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# REFLECTIONS

India International Group





# Editor's Note

As we step into this new issue, I am reminded of the power of images and words to shape not only how we see the world, but how we feel connected to it. The journey from the fifth edition to this sixth has been both humbling and inspiring. I am overwhelmed with the positive feedback poured in for our redefined fifth edition. Each message of appreciation, each thoughtful critique, and each note of encouragement has been a testament to the shared passion that binds our community together. I thank all our readers and contributors, whose voices and visions breathe life into these pages. That feedback, and the expectations it carries, elevates my responsibility as editor of this sixth issue, urging me to curate content that is not only visually compelling but also deeply meaningful.

In this spirit, we are including a special section where each photographer in the IIG group reflects on "What Photography Is", inspired by Mishka Henner's thought-provoking book *Photography Is*. Their voices, layered and distinct, offer a mosaic of interpretations—personal, philosophical, and practical—that enrich our collective understanding of the medium.

This issue is a celebration of diversity in perspective: from the quiet patience of wildlife photography to the vibrant energy of cultural festivals, from archival timelines that honor South Indian photographic legacies to contemporary explorations of creative practice. Together, these contributions remind us that photography is not just about capturing moments—it is about curating meaning, preserving heritage, and inspiring dialogue.

Together, these contributions form a tapestry of conservation, culture, technique, and reflection. I invite you to engage with this issue not just as a reader, but as a participant in the ongoing dialogue about photography's role in shaping our world. May this edition inspire you to see beyond the frame, and to find meaning in both the fleeting and the enduring.

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## Reader's feedback

Dear Mr Gopalakrishnan,

Thank you very much for sharing the 5th edition of IIG's journal *Reflections*. It is truly a pleasure to see the journal grow stronger and more refined with each edition.

I sincerely appreciate the thoughtful curation and contemporary design of this issue. The content reflects both depth and sensitivity, making it a rewarding read for photography and art enthusiasts alike.

Congratulations to you and the entire IIG team for sustaining this beautiful initiative for the second consecutive year.

I feel honoured to be part of the readership and grateful for the encouragement to share thoughts and reflections. I look forward to reading this edition and to many more inspiring issues in the future.

Wishing *Reflections* continued success.

Warm regards | Sanjoy Bhattacharya

Dear Sri Sundar,

Delighted to receive *Reflections*. It is produced wonderfully with good useful articles. The print quality is also excellent. I have no hesitation in saying it is a collectors item. Look forward to the printed issue. Thanks again to Team IIG for the wonderful journal.

Dr H C Sharatchandra

Dear Sundar

Many thanks for your email sending the link to the wonderful IIG Journal called *Reflections*

I loved it's lucid layout and fantastic articles which encompasses such a wide variety of photographic articles

With best regards | Dr Shourjendra Datta

Good morning friends,

Excellent magazine!

Best regards from Montenegro. | Andrija Kasom

Dear Sundar ,

Thank you for sharing !

A beautiful Journal with exquisite design and rich content, Looking forward to the next issue.

Sincere congratulations!

Best regards | GaiYu



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Front Cover Page Photograph: **Balasubramanian GV**

Back Cover Page Photograph: **Narasimhan**

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# Beyond the Stripes

*the Lens,  
the Legacy, and  
the Life of the Forest.*

**I**n another two decades, it is the tigers that will feed this village - quipped Fateh Singh Rathore, the then DFO of Ranthambore National Park. In 1973, India had just launched Project Tiger to combat the rampant threat of poaching, with Ranthambore serving as its flagship forests. The initiative followed the conservation model of the era: a strict separation of wildlife and human habitats. Consequently, Singh's primary challenge was the relocation of several villages from the forest's core. It took years of persuasion and negotiation to convince residents to leave their ancestral lands in exchange for compensation, alternative acreage, and new livelihoods outside the park boundaries.



**Narasimhan a.k.a Nara**, a nature photographer exploring the fine art side of wildlife, landscapes, and environmental portraiture. His journey began in documentation, but today his work is driven by a creative, intentional lens. Beyond the camera, he co-founded *Sal Tree*, a startup dedicated to premium fine art archival printing, based in Chennai, India.

## Ghost of the Forest Steps into the Light

While the villages moved, Fateh Singh faced an even more daunting shadow: *the poacher*. Protecting the tigers meant living alongside them. For years, Singh, his staff became a permanent fixture of the landscape, traversing the rugged terrain in the jeep for countless hours, day and night, monitoring every movement within the brush. The "fruits" of these exhausting years of surveillance are what we, as wildlife photographers, harvest today.

For centuries, the tiger was a "ghost of the forest"—a strictly nocturnal predator that was rarely, if ever, seen in the harsh light of day. But under Singh's watchful eye, something fundamentally shifted. Because generations of tigers, especially cubs, grew up seeing the park jeeps from the moment they opened their eyes, their perception changed. The rumbling engines weren't a threat; they were simply another harmless part of the habitat. Slowly, the tigers stepped out of the shadows and into the sun.

Fateh Singh Rathore's words weren't just optimistic; they were prophetic. Today, it isn't just Ranthambore that thrives.



Fateh Singh Rathore

Across India, the tiger has become the ultimate provider. From guides and drivers to lodge owners and craftsmen, hundreds of homes are now sustained by the very animal they once feared or hunted — all because one man chose to stay in a jeep and watch.

### Double-Edged Sword of the Safari

We belong to a rare, fortunate

generation. To sit in an open jeep and lock eyes with a wild tiger in the golden light of day—without a flicker of fear from either side—is a miracle many take for granted. This intimacy is not just a gift for the photographer; it is a vital shield for the species.

### Guardian in the Passenger Seat

Tourism does more than just fill the pockets of local guides and lodge owners; it creates an indirect corridor of protection. When travelers frequent these trails, they become a thousand pairs of unofficial eyes.

If a resident tiger goes missing from its usual haunt, the pressure from the public and the tourism community forces the Forest Department to investigate immediately. In this way, the clicking of cameras acts as a deterrent to the silent snare of the poacher.

**The Cost of Closeness:** Of course, this proximity comes with a price. Over-enthusiastic visitors who crowd a tigress and her cubs or block a hunting path create immense stress. A single lapse in judgment can lead to a fatal encounter—an "unexpected response" from a predator.



## Managing the Footprint

To counter this, the Forest Department has tightened the reins. By restricting the number of vehicles and banning "full-day" safaris in parks like Ranthambore, authorities are ensuring the forest has time to breathe. These human-related stresses are manageable; they can be solved with stricter monitoring and better education for the visitors

## The Real Enemy: Vanishing Horizons

However, if we look closer, the true threat to the tiger is not the tourist jeep—it is the vanishing horizon.

Habitat loss is the silent killer. Whether it is a mine carving into a mountain, a dam drowning a valley, or a high-speed railway slicing through an ancient migratory path, these "linear divides" are devastating.

As their territory shrinks, tigers are forced into human settlements in a desperate search for food. These inevitable conflicts almost always end in tragedy, and regardless of who strikes first, it is always the tiger that loses.

## The Keystone: Why the Forest Stands or Falls

To understand the tiger is to understand the concept of a Keystone Species. Much like the central stone that holds a grand

archway together, a keystone species is an organism that anchors an entire ecosystem. If you pull that one stone out, the entire structure collapses.

## The Apex of the Living World

As an Apex Predator, the tiger sits at the very summit of the food chain, answering to no natural enemy. But this position isn't about dominance; it's about stewardship. When we protect the tiger, we aren't just saving a single striped cat; we are sheltering an entire universe—the rivers, the ancient trees, the silent reptiles, and the vibrant birds that call the jungle home.

## A World Without a Shadow

Imagine, for a moment, a forest where the tiger's roar is silenced forever. Without a predator to keep them in check, populations of Spotted Deer and Indian Gaur would multiply unchecked. Soon, the forest floor would be stripped bare. Every blade of grass, every emerging sapling, and every bit of lush vegetation would vanish into the bellies of a starving, overpopulated herd.

## Drying of the Land

The consequences of this "green desert" are devastating.

**The Water Crisis:** Without vegetation to anchor the soil and absorb rainfall, the

land loses its ability to hold water. The gentle streams of Ranthambore would turn into raging floods during the monsoon, only to vanish into parched, cracked earth by summer.

**The Vanishing Small:** This erratic water cycle wipes out the fragile world of amphibians and insects, the quiet foundation of the forest.

**The Final Conflict:** Desperate and hungry, the deer and Gaur would be forced to leave the dying woods and enter human settlements in search of food. Once again, the cycle of human-animal conflict would ignite—not because of the tiger's presence, but because of its absence. In the end, the tiger is the invisible gardener of the wild.

## The Lens as a Shield : The Photographer's Burden

Every traveler who enters these sanctuaries carries a silent weight of protection. By simply being there, they contribute to the forest's survival. But for those of us in the wildlife photography community, the stakes are higher.

Whether we are there to document a rare behavior, chase a prestigious award, or simply find peace in a hobby, our presence leaves a mark—both seen and unseen.





We do not just take photos; we carry the forest out with us, one frame at a time, to ensure it remains there for the generations yet to come.

**Beyond the "Hero" Shot**

It is easy to be captivated by the majesty of a tiger, and a well-timed shot can bring instant fame on social media or a trophy on a mantle. But our true responsibility lies in the wider frame.

A perfectly composed image of a tangled forest floor, the delicate plumage of a forest bird, or the stoic patience of a reptile does more than show beauty—it provides an education. By showcasing the entire "living architecture" of the habitat, we teach the

public that a forest is not just a home for one big cat; it is a complex, breathing machine where every gear matters.

**The Debt of the Witness**

We are the fortunate few. We have been granted the privilege of witnessing the wild in its rawest form—a gift made possible only by decades of fierce preservation by men like Fateh Singh Rathore.

Because we have seen what others may never see, we owe a debt to the forest.

Our commitment is to act as the bridge between the deep woods and the concrete world.

Through our lenses, we must translate the silent language of the jungle into a message of urgency and awareness for those who cannot be there.

We do not just take photos; we carry the forest out with us, one frame at a time, to ensure it remains there for the generations yet to come.





Wards Trogon

# Mesmerizing Mishmi!

at Dibrugarh, Assam, a good 150 kilometers from Mishmi hills.

The day arrived for my journey to Mishmi, via Kolkata and Dibrugarh. At Kolkata airport, I met Mr. Ganguly along with my fellow travelers, a close-knit group of six ardent photographers. Then, we were welcomed by the resort owner/local guide Mr. Ravi, on reaching at the Dibrugarh airport.

We could see a lot of military movements, as Arunachal Pradesh is a border state. We had to get permits from the Border Security to enter the Mishmi hills. It was a

drive, for our safety and comfort. Compared to the no power zone at Upper Mishmi, we at Lower Mishmi had regular power supply. This helped us in our daily backups or processing after a long photographic day.

After check-in and lunch, we went out for birding in the nearby areas. We had good sightings of *Wreathed Hornbill*, *Besra*, *White-bellied Erpornis*, *Mountain Bulbul*, *Gray-cheeked*



Sclater's Monal

*Warbler*, *Nepal Fulvetta*, *Whiskered Yuhina*, to name a few.

**T**he enchanting beauty of the Indian Himalayan region held me in its spell since my visit to Chopta and Mandal in 2023. Though I had visited Latpanchar and Lava in West Bengal, my dream to visit the other Northeastern states, for their beauty, serenity and a great birding experience, remained unfulfilled. The availability of a good guide is rare, as their tours are booked well in advance. My time and the distance were never conducive.

I feel lucky to have been introduced to Mr. Chandramouli Ganguly from Kolkata, by a fellow birder. A birder himself, he is also an avid traveler and a remarkable tour organizer. He has all his tours booked for the next 1 to 2 years! When I expressed my interest to enroll for one of his tours, he informed me about his tour plan to Mishmi in Nov' 2025, an excellent birding season. I had never heard about this place and so was skeptical about the birding experience. Only when I checked with a few of my friends who regularly visit the place, did I come to know that Mishmi is one of the best places for birding during winter. I also heard that Mishmi receives many species of migratory birds and is home to a variety of local birds too!

Mishmi is part of Arunachala Pradesh, bordering China. The nearest airport is



Slender-billed Scimitar-Babbler

new experience for us all, as we had never entered an area with such military security.

We were initially told that we would be staying for a few days in Lower Mishmi and then in Upper Mishmi for the rest of our trip. But the weather conditions at Upper Mishmi forced to decide that we stay only in Lower Mishmi and go to Upper Mishmi by car, which would be a 3 to 4 hours'

At dinner time of **day 1**, our organizer asked us to be ready at 2:30am, as we had to travel to *Mayodia Pass*, a part of Lower Dibang Valley district, in Upper Mishmi. It was a long travel to spot Sclater's Monal, which is restricted to Eastern Himalayas (Arunachal Pradesh), Myanmar and China. The other Monal, Himalayan Monal, is the national bird of Nepal and the state bird of Uttarakhand, and is distributed from Afghanistan to Northeast India, Nepal and Bhutan.

**Day 2.** We got up at 1 am. The temperature was freezing, forcing us to hide beneath multiple layers of clothes. We were all ready, and started moving by 2am. We reached the spot around 4am.



Black-faced Warbler



**G N Ramaswami**

AFIP, AFIAP, PPSA, IIGs6+p6

As instructed, we neither made any sound nor made any swift movement, lest we disturb the movement of the bird. Our guide told us that the Monal was moving towards us. It had to, as the spot we were at was called the

*Monal Point!* We were waiting with bated breath for another 20 minutes. Finally, the Monal came out! Like in most birds, the male of the species is more colorful than its female counterpart. The male *Sclater's Monal* has an iridescent purple-green plumage, copper neck, white

back and an orange bill. The female *Sclater's Monal* is mostly brown in color, with a white throat, pale yellow bill and a white tipped tail.

Throughout our stay in the Mishmi valley, ours was the only group which got a good sighting of *Sclater's Monal*. The day in the Mayodia pass and 12 Gulai showered us with great sightings of more than 30 species like the *Yellow rumped Honeyguide*, *Bar winged Wren Babbler*, *Black faced Laughing thrush*, *Eurasian Jay*, *Manipur Fulvetta*, *Beautiful Sibia*, *Gould's Shortwing*, etc.

**Day 3** saw us trek around Lower Mishmi, Mayodia pass, area near Hotel Maya, 12 Gulai, and places near the Coffee House. We were lucky to sight close to 14 species of birds including the *Mishmi Wren Babbler*, *Brown-throated Fulvetta*, *Scaly*



*Black-throated Tit*

*Laughingthrush*, *Blyth's Tragopan* etc. It was an active day with good sightings as planned.

On **Day 4**, we trekked around IHO view point, Chikopani Bridge, Tiwari Gaon, etc. We sighted 20+ species including *Little Bunting*, *Daurian Redstart*, *Asian Barred Owlet*, *Streaked Spiderhunter*, *Golden Babbler*, *Great Barnet*, *Red-headed Trogon*, and *Rufous-necked Hornbill*, to name a few. The lighting was amazing and all the participants were thrilled to see a variety of avian species.

**Day 5.** We went to the grassland



*Goulds Shortwing*

area in the morning and were around the place till noon. We sighted 10+ species including *Black Stork*, *Hen Harrier*, *Wreathed Hornbill*, *Common Iora*, *Jerdon's Babbler* and the *Black-breasted Parrotbill*. Post lunch we went to Tiwari Gaon and Frogmouth Camp areas and were able to see 20+ species including *Himalayan Swiftlet*, *Lemon-rumped Warbler*, *Olive-backed Pipit*, *Gray-headed Canary-Flycatcher*, *Small Niltava*, *Snowy browed Flycatcher*. The



*Red Headed Trogon*

day was very hectic, but for the short breaks we took for breakfast and lunch.

**Day 6** was the last day of our itinerary. We started moving to Dibrugarh. En route we halted at a few points and walked around areas like Dibang Valley Jungle Camp, Baramile and Dhola Sadiya Bridge. On this day too, we were fortunate to spot 14+ species, like, *Lesser Yellownappe*, *Pale-billed Parrotbil*, *Slender-billed Vulture*, *Crested Serpent-Eagle*, *Common Green-Magpie*. We returned to the base, the hotel we were staying in Dibrugarh, for the night.

Overall, the trip offered us an amazing experience. We got to see 100+ species of birds and most of them were lifers for us. The heavy gears we carried and the 10 to 15 km of walk in the hilly terrain never felt cumbersome because of the spell the beautiful forest and avian species had cast on us!

Thanks to our guides Mr. Ganguly & Mr. Ravi, with whose immensely accurate bird spotting skills, we were able to capture some rare birds, camouflaged in the thicket. Thanks to our skilled drivers, who maneuvered the vehicles with ease through the rugged hilly terrain. I noticed that all drivers in Mishmi followed road rules & never over sped or ghost drove once, which is a commendable trait of a responsible driver. Kudos to them.

# Street Notes *from Munich*



**Balasubramanian GV**  
EFIP, EFIAP

**M**ade between June and September 2022, these photographs come from unhurried walks through Munich during a visit to my daughter. Moving without an agenda, I observed how people inhabit the city's quiet in-betweens—steps, corridors, bridges, storefronts. Geometry, light, and color often set the stage, while human presence appears unguarded, paused, or absorbed. I watched strangers pause for music, commuters wait patiently underground, shoppers linger under glowing windows, and light sculpt everyday moments. I saw familiarity in human gestures and difference in rhythm. Some images strip the scene to monochrome to emphasize form and rhythm, while others lean on restrained color as a compositional anchor. Together, the images form a personal map of Munich: restrained, orderly, yet gently human—where everyday moments unfold within carefully built spaces. These photographs are not souvenirs of travel, but fragments of time—where a parent learns a new city while holding on to home, through my daughter's adopted world. ●



*Corridors of a Museum, Munich*



City Centre, Munich



Stilt Dancer and a Tourist



Olympia Park Subway Station



Munich by Night



Olympia Park Subway Station



*End of the Day*



*Hackerbrudkke Bridge*



Love for nature takes us to some exotic places - trails that hold secrets of spell bounding beauty - trails that are as ancient as the land itself - species that evolved and chose these places its home. We humans in pursuit of these magnificent creations of nature follow these hollowed trails.

One such trail took me face to face with the **Eastern Copperhead**, a venomous snake *endemic* to North America.

Before every trail, it's mandatory to check on the do's and don'ts, the dangers we might encounter & mitigation plans to counter that. As it was my first visit to Virginia, I did my check and got to read about three venomous snakes, I must be vigilant of, and my probability of sighting two of them was very high I read blogs and journals to understand and know more about these magnificent reptiles, and my urge to spot and photograph them was high on my bucket list. One particular trait of the copper head was that it would freeze in its place when approached by humans, unlike most venomous snakes, which would scamper away. The reason these snakes would stay put was the confidence in its camouflage that it can't be spotted. So trail after trail I went looking for birds and butterflies, with a longing and hope that I will also encounter a copper head in one of the trails. The summer season littered the floor with dry leaves, and it would provide the perfect camouflage for the snake. Every time I deviated away from the paved path, I treaded across with caution and was watchful of my every step. Many days and many trails, luck was not on my side, and the snake remained elusive to my lenses, but I was sure my perseverance would be aptly rewarded.

One morning as I was walking across the trails at Lake Accotink I saw this beautiful snake right on my path. I moved slowly towards it maintaining a safe distance that is good enough for my clicks and true to its nature the snake just stay put and did not budge a inch. I got down to get my clicks. The thick tree cover ensured light was not in my favor, but the snake was helping my cause by remaining still. Slowly, joggers started reaching, and I cautioned everyone to stop. They were all in awe of this beautiful reptile on one end and, at the same time amused to see one guy crawling towards the snake at the other end. I moved to the right distance and waited for the snake to make its first move. It just turned its head towards me, and that eye to eye contact with the beautiful Copper head was surreal.



I felt complete, a joy of getting this beauty in its habitant the way I wanted. The number of joggers increased as time ticked by, and the snake realized its cover was blown and it skedaddled back into the bushes. I stood up beaming with a sense of accomplishment and happiness. The first question from one of the curious onlookers was can I have a look at what you have clicked. "Are you not afraid of snakes ,You stood your ground and kept clicking." I just smiled, knowing I was well within my limits. Today was just my day, and nothing would go wrong when you understand and respect nature .

Another beautiful page to decorate my book of nature adventures.



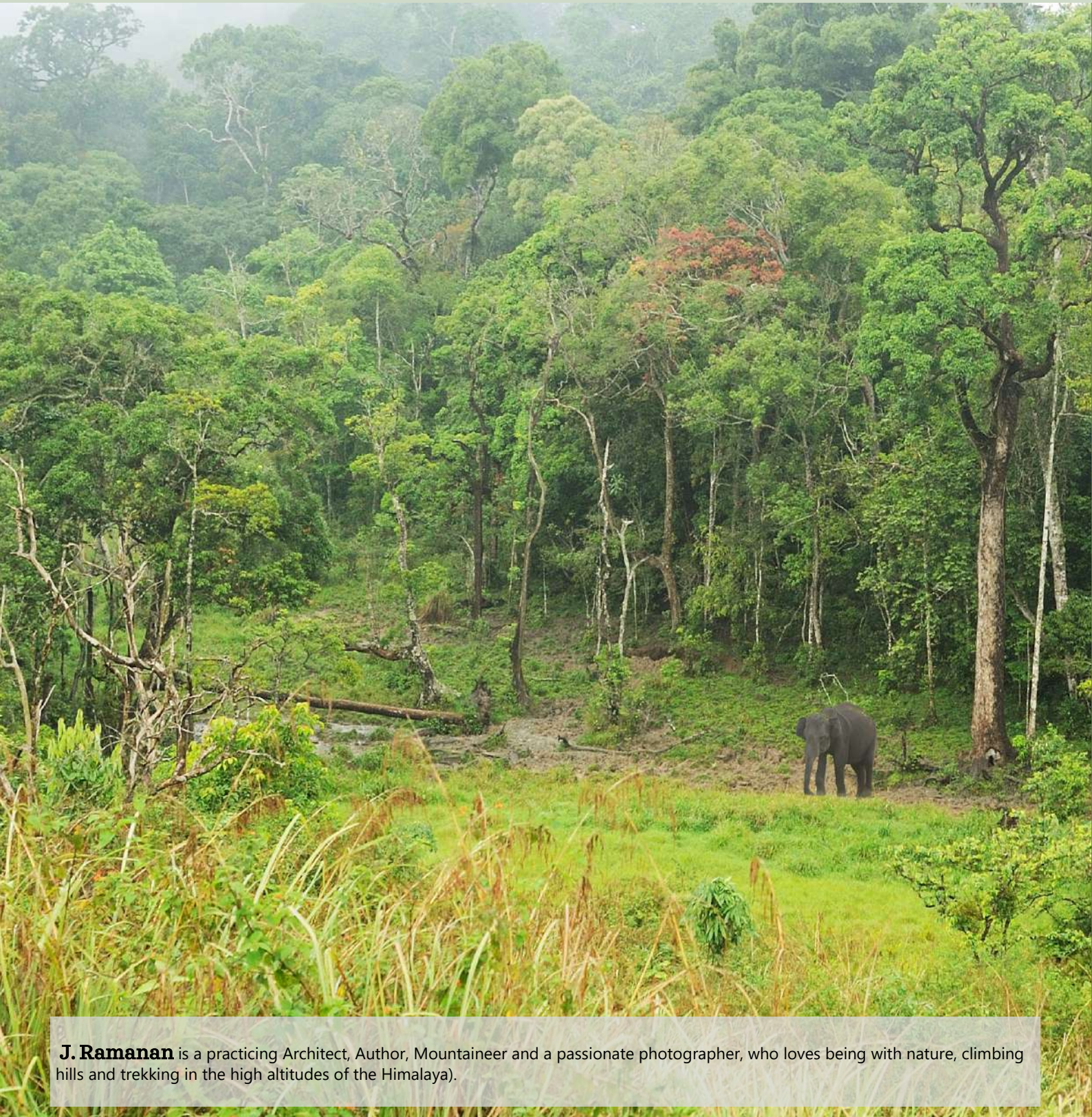
**E. Arun Kumar** is a documentary filmmaker and saree designer by profession have always been an ardent lover of nature. Love for nature took me to various corners of our country to see and experience the beauty of our nature. This love introduced me to photography so I could document everything I was seeing and later share it with the relevant authorities for conservation and restoring our fragile ecosystems. Have been assisting the Tamil Nadu forest department with bird and butterfly surveys.

# The Predator & The Protector



**J. Ramanan**  
Chennai

*How photography can exploit or save the vanishing Western Ghats?*



**J. Ramanan** is a practicing Architect, Author, Mountaineer and a passionate photographer, who loves being with nature, climbing hills and trekking in the high altitudes of the Himalaya).

This is for all photography aficionados. For some, the viewfinder is a mirror, reflecting back social status, contests or the fleeting currency of Instagram likes. For others, it is a window - a pane of glass that, when held up to the public, reveals a world on fire. Nowhere is the tension between these two modes sharper than in the Western Ghats, an ancient mountain range, where the pursuit of the "perfect shot" is simultaneously killing the subject and serving as its last line of defense.

This is an article about that duality. It is a manifesto for a sublime genre of photography: not the aim-&-shoot uploader, not for the socials, etc., but the conservation photographer. It is about using several decades of technical skill not to collect trophies, but to educate a public that has never heard of the galaxy frog, never seen a shola sky island, and never calculated the true cost of their morning tea.

I use photography to bring people closer to the Himalaya and the Western Ghats. In this article, I will concentrate on the latter - a landscape I love, not despite its wounds, but, because of its desperate, beautiful resilience.

### **The Cosmos Under A Log** *The Cautionary Tale of the Galaxy Frog*

To understand the stakes, we must start with a tragedy.

In the Southern Western Ghats, residing only at elevations above 900 meters, lives a creature the size of a small coin. The Galaxy Frog (*Melanobatrachus indicus*) is the sole member of its genus on the evolutionary tree of life. Its skin is an oil slick of stars, it is, quite literally, unlike anything else in our corner of our universe.

In March 2020, researchers found seven of these frogs beneath rotting logs at a research site. When they returned seventeen months later, the logs were overturned, the vegetation was trampled and every frog was gone. An informant reported that groups of four to six photographers had visited the site, handling the frogs with bare hands, blasting them with high intensity flash for up to four hours at a time, and moving them onto moss for better composition. Two small frogs died during the sessions.

This is photography as extraction. It is the "aim and shoot" mentality matured into something utterly destructive and competitive. It represents insensitive photography: participation in the craft purely for the sake of the capture, devoid of ecological ethics. In attempting to immortalize the frog, the photographers erased it.

This erasure is not an aberration of the digital age. It is the culmination of a legacy that stretches back to the early 1980s, when a generation of young, ambitious, wildlife photographers entered India's forests with the most expensive tripods and telephoto lens with an intention to acquire rare images of wildlife in the wild. To secure a unique image - one that would earn accolades, book deals or international acclaim - they employed methods that now read as a manual of ecological violence.

Nests were destroyed after the eggs were photographed, ensuring that no rival photographer could later capture the same fledglings. Owls were flushed from roosts in broad daylight, stressed until they flew into the open frame. Baits - live chicks, rodents, or slabs of meat, were staked out to lure tigers and snow leopards into killing positions, transforming wild predators into paid actors on a blood stage. The resulting images were celebrated as triumphs of field craft. In truth, they were trophies of sabotage.

What these photographers failed to understand - and what the galaxy frog's ghost now teaches us - is that a photograph obtained through cruelty is not a conservation image. It is a confession. It admits that the photographer valued the prize over the subject, the print over the population, the frame over the future.

### **The Ethical Shift**

If we are to justify our presence in these fragile corridors with expensive equipment, we must evolve past

this. We must become what conservation photographer Steven David Johnson calls "good neighbors" to the more-than-human world. We must move to becoming more sensitive to our fellow inhabitants of this planet.

### **The Price of The Plantation**

#### *Two Centuries of the "Green Desert"*

The Western Ghats did not arrive at this precipice only because of rogue photographers. The rot is historical, systematic and deeply economic.

Nearly 200 years ago, British colonists surveyed these misty slopes and saw not biodiversity, but commodity. They clear felled ancient forests to install tea and coffee plantations across the Nilgiris, Munnar and Wayanad. Today, an estimated 250,000+ acres of tea and over 1 million acres of coffee, blanket the mountains. Environmentalists estimate that nearly an alarming 70% of native grasslands and forests have been damaged or destroyed.

What replaced them is termed, by ecologists, a "Green Desert". The phrase is not a hyperbole. Industrial tea cultivation is a monoculture. It strips the soil of nutrients, saturates the earth with pesticides and offers zero sustenance for native fauna. It is not a forest, it is a crop. It doesn't breathe, it yields.

I have walked these landscapes. I have framed shots of tea-pickers in bright sarees against emerald slopes-images that are aesthetically stunning and ecologically deceptive. The causal viewer sees beauty. The trained conservation photographer sees a carbon sink destroyed, a watershed destabilized and a wildlife corridor severed.

The question that haunts the Ghats is this: How do we photograph what is missing?



**A Calculus of Loss: Economic Benefit Vs. Incalculable Ecological Value**

Here we arrive at the central conflict of conservation in India. The tea industry is not a small stakeholder; it is the skeleton of the regional economy. In the Nilgiris alone, roughly 600,000 people depend on tea for their livelihood. Farmers argue, with some validity, that if tea was removed, the land would not revert to pristine Shola forest — it would become concrete resorts, tourist homestays, an urban sprawl. According to a study, in the financial year 2023-24, India exported Coffee and Tea valued at US\$ 2 billion foreign exchange. Besides, there are lakhs of people employed in this and allied industries. Now, because of legal obligations and the revenue that it generates, it is impossible to convert the plantations into forest areas.

This is where I, as an Architect and Town Planner propose a framework borrowed from urban planning: the 10% Open Space Regulation (OSR). In city development, when a builder razes land, they must often dedicate 10% of land in their own space if it is a large area or elsewhere for parks or set aside funds for green space. It is an admission that development carries debt. This is particularly done to harvest rain water and recharge the ground level of water.

We need a similar ecological OSR for the Ghats.

We must ask: what is the offset? If we calculate the foreign exchange earned by the tea exports, can we calculate the debt incurred by the loss of an endemic tree? Can we price the value of a watershed that prevents landslides? Year after year, many places in the Western Ghats suffered catastrophic landslides that killed many hundreds of people.

Scientists tied the severity of the disaster to the loss of native forest cover.

How do we photograph a landslide that hasn't happened yet? This is the work. We photograph the vulnerable slope. The eroding bank. The stream that once flowed year round inside the shola, one that now runs dry nine months of the year because the tea plants suck it dry.

The economic benefit of tea is calculable, quantifiable and appears in ledgers. The ecological benefit of a single *Michlia nilagirica* tree- oxygen, habitat, soil stability, water retention, biodiversity- is incalculable. Our job is to make the incalculable visible.

**The Corridor Cure: Wild Carbon, Sholas and the Art of Connectivity**

Despite the grim math, there is hope. It arrives in the form of a concept fundamental to both ecology and photography: the corridor.

Historically wildlife moved across the Ghats freely. Elephants migrated along ancient routes; tigers traversed hundreds of Square kilometers' gaurs



(Indian Bison) followed monsoon patterns. The plantations, settlements and roads fractured this network, stranding populations in "islands" of forest.

**Photographing the Edge**

For the photographer, the corridor is a new kind of subject. It is not the majestic tiger in the core of Bandipur. It is in the fringe. It is the narrow strip of shola trees that allows that tiger to move safely past the village. It is the buffer.





This is the story the camera must tell. It is not the story of the pristine wilderness untouched by man. That Ghats no longer exists. It is a story of co-existence, of working lands that also function as habitats, of the indigenous tribal people, who are also conservationists.

**The Ecology of The Frame** *Conservation Photography as a tool*

What distinguishes the conservation photographer from the tourist is intent. The tourist photographs for himself. The conservation photographer, photographs

on behalf of the subject.

This is not merely philosophical; it is technical. It requires the skills gained with years of experience, not to win salon medals alone, but to build a case. To show a forest officer the precise GPS coordinates of an elephant corridor that needs legal protection. To provide a naturalist with an image clear enough to identify a new species of tarantula or gecko. To give an indigenous adivasi elder a platform to show how his sacred grove has shrunk in his lifetime.

In October 2025, the National Geographic Society and the WHO conducted a photo camp in Kiribati, teaching youth to document the health impacts of sea-level rise. The resulting images were not just art; they were evidence. They were displayed at the WHO Regional Committee, placed directly in front of the policy makers.

That is the power of Photography with a cause.

We do not just document the problem; we visualize the solution.



**A Lens Towards Restoration: Practical Framings**

As I turn my own lens towards the Western Ghats for this long term project, I am guided by specific visual strategies. These are the "side heads" of my viewfinder:

**1. The Portrait of Labor**

The tea worker is not the enemy. She is the victim of the same colonial extraction that felled the forests. I photograph her hands, her weathered face, her baskets. I also photograph the sapling she is planting, as part of agroforestry initiatives.

**2. The Invasive Vs. The Endemic**

I create diptychs: one frame of eucalyptus or wattle (exotic, water guzzling, sterile), paired with a frame of native shola regrowth. The contrast is undeniable.

**3. The Edge Habitat**

I photograph the precise line where the manicured tea bush meets the chaotic, glorious tangle of native restoration. This is the frontline of the climate war.

**Conclusion: Witnessing the Vanishing**

The Western Ghats are vanishing. Not overnight, but, leaf by leaf, frog by frog, log by overturned log. The same forces that drove the galaxy frog from its home - greed, ignorance and a camera without a conscience- are driving an entire biome towards a tipping point.

But, here is the truth I have learned in the mountains: People protect what they love and they love what they know.

The Western Ghats — they do not know, because they have not been shown.

*That is our assignment.* Not just to photograph the pretty flower, but to photograph the watershed; not just the

tiger, but the corridor too; not just the frog, but the cost of its absence as well.

We cannot plant 300,000 trees with a shutter button. We cannot restore a watershed with an SD card. But, we can create the political will for the people who do. We can show a farmer in Karnataka the success of Wild Carbon in that state and inspire replication. We can show a legislator in Delhi the corpse of an endemic endangered frog and demand regulation of wildlife tourism.

This is photography with a purpose. It is not faster than destruction, but it is persistent. It accumulates. It builds a case.

The mountains are watching. They have millions of years for us to evolve the consciousness in us, to see them not as resources, but as relatives.

It is time to focus.



**Flamingos** Ajit D. Joshi

I want to share my experience while I was in service. Now I am retired. I stay at Thane East and the creek is hardly five minutes walk from my residence.

It was the month of July (I don't remember the year) and I returned home from the office by 3.30 p.m. My wife and son were expected at about 5.00 p.m. I was alone at home. It was not raining and therefore I decided to go to a creek nearby my place. That time I was very fond of taking bird photos. I reached the site by 3.45 p.m. set my tripod and camera on it. Of course not forgotten to carry plastic raincoat not for me but for my Camera and Umbrella for me. I could hardly click and it started raining after 4.30p.m. I stopped clicking and covered my camera with a rain coat. Opened my umbrella and stood there only to observe nature more. I was all alone on the creek, only nature was with me. At about 4.50 p.m. I decided to pack up and return home.

As I was packing suddenly one cloud, black cloud to be precise, came down at far. Initially I was afraid of that phenomenon but realized Lesser Flamingoes landed far away. I decided to stay there only. Flamingoes first danced on water, when experts were asked, came to know that it was just to disturb algae on water so that they can eat. I waited on the same spot, standing still like a statue umbrella in one hand, camera covered with raincoat.

Flamingos first came closer to me but due to lack of confidence retaliated. This happened three times and then birds who were confident about me started encircling me in statue form. I was standing still, mosquitos were testing my blood sample but not clicking any photographs till boys who wanted to play football in the rainy season, appeared in the scenario.

Because of the noise birds flew away and the show was over. I still remember not through the camera lens but my iris lens.

# Victoria Public Hall at Chennai



**Vivekanand Srinivas**

Chennai

Victoria Public Hall, or the Town Hall, is a historical landmark building in Chennai, named after Victoria, then Empress of India. One of the finest examples of British Architecture in Chennai and was built to commemorate the golden jubilee of Queen Victoria in 1887.

Victoria Public Hall designed by Robert Chisholm and built by Namberumal Chetty, in the year 1888 the building is an excellent example of Indo-Saracenic architecture. The two storied building measures 48 meters in length and 24 meters in width and the height of the main roof is about 19 meters high; and the total height of the tower is 34 meters.

The public raised funds to build the structure and Rajah Sir Ananda Gajapati, the Maharajah of Vijayanagaram, set aside three and a half acres from People's Park to a Board of Trustees on a 99-year lease at eight annas (half a rupee) a ground per year. He is remembered in a tablet, embellished with all his titles, preserved at the entrance, for having laid the foundation stone.

Chisholm designed the hall with Gothic arcades and tiled sloping roofs and verandahs. A tall four-sided tower that rises to a height of 150 feet continues to exist till date with a claustrophobic winding path, just perfect to take one to the top. Another article states that Chilsom made small rounded balconies, some of them with canopies to make baldacchinos, all along the length of the tower. A memorial to a former Governor of Madras, Sir Charles Trevelyan, stands in the form of a fountain at the front yard of the Hall.

The Hall's purposed for city's cultural and intellectual pursuits. It hosted several talks, screened films, held ballroom dances, saw performances of plays and discourse on challenging political, spiritual and nationalistic concepts.

## *Vivekanand Srinivas*

A serious hobbyist in photography and interested in Nature, Bird, Macro, Street and Documentary photography. He is in the field for Photography ever since the film days and has moved over to digital and latest to the mirrorless technology. One of the founder members of the revival committee which revived PSM in the year 2007. Had worked in various capacities in the Executive Committee of PSM Viz. Jt. Treasurer, Treasurer, Director of Competitions & Exhibitions, General Secretary, President and Chairman of PSM Salons. His other area of interest is collection of vintage cameras.







Chennai owes its cinematic roots to Victoria Public Hall. An article states that the premiere of the first ever film screening in the city was by T Stevenson in December 1896, the proprietor of the Madras Photographic Store. At Victoria Public Hall, he screened ten short films and many magic lantern slides, depicting views of Madras such as the Guindy horse races and a Mowbray's Road street scene.

Besides the tryst with cinema, several plays, particularly those political by nature, were hosted by the Suguna Vilasa Sabha. It is also stated that the Justice Party had its first meeting at the Victoria Public Hall in 1916.

The hall has also played host to several eminent speakers. An article of 1897 speaks of Swami Vivekananda's visit. Mahatma Gandhi has also addressed a gathering here. Chennai Andhra Maha Sabha also functioned out of the premises in 1914 with the aim to promote Telugu culture and literature for 30 odd years. Several sports: table tennis, billiards, and chess found patronage here at the ground floor of the venue.

The Hall which remained closed for several decades has been recently renovated and open to public for viewing with all its grandeur.



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# Theerthavari

*A sacred celebration of Maasi Magam*



*KV Krishnan*  
EFIP, EFIAP, PPSA

It is one of South India's most spiritually profound festivals, observed during **Maasi Magam**, an auspicious day in the Tamil month of *Maasi* (February – March in the English calendar). Rooted deeply in Hindu tradition, this festival is celebrated across Tamil Nadu, parts of Kerala, and among Tamil communities worldwide.

## Cosmic Significance

Maasi Magam occurs when the **Magha nakshatra (star)** aligns with the lunar position in the month of Maasi, a rare and powerful combination believed to heighten divine energy. Devotees regard this alignment as a gateway to spiritual growth, purification, and liberation (*moksha*).

## The Ritual of Theerthavari

At the heart of the festival lies the sacred act of **bathing in holy waters** which could be rivers, seas, temple tanks, or lakes. This ritual symbolizes the cleansing of sins and renewal of the

soul.

Devotees believe that planetary alignments on this day make it especially favorable for invoking blessings from Lord Vishnu, Lord Shiva, and other deities.

- **Ceremonial Bath:** Temple idols (*utsava murtis*) are carried in grand processions from the temples to nearby water bodies. Devotees go along with the idols and immerse themselves alongside the deities, seeking purification.
- **Processions & Temple Ceremonies:** Deities are placed on decorated chariots or palanquins, accompanied by music, chanting, and rituals performed by priests.
- **Devotional Gatherings:** Communities unite at these riverbanks and seashores, offering flowers, fruits, coconuts, and sweets while reciting sacred hymns such as the *Vishnu Sahasranama* and *Gayatri Mantra*.





**Acts of Charity:** Feeding the poor and offering alms are integral to each other, reflecting compassion and reinforcing the festival's communal spirit. By participating in this holy ritual, devotees seek blessings for prosperity, good health, spiritual growth, renewal of inner peace, an opportunity to strengthen one's connection to the divine inner peace and atonement for past mistakes.

**Meaning of the Layers**

- **Spiritual Purification:** The holy dip is believed to cleanse negative karma and promote inner peace.
- **Divine Blessings:** Devotees feel closer to celestial beings and ancestral influences, who are said to descend to earth on this day.

**Rejuvenation:** The cosmic energy of Magha Nakshatra inspires reflection,

renewal, and spiritual awakening.


**Timing & Tradition:** Unlike fixed solar or lunar festivals, Maasi Magam's timing shifts annually, determined by astrological alignment. Local temple calendars and *panchangs* guide devotees to the most auspicious *muhurta* (time) for rituals.

**Modern Observance**

Today, Maasi Magam continues to draw thousands of devotees to temples, rivers, and seashores across Tamil Nadu and Kerala, as well as Tamil diaspora communities abroad. Extended rituals, vibrant processions, and communal worship blend age-old tradition with contemporary devotion, making Theerthavari not only a spiritual cleansing but also a celebration of cultural heritage and unity.



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# Victoria Memorial

*A Tourist's Walk, A Photographer's Dream*





Abhijeet Kumar Banerjee

EFIAP/s, MPSA, EFIP Gold (n), IIG/p3

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*It is not just a monument you tick off a list. It's a place you return to — physically or in memory. As a photographer, it teaches patience, observation, and respect for light.*

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There are places you *visit*, and then there are places that quietly follow you home. For me, the Victoria Memorial in Kolkata belongs firmly to the second kind. As a tourist, it offers history, scale, and serenity. As a photographer, it is an ever-changing canvas of light, texture, and emotion. No matter how many times I return, it never feels finished—only paused, waiting for the next moment to reveal itself.

### First Impressions: Marble, Space, and Silence

Approaching the Victoria Memorial for the first time is an experience in itself. The gleaming white Makrana marble rises from manicured lawns like a dream shaped in stone. Even amid Kolkata's ceaseless rhythm, the moment you step into the grounds, the city seems to soften. Sounds stretch out, footsteps slow, and the monument commands your attention without shouting.

As a tourist, I'm struck by its sheer scale and symmetry—grand yet graceful. As a photographer, my eyes immediately begin to measure angles: the central dome framed by trees, reflections waiting to happen in the water bodies, and leading lines formed by pathways converging towards history itself.

### The Photographer's Relationship with Light

Light is the real architect of the Victoria Memorial. Morning light arrives gently, almost respectfully, brushing the marble with pastel hues. This is when the monument feels contemplative—perfect for wide shots, minimal compositions, and quiet storytelling. The shadows are long, the contrast soft, and the gardens still waking up.

By midday, the light turns assertive. Details emerge: intricate carvings, statues, and architectural flourishes that might go unnoticed otherwise. This is when I switch from grand vistas to intimate frames—close-ups of stonework, textures, and human interactions within the space.

Come evening, magic takes over. The sun dips, the sky warms, and the marble glows as if lit from within. Blue hour transforms the Memorial into a cinematic subject, especially when the lights come on. For photographers, this is the moment to slow down, use a tripod, and let time stretch across the sensor.

### Walking Through History as a Tourist

Inside the Memorial, the mood changes. The galleries narrate colonial history through paintings, manuscripts, photographs, and relics. As a tourist, I find myself lingering—not just reading placards, but imagining the eras they represent. The quiet indoors contrasts

beautifully with the openness outside.

This duality is what makes the Victoria Memorial special: it is both outwardly monumental and inwardly reflective. You can walk its halls learning history, then step back into the gardens and *feel* it.

### Gardens, People, and Everyday Stories

The surrounding gardens are not just ornamental; they are alive. Families picnic, couples stroll, children chase pigeons, and solo visitors sit lost in thought. For a photographer, these human elements are gold. They add scale, narrative, and emotion.

One of my favorite frames is a lone figure walking across the vast lawn with the Memorial towering behind—history and humanity sharing the same space. These moments remind me that travel photography isn't only about landmarks; it's about how people inhabit them.

### Changing Seasons, Changing Moods

Monsoon clouds add drama. Winter mornings bring mist. Spring fills the gardens with colour. Each season reshapes the Victoria Memorial's personality. As a tourist, it ensures no two visits feel the same. As a photographer, it becomes a long-term project—returning again and again to see how time, weather, and light reinterpret the same subject.



### Practical Notes from Behind the Lens

- **Best time to visit:** Early morning for calm and soft light; late afternoon to evening for drama and illumination.
- **Gear choices:** A wide-angle lens for architecture, a mid-range zoom for details and people, and a tripod for evening shots.
- **Mind the rules:** Photography is allowed outdoors freely; indoors, be mindful of restrictions. Respect the space—it shows in your images.



**Why It Stays With You**

The Victoria Memorial is not just a monument you tick off a list. It's a place you return to—physically or in memory. As a tourist, it deepens your understanding of Kolkata's layered past. As a photographer, it teaches patience, observation, and respect for light.

Every visit leaves me with images on my camera and a quiet sense of gratitude. Some landmarks impress you. This one *converses* with you—slowly, elegantly, and long after you've walked away.

And that, perhaps, is its greatest photograph: the one it imprints on your mind.



# REPUBLIC DAY

- One Day Contest -



# VALENTINES DAY

- One Day Contest -



# Hall of Fame

IIG Distinction Awards between Nov'25 to Feb'26

Ah Liak Tan	IIG/s2	Mariam Hassan	IIG/s
Ajar Setiadi	IIG/s8	Md Iqbal Hossain	IIG/s2
Ajay Kapoor	IIG/p	Mehmet Masum Suer	IIG/p2
Ajit Joshi	IIG/s2+p6	Michal Nega	IIG/s4+p
Alessio R Darmanin	IIG/s10+p3	Mihee Eo	IIG/s6
Barath Karthi RK	IIG/s+p6	Naresh Agarwal	IIG/p2
Bibhuti Bhusan Nandi	IIG/s10+p9	Pantelis Kranos	IIG/s10+p5
Chris Moncrieff	IIG/s	Piyali Mitra	IIG/s3+p5
Deba Prosad Paul	IIG/s3+p2	Pratik Choudhury	IIG/p
Dhiman Nath	IIG/s+p2	Pravin Tirkey	IIG/s3+p
Dino Hadzidervisagic	IIG/s2+p2	Pritam Panja	IIG/s2+p5
Donald DeDonato	IIG/s7	Punyabrata Barma	IIG/s3
Dr Abhijit Bandyopadhyay	IIG/s10+p15	Ramaswami GN	IIG/s6+p6
Dr Aninda Mitra	IIG/s	Ravindra Puntambekar	IIG/s2+p5
Dr Ernoe Barsi	IIG/s4	Ricos Andreas Gregoriou	IIG/s3
Dr Gottfried Catania	IIG/s30+p3	Sanath Kumar	IIG/s15+p8
Dr Manish Nagpal	IIG/s7+p4	Sandeep Das	IIG/p
Dr Samir Kumar Samanta	IIG/s4+p3	Sandor Kibedi	IIG/s2
Dr Sharatchandra HC	IIG/s10+p10	Sankar Nath Chakrabarty	IIG/s5+p4
Dr Somdutt Prasad	IIG/s10+p15	Sherman Cheang	IIG/s10
Dr Suranjan Mukherjee	IIG/p2	Shuvojit Rakshit	IIG/s3+p2
Eva Lambropoulou	IIG/s10+p2	Sitanath Paul	IIG/s6+p7
Hans-Peter Hornbostel	IIG/s2+p5	Sonja Vander Meulen	IIG/p3
Irene Ehrenreich	IIG/s2+p3	Stefan Stuppig	IIG/s9+p7
Jacky Panhuyzen	IIG/p2	Steven Stavri	IIG/s
Joachim Schmitt	IIG/s	Subhasis Barat	IIG/s+p
Joxe Inazio Kuesta Garmendia	IIG/s9	Sudip Saha	IIG/s+p6
Klea Kyprianou	IIG/s6+p2	Sundar Gopalakrishnan	IIG/s+p3
Lale Cakti	IIG/s2+p3	Sunil Vyas	IIG/s+p6
Laura Rutigliano	IIG/s2	Sylvia Van Bommel	IIG/s
Luiz Augusto Magina	IIG/s2	Thanasis Hadjipavlou	IIG/s8+p7
Luiz Paulo Grinberg	IIG/s4	Tinneke Layadi	IIG/s
Mahendra Putra Lim	IIG/s	Udayan Sankar Pal	IIG/s25+p20
Manasi Roy	IIG/s6+p9	Umberto D'Eramo	IIG/s3
Marcos Silva	IIG/s6+p5	Yuet Yee Wong	IIG/s2

# Ask SKB



**SK Balachandder**

EFIAP/gold, IIG s6+p10

**Question:**  
 What are the different types of sensor formats, secondly which genres of photography benefit most from each, & why?

There are 7 formats such as: (1) Medium format, (2) Full-frame 36x24, (3) APS-C, (4) Micro Four Thirds, (5) 1-inch (6) 1/2.3-inch, and (7) mobile phone sensor.

Each sensor format differs in capability and every format has its own strengths and weaknesses. What really matters is: *for what type of photography are you going to use it for.*

**Sensor Sizes:** Refer Table 1

**Quick comparison:**

Larger Sensor	Smaller Sensor
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Noise is generally lower.</li> <li>Dynamic range is better.</li> <li>Shallow depth of field is easier to achieve.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The effective focal length you get from a given lens is higher (more "reach").</li> <li>Depth of field is naturally deeper.</li> <li>The gear is lighter and easier to carry.</li> </ul>
But the camera body and lenses tend to be bigger and heavier.	But one have to compromise a bit on the low-light performance.

	MEDIUM FORMAT	FULL FRAME	APS-C	MICRO 4/3	1"	1/2.55"
SENSOR						
SIZE (Approx)	43.8 x 32.9 mm	36 x 24 mm	23.6 x 15.6 mm	17 x 13 mm	12.8 x 9.6 mm	6.17 x 4.55 mm
CROP FACTOR (Approx)	0.64	1.0	1.52	2.0	2.7	5.62
CAMERA						

Table 1 - Sensor sizes

Sensor Type	Dimensions (Width × Height, mm)	Diagonal (mm)	Common Examples
Medium Format (entry)	43.8 × 32.9	~54.8	Fujifilm GFX, Pentax, Hasselblad
Medium Format (max)	53.4 × 40.0	~66.7	Phase One
Full Frame	36.0 × 24.0	43.3	Nikon, Canon, Sony
APS-C	23.6 × 15.6	28.3	Fujifilm, Sony, Canon, Nikon
Micro Four Thirds	17.3 × 13.0	21.6	Olympus, Panasonic
1-Inch (range)	12.8 x 9.6 to 13.2 × 8.8	~15.9	Sony, Panasonic, Canon
1/2.3-Inch (range)	6.17 x 4.56 to 6.3 x 4.7	7.66 - 7.77	Bridge cameras, compacts
Mobile (basic)	1/3 inch–1/2.55 inch	4.5 - 6.5	Most smartphones
Mobile (smart)	1/1.7 inch to 1/1.3 inch	9.30-12.5	Samsung S series ultra, Xiaomi pro, OnePlus flagship models
Mobile (large)	1/1.28-inch to 1/1.14-inch	12-14	iPhone 14 Pro to iPhone 17 Pro
Mobile (high-end)	1 inch sensor (13.2mm x 8.8mm)	15 -16	Huawei 70/80 Ultra, Vivo X90 Pro, Oppo Find X6 Pro / X7 Pro, Xiaomi 14/15/17 Ultra, Sony Xperia Pro-1

## Medium Format Sensor

Medium format offers extremely high detail, rich tonal range, very shallow depth of field, and outstanding large-print quality. Pixel counts are high and noise is very low.

*Best suited for:*

- Fine-art prints
- Archival museum-quality prints
- Advertising and e-commerce
- Fashion and food photography
- Real estate work
- High-end portraits
- Studio, glamour, and modelling photography
- Celebrity weddings
- Very large exhibition prints

*Limitations:*

- Camera and lenses are heavy and not easy to carry everywhere.
- Systems are extremely expensive.

## Full Frame Sensor

Full-frame sensors provide very good low-light performance, wide dynamic range, and strong control over background blur. Compared to APS-C, you can achieve a shallower depth of field. Some bodies offer weather sealing, and with adequate pixel count, noise levels are low.

*Best suited for:*

- Weddings and events
- Portraits and low-light events
- Wildlife and bird photography
- Landscape and architecture
- People and sports
- Very large prints
- Book copying and general professional work
- Excellent choice for video work

*Limitations:*

- Heavy, non-stabilized bodies and lenses can be tiring and harder to handle.
- In general, full-frame systems are expensive.

## APS-C

APS-C sits in the middle ground for quality, weight, and cost. You gain extra “reach” due to the 1.5×/1.6× crop factor, and many cameras offer good stabilization and high burst rates.

*Best suited for:*

- Wildlife and bird photography (tele-reach advantage)
- Travel and street photography
- Sports and action
- Landscape
- Large prints
- Very good for video work
- Overall, pricing is more affordable and approachable

*Limitations:*

- It is hard for APS-C systems to match the ultimate image quality and flexibility of medium format and full-frame.

## Micro Four Thirds

Micro Four Thirds systems offer light bodies and lenses. Depth of field is deeper, in-body image stabilization (IBIS) and burst fps are strong points, and many bodies are weather-sealed. The 2× crop factor gives significant extra reach.

*Best suited for:*

- Long telephoto work (extra reach advantage)
- Wildlife and birding with lighter long zoom lenses
- Street and travel photography
- Documentary work
- Video production
- Generally good value for money

*Limitations:*

- Best suited for moderate-size prints rather than extremely large ones.
- Difficult to match the performance level of medium format and full-frame in demanding situations.

## 1-inch sensor

1-inch cameras are usually compact, pocketable, or bridge-type cameras. They perform well in daylight; low-light shooting is more challenging.

*Popular Models:*

- Bridge/Superzoom: Sony RX10 III/RX10 IV/ Panasonic Lumix FZ1000 II/ FZ2500/FZ2000
- Compact: Canon G7X/G7XII/G7XIII/Sony RX100 II/RX100 IV/RX100 V
- Rugged: Sony RX0 II/Canon PowerShot V10/DJI Osmo 360

*Best suited for:*

- Casual travel and family photography
- Web and social-media sharing
- An “always-with-you” camera
- Long-zoom bridge cameras, where zoom range and convenience are the main advantages

*Limitations:*

- Dynamic range is more limited.
- Fine detail and overall image quality are lower compared to larger sensors.

## 1/2.3 inch sensor

1/2.3-inch sensor cameras are compact, pocket-sized devices often found in older point-and-shoots, budget models, and superzoom bridge cameras.

*Popular Models:*

- Bridge/Superzoom: Nikon P950/P1000, Panasonic FZ80D/FZ300.
- Compact: Canon SX620/SX740 HS, Sony WX800/HX99.
- Rugged: Olympus TG-6/OM System TG-7, Ricoh WG-60/90

*Best suited for:*

- These cameras excel in bright light for casual photography and high-zoom.
- These sensors offer high pixel density, often 12MP to 20MP.
- Best suited for travel, daylight, wildlife/birds and scenarios requiring long optical zoom.
- All-in-one convenience with DSLR-like ergonomics, EVF, and manual controls.
- Affordable (often under \$1000) compared to interchangeable lens systems.
- Good for daylight casual video shoot with stabilization.
- Weather-sealed options available for outdoor use.

*Limitations:*

- Suffer from limited low-light performance and limited dynamic range
- no background blur & high 5.6x crop factors
- Tiny size limits light gathering, leading to more noise in low light despite processing.
- Smaller photosites reduce dynamic range and true bokeh compared to larger sensors.
- Heavy reliance on software can introduce artifacts or unnatural looks in complex scenes.
- Heat buildup during prolonged use affects image quality and battery life.
- Fixed lens quality often lags behind interchangeable systems on bigger cameras.

## Mobile phone sensor

Mobile Phone sensors are very compact, varying in size from basic to high-end models, to suit the needs of Gen-Z people, who daily vlog on various subjects.

*Pros of Mobile Phone Sensors*

- Extremely compact and lightweight, fitting easily into pocketable devices.
- Affordable production scales to billions of units with low cost per sensor.
- Multi-camera arrays (wide, ultra-wide, telephoto) enable versatile focal lengths in one device.
- Computational photography (AI stacking, HDR) boosts low-light performance and detail beyond raw sensor size.
- Always available with instant sharing and video capabilities.

*Cons of Mobile Phone Sensors*

- Tiny size limits light gathering, leading to more noise in low light despite processing.
- Smaller photosites reduce dynamic range and true bokeh compared to larger sensors.
- Heavy reliance on software can introduce artifacts or unnatural looks in complex scenes.
- Heat buildup during prolonged use affects image quality and battery life.
- Fixed lens quality often lags behind interchangeable systems on bigger cameras.

### Additional Information: Sensor Technology Comparison

Sensor Type	Structure & Key Trait	Strengths	Weaknesses	Best For & Examples
<b>CCD</b> 📷	Charge-coupled device; analog signal shift	Excellent color accuracy, dynamic range	Slow readout, high power use	Astronomy, older compacts (Nikon Coolpix)
<b>CMOS</b> ⚡	Complementary metal-oxide; on-chip processing	Fast, low power, affordable	Early noise issues (improved now)	DSLRs/mirrorless (Canon EOS, Sony A7)
<b>BSI-CMOS</b> 🌙	Backside-illuminated; light hits photodiodes first	Superior low light, high sensitivity	Slightly costlier than standard CMOS	Samsung NX1, Canon R, Nikon Z series, Sony α7IV, α7RV, α9II, α1 Phones/highend (Sony IMX, iPhone Pro)
<b>X-TRANS</b> 🌀	Fujifilm's non-Bayer CFA; 6-color array	Natural colors, less moiré (no AA filter)	Unique processing needed	Fujifilm mirrorless (X-T5, GFX100)
<b>Bayer</b> ■	RGGB color filter array (standard)	Universal compatibility, good detail	Moiré risk, interpolation artifacts	Most cameras (Nikon Z6, Canon R5)
<b>Stacked</b> 🚀	Layered DRAM+logic global shutter option	Ultra-fast readout, no rolling shutter	Expensive, heat-prone	Sports/video (Sony A9 III, RX10 IV)
<b>Global Shutter</b> 🌐	All pixels expose simultaneously	No distortion in fast action	Lower resolution/dynamic range	Cinema (RED, industrial cams)
<b>Foveon</b> 🌿	Layered color (no filters); sigma design	Ultimate color fidelity, sharpness	Slow, limited lens ecosystem	Sigma fp Style 11 Sigma SD Quattro H II Sigma DP2 Quattro

*Sensor technologies vary widely in design, speed, & performance, with creative icons highlighting strengths like image quality, speed, low light. Larger sensors pair best with advanced types like stacked BSI-CMOS for peak performance across lighting & speed.*

# the Van Dyke Brown process



*Ashok Viswanathan*  
FFIP, EFIAP, PPSA

The Van Dyke Brown technique originated in Germany in 1895 and so named because the final print is a rich brown colour. Essentially it is a Print Out process where a light sensitive paper is coated with chemicals, allowed to dry in darkness and then contact printed with a negative using UV light.

You can make your own chemistry using the formula or buy a ready made kit which obviously is more expensive. The cost is mainly due to the high silver nitrate prices.

## Formula

### Solution A

- Ferric Ammonium Citrate 9.0 gm
- Distilled Water 33.0 ml

### Solution B

- Tartaric Acid 1.5 gm
- Distilled Water 33.0 ml

### Solution C

- Silver Nitrate 3.8 gm
- Distilled Water 33.0 ml

Mix each solution separately in subdued light.. once combined it becomes light sensitive and so you need to work in a darkroom with dim red light. Combine Solutions A and B and slowly add C while stirring. Pour the sensitizer in a brown bottle and let it age for a few days before using. Keep it stored in a dark place. Sensitizer will stay for a year or so if stored in darkness.

As this is a contact printing process, you will need a printing frame to sandwich the negative and the coated paper. Ready made printing frames are available but I made my own from a smooth piece of wood and a sheet of heavy glass whose edges have been smoothed out. This will keep the negative flat and in close contact with the paper. Use four clips at the edges to ensure good contact. Check that the glass is not coated to resist UV transmission.

The light source is a UV lamp. Several ready made ones are available in wattage of 10-50. Alternatively daylight is a good option although its difficult to be consistent with exposures. Daylight UV varies and a passing cloud can upset your exposures. Test exposures will establish your base time typically 4-10 minutes depending on the wattage of the lamp and distance from the paper.

Before you start to print you need to make a few large format negatives. I print basically in two sizes i.e. A4 or A5. I make A4 negatives on Inkjet film and have used Pictorio or Permajet. If I make A5 prints then I have two images on a sheet of film. It makes for easier handling and economy. As someone said...."small is beautiful".. Making a digital negative is simple. Select a subject with strong lines such as sculpture, buildings, portraits or landscape. Crop to size and adjust levels, contrast and brightness.. avoid images with too much contrast. Softer low contrast images seem to work better. Once yr happy convert to monochrome in PS, Affinity or NIK – invert and remember to flip the image horizontally in order that the final print will be the right way round. There is no limit to the size of the print. The size of your printer will determine the maximum negative size u can make. I use a Epson L130 basic printer with quality set to "good" to make the internegatives.

Use a good water colour paper ideally 300 gsm smooth surface, so that the paper does fall apart in the wash. The

chemistry is sensitive to light so coating the paper needs to be done under a darkroom safelight. Take a little chemistry and using a foam brush gently coat the paper uniformly from left to right and top to bottom. You may like to leave a uncoated border so u get a nice white border on the print. There should be no free flowing liquid on the paper surface. Allow the paper to dry in darkness. This should take about 30 minutes or so.

Processing is simple. Wash in plain water for 5 minutes to get rid of the unused chemicals. Then fix in a plain 10% hypo solution for 5-6 minutes and wash again for 10 minutes. Hang up to dry. A 10% hypo is 100 gsm of crystals in 900 cc of water. Once dissolved top up to make a liter.

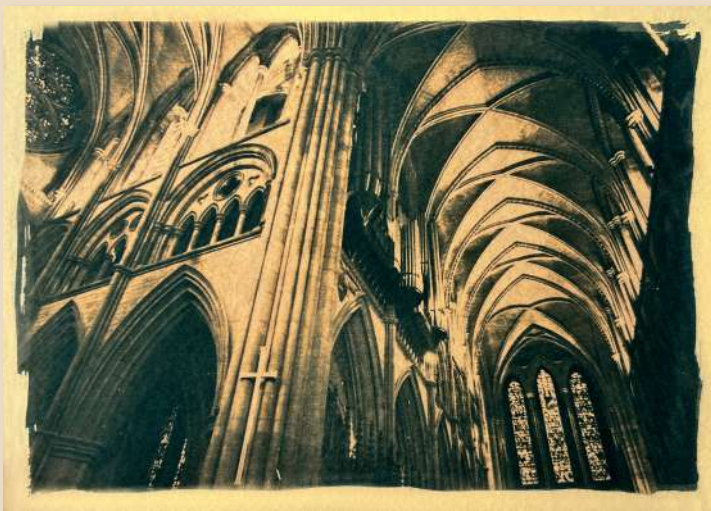
Be aware that when you finish exposing the paper, it will have a lovely golden image. This is temporary. When u wash it goes away and in the fixer the print will fade a little. Excessive fixing seems to cause fading as also too little fixing. On drying the image returns as a strong brown tone. Depending on exposure you will get a variation in the brown tones and even almost white highlights. The prints are stable and will last several decades, similar to normal silver bromide prints.

The final result is a beautiful and unusual print that deserves to be mounted and framed.





*Sculpture at Belur temple*



*Church in York*



*Thar desert Rajasthan*



*Oxford Architecture*



*Rocks Kovalam coast*

### ***Ashok Viswanathan***

A retired company executive with a passion for travel, landscape & portraits. A dedicated Nikon user from the early 70s and has now gone mirrorless with two Fuji X-E3 bodies and four lenses. However, still shoots film, mainly FP4 and HP5, on a Rolleiflex and Hasselblad 500 CM systems. Ashok is a long-time exhibitor with several awards and considerable published work in print and on the web. He is also interested in alternative techniques of Cyanotypes, Bromoil, Van Dyke etc., using large format internegatives. Lives in Chennai, India.

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# Mastering the Right Side



## *A Deep Dive into Expose to the Right (ETTR)*



**Dr Somdutt Prasad**  
 MPSA2, BPSA, EFIAP,  
 GFIP+EFIP/Gold, IIG/p15+s10

For many photographers, especially those who spent decades perfecting their craft with 35mm or medium format film, the "correct" exposure was something you felt as much as you metered. You knew exactly how your favourite emulsion would react to a sunset or a shadowed alleyway. Ansel Adams books on the Camera, The Negative and The Print were probably our rule books.

However, as we moved from chemical silver halides to silicon-based photosites, the fundamental physics of how "light becomes an image" changed. To capture the highest quality data possible today, we have to unlearn some of the "safety first" habits of the film era and embrace a technique known as *Expose to the Right (ETTR)*.

Let us try to understand how modern digital sensors act and how to get the best out of them, because most of us are now using digital sensors.

### Part I: The "Shoulder" vs. The "Cliff"

The most significant hurdle for film-era photographers is the way highlights are handled.

In the world of *colour negative film*, exposure theory was "expose for the shadows, develop for the highlights." Film has a beautiful, natural "shoulder"—as the light gets brighter, the chemical reaction slows down, compressing the highlights gently. You could overexpose negative film by two or three stops and still "recover" detail in the darkroom. The film was forgiving at the top end but unforgiving in the shadows, where underexposure led to "muddy" grain.

*Digital sensors are the exact opposite.* A digital sensor is a linear device with a "hard ceiling." Think of a digital photosite as a bucket. Once that bucket is full, it cannot hold another photon. Any additional light "spills over," resulting in a value of pure, 100% white. There is no "shoulder" and no gentle roll-off. When a digital highlight clips, it hits a metaphorical cliff.

Because of this "cliff," many photographers (and camera manufacturers) became terrified of overexposure. We started "underexposing" to play it safe. But as we will see, this "safety" comes at a massive cost to image quality.

### Part II: The Math of Bit-Depth

To understand why ETTR is technically superior, we have to look at how a 14-bit RAW file actually stores information. A 14-bit file has 16,384 discrete tonal levels.

Because digital sensors record light **linearly** (doubling the light doubles the signal), the distribution of those 16,384 levels is not equal across your exposure. It is heavily weighted toward the highlights:

Table 1. If we divide the entire dynamic range of the sensor

Stop of Light	Tonal Levels Available
<b>Brightest Stop (The Right Side)</b>	<b>8,192 levels</b>
2nd Stop down	4,096 levels
3rd Stop down	2,048 levels
4th Stop down	1,024 levels
<b>Shadows (The Far Left)</b>	<b>64 levels or fewer</b>

into 5 stops, this is how the sensitivity is distributed, Also illustrated visually in Figure 1.

When you "Expose to the Left" (underexpose), you are forcing your image to live in the bottom few stops where there are very few levels to describe the scene. When you later try to "brighten" that image in post-processing, you are stretching 128 levels of data to do the work of 8,000. This is the primary cause of **posterization** (banding in the sky) and **shadow noise**.

### Part III: The Signal-to-Noise Ratio (SNR)

Every electronic device has "floor noise"—that static hiss you hear when you turn up a radio with no station tuned in. It is called "Signal-to-Noise Ratio." In photography this means that the *Signal* is The actual photons hitting your sensor and the *Noise* is the random electronic interference generated by the camera.

ETTR is simply a strategy to ensure the "Signal" is as loud as possible. By pushing your histogram to the right, you are flooding the sensor with data, effectively "drowning out" the electronic noise floor. Even if you intend for the final image to be dark and moody, you are better off capturing it "too bright" (ETTR) and then darkening it in Lightroom or whichever post processing software you use. This "down-sampling" of the exposure crushes the noise and results in shadows as smooth as glass.

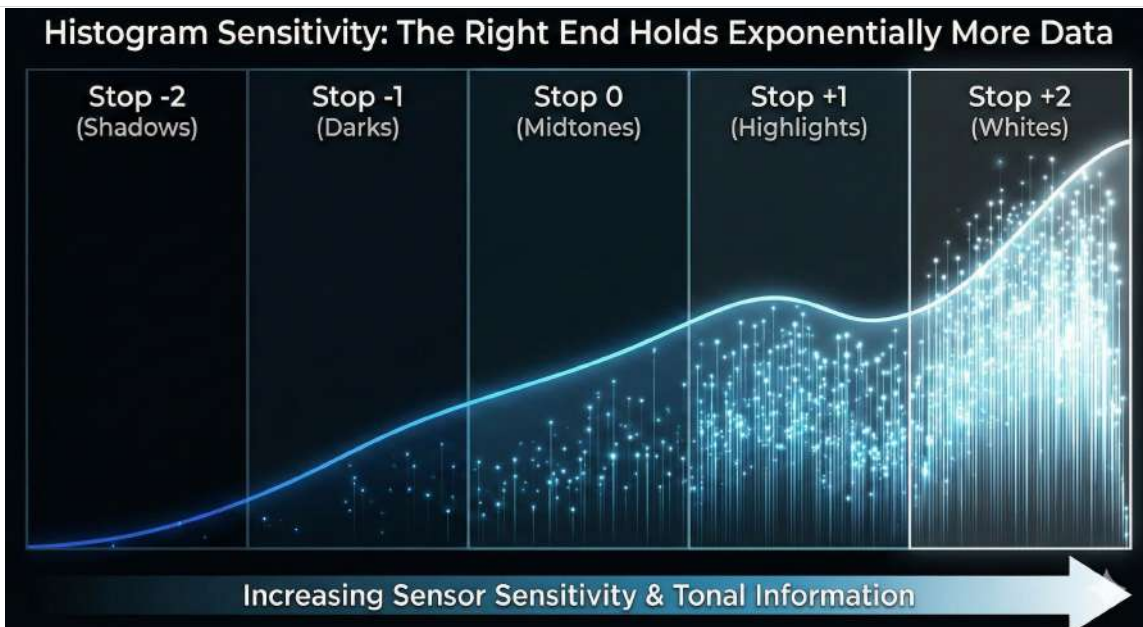


Figure 1: Histogram Sensitivity

**Part IV: The JPEG Histogram Trap**

One of the most confusing aspects of ETTR is the discrepancy between what the camera shows and what the RAW file contains. The histogram on the back of your camera is not a RAW histogram. It is based on a processed, 8-bit JPEG. Because JPEGs have higher contrast and a "S-curve" applied to them, they will show "clipping" (the blinkies) much sooner than the RAW file actually hits its limit.

The Reality is that when your camera shows a small amount of highlight clipping, you usually still have 0.5 to 1.0 stops of "secret" headroom in the RAW file. Mastering ETTR means learning exactly how much "over-clipping" your specific camera body can handle before the RAW data truly breaks.

When you move to your processing software, in my case Lightroom Classic, the histogram depends on what camera profile the software is applying. The data is all there in a RAW file, but is displayed according to the Camera Profile applied. So for example, if I use "Camera Standard" (Figure 2), it seems I have blown the highlights in this image as indicated by the triangle at the top right turning blue, but if I change the profile on the same image to "Camera Neutral" (Figure 3), I see that I have not blown the highlights.

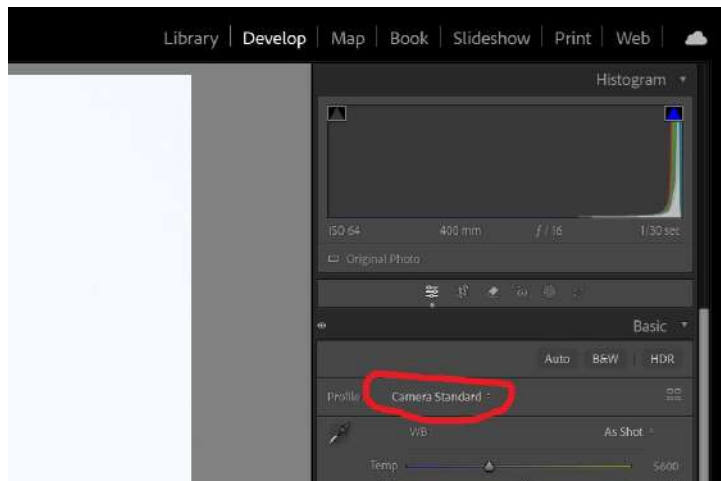


Figure 2: Camera Standard

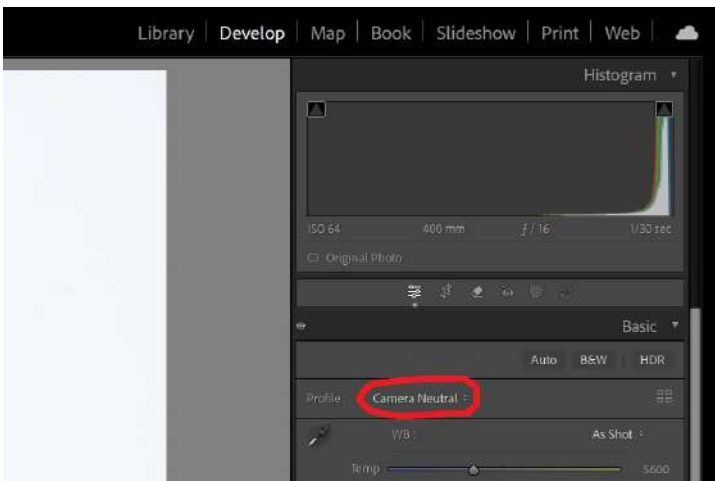


Figure 3: Camera Neutral

**Part V: Practical Execution**

If you want to start using ETTR at your next outing, follow this checklist:

- 1. Switch to the RGB Histogram:** The standard "White" histogram can hide clipping in the Red or Blue channels (common in sunsets or flowers). Mirrorless cameras allow you to have a live histogram within the electronic viewfinder, this is very useful to judge your actual exposure without taking your eye off the viewfinder, but the RGB Histogram which you can set to show on the Rear LCD has much more information.
- 2. Use "Highlight Weighted" Metering if available:** Some modern cameras have this mode (Nikon usually has); it automatically ETTRs by ensuring the brightest part of the frame is just below the clipping point.
- 3. Shoot RAW:** ETTR is pointless if you are shooting JPEGs, as the camera will throw away the extra data during the conversion process.
- 4. The "One-Stop" Rule:** Start by pushing your exposure compensation dial to **+0.7 or +1.0**. Check your "blinkies." (You can set up your viewfinder and rear LCD so that areas which have blown out blink) If they aren't firing, you haven't pushed far enough!

Lets take a practical example. I shot this Monkey with a +0.67 Exposure bias, using multipattern metering and the RAW file looks terrible! (Figure 4), in fact I could have gone to +1.0 Exposure bias easily, but because most of my data is on the right half of the histogram, I could extract details without any noise penalty and get the image I had in mind after processing. (Figure 5).

**Conclusion**

Expose to the Right is the digital equivalent of "filling the negative."



Figure 4: Raw Image

It is about capturing the maximum amount of information that the laws of physics allow. By understanding that our sensors are linear, "top-heavy" data collectors, we can stop being afraid of the right side of the graph and start producing files with the depth, clarity, and dynamic range that our film-shooting predecessors could only dream of.

The modern digital camera body is actually a computer body which handles image data. The better you understand it, the more you can get out of it.



Figure 5: After processing

**Summary Table**

Feature	Film (Negative)	Digital (RAW)
<b>Light Response</b>	<b>Non-linear (Logarithmic):</b> Naturally compresses highlights; has a "shoulder."	<b>Linear:</b> Records light mathematically; no natural compression or roll-off.
<b>The "Sweet Spot"</b>	<b>Expose for Shadows:</b> Give the shadows plenty of light to avoid "muddy" grain.	<b>Expose for Highlights:</b> Push the exposure right to maximize data without clipping.
<b>Overexposure</b>	<b>Forgiving:</b> You can "save" highlights in the darkroom via burning/dodging.	<b>Fatal:</b> Once a highlight hits 100% (clipping), the data is gone forever.
<b>Underexposure</b>	<b>Risky:</b> Leads to thin negatives and poor shadow detail that can't be fixed.	<b>Noisy:</b> Leads to a poor Signal-to-Noise Ratio (SNR) and "banding."
<b>Post-Processing</b>	<b>Darkroom Chemistry:</b> Physical manipulation of silver/dyes.	<b>Data Mapping:</b> Re-assigning tonal values within a software environment.
<b>Noise/Grain</b>	<b>Fixed:</b> Grain is an inherent characteristic of the film stock's ISO.	<b>Variable:</b> Noise is largely a result of signal strength and heat.

**Further reading:**

- <https://www.35mmc.com/19/10/2025/assignment-of-exposures-using-ansel-adams-zone-system/> - "One thing I found helpful when I was trying to learn, and understand, the Zone system is the axiom "Expose for the shadows, Develop for the highlights." I see many people trying to find a way to expose the film to find a happy medium between shadow exposure detail and highlight detail, and they end up disappointed on both counts." – Craig Pindell
- <https://digital-photography-school.com/12-bit-versus-14-bit-raw-which-is-right-for-you/#:~:text=Uncompressed%2014%20bit%20RAW%20files,the%20highest%20possible%20amount%20of> - Uncompressed 14-bit RAW files store 16,384 tonal values for each colour per pixel and do not throw any data away, giving you the highest possible amount of information to work with in post-production.
- [https://www.nikon.co.uk/en\\_GB/learn-and-explore/magazine/tips-and-tricks/camera-metering-modes-explained](https://www.nikon.co.uk/en_GB/learn-and-explore/magazine/tips-and-tricks/camera-metering-modes-explained) - Highlight-weighted metering: This mode gives preference to the highlights in your image when determining exposure so they won't be blown out. It's well-suited to bright environments or situations where you need to pay particular attention to the brightest part of your photo, for example, someone spotlighted on a stage. Highlight-weighted metering is specific to Nikon cameras and uses the same data as matrix metering. But instead of balancing the exposure across the whole frame, it calculates an exposure that saves the details in your highlights. Remember that this will make your shadows darker.



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# Changing Perspective



**Ashok Kandimalla** is a highly recognized photographer with over 3 decades of experience who combines his IIT Madras engineering background with a deep understanding of digital photographic technology. He is a prolific writer and educator, having authored over 200 articles and currently serving as a visiting faculty member at Mindscreen Film Institute (MFI), Chennai. His key achievements include being the former President of the Telangana Photographic Society and being conferred with the prestigious Hon FIP (Honorary Fellow of the Federation of Indian Photography).

As you know, the world around us is in three dimensions, that is, it exhibits depth. Photographs either printed (or paintings for that matter) or viewed on the screen are rendered “flat” in two dimensions without any depth. One of the techniques used by photographers (and painters) to show apparent depth in a two-dimensional flat rendering is through “perspective” which is technically a projection. Due to perspective objects close to the viewer look larger than those that are far away. This property is used to create the impression of depth in a photograph and is used extensively for example, by landscape photographers. More of this shortly.

Perspective also manifests itself in other ways. One of the frequently encountered problems when photographing tall buildings or structures occurs because we tend to point the camera upwards, with a wide-angle lens to get the whole building in the frame. This causes the building to appear as if it is leaning backward (Picture 1) and is erroneously called distortion. However, it is not and hence is **not** a defect! This is due to perspective. There are a few ways to solve this problem. Examples are choosing a proper shooting position, shifting the lens axis by using a suitable camera or lens, employing suitable post-processing techniques, etc. In both Lightroom and Photoshop, there are multiple tools available to achieve the needed correction but the Perspective Warp function in the latter is unquestionably the most powerful. This article will explain to you how to use it.



Picture 1: The building looks leaning backward due to perspective. This is not distortion!

Perspective Warp is in the Edit section of the main menu of Photoshop. You can invoke it by -

## Edit > Perspective Warp

If this is grayed out and access is blocked, it means that your computer does not have the required hardware to execute Perspective Warp which requires a graphics accelerator. If this happens, there is not much one can do other than upgrading your computer.



Picture 2: The context sensitive menu of Perspective Warp.

Once you select Perspective Warp from the Edit menu, a context sensitive menu appears at the top (Picture 2).

Perspective Warp operates in two modes – **Layout** and **Warp** and you can switch between the two buttons by clicking on the buttons provided. The former allows you to draw guides after which you can switch to **Warp** mode to do the warping for corrections. Next, you have three icons. These behave as follows.

The first icon with vertical lines snaps near-vertical lines to perfectly vertical orientation and next does the same by snapping near-horizontal lines to perfectly horizontal orientation. The last one does both. Our advice - don't use them. They do the job as described but give very odd results. The next icon takes you out of Warp mode. Then there is the abort icon clicking on which will terminate the command. The same can also be done by hitting the ESC key. Clicking on the last icon will execute the Perspective Warp.

After you open an image in Photoshop, we always recommend that you duplicate the background layer as a safety measure. After this is done, invoke Perspective Warp as described and from the context sensitive menu (Picture 2) click on **Layout**.

You will now see that the shape of the cursor has changed. You can now click and drag the mouse. As you drag the mouse, you will see that a quadrilateral (a shape with four sides with four corners) will start forming. This shape is fully under your control and you can change it at will while you drag the mouse. After you release the mouse button, you can change the shape of the quad (short for quadrilateral) freely by clicking on the quad pins at the corners and dragging them. You can also move the quad by clicking inside the quad and dragging. In our case, I have made the quad align with the front face of the building (Picture 3). Notice that the quad has a grid inside to help alignment.

You can click outside the quad and create another quad (or as many as you want). Here, I have created one more to cover the side face of the building. Since these are two faces of the same building, you will notice that, as you do create the second quad, the quad pins close to each other will snap together so that a common boundary is formed between the two quads (Picture 4). So, we now have six quad pins of which two are common. All six can be moved independently.

Click on the **Warp** button and you will see that the two quads (Picture 5) have changed color. As before you can change the shape of the quad freely by clicking on the quad pins and

dragging them but instead of just the quad changing shape, *the image itself will now get warped*. Adjust the quad pins as you would want. In this example, I have made the sides nearly (but not fully) vertical. The resulting image is now corrected for perspective and appears as in Picture 6 after some cropping.

**Conclusion:** Perspective Warp is an important tool in Photoshop. It can perform perspective corrections that would require expensive equipment. Just try it a few times following the steps given here and you will agree with me!



Picture 3: The quad created is now aligned with one face of the building.



Picture 4: The two quads are now linked together with a common boundary.



Picture 5: This shows the image after Warp mode is invoked.



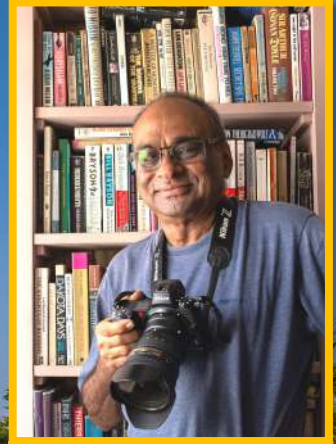
Picture 6: The final corrected image.

#### Tips:

- Whenever Perspective Warp is used, there will be some gaps (that is, blank areas) with no information at the boundaries as the image is warped through the process of interpolation of pixels. These gaps will be shown by Photoshop as the checkered white and gray squares. You can fill them in various ways using the Clone tool, Content Aware Fill, etc. but the easier thing would be just to crop these away. Hence, you must leave some space around the subject – that is, compose loosely when you are capturing the image so that you can crop off portions without affecting the composition.
- Do not overcorrect! That is, leave the building to appear to be leaning slightly back as it appears naturally that way to our naked eyes. If you fully correct (make perfectly vertical lines) or by mistake overcorrect, then the building will appear falling to the front and this looks wholly unnatural!

# Madras Musings

*The Life and times of an amateur photojournalist*



Rags Raghavan

**Raghavan** - Musician, Photographer, Design thinker, Writer, Bird watcher, ex-Chennai Snake Park, Member-Chennai Rifle club, DIY Handyman, Dogs, Watches, Traveling, Vodka, Laughter and more.

He recollects his journey as a photojournalist and presented here are his few anecdotes that appeared in a fortnightly tabloid called Madras Musings (MM)

*It all began with picking up a copy of MM in '92/'93 and I was hooked. It so happened that the same issue had an advertisement for a freelance photographer and I applied. Street, candid and travel Photography being passions, and I being born right here in Madras, I qualified for the role instantly! I soon found myself at Mr. Muthiah's house down Vijayaraghava Lane in T. Nagar, and the rest was history. The MMM would call every other day asking me to check a heritage building somewhere or meet someone who had a long bonding with Madras, and I would be off taking pictures and writing stories.*

*On assignment with Madras Musings is where I honed my skills in street photography. To walk up to total strangers and take their pictures, or shoot candid when they weren't looking, or including humans in heritage building photos to add scale and a sense of being, or adding a human touch to an otherwise plain architectural photo. Sometimes people would ask why, and I would flash my Madras Press Club ID card! That ID card added a lot of weight and I felt good flashing it around.*

*More than anything else, this set of anecdotes are tributes to Mr. S. Muthiah, the greatest ever historian, author, journalist and heritage conservationist India has ever known. The last of a vanishing species, may his soul rest in eternal peace.*

**Anecdote 1:** The sprawling Standard Chartered Bank campus on College Road/Haddow's Road once housed a single mansion among the trees. When the new campus was being built, the architect Chitale Associates, drew out a blueprint of the campus, marked out the old trees, and then built the buildings *in-between* the trees! What a wonderful way to preserve the

environment and the ambience, and yet give the campus the old lived-in look, even with the new buildings - Amazing!

To shoot the pictures of the campus, I had to access the terrace of the 9-storey residential complex opposite Stan chart on Haddow's Road.

**Anecdote 2:** It was an era when colour film and the coin slot labs were taking over the planet and the simple B&W lab I knew in Mylapore was doing the best they could. Then someone introduced me to Kannappan in Adyar and his processing and printing was first class - and Muthiah was most impressed. Kannappan would let me into his darkroom and watch him dodge and burn prints.

I would shoot ten frames of 35mm because the photo op warranted about ten shots, add some buffer, unload the film in a dark changing bag, take the cut film in a light proof container to

Kannapan - the film would be processed and my prints would be ready by evening. I would go to his studio to collect the negs and prints, but not before downing tea and smoking a cigarette each! The next morning the prints would be on Mr. Muthiah's desk! Life was slow, but eventful. (Because Film photography carried a quiet, unhurried magic in a world now obsessed with instant results. Unlike digital images that appear in a blink, film asked for patience — to compose carefully, to trust your instincts, and to wait for the alchemy of light and chemistry to reveal its surprise - Addendum March 2026).



Subbiah Muthiah (13 April 1930 – 20 April 2019) was an Indian writer, journalist, cartographer, amateur historian and heritage activist known for his writings on the political and cultural history of Chennai city.

Picture Courtesy: The Hindu

only the cast iron mounts remained, and plenty of dusty wooden chairs and benches piled on top of each other. There were cobwebs everywhere I looked – *I felt I was breathing air a hundred years old!*

The foundation stone laid in 1882 on the Eastern wall was half buried under mud, and the

caretaker of the Hall helped to dig away a portion so the text could be seen. Back indoors, I set up my tripod and shot some pictures in available light with my Nikon and a wide-angle lens loaded with 400 ASA film and attempted to get all angles and perspectives, which I achieved.

As I wrapped up shooting indoors, the caretaker asked me if I wished to go up the steeple tower and I enthusiastically accepted, briefly visualizing elevated photo

views of Ripon Building and Central Station – seriously, who else can get photo opportunities like this!

Some of the wooden steps up to the tower were missing and I was climbing alternate steps – everything around me was coated with dirt and dust and foul smells. I gingerly went up the stairs approaching the top, when to my horror, I flushed a colony of Bats that were dozing high up in the rafters. All Hell broke loose and they – hundreds of bats – came screeching and screaming down towards me. I crashed my way down the stairs leaping over missing steps, and how I did not fall and break my teeth in the process was a wonder – the fastest descent down a staircase ever!

Once outside and safe in the sunlight, the grinning caretaker, who otherwise accompanied me throughout the Hall visit, said he preferred to stay away from the tower and he admitted he was terrified of the bats! And, he, was the kind soul who recommended I take up the tower view to complete my photo- shoot of Victoria Public Hall

**Anecdote 3:** MMM had obtained permission for me to take pictures inside Victoria Public Hall, The Hall, a fine example of Indo-Saracenic architecture and was designed by Robert Fellowes Chisolm in the 1880's.

Victoria Hall itself was intact, although dusty and badly maintained. Queen Victoria's portrait was way up high above the stage, discoloured and faded. Almost all the wall mounted fans were missing,

**Anecdote 4:** No snippet series of mine can be complete without mention of my visit to Armenian Church, on Armenian Street, on assignment for MM. I met the caretaker and keeper of the faith, a Mr. George Gregorian, and after referring to Madras Musings and Muthiah, I got down to shooting pictures. For a man of God, Gregorian was most cantankerous and edgy and seemed to take an instant dislike to me. In all fairness Muthiah did warn me

of the man's short temper, but a priest who swore in foul language? Once I got my pictures done, I remembered what Muthiah had told me - "If Fr. Gregorian is in a good mood, ask him nicely and he will ring the church bell for you". So, I called for my inner courage and asked nicely if Fr. Gregorian could ring the bell – He promptly booted me outside and told me to "get lost and come back another day, you fool"!!

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# Photography is...

“ **M**ishka Henner’s book *Photography Is* (2010) is a conceptual project that serves as both an archive and a manifesto. It is often described as "photography without photographs" because the work contains no images; instead, it consists entirely of text.

Henner Googled the phrase "Photography is..." and compiled the thousands of definitions he found. From those results, he published an iconic 200-page book. The project has also been exhibited as a large-scale wallpaper installation at the International Centre of Photography (ICP).

Inspired by the passion of his project, we asked our IIG photographers to send us their own definitions in three sentences or less. We are overwhelmed by the responses and the depth of meaning, philosophy, and psychology behind them. We present those definitions here for you to reflect upon; we invite you to send your own definition to [docs.iig@gmail.com](mailto:docs.iig@gmail.com)

Abhijeet Kumar Banerjee	Photography is a journey of self-discovery, where every frame reflects a part of who I am. Through the quiet act of observing light, people, and moments, I learn to see not only the world more deeply but also myself. Each photograph becomes a mirror - revealing emotions, stories, and truths I might otherwise never notice.
Ahmed Russell	Photography is the visual poetry of an imagined world.
Ajit Joshi	Photography is the intersection of the nature around you and the nature of the photographer, blended together through the art of storytelling.
Alessio R Darmanin	Photography is a way of connecting with both nature and people. Photographing landscapes and the natural world is not just about documenting beauty, but a deeply relaxing and soul-rejuvenating pursuit. Photographing new places and people is not only about preserving memories, but an eye-opening experience that deepens my connection to the world and to others.
Amit Sarkar	Photography is like listening the hidden heartbeats of light and shadow, where an ordinary moment suddenly reveals its inner soul. And in that tiny frozen fraction of a second, the world whispers a truth that words almost never manage to.
Anjan Das	Photography is my impetus in confinement, shelter at distress and love at success.
Arjun Das	Photography is about finding good light and a unique perspective, which makes me more aware of and respectful toward the world around me.
Arunbabu Pandian	Photography is the reason I have stood before a fire and trance of a Theyyam ritual in Kannur, watched the Rath Yatra roll through Puri, felt Durga Puja's grandeur in the pandals of Kolkata, emoted with faith and belief in Kulasai Dussehra, sat in silence before Yosemite's imposing valley - camera in hand, breath held. From the ghats of Varanasi at first light, to the wild of America's forests, it has taken me everywhere, allowed me to listen to a stranger's face, to a festival's heartbeat and asked nothing except that I pay attention. Photography is attention - given fully, without looking away.
Asian Hemrom	Photography means capturing special moments and the beauty of the world with a camera to preserve memories and express creativity through images.
Balachandder SK	Photography is always a passion of mine, which I look through my learnt subjects like, Mathematics, Physics, Chemistry, Computer Science and Psychology and also through Music, all combined into one Symphonic Rhapsody.
Barath Karthi RK	Photography is a poem, covered in four lines. It carries stories that are unsaid and go unnoticed in the daily routine.
Chitra Joshi	Photography is a scientific art.
Deba Prosad Paul	Photography is resilience of the past, preserved for future generations.
Debanjan Bagchi	Photography is a journey with a camera, to discover how beautiful my world is.
Debashis Kumar	Photography is the constant hunt for the perfect union of light and timing involving patient hours of wait for that fraction of a second which might actually never happen.
Deepanjan Ray	Photography is the act of turning a fleeting moment into something that can outlive the moment itself. It is the bridge between reality & memory. It is a mathematical translation of the physical world, where light is decoded into data to preserve a moment's geometry and soul.
Jyotirmoy Chattopadhyay	Photography is an illusion which is created from the Heart and cultivated by the Mind
Kanwarjot Singh	Photography is my connection with nature and God, I start believing in the almighty the moment I'm in the forest and my eyes on the view finder.
Kumaraguru Palaniappan	Photography is my companion; it helps me observe and enjoy the small delights of daily life. It is what's pouring me with countless memories to cherish along with great life lessons.
Lale Cakti	Photography is for me where nature, silence and light meet together and in that silence I learn to be with myself.
Maheswaran Karthikeyan	Photography is the art of stopping time without asking its permission. Photography is about the moment that refuses to be forgotten. Photography is light writing a letter to the future.

Manas Pratim Sharma	Photography is a beautiful escape from the mundane world into an enchanting universe. It allows us to encounter the unexpected on the street, unravel the mysteries of the wildlife and inspires to travel the world and get inebriated in their cultures, be enamored by the pulchritude of the landscapes.
Manasi Roy	Photography is the breath that keeps my spirit alive; in other words, my lifesaving medicine. As a carcinoma patient, I feel Photography is my small rebellion against every physical limitation. My only motto is simple—"I will click photos, unless my whole existence converts into a mere photo".
Md Iqbal Hossain	Photography is both an art and a science - the craft of capturing light to express reality, emotion, and meaning in visual form. It transforms fleeting moments into enduring images that convey stories beyond the limits of words. At its core, photography is a way of seeing the world and sharing that vision with others.
Moumita Poddar	Photography is an expression of the moments unfolding around in its timeless stillness. It is about telling stories and emotions in ways that my heart connects and capture.
Mrinal Sen	Photography is a way to heal my mind and soul when I go out with my camera. It gives me great joy to observe and capture the activities of different forms of life, and it makes me feel relaxed and refreshed. Through photography, I also learn about the world and understand the emotions of different living beings.
Narendu Ghosh	My raw photography is an art whose essence is to tell stories through the imagery of my thoughts and feelings.
Nilanjan Saha	Photography is a passion to capture or freeze a moment in time for preserving memories. It is a way of storytelling using light, subject, composition & perspective.
Lokanath Muda	The photography is the way of preserving memory.
Partha Ghosh	Photography is an expression of a photographer by which he/she photograph "a subject with its beyond" for his/her viewers. It is an art form of human ideas through camera in the field of "light and shades" using "near to infinite" numbers of angles.
Piyali Datta	Photography is a creative medium to represent different shades of life.
Pradyot Majumder	Photography is the Mirror of Life, which captures the beauty and struggles of Human, Animal and Nature existences. It shows the happiness of celebrations with warmth family bonds, innocence of childhood even the hardship of survive. Through the images, viewers can realise and connect with the reflection of Life style , emotions and experiences also.
Prasenjit Basu	Photography is a perfect triangle of three key elements manipulating light, capturing the right moment, and creating an everlasting memory.
Pravin Tirkey	Photography is a way of expressing my feelings which I cannot put into words.
Premomoy Ghosh	Photography is a motivational medium of exploring deep into my surroundings. A way of expressing glimpses of my perception of the world and life. Ultimately, an unconditional pleasure.
Pritam Panja	Photography is where my passion meets my profession as a geoscientist. Through my lens, I capture the stories of earth and life.
Raghu R	Photography is a medium to record the art of love.
Rajesh Muthuswamy	Photography is noticing a moment of truth in the quiet play of light and shadow. It is the process of removing distractions until only the raw energy remains. In the end, photography becomes my way of preserving a moment that will never exist again.
Rakendubikash Majumdar	Photography is the quiet art of catching light as it brushes against moments. It turns fleeting seconds into timeless whispers of memory and emotion. Through a lens, the ordinary world becomes a canvas where light writes its poetry.
Ratnabali Shome	Photography is to capture the moment of everyday life around us that becomes beautiful memory and enable us to time travel.
Rumna Mukherjee	Photography to me is a silent conversation with the wild, where the forest speaks and my camera listens. Every frame is a heartbeat of nature that I am lucky enough to pause for a moment in time. Through my lens, I don't just take pictures—I carry stories of the wilderness back to the world.

Rupak Das	Photography is the dialogue between time and perception. The camera does not simply record the world; it reveals how a human mind chooses to see it.
Sanat Kumar Karmakar	Photography is a combination of both science and art. While we set the instrument to snap, our mind sets it an artistic work.
Sanjoy Bhattacharya	Photography is the language of my soul.
Saurabh Sirohiya	Photography helps me document the truth and capture the memorable or historical moments. As a hearing-impaired traveller and photojournalist, it is a blessing that fills the vacuum of silence with powerful visual stories.
Sharatchandra HC	Photography is imaginatively capturing our surroundings by using light in a way that is realistic, aesthetically pleasing, and tells a story.
Shayan Mondal	Photography is how I capture moments and emotions so they can last beyond the time. I don't just click what I see, I like to shoot what I feel about the moment . Every picture I click preserves a small piece of life forever.
Shivendra Rai	Photography is the quiet act of noticing and keeping a moment before it fades. Since 2014, from Varanasi to wherever I happen to be, I've learned that a photograph can exist anywhere if the eye is ready.
Shourjendra Datta	Photography is the only legal way I know to steal time. A fraction of a second is quietly taken from the endless flow of life and kept aside. Every photograph is therefore a small rebellion against forgetting.
Somdutt Prasad	Photography, is an act of attention to lives that usually unfold without witnesses. In the stillness between shutter and breath, the wild reveals itself - fragile, sovereign, and shared. If the image stirs even a moment of care, it becomes more than art; it becomes advocacy.
Soumitra Chatterje	...photography is just not my passion, it is my path to express, my instrument to let my creative mind flow freely. To me photography is an art that enables to freeze a moment to eternity.
Srikanth Venugopalan	For me Photography is to capture the current moment and express those moments when we plan to achieve the photo with smile and tears. Either it is for Human or Animals.
Sruti Saxena	Photography is a legacy and an inherited artform for me. It's a pause button that lets me hold on to moments worth cherishing for a lifetime!
Subhasis Barat	photography is looking into the world to find myself.
Subrata Bysack	Photography is a time machine that helps you to visualize a frozen time. It is a mechanism that can be used to squeeze out your conscious and sub conscious mind. Photography is a Canvas with unlimited option and ageless.
Subrata Nath	Photography is the representation of the dream that I want to find in the flow of reality. Again, for me, photography is about portraying reality. Photography is a reflection of love that I want to see again and again.
Sudhir Saxena	Photography to me is something which takes away my tensions, anxiety, stresses and evokes a feeling of divine relaxation within.
Sundar Gopalakrishnan	... my life's fuel—an endless passion that keeps me alive to the moment.
Sunil Vyas	Photography is a passion that leads me toward knowledge, inculcates an artistic Outlook to everything in life and entuses a strong sense of discipline and duty in me.
Swaminathan Vadivelu	Photography is capturing unique stories in the space between Light and Shadow.
Tridib Mitra	Photography is an expression of Emotion of a photographer painted with Light.
Udayan Sankar Pal	Photography is all about the eye. You either see things or are influenced to see things.
Venkateswaran Radhaswamy	Photography is an art drawn with light, painted with memories and love forever.



# REFLECTIONS

April 2026

