When people ask me what equipment I use

– I tell them my eyes.

You didn’t come this far to stop. 

Create It

Build your own dreams

Or someone else will hire you to build theirs. Here is how you can take action – starting today.

Basics of Photography

All you need to start with your journey is a pair of observant eyes and a camera, be it mobile or DSLR doesn't really matter. Later on I'll show images clicked on mobile are far better than many clicks on a DSLR.

The point is lack of equipment should not stop you from being creative.

There are some basic technical terms we need to get familiar with if shooting in manual mode.

What is manual mode and why use it when the AI provides such a wonderful auto mode?

Do you still use a calculator to add up, no because you know how to do it mentally. It’s the same thing with a camera if we are not shooting in manual we won't have an idea of what's going inside and what are the so-called complicated ISO, Exposure, and Aperture.

About Me

I am Apratim Paul an Indian photographer based in Kolkata. I'm a natural light photographer, however I enjoy capturing all kinds of special moments. I love to create great memories and hopefully bring them to a wider audience. If you're looking for a professional photographer, but don't know where to start, I can help you with that! I'm open to shooting weddings and other special events, but I'm also looking to work with anyone to share their special moments with the world. Please feel free to contact me at apratim358@gmail.com or DM me on Instagram @cyromancer2002.

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Modes of a Camera

There are various modes on a camera but only a few of them come handy. We will find many places where people talk about each and every one of them but according to me for a beginner it’s hard to absorb all that so I'll be talking about only the ones that come handy while shooting.

Shutter Priority

Aperture Priority

Programmed Mode

Manual Mode

Shutter Priority –

It’s used when we are shooting extreme long shots or extreme fast. In case of extreme fast shots like shooting from a moving car or shooting a moving object like a car, insect, player etc. When shooting slowly that is known as long-exposure photography, where the shutter of the camera stays open for a longer period of time to capture a specific movement like Night traffic and moving water. There’s another section where I will explain in detail on the topic of long-exposure photography. It gives you complete control over its shutter speed and sets everything else on its own to expose the image properly.

Aperture Priority –

This mode is very versatile and can be used in many different conditions. This mode gives you control over the width of its aperture. This is where it starts to get complicated so I won’t share any technical terms with you whereas I’ll just share my practical knowledge. This mode comes handy to me while I am in a hurry but I need to click an image, I personally keep my f-stop around f/7 - f/8 this range will give you the sharpest image without having set everything according to your scene.

Programmed Mode –

This is semi auto mode on camera where the image is properly exposed by the camera itself but all other parameters can be altered by the user whether in Full-auto we don’t have control over anything. Personally I won’t suggest you use this mode unless you aren’t able to figure out the values of a particular scene.

Manual Mode –

This is where you actually start playing with the camera, not really but with the parameters of the camera. The exposure triangle comes in handy which we discussed above and will be explained furthermore. If you are just starting in this field I would suggest you to go through the Shutter and Aperture Priority mode rather than starting directly with manual mode that would frustrate you. Later on I will share images captured by me with the parameters of those mentioned.

The Exposure Triangle

The exposure triangle is just a simple way of explaining the three horsemen of the camera. ISO, Aperture and Shutter Speed, these three come together to expose the image properly. Little error in these can underexpose or overexpose the image. Exposing a photo means how bright the photo appears to our eyes.

Know more

The exposure triangle is a common way to explain the relationship between the three variables in nailing exposure. You must find a balance between ISO, Aperture, and Shutter speed to achieve the exposure you desire. I will attach a chart

Long-Exposure Photography

This is a very unique and creative way to take photos, the shutter of your camera remains open for a longer amount of time compared to normal. This basically blurs out the moving objects or subjects in the image creates a dreamy and silky effect in your image. This usually comes handy capturing clouds, moving water, night traffic or star trails. All you need is a tripod and you are good to go. I will attach some images with its parameters how I take long exposure. If you are willing to do Long-Exposure in bright daytime for a very long period of time you have to buy a ND Filter that is a Neutral Density Filter that manually helps you expose the photo according to need. There’s a small life hack you can apply if you don’t own a ND Filter still you need to take a long exposure but the image is getting overexposed. Place your device on a tripod then shoot a video for 30secs approximately. Import the video to your machine and trim it to 4-5 seconds and maximum 10 second if your device is powerful. Open Photoshop import the video file as layers and then select all the layers then from layer options select smart objects and stack mode to mean. You will get a good looking long exposure photography without having to spend much on ND Filters.

First Picture – Waterfall – ISO - 100

Aperture – f/22

Shutter Speed – 10sec

ND Filter – None

Second Picture – Beach – ISO – 100

Aperture – f/8

Shutter Speed - 15sec

ND Filter – 5 Stop

Third Picture – Light Trail – ISO – 200

Aperture – f/7

Shutter Speed – 30sec

ND Filter – None

ISO

What is ISO?

Most of the cases you will see people explaining it’s the sensitivity of the camera but if you ask me I will put it in this way, it’s a software based feature that can expose an image as we like. That’s why increasing it to a level more than 1600 or so introduces grains to the picture in entry level cameras. So I’ll recommend you to keep it below 1600 and try playing with the shutter speed and aperture to expose the photo properly. Base ISO is the lowest ISO setting on a particular camera that does not digitally increase exposure most of the times it's 100.

Exposing with Your Camera’s Light Meter

A light meter is a device used to measure the amount of light. A light meter is used to determine the proper exposure for a photograph. We can find it in the viewfinder of your camera or in the display LCD or in the display near the shutter release button. The scale ranges from positive (+3) to negative (-3). If you are starting off I would suggest taking a quick look at the scale and adjusting settings so the meter’s reading is “0” in the center.

Reading a Histogram

The histogram is a graph that shows you the exposure of every part of your frame. It comes handy when editing the image. To achieve a properly exposed image try having a good medium fat graph in the middle between your shadows and your highlights. It’s a graphical representation of the exposure values of your image. It can also include colour and tonal values.

Composition

Can be defined as positioning the objects in the frame. It is what guides our eyes through a photograph and gives importance to the subject in relation to the rest of the photo. Can dramatically change how a viewer sees your photo. Influenced by angle, perspective, size, position.

The Rule of Third

The rule of thirds is a compositional rule that involves mentally dividing up your image using 2 horizontal lines and 2 vertical lines. You then position the important elements in your scene along those lines, or at the points where they meet. A rule of thirds grid.

Depth of Field

It is the distance between the distance between the nearest and the farthest objects that are in acceptably sharp focus in an image. Here shallow depth of field means the more blurry background, to achieve that look we have three different ways like the larger aperture, the closer subject to the camera and more telephoto lens. If in low-light the camera struggles to find focus point at times I suggest using the manual focus mode and the focus ring present on most of the lenses to get a crisp image.

Editing

This can turn a normal image into a masterpiece and vice-versa. I personally use Photoshop CC and Lightroom Classic CC for editing in PC and Adobe Lightroom and Picsart for minor edits in mobile. Colour Grading according to your need is the key to edit like a professional. Later on in my blogs I’ll share my raw and processed images.

Tips and Tricks:

1. Don’t take out your SD Card from camera oftenly it damages the sensor head in camera
2. When changing lenses, tilt the camera down at an angle, so that dust particles don't settle on the mirror/sensor of your camera.
3. Clean your lenses regularly with Isopropyl Alcohol Solution and Microfiber Cloth.
4. Always keep a spare battery with you even though your primary one is fully charged.
5. Don’t forget to remove your battery from the camera after you are done with shooting.
6. Always use lens hood or UV Filter as protection for your lenses.
7. Don’t remove the camera straps until you are using it on gimbal.
8. Avoid storing your gears in moist or damp places.
9. Don’t touch your camera with oil or dirt on your hands, which eventually leads to wearing out of the leather coating from the body.
10. While purchasing gears for camera lookout for fake and duplicate products.

Equipment:

Cameras:

* Canon C100 Mark II – Filmmaking
* Sony A7S II – Mirrorless
* Canon 5D Mark III – Professional DSLR
* Nikon D3500 – Entry Level DSLR
* Canon EOS 3000D – Budget DSLR

Lenses:

* Canon
* Nikon
* Sigma
* Yongnuo

Audio equipment:

* Zoom H6N
* Rode VideoMic Pro
* Rode NTG3 Shotgun
* Boom Pole

Lighting Kits:

* Godox Diffuser Umbrella
* Kodak Ring Light
* Digitek Portable LED

Film-Making Page

Quote on Landing page –

It is the power of memory that gives rise to the power of imagination.  
– Akira Kurosawa

(\*End the parallax transition)

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Pre-Production Checklist-

Creating a concise direction, vision, and goal for the project. A goal without a plan is just a wish. Choose an idea that is realistically executable and you enjoy the shoot. Define the story and shots that will make up the project, to do that first create a script, characters and a storyboard. After gathering all the elements of the production and planning the practical parts of the production, create a budget, scout location and gather your equipment. Now wrap up final elements before production.

Understanding your Camera:

Understanding your camera is really the key that makes a good video into a great one. The latitude of your camera most of you might not have heard the term and no one’s really talking about this nowadays. It’s the ability of your camera to evenly expose a frame, in filming cameras the latitude ranges up to 14 f-stops. Consider having a well-lit subject and overexposed or underexposed background naturally your attention will be drawn towards the subject. Consider a landscape and your frame is unevenly exposed; that's a major turn off for viewers. Next pay attention to your White Balance this can change the vibe or mood of the whole scene. Talking about settings, always shoot at the highest available resolution and at a frame rate of 60 Fps.

Production and Lenses

Mastering your lenses is an incredibly important tool to become a professional video creator because the choice of lenses totally changes the feel and overall aesthetic of the film. Now coming to focus mode, always use manual focus because you specifically need to tell your camera where it needs to focus with respect to the focal plane because most of the time it will take its focus point in the centre or well exposed parts of the scene. That is not what you always want while shooting a video. If you own multiple lenses then I would suggest you use a prime lens for drawing attention towards the subject on a single plane, wide angle lens for shooting landscapes and wider range of subjects and zoom lens for close up, macro and wider range of shooting. If shooting in low light use a prime lens preferably as they have lower f stop. If you intend to travel then I suggest you carry small and necessary gears only.

Lighting and Sound

Key principles in lighting in your film and video is to control and keep in mind how you’re affecting the viewer. The light shows your viewer the ambience of the scene and the sound track decides what to feel. People don’t really consciously know the importance of lighting every element of the scene but it really affects how you feel. Imagine seeing a beautiful sunset you’re there with your girlfriend, maybe you don’t have a girlfriend doesn’t matter. The point is the light in the scene sets your mood and how to feel. If you are shooting outside without specific requirements then shoot in the golden hour of the day. Now that you have managed to draw the attention of your viewers and set the ambience it’s time to make them feel the scene. If the audio in your film is incomplete the story that you are trying to tell would remain unfinished. I already have discussed earlier in the Equipment section related to Light and sound.

Framing Understanding

Let’s see the different types of framing all these different choices that you’re going to use to create an incredible video. First comes the extreme side shot or landscape shot, this is an excellent type of framing that you use to establish a character in a specific environment. This captures a large range of information, this shot can’t be achieved by a telephoto or a macro lens. You need something around 16-35MM. Then comes medium shots that are generally the waist up, It's closer up on the subject and you can still see hand gestures. When you close in a bit farther we get medium close up. For these shots you can use something varying from 35-70MM. There are many more shots like over the shoulder, vertigo, reflection on the surface etc. You should get more creative with framing shots that will lead you to gain more experience.

Mastering Camera Movements

The language of camera movement definitely my most favourite part of filmmaking besides the editing process is using dynamic camera movement, right moving the camera physically through space forward and back left and right up and down and this three dimensional axis that we have to create. If you are doing a hand-held shot with camera movement then I would suggest you turn on the VR (Virtual Stabilization). A dolly shot with camera movement or a steady cam or a gimbal. I personally own a Webill-S which works with complete charm. I can’t exactly tell you what camera movements to use, because that depends on different shots.

Editing and Posting

This part can make a very normal looking video into a masterpiece, key to editing a video is understanding every shot choice and deciding its sequence, shot length and knowing when to cut. Yes, if there are mistakes while shooting those can be corrected while editing them. At last comes the colour grading, this will turn your video into Hollywood level movie if done with perfection. I will share my edited videos and how I edit them accordingly. Post it as you like and make sure to look out for copyrighted contents in your video and you are good to go. I am open to any critic and help you lookout for, feel free to ping me and ask if you have any doubts regarding these.