**What would you say is your greatest talent or skill? How have you developed and demonstrated that talent over time?**

I always had a certain sixth sense in photography. Back when I first picked up a camera, a small, compact Nikon from my dad, I used to take pictures for fun while subconsciously correcting myself in every shot I took. My 10-year-old self was unbeknownst to any photography techniques. I was simply having fun and kept taking pictures wherever I went.

It wasn’t until college, when I took a photography class at UCSD, that I realized the love I have for photography. I took the class solely to fulfill my General Education requirements whilst, as much as I’d want to sugar code it, get an easy-A. To my surprise, I was exposed to so many things beyond photography techniques: the history, the artists, and their styles.  While techniques were great to learn, I was primarily intrigued by artists that had a passion for nature based photography. For one artist, “a people-less picture bears a unique perspective on mother earth, due to its liberation from political correctness.”

That quote struck something in me. After looking at my recent and old pictures, going way back to my first Nikon picture, I saw a pattern. I had gravitated towards nature pictures too but with a twist: a lot of them involved the contrast of infrastructures. I found it surprising that I haven’t noticed this pattern. But after knowing that some artists had chosen to avoid taking pictures involving human activities due to political correctness by opting to take nature pictures instead, I begged to differ. I saw the idea of taking a picture that portrays the effects of human obstruction to nature without necessarily portraying them in it.

Hence, I soon curated my photography account to convey just that, leading to my interest in working on innovative machine designs that prioritize environmental sustainability. Thus, I am thankful that photography has pushed me to ask questions about myself, about what social impact I could make in my life. That is why photography is meaningful to me. Not only has my photography journey led to my skill improvement, but also led to identifying myself towards the kind of Mechanical Engineer that I want to be. I will continue to pursue both photography and the development of environmentally sustainable technology simultaneously.

Hi Ravi,

I see that this essay has indeed showcased how you’ve developed your interest for photography over time.

However, I feel that currently, the prompt is still not explicitly addressed. The key to writing a strong essay is to write about an obvious skill and explore your specialization. At the moment, your essay sounds like why you became more interested in photography and how you developed this interest.

First, think about how you’ve developed photography skills through unique situations. For instance, your dad also loved photography and both of you shared the same passion for taking pictures. Then, after taking some pictures yourself, your dad applauded you, saying you had an eye for this and handed you his compact Nikon. Later, you became the photographer for all of your family events, etc. This is the chance for you to show off a bit about your photography techniques and how your talent is appreciated by others. Remember that you need to answer **how you demonstrate** this talent.

Next, consider how your relationship with photography has evolved. Why do you keep going? Do you find peace in taking pictures of nature/people/infrastructure? Currently, it is rather hard to see your values or ambitions for developing this talent. Make sure to also address the amount of effort you’ve put to hone this skill. Do you practice it daily? Watch videos and techniques on Youtube? Join a club?

Lastly, elucidate why photography is valuable to you, and include why photography has helped you developed more **personal strengths**/traits that made you a strong candidate for UC. As of now, it is rather hard to see the connection between photography and the areas you mentioned: machine designs, environmental sustainability, or mechanical engineering. A better way to address this would be how you wanted to become more environmentally conscious after taking pictures of nature ruined by humans. Another would be how you became more patient because taking good pictures would require some time.

Best wishes,

Melinda