into something far more personal.

When Documentation Became a Journal

While revisiting my diaries, I realised the work wanted to exist as a journal—part photograph, part text. The photobook became a visual and written travelogue, less about destinations and more about the experience of movement, reflection, and stillness.

The final book measures 5.5 × 8.5 inches and contains around 70 pages with 59 photographs. I designed and sequenced everything myself, making multiple dummies and constantly refining the layouts.

Designing Through Touch, Not Templates

Sequencing the book was a physical process. I printed small 4 × 6-inch prints, sorted them into loose categories—tracks, people, platforms, landscapes—and gradually eliminated images that did not belong. I pinned photographs onto a board, rearranging them endlessly, sometimes following the rhythm of boarding a train, sometimes responding intuitively to the text.

This physical engagement with prints changed how I understood the narrative. Moving photographs by hand revealed connections that a screen never could.

The Final Object

Once the book reached a stage I was satisfied with (images sequenced and text in place) I scanned the pages and handed them over to a printer, a well-known copier outlet near my college, with instructions to print the sheets required for a small number of copies. I then personally bound the pages to create the final book. I chose a paper that resembled handmade stock, as its texture echoed the slowness of the journey and encouraged the reader to pause. In all, I produced five copies. These photobooks were later exhibited at the design gallery at the National Institute of Design, where they were warmly received.

When the Darkroom Pushes Back

My relationship with print extends far beyond the photobook. I also make large darkroom prints, which come with their own challenges and limitations—forcing me to rethink space, tools, and process.

To give a practical example, standard developing trays rarely exceed 20 × 24 inches. To print larger, I had to improvise. I went to a carpenter to build custom wooden trays and lined them with plastic garbage bags to make them waterproof. It was not elegant, but it worked. Space was another challenge. I created a vertical projection surface by covering a wooden partition with soft foam board, allowing me to pin light-sensitive photographic paper directly onto it. Rotating the enlarger to project onto a wall introduced new problems—especially focusing. The image was so faint, even at f/2, that judging sharpness became almost impossible.

Exposure times posed a serious risk. I normally prefer printing at f/8 or f/11 for control and sharpness, but at that distance, exposures stretched to nearly seven minutes. That duration risked overheating the enlarger and blowing the bulb mid-print. The compromise was working at f/3.5 to keep exposure times manageable.

Interestingly, the scale brought unexpected freedom. I could step into the projected image and dodge and burn using my hands or body. Developing the prints required rolling the large sheets through chemistry by hand, constantly moving them to ensure even development. It was slow, exhausting, and deeply physical—but it brought me closer to the image.

Why the Photobook Tells Stories Better

Coming back to the photobook, holding the printed book for the first time felt emotional—almost like holding a baby. Feedback was mixed. Some felt the book should be larger, others preferred typed text over handwritten notes. I welcomed all of it. A photobook does not need consensus; it needs honesty.

The physical format transforms storytelling. Turning pages and feeling paper textures create rhythm and pause. A printed photograph does not demand attention. It waits.

Why I Still Believe in Print

Every few years, photography is declared "democratised," "freed," or "liberated" by technology. And yet, something essential keeps slipping away. Not resolution. Not sharpness. But meaning.

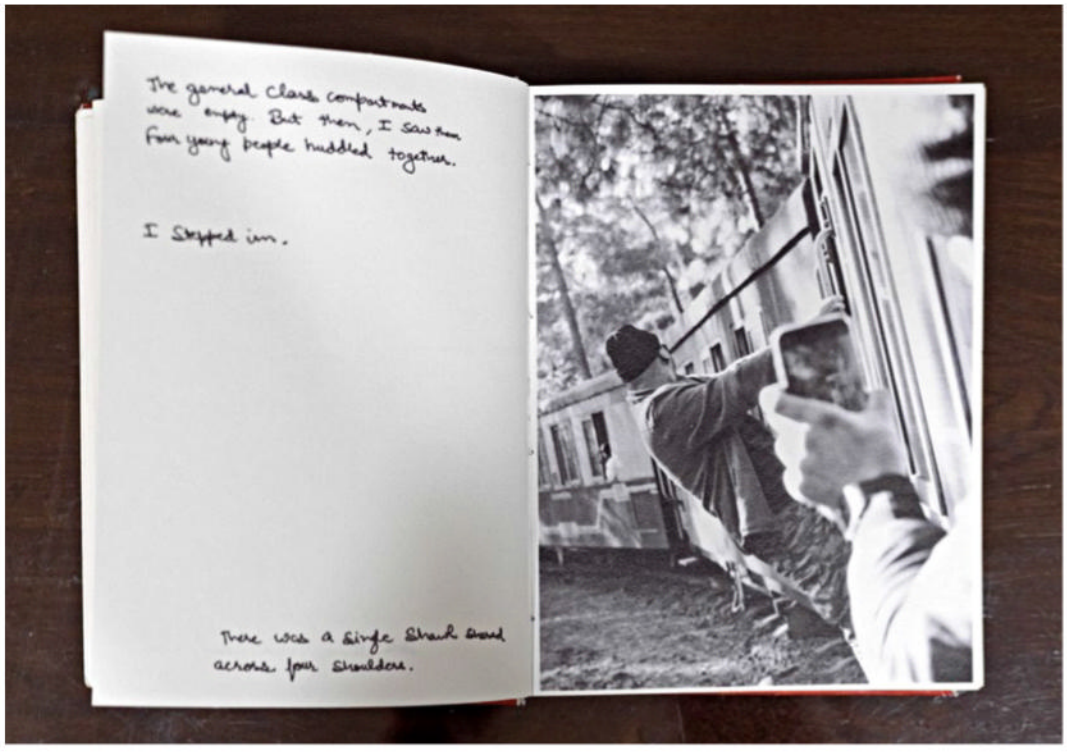
Print slows photography down. It asks photographers to choose, not accumulate. It asks viewers to pause, not scroll. A printed photograph does not compete; it invites. When a young photographer commits to film, darkroom printing, and the photobook, it is not nostalgia. It is resistance—against disposability, forgetfulness, and speed.

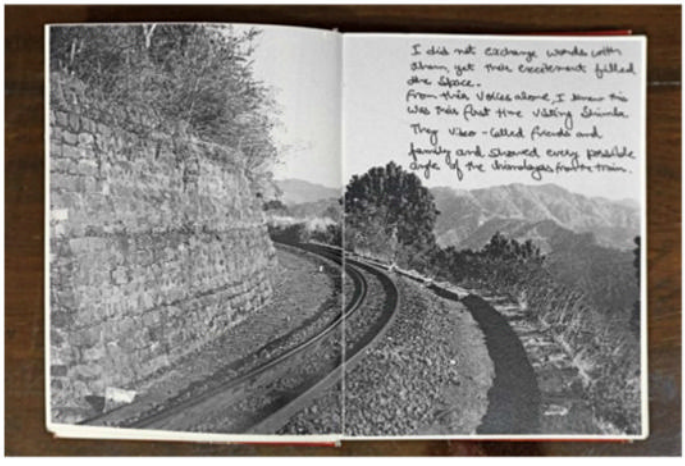
If photography is memory—and it always has been—then print is where memory finds a home. Screens show us photographs. Prints keep them. And perhaps, in holding photographs again, we might also learn to hold time a little more carefully. **|SP**

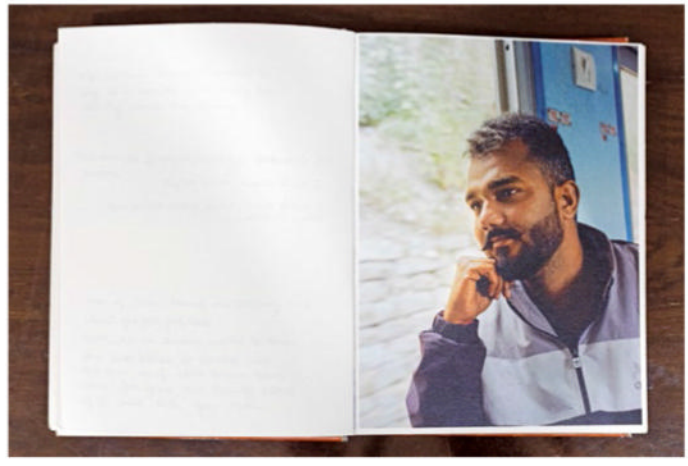




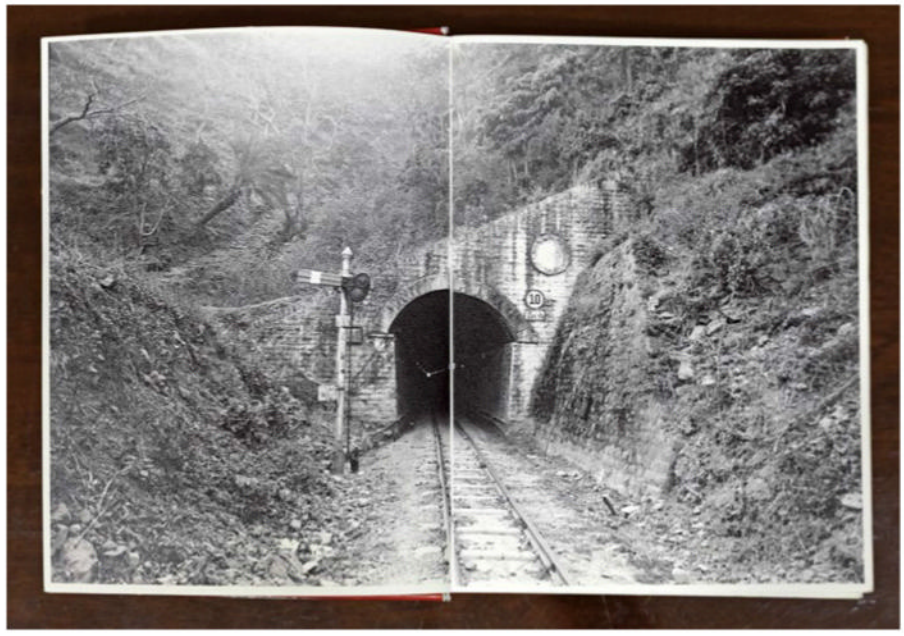
Friends flipping through the photobook

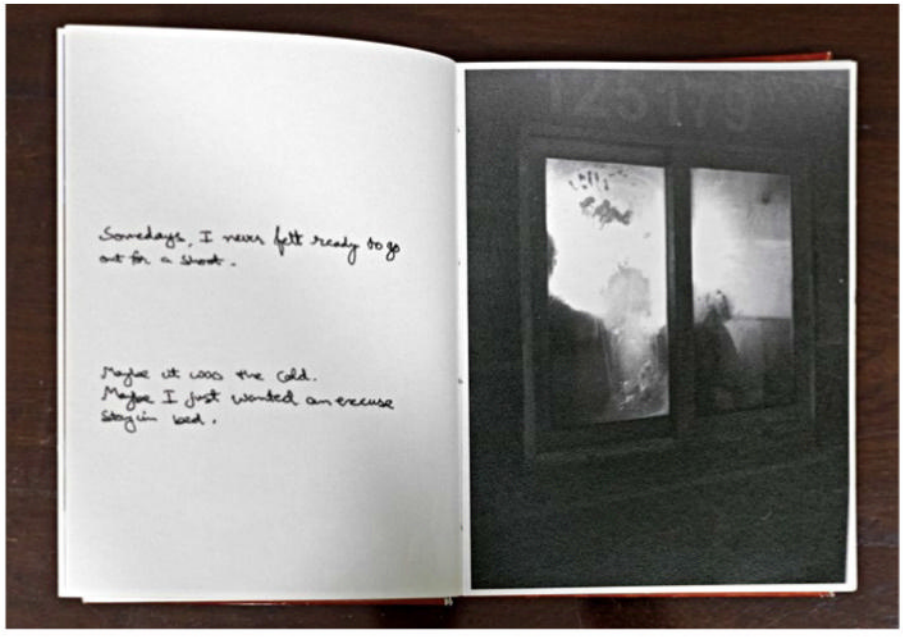




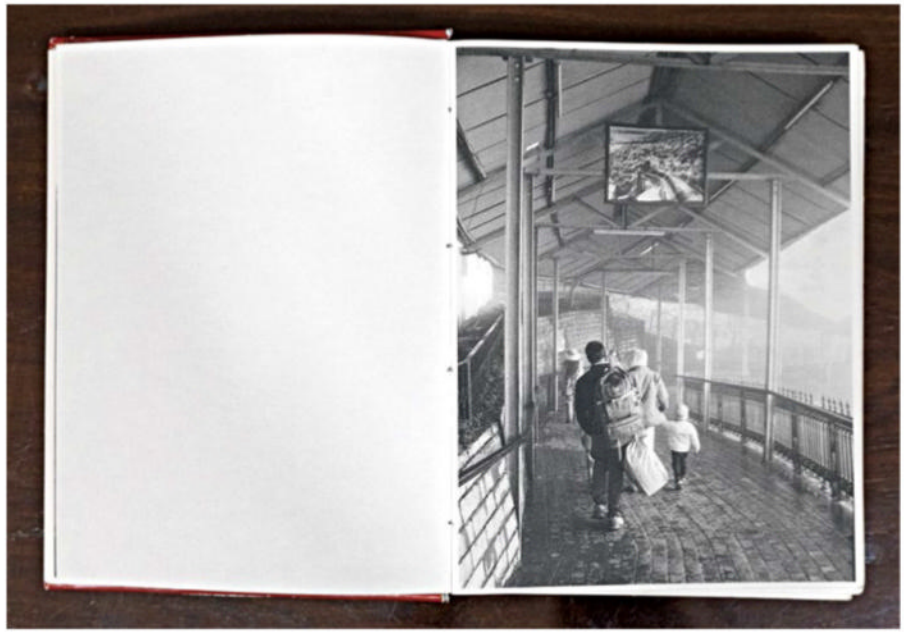


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February 2026*

REVIEWS

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70

Lens Review

Viltrox AF 35 mm f/1.2 LAB



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Ashok Kandimalla

In the recent past we had brought to you our assessment of the Viltrox 135 mm f/1.8 LAB, a large, fast premium lens designed for portraiture. This month, we will review its companion lens, a classical 35 mm prime with a fast aperture of f/1.2 that also belongs to the premium Viltrox LAB family.

Design & Build Quality

This is a large, solidly built lens with an all-metal construction. There are two rings on the lens – the first is for focusing and the second is for aperture control.

There are two function buttons and two switches. The latter are for AF/MF and aperture click stop enable/disable. There is also a display panel that shows important parameters with a touch of colour.

There are seals to make the lens dust and moisture-proof. On the barrel, you can see the label "LAB", which is the Viltrox seal for their premium quality lenses. The lens we tested came with the Sony E mount, and a Nikon Z version might be available in future.

Key Features

The Viltrox 35 mm lens is constructed with 15 elements in 10 groups. These include three high refractive index, five ED, and two aspherical elements.



The lens elements are coated to reduce reflections and prevent smudges on the exposed surfaces. The aperture has 11 blades to give a smooth bokeh.

There are two 'L-Fn' buttons. The Fn1 can be programmed for focus locking while both can be assigned as independent focus presets. The aperture ring can be chosen to operate with or without click-stops with the help of a switch. There are no aperture markings on the ring. However, you can see the set aperture value on the display panel along with many other parameters viz., distance, focus range settings, and the state of the function buttons.
The AF function is performed by what Viltrox describes as 'Dual floating internal focusing" mechanism, and is driven by a high-speed voice coil motor (VCM). It is extremely smooth and noiseless. Focus breathing is minimal, a feature that will be welcomed by videographers. The lens does not have any image stabilization, as that function is expected to be fulfilled by the camera through its internal stabilisation (IBIS). A USB-C port has been provided on the lens mount for connecting to a computer (or a smartphone) and updating the lens firmware. The supplied hood is well designed and made.



Ergonomics

Due to its heavy weight, it is best to use the lens supported by the left hand and when done so the lens is comfortable to use. Both the rings were nicely ribbed but we felt that the damping on the focus ring was a tad less than ideal. When the click stop feature was enabled, the action was crisp and positive. The L-Fn buttons can be operated easily, but are placed a bit too close to one another.

One odd feature is that we heard and felt some wobbling inside when the lens was slightly shaken. However, once mounted and the camera powered on, no such thing was noticeable. This is normal operation.

Performance

Viltrox intention was to offer peak optical performance at an affordable price with their LAB series of lenses and in this case, they have certainly hit that target.

At the centre, the resolution is excellent from wide open – no mean feat for a lens with an f/1.2 aperture. And that performance continued when stopped down till about f/5.6. The edge sharpness is behind when wide open, but not too bad considering the speed of the lens.



© S. Vivekanand

Camera: Sony A1
Lens: Viltrox AF 35 mm f/1.2 LAB
Aperture: f/1.2
Shutter Speed: 1/1000 sec
Focal Length: 35.0 mm
ISO: 400

Stopping to f/2.8 improves the sharpness across the whole frame. The sweet spot seems to be around f/4. There was some flare but we can say overall that the resistance to flare is excellent unless you want to shoot with bright light sources at very wide apertures. Colour rendition was vibrant with excellent fidelity.

Not surprisingly vignetting was noticeable wide open, but was well controlled, and disappeared by f/4. Chromatic aberration was very well controlled and distortion was negligible. All these results are post automatic corrections in the post-processing software.

AF is not a major criterion for lenses of this focal length, but thanks to its sophisticated design and VCM, the lens focused very fast and was sure footed but we noticed some hunting when the light was very low.

Value for Money

The MRP of the lens is Rs. 100,000/-, giving it an indisputable advantage over competition when it comes to performance-to-price ratio. |SP

Camera: Sony A1
Lens: Viltrox AF 35 mm f/1.2 LAB
Aperture: f/1.4
Shutter Speed: 1/1000 sec
Focal Length: 35.0 mm
ISO: 500



© S. Vivekanand

FINAL SCORE



Design and Build Quality
★★★★☆

Key Features
★★★★☆

Ergonomics
★★★½☆

Performance
★★★★☆

Value for Money
★★★★½

Overall
★★★★☆

KEY SPECIFICATIONS

Focal length & coverage:	35 mm, full frame, Sony E mount.
Aperture range:	f/1.2 to f/16, diaphragm with 11 blades
Lens construction:	15 elements in 10 groups
Picture angle (diagonal):	64.2°
Highest magnification:	0.17x
Focusing Range:	0.72 m to ∞
Filter/attachment size:	77 mm
Lens Hood:	Included
Dimensions (diameter x length):	89.2 x 121.8 mm for Sony E Mount
Weight:	920 g

PLUS

- Solid all metal construction
- Outstanding price-to-performance ratio
- Excellent optical performance
- Aperture ring with or without click stops
- Display shows lens settings at a glance

MINUS

- Large and heavy
- Wobbling sound when shaken
- Aperture ring has no stop

VERDICT

This lens delivers impressive optical performance, even if it falls a touch short of the refinement offered by OEM counterparts. What sets it apart, however, is its price—significantly lower than most competitors. Distortion is kept well under control, making it suitable for architectural photography, while event shooters will appreciate the subject isolation afforded by its large aperture.

For street photographers, it shines in low-light conditions, though its size may draw attention during the day. A 35 mm lens with an f/1.2 aperture is a rarity—only three exist at the time of writing—and none can give the value for money this offers. In short, it's an outstanding option for photographers seeking flagship-level specifications without the premium price tag.

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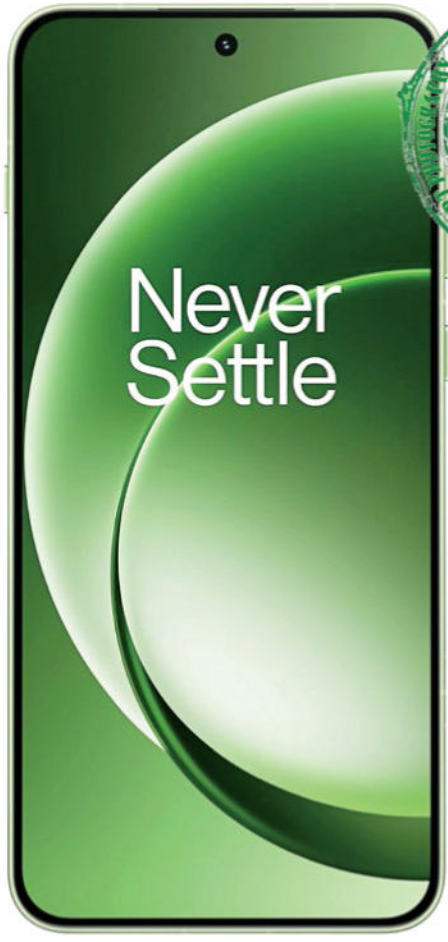
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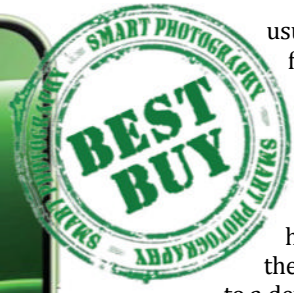
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- ✓ Protective case (clear or color-matched silicone/rubber case)





Saeed Akhtar

The timing of a smartphone release often tells a story more compelling than the spec sheet itself. When the OnePlus 15R arrived approximately five weeks after the flagship OnePlus 15, it did not appear as an afterthought but as a calculated recalibration. Positioned as a performance-first value flagship, this device is designed to inhabit the space between the standard flagship and the more compact 13s. At a starting price of Rs 48,000 for the 256GB model, it represents a significant reduction compared to its more expensive sibling. The expectation set here is clear: this is a device for those who prioritize raw power and endurance over the absolute pinnacle of mobile photography or the convenience of wireless charging. It is a tool for the pragmatic power user and the dedicated gamer who wants the latest silicon without paying the premium for a few luxury flourishes that they might never use.

A Sturdy Evolution in Design

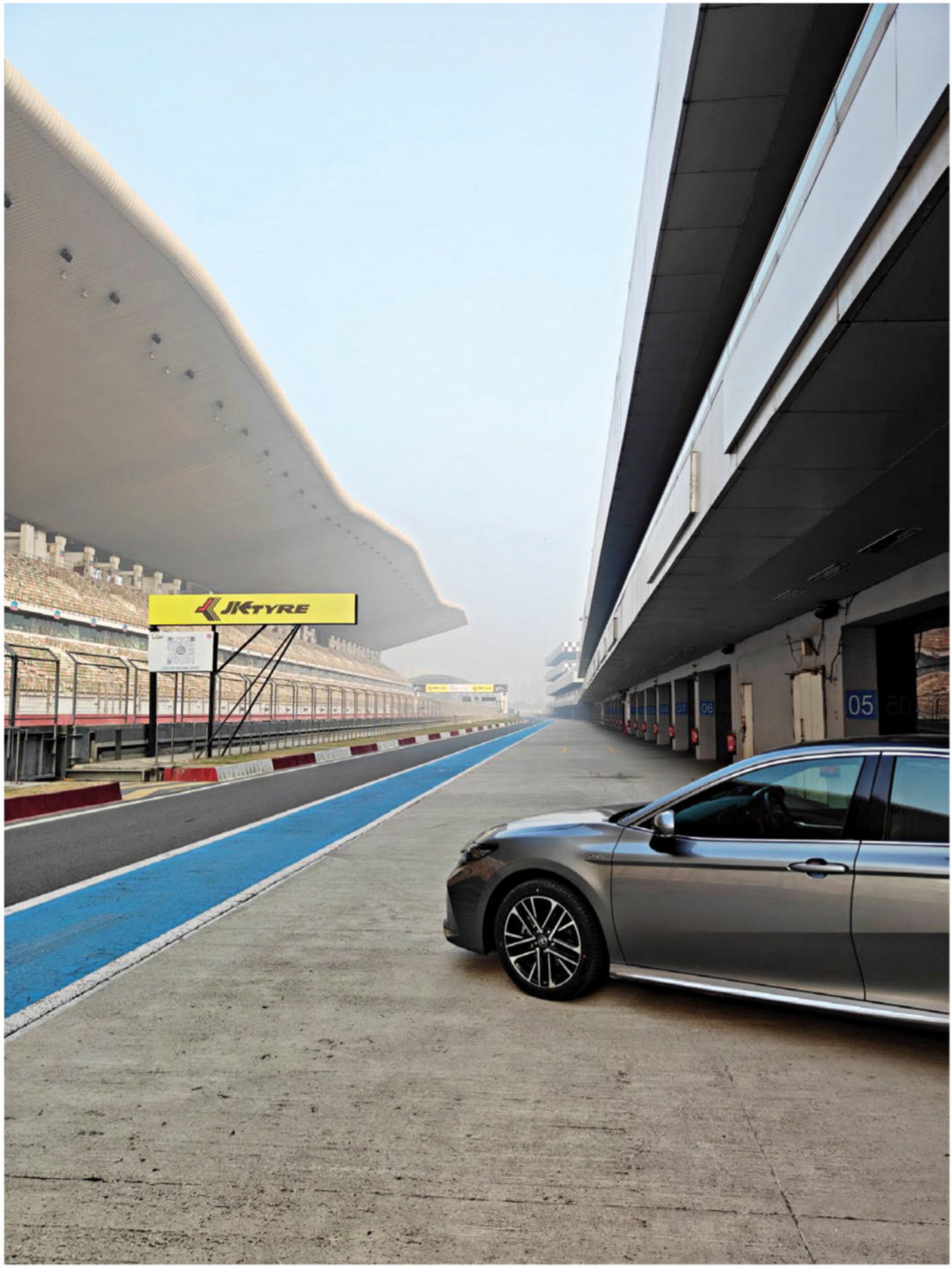
The physical presence of the 15R is one of reassuring density. It follows the minimalist design language established by the 13 and 15 series, characterized by a clean rectangular camera module and a logo aligned perfectly at the center. In the hand, the device feels substantial. Depending on the specific configuration, it weighs between 213 and 219 grams, making it slightly taller and heavier than the standard OnePlus 15. The frame is constructed from aluminum, lending a structural rigidity that many modern phones lack. The fit and finish are excellent, with the glass and metal meeting in a seamless manner that suggests a high level of manufacturing precision.

Available in Charcoal Black and Mint Breeze, there is also an Electric Violet variant exclusive to the Indian market. Beyond the colors, the durability story is a highlight. The 15R carries an IP69K certification. This is a step above the usual water resistance found in consumer electronics, as it indicates the phone can withstand dust ingress as well as high pressure and heated water jets. For the user, this translates to a device that feels less like a fragile ornament and more like a tool capable of surviving the accidents of a busy life.

One of the most significant changes to the physical interaction is the removal of the traditional three stage Alert Slider. This has been a staple of the brand for years, and its absence is notable. In its place sits the Plus Key. This is a programmable button designed for custom shortcuts. During extended use, the utility of this change becomes apparent. Instead of a dedicated toggle for sound profiles, the user can now map the button to open the camera or capture voice notes. While traditionalists may miss the tactile click of the old slider, the versatility of the Plus Key offers a different kind of functional value.

Raw Power and High Refresh Realities

The core performance of the 15R is driven by the Qualcomm Snapdragon 8 Gen 5. This is the first international device to feature this chipset. While synthetic benchmarks like Geekbench 6 and AnTuTu show that this version is roughly 10 to 15 percent slower than the Elite version found in the flagship OnePlus 15, the real world behavior tells a different story. In daily use, the responsiveness is absolute. Apps open without hesitation, and the system feels effortlessly smooth. For the vast majority of tasks, from social media scrolling to intensive video editing on the go, the performance is indistinguishable from the more expensive flagship.


JKTYRE
05

The display plays a crucial role in this perception of speed. It is a 6.83 inch AMOLED panel with a 1.5K resolution. What sets it apart is the 165Hz peak refresh rate. While this is specifically optimized for compatible gaming titles, it contributes to an overall sense of fluid motion throughout the interface. The peak brightness of 1,800 nits ensures that the screen remains legible even under direct midday sun. Furthermore, the inclusion of a dedicated touch chip enables a response rate recorded at 3,200Hz. This is a detail that most users will not notice during a text message but will certainly appreciate during a fast paced game where every millisecond of input lag matters.

Biometric security has also seen a meaningful upgrade. The ultrasonic fingerprint sensor placed under the display is a significant improvement over the optical sensors used in previous generations. It is faster and positioned more naturally for the thumb, making the process of unlocking the phone feel instantaneous and reliable, even if your hands are slightly damp.

Reliability in the Daily Routine

Usability over time is where the 15R truly begins to justify its existence. The learning curve is virtually non-existent for anyone familiar with modern Android devices, but the daily reliability is what stands out. The combination of 12GB of LPDDR5X Ultra RAM and fast UFS 4.1 storage ensures that background processes are handled without aggressive closing of apps. It fits into a routine where the user can jump between a dozen different tasks without the system stuttering.

Comfort is a factor given the weight of the device. At over 210 grams, it is a large phone that requires a two handed approach for many tasks. However, the ergonomics of the curved edges help mitigate the fatigue that often comes with heavy devices. The consistency of the software, OxygenOS 16 based on Android 16, provides a predictable environment. It is stable and does not suffer from the erratic behavior that can sometimes plague new software versions.



Camera: OnePlus 15R
Lens: OnePlus 15R wide camera 23mm f/4.5
Aperture: f/4.5
Shutter Speed: 1/100 sec
Focal Length: 5.6 mm
ISO: 500

Software Logic and Features

The software experience is centered around OxygenOS 16. It feels refined and focuses on stability. One of the more interesting additions is the Mind Space hub. This is an integrated system for productivity that includes tools for transcribing notes, summarizing screenshots, and saving voice memos. These features are designed to be assistive rather than intrusive. They exist in the background until needed, providing a level of user control that feels respectful. OnePlus has committed to a long term support cycle for this device. With a promise of four years of major operating system upgrades and six years of security patches, the 15R is positioned as a long term investment. This level of predictability is essential for a device that is meant to be a daily driver for years to come. The automation features within the system, such as those that manage background power consumption, help maintain this consistency without requiring manual intervention from the user.

Navigating Performance Limits

No device is without its constraints, and the 15R shows its limits in specific scenarios. While the Snapdragon 8 Gen 5 is a powerhouse, it is not the Elite variant. Under extreme stress, such as sustained high resolution gaming or 4K video rendering for long periods, there is a slight drop in performance compared to the top tier flagship. However, these are edge cases that the average user is unlikely to encounter.

The more visible constraint lies in the camera system. The dual rear setup uses a 50MP Sony IMX906 primary sensor

with optical image stabilization and an 8MP secondary sensor. The absence of a telephoto lens, which was a feature on some previous R models, is a notable omission. In daylight, the photos are sharp and dependable. However, in low light or challenging shadow conditions, the camera begins to struggle. The images can sometimes produce muddy details or inconsistent exposure. This is a clear indicator of where the cost savings were applied. While the 32MP front camera with autofocus is a welcome upgrade for selfies, the rear system is purely functional rather than exceptional.

Endurance and Thermal Management

The defining characteristic of the 15R is undoubtedly its endurance. It houses a 7,400mAh battery, which is even larger than the 7,300mAh cell found in the standard OnePlus 15. The real world results are outstanding. This is a phone that consistently lasts through a full day of heavy use, outperforming many of its rivals in the segment. For users who are away from a charger for long stretches, the peace of mind offered by this battery capacity is a significant selling point. When it does come time to charge, the device supports wired fast charging that can reach 100 percent in less than an hour. However, it is important to note the lack of wireless charging. This is another trade off made to maintain the price point.

Managing the heat from such a large battery and a high performance chipset is handled by the Cryo Velocity cooling system. This includes a 3D vapor chamber designed to dissipate heat during intense loads. In practice, the thermal stability is impressive. Even during long gaming sessions, the phone remains comfortable to hold. The design decisions here clearly favor sustained performance over thinness, and the result is a device that does not throttle its power easily.

Tactile Details and User Interaction

The interface logic is sound. The layout of controls is intuitive, and the quality of haptic feedback is sharp and precise. Every interaction, from the click of the power button to the vibration when typing, feels deliberate. The Plus Key, despite being a departure from tradition, is a thoughtful addition. Its responsiveness is immediate, and the ease of access it provides to frequently used tools is a clever design touch that rewards customization.

Strengths and Limitations

The strengths of the 15R are concentrated in its core identity. It offers flagship level build quality with the added benefit of IP69K durability. The battery life is among the best in its class, and the display is a high refresh rate marvel that will satisfy even the most demanding gamers. The performance is consistent, and the long term software support adds significant value.

The limitations are equally clear. The camera system, while competent in good light, lacks the versatility of a telephoto lens and falls short in low light performance. The absence of wireless charging will be a deal breaker for some, and the removal of the Alert Slider may alienate longtime fans of the brand.

The ideal user for the OnePlus 15R is someone who views their phone as a high performance tool. It is perfect for gamers who need the 165Hz refresh rate and the 3,200Hz touch response. It is also an excellent choice for professionals who spend long days away from a desk and require a battery that will not quit before they do.

However, those who prioritize mobile photography above all else or who have integrated wireless charging into their daily workflow may find better options elsewhere. |SP

VERDICT

The OnePlus 15R is a device that knows exactly what it is. It does not try to be a jack of all trades. Instead, it doubles down on performance, endurance, and build quality. It sits in its category as a formidable value flagship, offering the most essential parts of the flagship experience at a more accessible price. It is a measured, powerful, and reliable device that successfully bridges the gap between raw utility and modern design. For the user who values substance over style, it is a compelling choice.

FINAL SCORE



Design and Build Quality

★★★★☆

Key Features

★★★½☆

Ergonomics

★★★★½

Performance

★★★★☆

Value for Money

★★★★★

Overall

★★★★☆

PLUS

- **Incredible endurance (7,400 mAh battery)**
- **Fluid performance (Snapdragon 8 Gen 5 & 165Hz display combo)**
- **Robust build (IP69K rating)**

MINUS

- **Camera versatility (No telephoto lens)**
- **Average low-light performance (ultra-wide sensor limit)**
- **No wireless charging**

KEY SPECIFICATIONS

Display: 6.83-inch AMOLED, 2800 x 1272 resolution (1.5K / FHD+), 165Hz refresh rate (adaptive, up to 165Hz in supported apps/games), HDR10+/HDR Vivid/Dolby Vision support, up to 3600 nits peak brightness

Processor: Qualcomm Snapdragon 8 Gen 5

RAM: 12GB LPDDR5X Ultra

Storage: Up to 512GB UFS 4.1 (variants: 256GB / 512GB, no card slot)

Main Camera: 50MP Sony IMX906 sensor, with DetailMax Engine for enhanced processing

Ultra-Wide Camera: 8MP sensor

Front Camera: 32MP sensor

Battery: 7400mAh capacity, 80W SUPERVOOC wired fast charging

Build & Protection: IP68/IP69 dust and water resistance, glass front and back with aluminum frame, dimensions approx. 163.4 x 77 x 8.1-8.3 mm, weight ~213-219g depending on color variant

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Srini Swaminathan

We reviewed the newly launched vivo x200T - a smartphone that has been recently launched in the Indian market. The unit we tested is the Stellarblack 5G 12GB RAM/512 GB Storage variant. From the moment you pick it up and switch it on, you feel that the vivo X200T is not a cosmetic refresh or a spec-sheet exercise. It does feel like a deliberate shift towards better imaging, battery engineering, and sustained performance. This is a phone designed for users who actually push their devices hard.

Unboxing & Design

The vivo X200T feels carefully engineered. The new Velvet Glass finish is not just visually refined but genuinely functional, resisting fingerprints even after prolonged use. Despite housing a large 6200 mAh battery, the phone remains slim and well-balanced in hand (it weighs just 205 grams!) and not at all bulky. Build quality is unmistakably premium, with attention to contours and weight distribution that makes long-term use comfortable. We used it for many hours under varying conditions and the phone didn't tire our hands at all. We even took it on a grueling half marathon while clicking pictures and using it during the run and we found it to be excellent.

Camera

The camera system is where the X200T clearly differentiates itself even though it is a compact flagship phone.

The triple-camera system consists of:

- 50 MP ZEISS main sensor
- 50 MP ultra-wide camera
- 50 MP telephoto camera with OIS

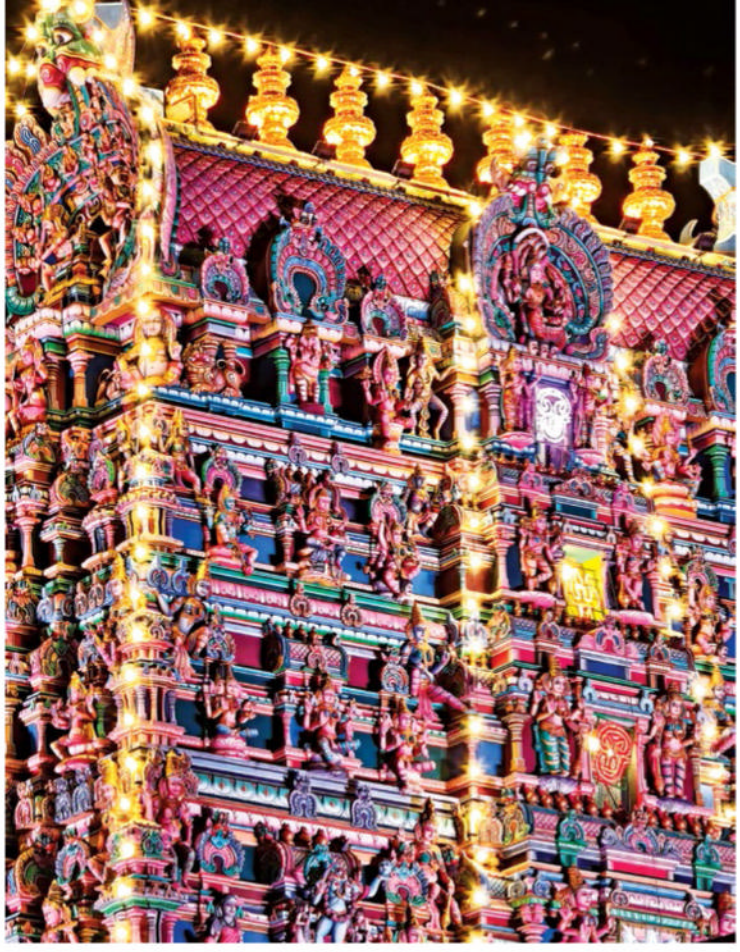
And a 32MP front camera.

For most situations, you just need to click and the hardware + software combo takes care of everything. You would hardly need to do any editing. The 50MP Zeiss Main Camera and Super Telephoto Camera changes how the phone performs at long focal lengths. The Zeiss Ultra Wide Angle camera and 32MP Zeiss Wide Angle Front Camera produce excellent photos. Detail retention, micro-contrast, and texture are exceptional, even after heavy cropping. Architectural shots, distant landscapes, wildlife, and long-range portraits all benefit from this sensor's size and optics but with extreme zoom, the subject appears more like a HDRish painting than a real photo. This is one of the drawbacks of extreme zoom, something we noticed in other vivo phones as well. That said, portrait processing still needs refinement. While detail is excellent, skin tones and edge



Camera: vivo X200T
Aperture: f/1.57
Shutter Speed: 1/2300 sec
Focal Length: 5.6 mm
ISO: 50





separation can occasionally feel over-processed, suggesting software tuning hasn't fully caught up with the hardware.

The large circular camera island with well positioned lens and flash + the attractive knurl ring gives it a familiar feel. The camera software has all the basic and advanced features and modes such as Landscape & Night, Portrait, Portrait Video, Night, Food, Stage, Time-Lapse, PRO, Supermoon etc. If you want hassle free document photos instead of scanning, the Ultra HD Document mode can be very useful.

That said, the X200T isn't without its limitations. While its imaging system is strong for the price, it doesn't radically outpace some direct rivals in colour consistency or ultra-wide detail, and portrait processing and extreme zoom pics sometimes lean toward subtle beautification that may not appeal to everyone.

Performance, Software & Battery Life

On the software side, OriginOS has matured noticeably. The interface feels cleaner, more coherent, and better animated than previous iterations. One genuinely good addition is vivo's Apple ecosystem interconnectivity, which allows smoother file sharing and cross-device workflows for users who straddle Android and Apple hardware. We transferred 100s of images and videos to an iPhone and the process was smooth.

The 6200 mAh Li-ion battery is impressive not just for its capacity, but for how it fits into a sub-8mm chassis. In our real world usage, it easily stretches through a full day and beyond. Fast 90W wired and 40W wireless charging ensure that the large battery enhances convenience rather than becoming a liability. |SP

VERDICT

The vivo X200T is a well-judged compact flagship that focuses on the fundamentals, i.e strong all-day performance, dependable battery endurance, and a capable ZEISS-tuned camera system. Powered by a modern Dimensity platform and paired with a smooth, high-quality AMOLED display, it delivers a consistently reliable experience. It's a sensible choice for users who want flagship speed, good photography, and long battery life in a refined, everyday device without stepping into ultra-premium pricing.

FINAL SCORE



Design and Build Quality

★★★★★

Key Features

★★★★½

Ergonomics

★★★★½

Performance

★★★★★

Value for Money

★★★★☆

Overall

★★★★½

PLUS

- **50MP Zeiss Telephoto Lens produces exceptional images**
- **Superb 6200 mAh battery with fast wired + wireless charging**
- **Good mixed-light and low-light imaging**

MINUS

- **Extreme zoom tends to make photos look unrealistic**
- **Need stable support or steady hands for high zoom**
- **Large camera island may not appeal to everyone**

KEY SPECIFICATIONS

Processor: MediaTek Dimensity 9400 (4nm)
RAM: 12GB
Storage: Upto 512 GB
Battery: 6200 mAh
Rear Camera System: 50MP ZEISS main camera + 50MP telephoto (2× optical) + 50MP ultra-wide
Front Cameras: 32MP Camera
Cover Display: 6.67-inch AMOLED, 1.5K resolution (2800 × 1260), 120Hz refresh rate, 460PPI
Durability: IP68 and IP69 under IEC standard 60529.

DID YOU KNOW?

Hoshang Billimoria

- Digital cameras are driven by sensors and for a long time, these were Charge Coupled Devices (CCD). CCDs were common since the 1990s. CCDs were however slow and took a reading from the edge of the sensor pixel by pixel. The matrix of pixels was used to create the image. This involved a lot of current passing through the camera's chip and was a drain on power.

- CCD sensors were invented by Bell Labs as early as 1969. George Smith and William Boyle won the Nobel prize for their efforts. Nobukzu Teraniah of NEC made several improvements which improved the resolution possible from these sensors.

- In 1995, NASA's Eric Fossum invented the CMOS sensor which considerably reduces the power consumed by CCD sensors. Naturally, the CMOS sensor took over and now has a dominating 90% market share. However, CCD sensors are still used in niche applications like microscopy and a variety of laboratory applications.

- The Ricoh GR series of compact cameras is now 30 years old.

- Photoshop is certainly one of the best imaging software available to photographers. But did you know that Photoshop was created by two brothers called the Knoll brothers?

- Nikon's last film SLRs are in great demand even now by film enthusiasts. Particularly strong is the demand for the F 6, Nikon's last flagship SLR.

- Asahi Pentax's response to the OM series of cameras were the dimunitive M series (ME, MV and MX). The M series were a big success for Pentax.

- In spite of the Minolta Maxxum being the first SLR with an integrated auto focus system built into the camera body, Minolta could not take the lead in the autofocus market. Canon swept competition aside with the EOS 650 and EOS 600.

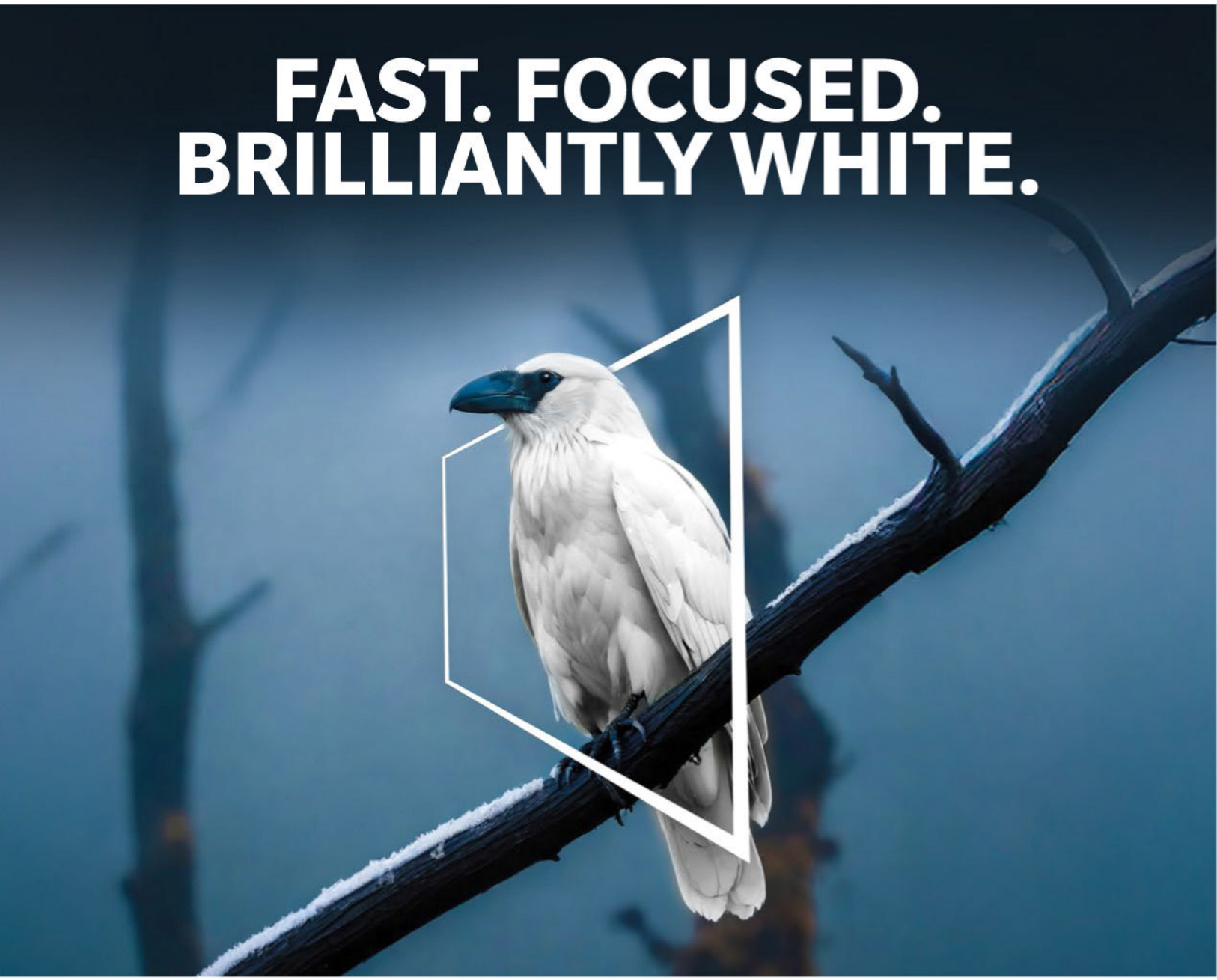
- Brands like Yashica, Chinon, Kowa, Voigtlander and Miranda are dead as far as cameras are concerned. However, the brand names are licensed and you may well see these brands used by third parties under license.

- As China races ahead with better and better lenses and cameras, the Indian camera industry is virtually stillborn. There is not a single manufacturer of camera bodies or lenses as of today.|**SP**

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