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## Mr. Mukund Sawant

Interviewer: Ms, Shilpi Gulati

Camera/Sound: Ms. Divya Cowasji

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Mr. Mukund Sawant is Producer and Co-ordinator, Media Archive and Resource Centre, School of Media and Cultural Studies. After completing his GD Art from the JJ School of Art, Mumbai, he joined TISS in 1978 at the inception of the School, when it was an audio-visual documentation project under the aegis of the renowned late playwright Mr. Vijay Tendulkar. He is a graphic designer, photographer and an award-winning filmmaker.

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Mukund Sawant:

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We had around 7 – 8 projects with them. We used the Super 8 Camera. I hardly knew anything about it. I used to just carry Vijay Tendulkar's bags and go with students to Trikaya. Rediffusion and Trikaya were the new agencies that time. Thums Up was a new brand that time. So with my friends we had made the symbol of thumbs up even.

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Mukund Sawant:

I was thinking what to do now. We had lenses for the Kodak Camera and we worked on Kodak Chrome Film. In Super 8 camera we had a film with sound which was manageable. We used to send it to Kodak Company for development.

All the technical issues of the camera were unknown to us. But I am happy that I have learnt it now.

0:00:56.801

Mukund Sawant:

We had our Unit in the Library. We had a small room there. We had two locks there and all the sources were kept there like the projector, Cassettes etc. I learnt everything with my pace and had started with audio visual work. I was very bored. Tendulkar Sir, Medha Patkar, Prof. V Panvalkar spoke all about Social Work. I never knew all these things. But later I understood little bit. Like defining what India is all about.

India had two identities. One is known as Bharat and the other is India itself. What I thought and what was there in front of me was different.



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Mukund Sawant:

Then I started working with Prakash Amte. We worked with Baba Amte. As we started on our audio visual work we had big celebrities coming in. I felt something different. I felt as if I should learn this. I used to go in slum areas like Dharavi. We took many photographs. Then I realized that this is a different India than that I was thinking about. This is not the same India. This is my Bharat. This is a different world and I have started analyzing it. Then we had ample projects in our hands. We had a project of Shramik Sangathan.

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Mukund Sawant:

That is a Samadhi place of Ghulam Maharaj. Tendulkar Sir used to guide me. I did minor work like taking shots of the place. I did even climb a tree to take different shots. Tendulkar Sir was around 55 – 60 so I used to do this work. And one day we missed one of our trains and we were away from Nandurbar. We were 40 km away. We walked all the way from Dhulia. We thought it was near and we went on walking. But that time while walking with him I learnt a lot. We were making a slide show in Mhaisal. We had used Super 8 Film for that. So I had to go to a Mandir belonging to Devdaasis to get the foot work. Someone threw a stone at me. I did not realize what was wrong. I thought it was a kind of misunderstanding. But then I realized they did it purposely. Later they asked from where I was? And said that I cannot take photographs like this way. I said I have some work over here. But don't throw stones at me, I will leave. I learnt a lesson.



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Mukund Sawant:

Then there were different experiences with different places. There is a quote in Marathi, "Mannat hote hathi ghode palkhi te basave" There are many things running in your mind. Feel like accomplishing my wish but whatever happens, happens according to God's decision.

But sometimes you even get success very soon. And that thing I appreciated a lot. I had heard it many times but this time it happened with me. And my interest in my work increased. So my vision expanded in graphic designing, painting etc.

0:04:56.519

Mukund Sawant:

I started adapting with the society in different aspects in Tata Institute of Social Sciences. I find myself very lucky to be here. They had many Seminars organized related to this work. So I used to make certificates, banners for such Seminars. I had different designs for every Seminar. I even changed the design format for the Convocation Ceremony. I had made a huge banner. Later I had to just change the figures. Convocation numbers I used to make in thermocol. Later when they used to put the banner I had a different feeling of happiness running in myself.

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Mukund Sawant:

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I had started designing on sets. Whenever there was a program I used to design the backdrops and other stuff. Certificate designing was also done by me. Once I went to Prof Gore with a very good design. He asked me who made this design. I was happy to answer that I have made it. He said that don't make such good designs because TISS certificates also don't have such good designs. He asked me to make it according to a particular standard. He said the designs are so good that I feel bad for not approving for the short term course. I appreciate your work but don't be so good that I have to disapprove it.

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Mukund Sawant:

I am very happy to say that I have many records maintained in TISS. From 1978 to 2012 whoever has passed out from TISS, the calligraphy on their certificates is done by me. Even the certificates for the Head of Departments, Chairperson plus doctorate students have my handwriting on their certificate.

0:07:11.002

Mukund Sawant:

On their PhD thesis also I have worked a lot. In that also I have actively participated. I have adopted a different nature now. Anjali and Jayasankar always say that I like helping and volunteering. I have mastered lots of skills with this volunteering work. And it also makes me feel like a good human being.



0:07:52.639

Mukund Sawant:

Yesterday when I was thinking about this interview I was thinking to give a whole retrospective of my work. There was a NSS department here, even there I have many lectures. I had made lots of posters with calligraphy and in street plays also there was lots of work done. I had visited rural campus even. I consider myself very lucky. I used to take photographs of those events. There was an event in Taj Mahal hotel so with the Director I left for the hotel in his car. I realized my importance that time.

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Mukund Sawant:

And all people here have loved me. So my nature has changed. I am very happy to retire in Platinum Jubilee. I am taking all my memories with me. My work and recognition is making me proud. I have made reports for the Director, annual reports, certificates, art work etc. I have even made designs for books. So I am much known here.

0:09:28.838

Mukund Sawant:

I have three portraits with charcoal. Dr M S Gore, Dr. Behram Mehta and Dr Armaity Desai. So I have some impressions left even here. So whenever I will return I have signs of my work over here. Before I forget we had Raj Kapoor's bungalow in our neighborhood. That was a sight of attraction.



0:09:58.200

Mukund Sawant:

I worked for golden jubilee. I have organized exhibitions. Three of them were only on TISS. There was a screening in NCPA which was about TISS. So Anjali, and Nandan Kudhyadi together had made a presentation which was screened with three projectors. To see every word we had to divide it in three frames and we had calculated it the same way. I had learnt a different skill that time. The presentation was for 10 min but there were 9 projectors. We had given a dissolve to eclipse. As soon as the film started my journey towards this whole work started. It was a wonderful feeling.

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Mukund Sawant:

I was talking about Raj Kapoor. I always got positive energy in his songs and I got encouraged.

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Shilpi:

You have completed more than 30 years. There are different stages where the Center of Media and Cultural Studies has changed. What has been your experience of it?

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0:11:47.801



Mukund Sawant:

When I had joined here there were only 6-7 units. Dr Gore, Vijay Tendulkar etc. Because students could not go to certain places we used to go and get the work done. So we used to do reece and then plot our layout. And we always completed the work. But Tendulkar sir had some other things in mind. He wanted the students who were interested to work on camera to come in front and participate. And Tendulkar sir had taken one box camera which was for the faculty. He said that students should take the camera with them and we will develop the films. At **the dark room**, we had lots of work. We illustrated a rough table and had copyrights over here. And we had big panels to show case them.

0:12:50.479

Mukund Sawant:

The whole production was based here. Then Anjali and Jayasankar joined in. Initially Anjali had made a film Pani Panchayat in Naigaon. They even received Bajaj award. But the Government had not provided any scheme for us. But Odhni was a production which started later. First audio visual unit was established and then a Media and Communication Center was established.

0:13:32.799

Mukund Sawant:

The change was good. VHS Super 8 Camera was being used at that time. Anjali and I together had made lots of slide shows. Later we changed to only VHS. In VHS we received 180 cassettes. The problem was in zoom in and zoom out because we were not



from FTII. But later we understood very well. When I had visited FTII I had seen pictures there. Different styles were implicated on different pictures. Later we had Nandan Kudhyadi join in and then a girl from IIT Powai, Srabani Azam had joined in with Jayasankar Sir. He was doing his PhD that time. We met them during Pani Panchayat film.

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Mukund Sawant:

Jayasankar sir and Anjali have made lots of films together. Later the environment changed. Later some process changed and then the syllabus. During this process in meetings I was also included and my suggestions were also taken. I was respected by Anjali and Jayasankar. I have seen this center developing. When the first batch passed out from here that time I felt that we have so many people ready to face the outside world.

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Mukund Sawant:

Hence cultural studies came into picture. And it was included in the course. Hence here the exposure even as compared to FTII is very good. TISS gives an additional perspective beyond the technical only. The adjustments like lights and other elements were considered a lot. It taught you to the core how to actually make a film. Now we even feel good when our students win awards and come to TISS. It is an achievement for us as well as for the students. They have grown up and now they are making their own independent films. It makes me feel good when students make documentary films.



0:16:13.799

Mukund Sawant:

First documentary was not given importance but now people have started knowing what documentary is all about. I like the fact that what we started has now become an important aspect in society. We had students with fourteen in a batch. Now we have twenty students in a batch. Now we have forty two students learning FCP. And they are learning very well and grasping very fast. We even hear this conversation about the shot which we like a lot. It makes us feel that they are learning a lot.

0:17:02.518

Mukund Sawant:

Right now students themselves are making good films. Right now we have a festival called Cut.In in Mumbai. Films made by student have some kind of uniqueness. Like there is a building at Crawford Market which basically is common however in a film by students it appears very different. One film was made on comics. We often read comics but one student made a film on that topic. So all kind of skills and creativity are been used here.

0:17:43.519

Mukund Sawant:

It is a good thing. It is a different understanding altogether. Students have made films on M Ward. And the message of volunteering is been passed about with awareness in the



film. This is visually possible through these films. Within one short film there are different aspects and our students here are very bright. And this is true enough. Right now Divya and Shilpi are making films on Platinum Jubilee of TISS and even won an award. Looking at that I feel that they have won a Filmfare award.

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Mukund Sawant:

Now it looks like everything just passed by too soon and still there are more prizes to win. Already we are running short of show cases to put our awards in. And students are also working hard for making films.

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Shilpi:

Sir, can you talk a bit about Prof Gore. He was one of the Directors and as Directors come in there is a different change seen in the Institute. Can you tell us what kind of ethics did Prof Gore have?

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Mukund Sawant:

Initially I hardly knew how to speak English. But then I gave it a thought that Prof Gore is a Maharashtrian and during my interview people had come from Malegaon. Everybody was there. I had got a huge portfolio with me. I asked him to only look at my work and spoke less with him. Even Tendulkar sir was there. He looked at my work. My brother



was pursuing a PhD in Institute of Science and had much work related to it. So later I decided that I will do all kinds of work related to slide show or whatever it is. He judged my work properly and there was no partiality. He was a very soft person. His bungalow was exactly opposite to our unit. After having his lunch he often used to meet Tendulkar Sir. And because it was an audio visual unit it used to be dark over there.

0:21:22.519

Mukund Sawant:

And because our curtains were pulled he thought that we were working around. And he often visited us. So there was one project by Prakash Amte at Hemalkasa and his language was really very hard to understand. I did not understand a bit of it. The para professional social worker had written the script in Devnagri and it was written in Marathi. He was teaching the tribals Marathi and asking them to express themselves in it. So later I was asked was it necessary to put the script in Devnagri language only as it was different from their language ? Do we need change their language? He just said this and left. And then I realized it is very much necessary to be alert about cultures around you. I did not understand that time but later it was easy for me to understand.

0:23:02.239

Mukund Sawant:

We were shocked on what basis did he comment, even Tendulkar Sir was stunned for a moment. Prof Gore had a house in Hubli and we had visited his place once when he was a Director. For some work all of us with Prof Gore were suppose to go there. Face's was



the organization to invite us. There were different people all together there. We had to make one slide show to show there. We had to stay in Prof Gore's house only. That time he was a different man. His way of addressing changed and he was friendlier.

0:24:11.879

Mukund Sawant:

That time it was hard to believe a man in different way. He had received a Padmabhusan award and he was so down to earth. Our conversation started from there. The Maharashtrian culture adopted in the circle was different and I liked it. It was a different friendly environment. And thereafter when I was back we often had small conversations about my work and he never behaved like a higher authorized person as a Director. He had written an article on Tendulkar Sir. He wanted a young photographer that time and he got one.

0:25:14.038

Mukund Sawant:

He had made good sketches. He did not write my name in the article. Because every article has its own flavor within itself. There were many theaters in Dadar. And Tendulkar sir asked Prof Gore to visit the place once. He agreed and asked to buy tickets. There was a film called Simhasan which portrayed a political leader. So we had gone to see that movie with him. So Prof Gore asked all of them to join the movie . He even asked his driver to join in. Director Jabbar Patel asked him to call the driver to see the film



also. And he was pretty friendly with everyone. While sitting in a car he never sat on the back seat showing that he was superior. He always sat besides his driver.

0:26:23.838

Mukund Sawant:

We had received a National award for my production work and that time Prof Gore was in Mumbai University. So we went there to meet him. Then he said that he is leaving after nine months and has many good prizes with him like cameras and other stuff related to that. The camera had flash guns etc. He gave away many things to us like tripods and cameras. This was all about Prof Gore. A nice person. Then came was Dr Armaity Desai.

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Mukund Sawant:

I had seen her photograph when she was a TISS student. 1986 was a golden jubilee year. That time I and Anjali had worked. Every member of the unit was present. We had worked with Illustrations and made around 45 posters and I had made a logo for 50 years. Different styles were used for that creative writing. We had taken signatures from big people. So I was told that with the signatures 50 years did not suit. Later I designed something like a peacock and she liked it. We had even taken ideas from members of social work course. Dr Desai really loved the concept.

0:28:46.798

Mukund Sawant:



The ideas were not matching our graphic designing. We wanted simplicity and not like an agency. We used to work day and night for this activity. We had many posters now. Later from Bangalore, Mukherjee sir had come. He was in the field of photography. He had developed a film with us in our unit. And he had said when the unit closes he was ready to buy all the stuff from there.

0:29:58.078

Mukund Sawant:

The card for his son's wedding was designed by me. I had gone to his cabin to make the calligraphic plate. I designed for big people like Sen Gupta, Vidya Rao, Miss Mathew and had designed a poster for Wadia hospital. I have often worked like this. I find myself very lucky to work here. This is all because of people around me in TISS.

0:30:38.879

Mukund Sawant:

Everything has changed in life. I am so happy and Tendulkar sir was right, he said don't run behind money, work and money will come automatically. And I never worked for money. I had attained peace by working over here. I have always been happy here and this is because of the culture here. This is what I will call my India.