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When I was in school, photography interested me and I have also done photo developing as a hobby. In fact the first thing that I did was most probably when I was in fifth or sixth standard, and I became a little more serious by the time I finished my schooling. I had a collection of very good photographs and then that probably encouraged me in continuing with it. So I came back to Bombay and continued with photography. In fact, I was the first to organize something called photo corners in college - National College. The best photographs taken by any student would be clipped in over there. That became more serious when I came to KC College in my second year. For my second and third I stayed in KC College, in Bombay, and it became a competitive zone.

Those days it was all black and white, 1957-1961, and in fact photography was not that expensive in black and white. So there used to be weekly competition. The best photograph was to be put up on the notice board with captions, and by 1961 in fact 1960, there was an even a photographic exhibition in KC College.

In 1961, when I finished my graduation, then it had become more serious and they in fact even had prize money, the college used to put up the prize money. In fact, the best photographs appeared on the cover page of the Rhea magazine. By then, I was also taking part in photographic exhibitions in Bombay like Photographic Society of India and other exhibitions and I went on getting some prizes. Then my photographs used to be sent abroad for the competitions, I remember for one in Germany they even sent a couple of my photographs.

So by then, it was obvious there was no other choice but to look into the field of photography - that is if I convert my hobby into profession, probably I would do better. Mainly when I started with photography I was school student, It was random. There was no any aim to it, but I was provoked by family members to take photographs of their to-be wedded daughters. So, it worked for me financially because whichever girl I photographed got married (with the approval of photographs), I would get some money. Those days there was no flash or anything. I used to take care - a little good background and all that – with my box cameras.

There is another story - how I went from the Box Camera to a better camera which. All those cameras are with me even now. So what happened is that the money that used to come from photographing the to-be brides, I would use it to buy more rolls. With those I began to shoot landscape and candid photography. There were lots of Candid photographs which got an award by what used to be called the AXA Art Gallery. It used to be published from Bombay and my photographs used to appear and they used to send me the prize money of 25 rupees where I was studying in school (in Jamshedpur, Bihar that's where I studied). And this money helped me to buy a better camera.

Anyway, later when I came here to Bombay, I thought these were too small amounts. And it's not money alone that is important. So I stopped giving them out but began to enlarge them myself and exhibit.

When I finished my B.Sc., I was looking for work one Mr. Lakshmi Nursu who was in Delhi (He used to be the Secretary of Indian Academy of Photographers and he used to select my photographs to send abroad) wrote to

me saying that, Look you may be interested in this field and cinematography is little different but probably you would like it, and there is a institute which is coming up in Pune, look forward to it. That's it, I stopped everything and looked forward to the opening of that institute.

There's another story about how I got in there, in the Film Institute of India (later FTII). My selection was in a sense tough for them because those days they were selecting students who had little bit of knowledge of cinema but I had everything. I had almost a professional category of photography. So when I got in there I was given 6 months' grace period because they were supposed to teach photography in the first 6 months and I already knew that. So I in fact studied only 2-1/2 years instead of 3 years.

If I would not have gone there probably I would have gone to JJ school of Arts and may be into architecture, that was also interesting to me.

So, I graduated from Film Institute. My very first assignment was actually when I was still in there, and that probably was a blessing to me because my first assignment was Pope Paul's visit in India. Pope Paul was leaving the Vatican for the first time and he chose to come to India and that too to Bombay. One producer from Bombay asked me whether I would be able to come and cover it; that was the beginning of my career. Because my coverage was accepted and he made lot of money, he went on giving me assignments one after another. His name was Clavint Baptista.

The largest documentary filmmakers company was called Image India Films Pvt. Lad. Next to Films Division, they were the largest. I make a lot of films

for them - documentaries as well as advertising films, because they used to do both.

When I say advertising films, I mean I used to watch in the beginning. For these films they used to call cameramen from feature films. When I came out in 1964, I just observed them. They used to finish the shoot for these 1-minute films in 6 shots. So shoot 6 shots and put them together - it is a 1-minute ad. I used to feel that it needed more than 6 shots. Also they used to do no opticals at all, no in-camera opticals. Those days there weren't opticals like today which we can do in laboratories, by using the Dupe negative. No labs used to do it. So either you did them in-camera or there would be no opticals.

I thought of telling them that opticals can be done in-camera for the advertising films. And so I started shooting these films. I used to use the Mitchell to do opticals, because even though the Arri IIC used to be the popular camera, the cameraman can't do opticals in the Arri IIC.

Now, the opticals for advertising in those days were something like this: In those days, we shoot an ad film and it has to be released in say 10 languages in India. So the text captions had to be different languages and sometimes the pack also, as it had to be of the regional site where it was being used. I used to do those things directly in the Mitchell.

I began to be called by other producers as well and I became a kind of pack shot cameraman in the beginning for their advertising films and then later on I went on shooting their whole films as well.

What happened is that since my background was of the Film Institute, there we had been exposed the best films and a lot of opticals. We could see them and also we had some experience of operating a Mitchell and we had tried lots of experiments. So I wanted to carry on the same thing here - which I could easily do. So I thought of taking this very seriously and then I went on innovating with close up technology, split field technology, using lot of filters to glamorise the situation of advertising. I also started shooting a lot of shots for the ads, because I understood 'fast' shots, the cutting point required of them - and I understood them because of my background to cinema. So I used to shoot many shots within the given sequence. And that fascinated a lot of producers.

At an average, those days every film used to be a cinemahall ad film of one minute. Some of them were black and white and some of there were in colour. The black and white budget used to be Rs. 16,000 per film and the colour films used to have a budget of Rs. 37,000 to 40,000 per film, and the cameramen were paid – maximum - about Rs.700 per film. The film used to have normally about 2 days of shooting. If the film was being shot outside of Bombay, it used to be 2 days of shooting and two days of journey. Stock used to cost 1200 rupees for 1000 feet. The maximum stock used for a film was about 1 roll. Usually most films were shot in 500 feet because the number of shots and shot length was not as much as today. Secondly these films used to be the very, very simple.

There used to be studio shoots but the camera movements were not at all complicated. Today even in a 30 sec film there are sometimes even 40 shots, but those days it was not like that at all. It would be a maximum of 10 shots or 12 shots in a one-minute film, and this was reflected in the whole tempo of things. As

a matter of fact, this reflected the tempo of the whole country. Our Indian cinema and its songs used to be shot in the same way, just like our advertising films.

They were mostly jingle based or with a voice over which was changed for different regions, different regional voice-overs. The products used to be soaps, oils, textiles, pills, etc. Anacin used to have the maximum commercials in those days - Crocin and Anacin.

My first advertising film, if I remember rightly, was a washing powder called Magic. It was from the Tata Company and it is no more now. Tata introduced it in pack similar to what Surf is like today and it used to be called Magic, and then Magic became "New Magic" and "Super Magic", and it went on for several years- just like what Surf is doing today.

What happened is that my other colleagues went on coming from FTII and going into feature films and to other cameramen. I became a competition to them because now in advertising, most of the producers starting preferring me to feature film cameramen. So they all began to call me a *Saabun-Tel ka cameraman* (Soap-Oil cameraman) and my own colleagues from the same Institute also used to tease me. They would tease me and say *Saabun-Tel ka cameraman ban gaya*. (You have become a soap-oil cameraman) Meaning you don't have a future because you discourage feature films.

I do not know what helped me through this but I thought I will stay and I will remain the *Saabun-Tel ka cameraman*. Today I use the term sarcastically because today the first priority for any cameraman coming from the Film Institute is the ad films and short films. First he will get a name in ad films and then he will

get a place in feature films. This is because this has much better technology for the cameraman, also financially it is much better. Then you can see the results of your work every week, unlike feature films.

Furthermore, with feature films being as they are today, it could be that you are shooting half and then somebody else is shooting the other half of that film. They do not wait for the cameraman's dates. Naturally there they are interested in their star cast dates. Anyway, to keep it short, advertising has encouraged me in whatever I wanted to do, in whichever way I wanted to do it, and producers have also supported me in this.

So, as I was telling you, I began to take a lot more shots, a lot more than other cameramen, for these ad films. Which is not to say that I was creating/inventing this. There were directors and producers who were working in ads as well, but the fact is that in any situation a cameraman can always take more shots in a same situation. For instance, If I have a zoom in with me. (In fact when I started the zoom was not used. The zoom lens came much later but there used to be a short zoom length, it used to be 37 to 106 (1964-1965). In the end of 1965-1966 or even later, the 25 to 250 zoom length was introduced.) If I had the zoom with me then I used to tell them that I don't need any other lenses. Because with the zoom I used to take various shots of different dimensions, I would take the same shot in many different ways. Instantly I used to change when I felt that you needed to get closer. So that way the director used to get many cutting points.

Something like this – its not that cameramen from feature films couldn't do this, I guess they just didn't do it probably because they were not told to do it.

So that was one of the reason I became very popular. I used to use the zoom lens like a block lens, taking a number of shots, and giving cutting points to the director.

The second thing I used to do was to use lots of filters, which they (feature film cameramen) used to use only for heroines in feature films. Supposing the ad had an ugly bottle as the product – perhaps something with tonic of some kind in it. (I can't remember the name of this tonic bottle; I shot a number of films for it. Anyway this bottle used to be very ugly, the pack used to be very ugly. So to make it into a more glamorous bottle, I used to use nice filters, diffusers, or nets and that used to make it very nice looking.

Similarly, soaps - real soap never used to be good to shoot. (Today in all the soap commercials no one uses real soap. The soap is made of acrylic, which means that one soap probably costs about Rs.5000 - Rs.10,000) In those days it used to be real soap and real soap – made out of 100 per soap – was made for the shooting, but even then it did not look nice. So. I used to use filters.

So, when you are delivering something good then people start demanding it. The earlier and other cameramen used to shoot the films straight-on, and that is the reason that there was a difference in my shooting and their shooting. I used to use a heavy diffuser on soap. They used to use the heavy diffuser only on the heroine, but I said to myself that our heroine in this case is soap.

Basically, the thinking was different. Here, in my case, the cameraman's thinking went beyond the director's thinking. So things went on changing in

advertising. Another thing I also introduced was the close up lens. There used to be no close up lens used in advertising – I began to use the macro lens. For pack shots or anything else, they would do whatever minimum they could, but I went beyond that limit. These lenses existed and were available but they were not being used properly. So I used to use macro lenses for the pack shots and go that close.

Then I also introduced split field photography, which became very popular, almost every second film used to have a split field. Split field is that if you have an action happening on the background, and you want to show something very close to the camera, usually its impossible to have them both in focus. Except is you use split field photography. So the bottle can also be in focus in close up and also the action on the background. This is today much easier on video. In video you can always have this kind of multi-images but on this cinefilm, it was not easy.

This split field technology was introduced by me into advertising. The split field is a lens which is a half lens - it looks like a broken lens, so that on half the lens you can put on the zoom lens. So whichever side there is no zoom lens you can have an action at the background and whichever side you have the lens you can put the pack.

Most of my films used to land up with the split field shots and sometimes I used split field shots more effectively in two action shots, and also by putting things the other way round - top differently and bottom differently. Take for instance - trees with lot of flowers and fruits can be put on the split field on the top

and the down below there can be a different action, may be boating or something like that. This fascinated people in advertising.

I cannot remember a lot of these things that I went on introducing in advertising films. Even in terms of lighting, and the fact that every shot had to be innovative. Today, things have changed. Now they give you references, even video and not only photographs, and they say give us this. They want you to replicate what exists from foreign ads.