



a moment IN TIME

SOME PEOPLE HAVE THE BEST JOBS. THEY GO INTO WORK SMILING. THEY MAKE OTHER PEOPLE SMILE. AND THEY COME BACK HOME SMILING.

PHOTOGRAPHER PRIYA CHHABRA IS ONE OF THOSE LUCKY FEW WHO GET TO DO SOMETHING SOUL-SATISFYING. HER MODELS ARE GLOWING PREGNANT MOMMIES AND CHERUBIC BABIES! OF COURSE, IT'S NOT A WALK IN THE PARK. THE JOB INVOLVES PULLING FACES TO MAKE SULLEN BABIES SMILE, BUT AT THE END OF IT ALL, WHEN THE PICTURES ROLL OUT, IT'S ALL WORTH IT!

GC: DID YOU FIND PHOTOGRAPHY OR DID PHOTOGRAPHY FIND YOU?

PRIYA: In a sense photography found me. I was always interested in it and used to take a few pictures. It never occurred to me that I could make a profession out of it. For fourteen years I worked in Public Relations. When I had my kids, I was constantly taking pictures of them. Being a Fine Arts student, I have a creative streak and invariably the photographs

came out well. Everyone who saw the pictures wondered why I did not do it for a living! My family was also very supportive. It was all the push I needed.

GC: WHAT IS THE SYSTEM YOU FOLLOW FOR YOUR SHOOTS?

PRIYA: Of course, meeting the client is the most important part. I like to spend time with them, chat with them and in general find out what kind of folks they are. I need to have an idea about the kind of things they like, which will inspire the shoot. It will help me come up with the theme and give me ideas for the shots.



GC: DO YOU HAVE PEOPLE COME TO YOU WITH THEIR OWN IDEAS AND CONCEPTS?

PRIYA: Yes. Some of them show me photographs they would like me to recreate. They give me the ideas that they have on their mind. I am very open to suggestions and when I hear something good, I am game for it. However, if I sense that it won't work, I will say so. I have been lucky to have had clients who trust me completely. They see my previous work and they feel confident that I will only give them the best. And moreover, the props and outfits I have are all imported. They are on par with International standards – all hand-picked by me.

GC: WHAT ABOUT THE SETS, HOW INVOLVED ARE YOU IN CREATING THEM?

PRIYA: Once we have the theme or concept figured out, I make the set. I build most of it by myself. I get help from my assistants to craft small things, but the important parts, I do myself. For instance recently we did a shoot for a little baby boy with an aeroplane theme – I made the aeroplane from cardboard myself. I feel better that way, than to outsource it.

GC: HOW DID THE SHOOT WITH SRIDEVI VIJAYAKUMAR HAPPEN?

PRIYA: Just through a common friend. I happened to be in the city and we met. We discussed the shoot and she was very excited about the ideas we shared and then it was all about getting everything together. The shoot was for her daughter's first birthday and we did a vintage theme and balloon jungle theme. The pictures came out so well. The balloon jungle was a big hit. I have lots of clients who request it.

GC: WHAT WAS THE GOAL WITH WHICH YOU BEGAN THIS CAREER, HOW CLOSE ARE YOU TO ACHIEVING IT?

PRIYA: There is no five-year plan or anything. I am the kind of person who takes one day at a time. I do this job because I love it. I enjoy working with little kids and pregnant moms. It's a very fulfilling job. It's difficult at times on the set. I go with a plan always, but not always does everything go by the plan. Especially when you are working with babies and kids. Some of them just won't smile or pose the way we ask them to and I have to coax and cajole them into obliging. Some babies sleep through the shoot and it's just a breeze! When it comes to pregnancy shoots, my only goal is to make the moms-to-be look gorgeous. I know what it is like, what kind of changes happen to a woman's body when she is pregnant. When she looks at the pictures I want her to see a beautiful lady. I don't want her to be reminded of the bloated feet and back pain! She's a goddess and I want her to look like one. That's the only objective I have.

Priya's photographs freeze moments that we can treasure for a lifetime. She combines passion, skill and precision, to give her clients more smiles than they can imagine!

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