



# National Film Archive of India

Ministry of Information and Broadcasting  
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## Interview of Stage & Movie actor Suryakant Mandhare by Bapu Watve

**Bapu Watve:** How did you enter into the film line? When did you get the chance? Was that always your ambition?

**Suryakant Mandhare:** I was attracted to the film line and acting profession right from my school days. I was studying in the same school in which my elder brother Chandrakant had studied earlier. In one Annual Gathering function, he was invited as 'Chief Guest'. Chandrakant presented mimicry items to students. Being a student then, I was also a part of the gathering. That performance impressed me so much...

**Bapu Watve:** Hmmm

**Suryakant Mandhare:** After the Mimicry item, the teacher appreciated and praised my elder brother and garlanded him and I felt why can I also not show a similar performance? I was attracted to that art and in next year's school gathering I took part and presented a Mimicry item.

**Bapu Watve:** Did you act in any school drama later on?

**Suryakant Mandhare:** Oh Yes! One year in school gathering a drama "Gurudakshina" was staged. And although I was a good looking guy, I was asked to play the part of the devil 'Jarasandh'.

**Bapu Watve:** A devil? Why??

**Suryakant Mandhare:** Because I was well-built. I regularly used to go to the gymnasium and had developed a good physic and therefore they gave me the role of

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Jarasandh. I did that part. Around the time of the prize distribution ceremony, Bal Gandharva's company had come to Kolhapur.

**Bapu Watve:** Then!

**Suryakant Mandhare:** Our school principal invited Bal Gandharva as Chief Guest for the function and I received first prize at his hand.

**Bapu Watve:** A very good omen.

**Suryakant Mandhare:** Yes. This encouraged me so much that I decided to pursue this art only and started taking steps in that direction.

**Bapu Watve:** Did your family encourage you to pursue an acting career or to enter into a film or drama line?

**Suryakant Mandhare:** No. There was some opposition from family and for good reason.

**Bapu Watve:** The reason for my asking you this question is that your father Tukarampant had acted in silent movies made by Maharashtra Film Company.

**Suryakant Mandhare:** Yes. In old days.

**Bapu Watve:** He had acted in a number of movies.

**Suryakant Mandhare:** Yes. He had played the part of Dhritarashtra in the movie Karna.

**Bapu Watve:** He was the director of the movie. The year 1928. And had also acted in it.

**Suryakant Mandhare:** Yes.

**Bapu Watve:** Your elder brother Chandrakant was getting well established in the film line. Even then were they against your pursuing an acting career in film or drama?

**Suryakant Mandhare:** Yes. Chandrakant was not able to study due to their family's financial condition.

**Bapu Watve:** Hmm

**Suryakant Mandhare:** So he felt that at least his younger brother should study and become a Doctor or Engineer. They were not wrong in their thinking.

**Bapu Watve:** Absolutely correct.

**Suryakant Mandhare:** He felt that since the financial position has improved and he was earning well his brother should study further which will be beneficial for me in long term. How much could I earn in an acting career?

**Bapu Watve:** Yes. There was uncertainty.

**Suryakant Mandhare:** There was uncertainty in this profession and everybody felt that I should choose some other profession where earnings are better.

**Bapu Watve:** Hmm

**Suryakant Mandhare:** But I had a liking for acting and I was not attentive to my studies. I was totally fascinated by the acting line.

**Bapu Watve:** Who made first use of your natural talent for acting?

**Suryakant Mandhare:** First Use! In the film industry, there was a comedian -- Raja Pandit.

**Bapu Watve:** Yes. Raja Pandit.

**Suryakant Mandhare:** Around 1938 he made a movie "Dhruv" which had only children enacting all roles. Even the minister's part was enacted by a small boy.

**Bapu Watve:** Was the movie "Dhruv" or "Baldhruv"?

**Suryakant Mandhare:** No. No. Only "Dhruv"

**Bapu Watve:** Ok.

**Suryakant Mandhare:** And in that movie, he wanted a smart boy for the role of Vishnu

**Bapu Watve:** Ok. Wamanrao, was that the first experiment in India of producing a movie with all child artists?

**Suryakant Mandhare:** Yes. Very first experiment. Before that nobody had tried movie with all children artists. The film festivals being organized now are of very recent origin.

**Bapu Watve:** Yes.

**Suryakant Mandhare:** So, at that time Raja Pandit had produced that film.

**Bapu Watve:** Enacted by all small children?

**Suryakant Mandhare:** Yes small children only.

**Bapu Watve:** The elderly characters were also played by children?

**Suryakant Mandhare:** Yes. And in that film for the role of Vishnu, he wanted a good looking, smart and well-built boy and he came to our Harihar School. Being weak in studies, I was required to attend the extra tuition class and the teacher was teaching.

**Bapu Watve:** Ok

**Suryakant Mandhare:** Headmaster and Raja Pandit came to class. All the boys stood up. Headmaster informed that Raja Pandit needed one boy for the role of Vishnu and he had asked him to have a look at all the boys and select one. Being a comedian Raja Pandit played a joke.

**Bapu Watve:** yes.

**Suryakant Mandhare:** What he did is... He would look at each boy one by one and ask him to stand up. Gradually all the boys were standing up. After having a look at me he asked me to sit down. I felt and all my fellow students felt that I am rejected. They started teasing me that henceforth I will be the only one attending tuition and they would all be acting in the movie.

**Bapu Watve:** Ok

**Suryakant Mandhare:** I also had tears in my eyes.

**Bapu Watve:** Ok

**Suryakant Mandhare:** I felt that I had lost a good opportunity.

**Bapu Watve:** Were you the only one dropped?

**Suryakant Mandhare:** Yes. So he started leaving and while leaving said that the boy who is sitting should join him.

**Bapu Watve:** Ok.

**Suryakant Mandhare:** I was very happy. And when I went to him he asked for my name to Head Master who told him Waman Mandhare.

**Bapu Watve:** Yes..

**Suryakant Mandhare:** After hearing the name Mandhare, Raja Pandit wondered if I was related to Chandrakant Mandhare?

**Bapu Watve:** Ok

**Suryakant Mandhare:** Principal told him—Younger brother

**Bapu Watve:** Hmm

**Suryakant Mandhare:** He was very happy that he was getting a brother of an artist. But the teacher put one condition.

**Bapu Watve:** Hmm.

**Suryakant Mandhare:** He said, his family does not permit him. Although the boy had acted in a school drama but he feels that his family....

**Bapu Watve:** will not allow him.

**Suryakant Mandhare:** Yes, because he is poor at his studies. You could meet him only because he was attending tuition. But Headmaster said he wanted to encourage this artist. And because Headmaster encouraged me my further career started.

**Bapu Watve:** So, in a way, Headmaster obliged you

**Suryakant Mandhare:** Yes. He obliged me.

**Bapu Watve:** Headmaster's name?

**Suryakant Mandhare:** His Name....Dattatray Mehendale. He told Raja Pandit that the boy comes to school at 10:30 am.

**Bapu Watve:** ok

**Suryakant Mandhare:** He should bring the company car to school and collect the boy. The school ends at 5:30 pm. So he should drop the boy at school at 5:30 pm. This became my routine.

**Bapu Watve:** Anybody at your home knew about it?

**Suryakant Mandhare:** No. Nobody was informed at my home.

**Bapu Watve:** Ok

**Suryakant Mandhare:** This routine continued. What happened one day...God Vishnu was sometimes coming to test Dhruv in a get-up of the old man and sometimes coming in the normal get-up. The changes in make-up took a long time and I did not realize that time was past 5:30 pm. Director and other crew members also forgot to drop me at 5:30 pm. At that time Director was P.K.Kale and Vasu Anna Karnataki was the cameraman.

**Bapu Watve:** Brother of Master Vinayak?

**Suryakant Mandhare:** Yes. While at the studio, I had got totally involved in work.

**Bapu Watve:** Totally engrossed?

**Suryakant Mandhare:** Yes. Totally engrossed. It must have been around 9:30 or 10 pm

**Bapu Watve:** Oh My....

**Suryakant Mandhare:** Must have been around 10:30 at pm.

**Bapu Watve:** It was very late.

**Suryakant Mandhare:** Yes. Very late. And one servant came and informed that Mandhare's father has come. At that time I was in a get-up of an old man, coming for Dhruv's test, trying my dialogues and P.K. Kale was explaining to me the movement of hands and neck etc. After hearing my father's name I got frightened and my voice started shaking but I continued saying my dialogues. People around liked my dialogue

delivery and actions and were very impressed and were appreciating my work while I was frightened to the core.

**Bapu Watve:** Others did not know....

**Suryakant Mandhare:** How would they know? Only I knew.

**Bapu Watve:** as to why the acting was so appropriate?

**Suryakant Mandhare:** This incident happened because of the worry that the son who normally returned from school at 5:30 pm did not. When my father returned from his shop my mother informed him that Waman has not come back from school and my father went to school to enquire. The headmaster informed him that he had permitted me because I had an inclination for acting and since I was getting a role of Vishnu he has given his permission. My father came to the company in a tonga.

**Bapu Watve:** Headmaster must have informed your father that you were a very good actor.

**Suryakant Mandhare:** Yes. He did and said that is why he has given his consent. Father came to the company in a tonga and enquired about his son.

**Bapu Watve:** Then

**Suryakant Mandhare:** Raja Pandit met him first and enquired who his son was. Father said Mandhare. My son. At the mention of the name Mandhare, Raja Pandit got frightened.

**Bapu Watve:** Right

**Suryakant Mandhare:** He told my father that his son was there and is working. And after completion of work, they will arrange to drop me home. I was called. When I reached there my father did not recognize me since I was in an old man's get-up. I called him and informed him that I was alright. His first question was whether I had my food?

**Bapu Watve:** hmm?

**Suryakant Mandhare:** Because timely food intake and exercise were very important in our home. My father will never enquire about my studies...

**Bapu Watve:** is it?

**Suryakant Mandhare:** He will never enquire about my studies, But will enquire every day if I had gone to the gymnasium for exercise and the number of Push-ups and squats I did.

**Bapu Watve:** Hmm.

**Suryakant Mandhare:** If he got delayed and I had taken my meals and slept, he would look under the sheet at my legs to see if they were reddened?

**Bapu Watve:** Oh! So keen on exercise?

**Suryakant Mandhare:** Yes. Very particular. Before sleeping we had to consume one glass of milk and a plate of Jalebi.

**Bapu Watve:** But due to this, both of your brothers got immensely benefited in your lives.

**Suryakant Mandhare:** Yes. He was very keen about good health. He would say that even if you do not study it is acceptable but your body must be strong to undertake any physical labour in an emergency.

**Bapu Watve:** One does not realize in one's childhood. But when one grows up he feels thankful to his elders for all that they have done.

**Suryakant Mandhare:** What my father has given me is the wealth of this strong body. My Good health has helped me now.

**Bapu Watve:** Right.

**Suryakant Mandhare:** I wonder if the present generation of artists realize this.

**Bapu Watve:** It does not appear so.

**Suryakant Mandhare:** So this was how I worked in my first movie.

**Bapu Watve:** What did your father enquire about?



**Suryakant Mandhare:** He asked if I had my meals. I said yes. He then said he had brought Jalebi for me. I ate the same under a tree there which satisfied him. He left and later company car dropped me home

**Bapu Watve:** But he must have told the producer or director that in case of delay his son must be dropped at home in the car.

**Suryakant Mandhare:** Yes. He strictly instructed them to take care of his son.

**Bapu Watve:** But you have to give him credit that he did not take you home while the shooting was halfway through..

**Suryakant Mandhare:** No. Because at heart he was an artist. He had worked earlier and knew the process of shooting.

**Bapu Watve:** Or the difficulties faced by the producer.

**Suryakant Mandhare:** Yes. He had the idea. But he had never pursued it as a profession

**Bapu Watve:** Right.

**Suryakant Mandhare:** For the sake of friendship. He had worked only due to his friendship with Baburao Painter or Damle.

**Bapu Watve:** Otherwise Dhruv film would have suffered.

**Suryakant Mandhare:** Yes

**Bapu Watve:** Did that movie get completed?

**Suryakant Mandhare:** Yes. It was first exhibited at Rajaram theatre at Kolhapur.

**Bapu Watve:** Were you invited to the opening?

**Suryakant Mandhare:** No. I was not famous then.

**Bapu Watve:** Ok

**Suryakant Mandhare:** Since I was not well known, he had not informed me but all other boys were informed. And my brother was invited.

**Bapu Watve:** Yes. He was a well-known artist

**Suryakant Mandhare:** Yes. Well-known artists were attending the premier show. In those days new films used to open on Saturdays and not on Fridays as they do these days.

**Bapu Watve:** Yes. I recall.

**Suryakant Mandhare:** So on Saturday noon, after school got over and after play, while I was returning, at Rajaram Talkies I saw boys, who had worked with me in the movie, at the theatre. But I was dressed only a half pant and shirt which were also soiled during play.

**Bapu Watve:** Was Vishnu's picture exhibited in theatre decoration?

**Suryakant Mandhare:** Yes. It showed a picture of God Vishnu with raised hand and Dhruv sitting with folded legs under a tree.

**Bapu Watve:** You were seeing this picture while going across the theatre?

**Suryakant Mandhare:** Yes. While going and coming back from school. I used to tell others that it was me. Because there was no publicity then. The booklet had my name first.

**Bapu Watve:** Good. Waman Mandhare.

**Suryakant Mandhare:** Shri. Vishnu - Waman Mandhare. I used to point it out to others browsing through the booklet.

**Bapu Watve:** How old were you? Twelve?

**Suryakant Mandhare:** Yes. At that age, it gave me great joy. That boy called me and informed me that our film was being shown. I rushed to the stall.

**Bapu Watve:** With school bag?

**Suryakant Mandhare:** No. The school was over. Saturday. Morning school.

**Bapu Watve:** That's right.

**Suryakant Mandhare:** I had gone to play games in the noon. I saw this while returning.

**Bapu Watve:** That's right.

**Suryakant Mandhare:** Raja Pandit met me, welcomed me, said our film is being shown and took me inside. It was dark inside. The film portion after Interval was being shown.

**Bapu Watve:** This means you did not see the film prior to the interval.

**Suryakant Mandhare:** No. I did not. He pushed me inside in the darkness and I sat on any available seat and saw the picture. When the lights came on and I looked around I saw Baba Gajbar and Chandrakant sitting on the seats behind me.

**Bapu Watve:** Baba Gajbar---your teacher?

**Suryakant Mandhare:** Yes. My drawing teacher.

**Bapu Watve:** Baba Gajbar was a great artist. He was a teacher of Dada also.

**Suryakant Mandhare:** Yes. He taught Chandrakant too. We took our first lessons in drawing from him only. Not at J J School of Arts. Baburao Painter had also not gone to J.J School of Arts. He was a self-made person. And we got good teachers at that young age. I rushed out. Reached home. Was expecting to scold from Dada.

**Bapu Watve:** Imagine the difference ---in that period and today.

**Suryakant Mandhare:** No. We used to respect them. It was out of respect.

**Bapu Watve:** Yes. We are talking of period 49 years back.

**Suryakant Mandhare:** Being afraid out of respect. After coming home, I decided to have a meal and sleep before Dada comes home. My mother asked why am I eating before Gopal comes home? Chandrakant's real name is Gopal.

**Bapu Watve:** Ok

**Suryakant Mandhare:** I told her I was hungry. I did not want to tell her the actual reason. Dada and father started their dinner. I was pretending to be asleep. I wanted to hear their talk.

**Bapu Watve:** You wanted to hear Dada's opinion. Whether he was annoyed.

**Suryakant Mandhare:** Yes. I wanted to hear everything. Dada was telling my father that he had gone to see the movie " Dhruv" and I had acted in it.

**Bapu Watve:** Was your father not aware of that till then?

**Suryakant Mandhare:** Father informed me that he knew about my role. That he had gone to the studio once when I had not returned till late. Dada said I looked good in Vishnu's role and had also acted well. After appreciating he also said that I should now pay more attention to my studies.

**Bapu Watve:** You were acting of being asleep.

**Suryakant Mandhare:** Yes.

**Bapu Watve:** So acting came naturally to you.

**Suryakant Mandhare:** Yes.

**Bapu Watve:** So! After Dhruv what? Dhruv ran well. Did you get any further offers for acting in movies?

**Suryakant Mandhare:** The fact is that I got my screen name Suryakant after I became famous. Once, after I had small children, "Dhruv" was being shown in Kolhapur. The publicity board mentioned the main actor—Suryakant. Only my name. Dhruv's role was enacted by Balakram. But Balakram was not that well-known..

**Bapu Watve:** Yes. Right.

**Suryakant Mandhare:** So because I was famous, the publicity board mentioned only my name. Then I saw the full movie for the first time with my children. After Dhruv, I did not do anything for 4 years.

**Bapu Watve:** Were you not studying?

**Suryakant Mandhare:** Yes. Schooling continued. I shifted to Private High School from Harihar Vidyalaya.

**Bapu Watve:** Ok

**Suryakant Mandhare:** When I was in matric, Balaji Pendharkar came to Kolhapur for the first time. He wanted to produce the movie “Bahirji Naik” and in that movie, Shivaji Maharaj was to be 16 years old; that is, without a beard etc. He called many boys to company, took their photos with makeup on but was not satisfied. Baba worshipped Shivaji

**Bapu Watve:** That’s right.

**Suryakant Mandhare:** He had a certain image of Shivaji in his mind and did not approve of anybody.

**Bapu Watve:** ok

**Suryakant Mandhare:** He remembered that Chandrakant had enacted the role of Sambhaji in his earlier film “Thoratanchi Manjula”

**Bapu Watve:** Yes

**Suryakant Mandhare:** He decided to cast him in the role of Shivaji.

**Bapu Watve:** “Thoratanchi Manjula” had come one year earlier.

**Suryakant Mandhare:** Yes. Chandrakant was then in Mumbai, working on two big projects- Ram Rajya & Bharat Bhet.

**Bapu Watve:** Yes. Produced by Prakash Pictures.

**Suryakant Mandhare:** He was enacting the role of Ram in that famous movie.

**Bapu Watve:** Right

**Suryakant Mandhare:** So Bhalaji wrote to him requesting him to spare eight days for him and promised to release him within eight days. Bhalaji being his Guru Chandrakant could not refuse. So he came to Kolhapur for eight days. In Baba’s system of working he made everybody practice a lot.

**Bapu Watve:** Like Drama.

**Suryakant Mandhare:** Yes. Because he wanted all characters to understand their roles and their inter-personal relations. When these practices were going on I always wondered why I was not being called.

**Bapu Watve:** Yes.

**Suryakant Mandhare:** When he called Dada from Mumbai why could he not call me. But Baba did not know that Chandrakant had a younger brother and I did not venture to tell him.

**Bapu Watve:** Right

**Suryakant Mandhare:** One day there was a school holiday, being Sunday.

**Bapu Watve:** Then

**Suryakant Mandhare:** I thought why not go to the company? And I went to the company on my bicycle. Baba had a very strict policy about visitor's entry. A watchman would first make you get down from the bicycle. He would enquire about whom visitor wanted to meet and the purpose of visit. One had to write his work on a slip of paper. Then he would take that piece inside and allow you to enter only if permitted. I wrote Dada's name and said I wanted to meet him. After seeing the slip Dada asked him to send me in.

**Bapu Watve:** So your Dada permitted?

**Suryakant Mandhare:** Dada was never against.

**Bapu Watve:** Ok

**Suryakant Mandhare:** He only wanted me to study. It was all for my good only. He regretted that he could not complete his education due to financial constraints and desired that, at least, I should get educated. I went in. The practice was on. Many artists like Master Vitthal, Zunzarrao Pawar, Shanta Jadhav, Chandrakant, Jayshankar Danve were there and the practice session was on. I was apprehensive.

**Bapu Watve:** Had not seen Bhalaji Pendharkar's practice sessions till then?

**Suryakant Mandhare:** Not only that, I had not even seen Bhalaji Pendharkar, that is, Baba till then. He was sitting in a chair near Dada. I went and sat near his feet. Baba

looked at me closely and after observing my built, figure and age he enquired with Chandrakant about me.

**Bapu Watve:** Ok. Then,

**Suryakant Mandhare:** Dada informed him that I was his younger brother. Baba said he never knew and called me near him. With apprehension, I looked at Dada and went to him. He checked my Arms.

**Bapu Watve:** Did he enquire whether you attend a gym?

**Suryakant Mandhare:** Yes. He checked my biceps and asked if I go to the gym and exercise. I replied affirmatively. He enquired which school I go to. When I told him about Private School he was very happy. He and Shantaram Bapu were past students of the same school.

**Bapu Watve:** Good

**Suryakant Mandhare:** He was very happy that I am from his school. He looked at my profile from all angles as a Director does

**Bapu Watve:** So he studied your figure.

**Suryakant Mandhare:** Yes and enquired if I would like to work. With apprehension, I looked at Dada. He noticed that and asked me why am I looking at Dada? He was Dada's Guru and asked me if I would like to work. I said yes. Then Baba turned to Jai Shankar Danwe who was Assistant Director and said Shankar, the God is on his side and he has got the Shivaji of exact age and figure that he had in mind. He asked for a scene and asked me to speak dialogue. It was Shivaji Maharaja's dialogue. I was keen not to miss this opportunity. I had acted in dramas earlier. So I said that dialogue loudly with all the actions. Baba had a stick in his hand and he hit me on my hand. I was stunned. I knew and had the experience of teachers hitting students in school

**Bapu Watve:** Yes.

**Suryakant Mandhare:** But here too? But Baba was a very good teacher. He explained that this was not a drama but a film. Here one does not need so many actions. After saying the dialogue accordingly he liked it. He felt confident that I could act in the role. He asked Chandrakant to give his dialogues notebook to me. He called his manager and asked him to find out when Chandrakant is leaving for Mumbai and to buy a ticket for him. Dada mentioned that he has come for eight days and can stay for eight days. Baba

said 'No problem'. He was starting practice with me from next day and Chandrakant can return whenever he wants and the manager will arrange for his ticket. He said he had found his 'Shivaji' and Dada could go back if he wanted. Dada waited and Muhurt of the movie was picturised on me.

**Bapu Watve:** Wow.

**Suryakant Mandhare:** The shot was of Shivaji sitting in front of Bhavani in the Bhavani temple and showering flowers on Goddess. Dada was also present for the Muhurt shot. I was fully made up first and then Muhurt shot was enacted. I did not know anything about the Muhurt shot procedure.

**Bapu Watve:** Right.

**Suryakant Mandhare:** Dada whispered to me that I should pay respect to Baba first. As I started to bend to touch his feet, Baba stopped me and told me that henceforth whenever I am dressed up as Shivaji or Sambhaji's costume, I should never bend in front of anybody. He said " We will pay respect to you and when we do that you will only touch the sacred beads in your neck. Even though I am your Guru and teaching you, the costume you are wearing will always deserve respect. You are very lucky that you are wearing Shivaji Maharaja's costume today. Do not ever forget this."

**Bapu Watve:** Oh!!

**Suryakant Mandhare:** That is why, to date, if I am acting in a drama and wearing a costume, and if somebody comes to meet me, I never greet him with 'Namaskar'. People perhaps misunderstand me. But in that costume, I am not Suryakant but am enacting Maharaja's or Chatrapati's role and I have to maintain the sanctity of that personality. My Guru has taught me that I must always respect and maintain the dignity of the person whose role I am enacting.

**Bapu Watve:** Bahirji Naik was filmed in 1943.

**Suryakant Mandhare:** Yes.

**Bapu Watve:** Then what happened to your schooling or studies while you were working for a movie?

**Suryakant Mandhare:** I neglected my studies. I was in Matric class. When my film 'Bahirji Naik' got released at Royal Talkies in Kolhapur, my exam result was declared.



**Bapu Watve:** Matric?

**Suryakant Mandhare:** Yes. And I had totally failed.

**Bapu Watve:** Failed?

**Suryakant Mandhare:** Baba gave me Rs. 150/- for acting in his film. I refused to accept and told him that I did not work with him for money and in fact, I was happy that he gave me work. He insisted and said had I been in school would I have not got the scholarship? How could I have got a scholarship in school when I was not paying attention to my studies? However, in film line, I got my first scholarship from Baba.

**Bapu Watve:** Yes. And Rs. 150/- was quite a sum in those days.

**Suryakant Mandhare:** Yes. A very good amount.

**Bapu Watve:** So although you had failed in exams, You had passed your test in film line.

**Suryakant Mandhare:** Yes. That is true.

**Bapu Watve:** Did you get more work after Bahirji Naik?

**Suryakant Mandhare:** No. Long after this film, in Baba's film only, like 'Sasurvas' etc I got few minor roles. Nothing major. Baba was giving me some small side roles.

**Bapu Watve:** This means even after being a hero in the film 'Bahirji Naik' you were required to enact some small roles.

**Suryakant Mandhare:** Yes. I was forced.

**Bapu Watve:** Did you not feel slighted then?

**Suryakant Mandhare:** No. I did not feel let down. Because I was enjoying my work. I was only 16 years old then.

**Bapu Watve:** Neither a kid nor a grown-up man.

**Suryakant Mandhare:** At that stage, I was not getting the roles of Hero. For the child's role, I looked old and for the hero's role, I looked young. I was not old enough to act a

lover boy's role. I was not getting any work. Schooling was over. I started going to Baba Gajbar to learn Painting. Dada said since I had left school I should at least learn painting from Baba Gajbar. I also started working with Bhalaji in the camera department.

**Bapu Watve:** Hmm. On what salary?

**Suryakant Mandhare:** Forty Rs.

**Bapu Watve:** Ok. While working as an assistant in the camera department were you also getting any roles in films?

**Suryakant Mandhare:** Yes. Side by side Baba would give me suitable roles. And in his film, 'Jai Bhawani' Baba gave me Shivaji's role.

**Bapu Watve:** So you enacted Shivaji again.

**Suryakant Mandhare:** Yes. That time I used to come to the company on a bicycle. Since I was working in the camera department, I was not entitled to a company car and I rode on cycle to come to work. One day the shooting continued till about 2=30 in the morning and after removing my make up while I was returning home alone on cycle at night, Baba saw me.

**Bapu Watve:** Baba, that is ..

**Suryakant Mandhare:** Yes. He saw me and called out to enquire who it was. I replied "Waman," I told him that I used to cycle every day for coming and going to work.

**Bapu Watve:** Then

**Suryakant Mandhare:** Next day when I was leaving my home for shooting and when I was taking out my cycle, Production Manager Babasaheb Patil came and asked me to come in the car. I was reluctant. But he insisted and told me that early morning he got a thorough scolding from Baba. Luckily for him, nobody except his assistant Parandekar was present then. Baba told him that I was enacting Shivaji in his film and I must be picked up and dropped in company car when so many other less important people were getting company car. That's how I got a car for me first time.

Earlier when Chandrakant was working with Baba and I was in the Camera Department car use to come for Chandrakant and many times my brother asked me to join him in the car, but I always refused to say that the car had come for him and I cannot join.

**Bapu Watve:** Were you and your brother staying together?

**Suryakant Mandhare:** Yes. But even when we were staying together I never went in the Company car that had come to pick him. It was a matter of self-respect.

**Bapu Watve:** That's right.

**Suryakant Mandhare:** I did not want other people in the company to say that I came in the car because I was the hero's brother. The person from the camera department was not entitled to a car. So I requested Dada not ask me to join him again and I would go on a cycle. People used to get lunch in the company but I used to come home for lunch.

**Bapu Watve:** On cycle?

**Suryakant Mandhare:** Yes. I would always come and go on a cycle. One should live as per his stature.

**Bapu Watve:** So you are firm on your principles.

**Suryakant Mandhare:** Yes. Very firm. I always stuck to my principles.

**Bapu Watve:** Even today.

**Suryakant Mandhare:** I had decided that I will step into the car only when It would come for me. For the "Jai Bhavani" film, Baba sent a car for my first time and I went in the car. Baba gave me that honour because I was enacting Shivaji's character.

**Bapu Watve:** So he gave you recognition.

**Suryakant Mandhare:** Yes. He gave respect to me.

**Bapu Watve:** One develops respect for such seniors and one works hard and because you work hard, seniors respect you. You developed a respect for Bhalaji

**Suryakant Mandhare:** Yes. I respect him. I consider him my Guru because I learnt a lot from him which helped me throughout my career.

Meanwhile I was married and therefore I had more responsibility. I was working in Camera Department at salary of Rs. 40. I had decided not to take any money from home

and manage my household within Rs. 40 only. My wife also went through a hard time then but she understood that we have to manage within my earnings and never demanded anything.

**Bapu Watve:** Sushilavahini was very understanding.

**Suryakant Mandhare:** Yes. Very understanding.

**Bapu Watve:** This was year 1947

**Suryakant Mandhare:** Yes. 26 December 1947

**Bapu Watve:** So it is almost 40 years since your marriage.

**Suryakant Mandhare:** Yes. 40 years.

**Bapu Watve:** Until now you had acted only in historical movies. When did you first act in a social movie and who gave you the break?

**Suryakant Mandhare:** I got that role in movie “Ketakichya Banat” made by Raja Nene. Raja Nene called me.

**Bapu Watve:** In which year?

**Suryakant Mandhare:** 1949. An important year in my life. I got a son in 1949. The birth of my first son and my first picture as a Hero, all happened then. Raja Nene called me and told me that he had a Hero's role for me. He wanted a Hero who could ride a horse. Because I had worked with Baba he had assumed that I knew horse-riding and, therefore, had naturally selected me. He used to call me 'Hero'. He liked my masculine personality and my body-built and would refer to me as Hero. He was very pleased with my body-built and always called me Hero and never by my name Suryakant. When he enquired if I knew Horse riding, actually I did not know riding. But I felt that if I said 'No' I would lose the assignment. So I lied that I was an expert in horse riding. Only that he should give me the horse for eight days in advance for practice. I explained to him that every horse has some peculiarities and the rider has to know them. I talked to him in a manner of an expert rider.

**Bapu Watve:** So here again Actor in you helped.

**Suryakant Mandhare:** Yes, But I was frightened. But I decided to become fearless and jump, come what may.

**Bapu Watve:** Yes. One cannot achieve anything with fear.

**Suryakant Mandhare:** Yes. Then a horse was brought for me in the company and I started practising and learnt to ride sufficient enough for that shooting assignment. But real fun occurred during an outdoor shooting in Botanical Garden.

**Bapu Watve:** All this happened in Pune.

**Suryakant Mandhare:** Yes. In Pune. The movie was made in Pune and for that movie, I got my first contract. Rs.1200.

**Bapu Watve:** Is it?

**Suryakant Mandhare:** Rs.1200 for full movie.

**Bapu Watve:** It was alright for that period.

**Suryakant Mandhare:** Yes. Can say that. I was married and had no option and had to earn something.

**Bapu Watve:** Well. Rs.1200 is better than Rs.40.

**Suryakant Mandhare:** Rs.1200/- for the full movie and I had to spare 3 to 4 months for that film.

The shooting was in Botanical Garden and I had to ride a horse. But the horse was not riding towards Camera in a straight line. Nana Ponkshe was cameraman. He was saying that horse was going at an angle and I should come towards the centre of the camera. He used to speak in the intonation of the Nagpur area.

He was asking me to come in a straight line. I was trying but the horse was always going at an angle. I could not understand. I was also apprehensive that if they get the impression that I cannot ride they will replace me.

**Bapu Watve:** Yes.

**Suryakant Mandhare:** But then the horse owner came to me and told me that I was riding well but his horse was blind in one eye. He pleaded with me not to disclose this or it will result in his horse being replaced and, therefore, losing his income from rent which was his only source of income. I had a difficult choice. Should I risk an accident just to save him from starving? But possibly because of the blessings I earned for

helping the poor man earn his income, nothing happened to me even though I rode the same horse during the entire period. In the end, there was only one shot left which showed a farm being engulfed in fire and the hero comes on his horse and tries to douse the fire. Set was created on company premises only. However, in the night lights, the horse started galloping. It would not stand in one place and would not come to the spot where I wanted. Anantrao Mane was arranging that shot although Raja Nene was Director. He asked me to ride across the spot and once I cross the spot jump from horse and get out of camera range. Accordingly, I gave the shot and then got out of camera range on one side and the horse went out on the other side. But the horse could not see at night. In the studio, there was an open well and a horse fell in the open well.

**Bapu Watve:** Oh God!

**Suryakant Mandhare:** Everybody was wondering what would have happened if I was on the horse when a horse fell in well.

**Bapu Watve:** Yes.

**Suryakant Mandhare:** Think about it. Only my good fortune saved me.

**Bapu Watve:** Oh yes. Otherwise, I would not have been interviewing you today.

**Suryakant Mandhare:** So I got saved because of my good fortune. Then I informed Anantrao that throughout the filming of the movie I was riding on a horse with one blind eye. He said I should have reported earlier and they would have replaced the horse. I said if you had changed the horse the poor man would have lost his income. He commented that I helped the man at the risk to myself. I said my luck favoured me. I got blessings of that poor man for the help rendered by me and therefore I got saved.

**Bapu Watve:** And then you started getting good movies like ' Bala Jo Jo Re', Stree Janma Tuzi Kahani, , Gruhadevata. All these movies had a long run at the theatre.

**Suryakant Mandhare:** Yes. Right.

**Bapu Watve:** While working in these movies, because of your rural background and having lived in a rural place like Kolhapur, did you encounter any language problem?

**Suryakant Mandhare:** Yes somewhat. There is a difference in intonation in the languages of Pune and Kolhapur. Because I was from that place and used to rural intonation. So I had some difficulties while acting in social films, particularly 'Bala Jo Jo re' which had a Brahmin atmosphere and a Brahmin hero.

**Bapu Watve:** Did you feel the tension?

**Suryakant Mandhare:** Yes, I did. But I took efforts to continuously observe other peoples' language and worked in those movies. And I feel I did a good job.

**Bapu Watve:** Yes, Yes. People appreciated your work.

**Suryakant Mandhare:** Let me narrate to you one incident. It relates to my sons. When my first son was born I got Hero's role

**Bapu Watve:** For the first time.

**Suryakant Mandhare:** But that film did not get released for some time. It got released after 'Jo Jo Re' got released. I clearly remember the dates. My second son was born on 18<sup>th</sup> May 1951. The same day Dharmadhikari sent Datta Mane to fetch me urgently and inform me that Muhurt was planned the next day. Muhurt of 'Bala Jo Do Re' was performed on 19<sup>th</sup> May 1951.

**Bapu Watve:** It was shot on you.

**Suryakant Mandhare:** Yes. It was. When my second son was born and we learnt that I was being cast in 'Bala Jo Jo Re', Dada mentioned that the child is very lucky and has brought a contract with his birth.

**Bapu Watve:** That movie celebrated Silver Jubilee.

**Suryakant Mandhare:** And the name of the movie was also 'Bala Jo Jo Re'.

**Bapu Watve:** What a coincidence!

**Suryakant Mandhare:** Yes and good omen.

**Bapu Watve:** In spite of these roles your image of he-man was intact for several years.

**Suryakant Mandhare:** That is because of my strong body-built. I was not a delicate-looking chocolate hero.

**Bapu Watve:** Singing with the heroine.

**Suryakant Mandhare:** and dancing.

**Suryakant Mandhare:** I could not have fitted the role of a hero trying to persuade the heroine. I could only be a he-man for whom the heroine is striving or pining for. Raja Nene would always call me He-man. Would say Suryakant is He-man.

**Bapu Watve:** Right.

**Suryakant Mandhare:** He would say Suryakant is the only hero in the real sense. He never called me by name of Suryakant.

**Bapu Watve:** Would call you Hero.

**Suryakant Mandhare:** Would call me Hero.

**Bapu Watve:** You acted in 101 movies, In many of them, Dada (Chandrakant) was also in the cast.

**Suryakant Mandhare:** Yes. In several movies.

**Bapu Watve:** In some films, you two were brothers, in some friends, sometimes enemies, in some Master and servant, sometimes father and son and in some father-in-law and son-in-law. Means all possible combination of relations. Do you have any specific memory?

**Suryakant Mandhare:** None special.

**Bapu Watve:** You have once said that while working both of you would forget that you were Chandrakant and Suryakant.

**Suryakant Mandhare:** Yes.

**Bapu Watve:** Any such incidences occurred while working together.

**Suryakant Mandhare:** Yes. Two or three times. In one movie he was master and I was a servant. The servant makes some mistake and the master whipped him with the hunter in public.

**Bapu Watve:** What was the name of the film?

**Suryakant Mandhare:** Pancharati



**Bapu Watve:** Go on.

**Suryakant Mandhare:** Datta Mane was Director and that was the scene. After my dialogue, Master that is Chandrakant whips me with hunter. He whipped me so hard that I actually fell down.

**Bapu Watve:** Did you fall?

**Suryakant Mandhare:** Yes. Absolutely.

**Suryakant Mandhare:** After the second hit I could not bear it and fell down and started groaning. Director called CUT. Chandrakant threw his hunter and rushed to me and held me tight in his arms and enquired if I was hurt badly and started inspecting my body. This was our affection. But while enacting the role of Patil he lived the role and I was living the role of servant. Afterwards, we were brothers who loved each other.

**Suryakant Mandhare:** There were whip marks on my body and he regretted that that I was badly hurt. But the shot appeared real.

**Bapu Watve:** Yes.

**Suryakant Mandhare:** The shot had to appear real. The audience must get convinced.

**Bapu Watve:** Yes it did. But you had to really get hit.

**Suryakant Mandhare:** Of Course.

**Bapu Watve:** While shooting, did Dada not feel that you were his brother and how could he beat you?

**Suryakant Mandhare:** No.

**Bapu Watve:** This means the artist in him had entered the skin of the character.

**Suryakant Mandhare:** In a movie all relations are false. Characters are false.

**Bapu Watve:** Right.

**Suryakant Mandhare:** Forget that by coincidence two of us, brothers, were working together. In films while enacting the roles, the wife is false, the father is false, brother

is false, all relations are false. But you have to create an illusion of the relations being true, for that moment when the shot is being taken. See, Usha Kiran who is playing the part of heroin is not my real wife nor am I her real husband but at the particular moment of shooting, I have to feel that she is my real wife and enact the part accordingly. Then only the acting appears real and touches the heart of the audience.

**Bapu Watve:** Yes. The acting must be convincing.

**Suryakant Mandhare:** For that moment I am believing that she is my wife.

**Bapu Watve:** Once the shot is over, the relation ends.

**Suryakant Mandhare:** Yes. A relation is over.

**Bapu Watve:** Can you recall any such incidents with Dada?

**Suryakant Mandhare:** An incident worth narrating happened in 'Pavanakathcha Dhondi' where we had got the roles of brothers. He was elder and I was the younger brother.

**Bapu Watve:** Dhondi and Kondi

**Suryakant Mandhare:** Yes. I got role of Kondi.

**Bapu Watve:** Based on the very famous novel by G.N Dandekar.

**Suryakant Mandhare:** Yes. And I really loved that novel.

**Bapu Watve:** Yes. That is an excellent novel.

**Suryakant Mandhare:** When I had read that novel I had not even dreamt that I would be working in the film being made on that novel.

**Bapu Watve:** Then

**Suryakant Mandhare:** The novel actually reflected the relations in our family. Like the sister-in-law in the novel, my real sister-in-law also loved me like her son. And my real brother also loved me as much as the brother in the novel did.

**Bapu Watve:** Like Dhondi.

**Suryakant Mandhare:** Yes. Like Dhondi. I was really delighted to get that role. This incident is from that movie.

**Bapu Watve:** You had mentioned that you got great pleasure in enacting some roles.

**Suryakant Mandhare:** Yes. This was one of them. The Incident was like this: “Dhondi was working in his farm. All along Dhondi had helped others. Because he had fallen on bad times, people said they would till his farm. But it was not accepted by Dhondi. He said he was the head of that area. He has to take care of others. But nobody can help him. So he started tilling the farm and was plowing the land with a bull on one side and he himself on the other and while plowing he vomited blood and fell and died. When Kondi learnt about it, he rushed there, shouted Dada’s name and was grief-stricken.” The scene was Kondi was sitting with his brother’s head in his lap and shouting and crying. Now imagine my brother had died. Had it been any other artist I would not have been so affected.

**Bapu Watve:** Yes.

**Suryakant Mandhare:** I could not imagine even in my dream that my brother was dead. That was unimaginable. Sometimes during shooting, in some cases, we try to imagine ourselves in that character’s situation and try to figure out our reaction if I were actually undergoing that experience. But here dada was my real brother. I could not imagine the death of my real elder brother even in the movie.

I felt so bad and was so grief-stricken that I started really crying. I forgot my dialogues. Jayashri Gadkar was by my side then. Chandrakant was lying there acting as a dead man with his head in my lap and I had got totally involved in the shot. There was tingling in my head. I was mad and crying loudly. While observing the shot all the people on the set, Anant Thakur

**Bapu Watve:** The Director

**Suryakant Mandhare:** Yes. His eyes also got wet. The cameraman forgot to stop the camera. Director forgot to call “CUT” and the scene was being shot for a long time. And Dada also started getting affected.

**Bapu Watve:** and the film was rolling?

**Suryakant Mandhare:** Yes it was rolling. Dada also could not bear it. He suddenly got up, embraced me and both of us were crying on the set.

**Bapu Watve:** Oh God.

**Suryakant Mandhare:** For the next half an hour Dada was trying to pacify me saying 'I am here talking to you etc.' But I could not bear it. The scene was so emotional. Even the Director said that while observing the shot he became so emotional that he forgot to say "CUT". Even today the memory of that scene affects me.

**Bapu Watve:** That is because you loved your brother very much. You forgot that it was a false scene for the movie to be forgotten after the shot.

**Suryakant Mandhare:** Yes.

**Bapu Watve:** There is another incident that you have mentioned in your autobiography. I had interviewed you for TV. Afterwards, you got a letter from a girl.

**Suryakant Mandhare:** Yes. Right.

**Bapu Watve:** What was that letter? It is important.

**Suryakant Mandhare:** I think Priya Lotankar was the name of that girl. She was 12 years old. She saw that TV interview. She did not know my address.

**Bapu Watve:** I remember you had narrated these two scenes then.

**Suryakant Mandhare:** Yes.

**Bapu Watve:** It shows how much you two brothers love each other.

**Suryakant Mandhare:** No. I had also told you something else. You had asked me how much your brothers love each other? And I had replied that as much as Ram loved Laxman and Laxman loved Ram. After seeing that interview, that girl wrote to me that she was 12 years old studying in school and was sending a letter in anticipation that I would get the letter although the address was not complete. She had liked that interview very much. She had parents and two brothers. The brothers were always quarrelling and therefore her parents were very worried.

**Bapu Watve:** Ok. Then

**Suryakant Mandhare:** Parents felt very bad that these two sons were always quarrelling and had an intense rivalry. But after seeing the interview both brothers repented, touched the feet of their parents and promised that henceforth they will not fight and love each other.

**Bapu Watve:** Wow.

**Suryakant Mandhare:** I felt very happy that my interview was helpful.

**Bapu Watve:** You must have felt 'what more does an artist want?'

**Suryakant Mandhare:** Yes.

**Bapu Watve:** One more question. In 1942 Bhalaji Pendharkar's movie 'Thoratanchi Kamala' was well received. In that Dada had acted Sambhaji's role and Nanasahab Phatak had enacted Shivaji.

**Suryakant Mandhare:** Right.

**Bapu Watve:** After 22 years in 1963 Bhalaji produced 'Thoratanchi Kamala' again with Dada as Shivaji and you as Sambhaji.

**Suryakant Mandhare:** Yes.

**Bapu Watve:** And this new pair of Shivaji-Sambhaji looked very good.

**Suryakant Mandhare:** Madhav Shinde was Director.

**Bapu Watve:** But this movie was not as successful as the original one. Why?

**Suryakant Mandhare:** There can be only one reason. Everything was good. But with the passage of time, something did not click.

**Bapu Watve:** Right.

**Suryakant Mandhare:** It is teamwork. In some movies teamwork is good. In some, it is not. And then it does not click. In an earlier movie Sumati Gupte was heroin in this it was Uma. Here I was Sambhaji then Chandrakant had that role. But that time the teamwork had clicked.

**Bapu Watve:** And Indira Chitnis was in both films.

**Suryakant Mandhare:** She was in both. Vasant Shinde was in our film. In earlier Bapurao Pawar was a comedy actor. But the earlier film had clicked. I feel that if people have seen a film once, a second film with the same story does not run.

**Bapu Watve:** Right.

**Suryakant Mandhare:** It is difficult to maintain the same involvement in the second picture

**Bapu Watve:** And the second point is that it is very difficult to remake a successful picture.

**Suryakant Mandhare:** Yes. Difficult.

**Bapu Watve:** Risky.

**Suryakant Mandhare:** Baba's dialogues were good. Everything was good. But if still, the picture was not successful then something had not clicked.

**Suryakant Mandhare:** With time technique changes. Baba had employed old technique. Madhavrao Shinde had employed a modern technique. The old one appeared historical. Perhaps the new one did not. Some such thing must have happened. Take the case of Baba's earlier 'Sunbai' and his new 'Shabbas Sunbai'. Both produced by Baba. But 'Shabbas Sunbai' did not do well. Earlier Sunbai clicked. This is another example.

**Bapu Watve:** Both movies are always compared.

**Suryakant Mandhare:** Yes. There is a comparison. The audience is the same. They compare the two movies.

**Bapu Watve:** One more question. It is said that Director, writer and artist should be observant. He is always a student. The day he feels he has learnt everything he is finished.

**Suryakant Mandhare:** Correct.

**Bapu Watve:** You are also an artist. Actor and painter. You must have also been observant and learnt from your observation. Can you give an example of how a particular observation helped you?

**Suryakant Mandhare:** The movie "Sadhi Manasa"

**Bapu Watve:** An art film in real sense.

**Suryakant Mandhare:** In that movie, I did not even have a Make-Up. Prior to the shooting, I would be informed eight days earlier and I would stop shaving.

**Bapu Watve:** Oh.

**Suryakant Mandhare:** I needed a beard with some growth. Natural, without makeup. So I would grow a beard for eight days. I had the role of the black smith. I had never touched a hammer in my life. Occasionally. I had seen black smith working from distance only. I had not observed his methods and practices. Baba had left everything to me. Makeup, Costume, everything. It was a challenge for me. I had to observe a blacksmith while working. In Kolhapur, there were few black smiths and my nephew had a shop opposite one.

**Bapu Watve:** Hmm

**Suryakant Mandhare:** His name was Urankar. I would go to his shop and sit. He could not understand why his uncle was coming to his shop every day. When he asked me if I had some work with him I said no, I have come casually.

He used to wonder why his uncle who could never find a time when invited, was now coming every day.

I would go every morning and evening. I observed how the blacksmith ignited his furnace in the morning, how he would sit with a brick under his leg, how he would always wear a cap even if torn and would wear the only vest, how he would fire the coal, how he would bring iron to the anvil with tweezers, how he would hold the hammer, and operate with it etc. I tried to understand his technique, clothing, working method everything.

**Bapu Watve:** Yes.

**Suryakant Mandhare:** Thus before acting in the film I observed him thoroughly. I got a State award for that role.

**Bapu Watve:** That movie got a number of awards.

**Suryakant Mandhare:** I did not get an award for that film but I got the Maharashtra State award.

**Bapu Watve:** Why?

**Suryakant Mandhare:** Because Film 'Sadhi Manasa' was getting all the awards, the panel of examiners felt it was not correct. They decided that I would get the award but for my acting in the film 'Malhari Martand'. That role was very easy, typical villager's role which I had specialized in.

**Bapu Watve:** Yes.

**Suryakant Mandhare:** I had not done anything special in that. In Sadhi Manasa I had done something special.

**Bapu Watve:** Yes. That was a challenging role. You had to work hard for that.

**Suryakant Mandhare:** Yes. I worked hard. But that role did not get the Maharashtra State award.

### **The third part of the interview on 12<sup>th</sup> May 1987**

**Bapu Watve:** Suryakant, you were telling me something about the Maharashtra State government Awards.

**Suryakant Mandhare:** Yes. I had produced one movie 'Irsha'. At the time of the release of the movie, during the sensor show, sensors called me and complimented me that movie was very good and they had not seen a better film earlier. So I was hopeful about getting Maharashtra State Government Award for the film. Many knowledgeable directors in the film line had told me that I was sure to get the award that year. Some directors had not even entered their film in the competition. But when the results were announced I found my film was not anywhere on the list. Dada Kondke's film 'Bot Lavin Tithe Gudgulya' got the prize. Then I started wondering about the criterion followed for giving awards by State Government Award Function and the examiner panel. I became nervous and wondered why I did not get the award when Censor board members were full of praise for the movie. If the picture had any fault I would not have received about 250 letters from people appreciating the movie. I started wondering if there was any lobby. Later on, I learnt that there is a lobby working to distribute awards among themselves. I decided that I would not stand in such a queue and I was satisfied with the letters of appreciation received from 250 persons.

**Bapu Watve:** The theme of your film was very progressive and the subject was appropriate for the time but you did not get the prize.



**Suryakant Mandhare:** It was different because when you mention 'Irsha' a destructive thought enters a person's mind. I thought....

**Bapu Watve:** A fight between two groups.

**Suryakant Mandhare:** Fight, rivalry, burning each other's property etc between two groups were not shown in my film. I thought like two sides of a coin why can there not be 'Irsha'(competition) for constructive and developmental work. So I produced this film. The story was good which depicted that due to Irsha (competition) between two persons, there was the progress of the town. Water lines were laid, schools were built and with the implementation of various developmental schemes, there was overall development of the town. This was my subject and it helped the government.

**Bapu Watve:** Right.

**Suryakant Mandhare:** But it did not get the prize.

**Bapu Watve:** You had expressed the same feeling about your role in the film 'Sadhi Manasa'. You felt that you should have got an award for that film.

**Suryakant Mandhare:** Yes. I should have but did not get it. That is why I am dissatisfied with Maharashtra State Government Awards. I have seen really deserving people not getting the prize.

**Bapu Watve:** Suryakant, Initially you were working with Bhalaji Pendharkar in the camera department and were not acting. Some artists may have seen you as a worker in the camera department.

**Suryakant Mandhare:** Yes.

**Bapu Watve:** So later on, when you were cast with the same artist they must have wondered when this camera department person became an artist and a hero? Did it ever happen?

**Suryakant Mandhare:** Yes. I will narrate to you one such incidence. After Baba's company got burnt he made a film called "Mi Daru Sodali". I was working in the camera department then. That film had cast of Baburao Pendharkar, Durgabai Khote, Baby Shakuntala and hero was Lalasaheb Yadav, who later on became a MLA.

**Bapu Watve:** Ok,

**Suryakant Mandhare:** So Baby Shakuntala had seen me working in Camera Department and doing some odd jobs. Later on, I became an actor and my films “ Bala Jo Jo Re”, “Stree Janma Hi Tuzeech Kahani” became hit. When a new film company ‘Alhad Chitra’ was born in Pune, ‘Muhurt’ of ‘Alhad Chitra’s’ first film was performed on me. Dharmadhikari and Anantrao Mane considered me as a lucky hero. Hence I was cast in all movies produced by ‘Alhad Chitra’. After “Stree Janma Hi Tuzeech Kahani”, the movie ‘Akher Jamala” was being produced by Gharpure. Story was by Madhsudan Kalelkar. It was their first film. When they were discussing casting, Dharmadhikari and Anantrao Mane told them that their hero is fixed. Suryakant will be the hero. Baby Shakuntala was going to be heroin. When the shooting started Baby casually enquired with Anantrao who is the hero of the film? Anantrao told my name. She was surprised that a worker in the camera department with Baba is going to be a hero and that too with her? There was nothing wrong in such a reaction on her part. Anantrao explained to her that although she was right in expressing doubt, I was a good actor. Bhalaji Pendharkar was my Guru and I have undergone training under Baba. And that I had already worked in their two pictures “Bala JO Jo Re” and “Stree Janma Hi Tuzeech Kahani” and both the movies were hit.

**Bapu Watve:** Did Baby Shakuntala not know that?

**Suryakant Mandhare:** She knew. Then Anantrao told her that I am a good actor and she had to work hard to match me. The film was a comedy and they were sure that I would be good in a comedy role. He told that I had a comedy role in “ Akher Jamala” and a person who has undergone training under Baba will act well in any type of role. Once the shooting started, Baby’s doubts were cleared and she herself came to tell me that she had some doubts about me but they are now cleared and requested me not be annoyed with her. I told her that I am not hurt and I appreciated her large-heartedness in personally talking to me.

**Bapu Watve:** Was Datta Dharmadhikari the Director of that movie?

**Suryakant Mandhare:** Yes. Datta Dharmadhikari.

**Bapu Watve:** Raja Gosavi & Sharad Talwalkar were introduced in ‘Akher Jamala”

**Suryakant Mandhare:** Yes. They were. There is a story behind their introduction. Raja Gosavi used to work at the ticket counter in Bhanuvilas.

**Bapu Watve:** To sell tickets?

**Suryakant Mandhare:** He was a good artist but was not getting a chance. The thread ceremony of Datta Dharmadhikari's sons was being performed. He came there and offered to enact scenes from one or two plays. All people from the film line were present there and he wanted to show his talent. Everybody agreed. All of us including Anantrao Mane, Dharmadhikari were there. He enacted some scenes of Mathura and Gokul from the play 'Premsanyas'. All of us were very impressed. Dharmadhikari enquired his name. He replied 'Raja Gosavi'. Everybody enjoyed the joke that Raja and Gosavi represented two extremes. Work on 'Akher Jamala' was starting. In that, the hero had five friends. Raja Gosavi got role of one. About the same time, Sharad Talwalkar had also started working and he got the role of one friend. That is how Raja Gosavi got introduced.

**Bapu Watve:** Some times back you mentioned the film "Mi Daru Sodali". Before work on this film began, Bhalaji Pendharkar's studio was set on fire following the assassination of Gandhi.

**Suryakant Mandhare:** Yes.

**Bapu Watve:** You are a witness to that scary incident. Can you narrate anything about it? It is history now.

**Suryakant Mandhare:** On 30<sup>th</sup> January 1948, when Gandhi ji was assassinated, the news spread in Kolhapur like a wildfire. I was a worker in the Camera Department of the studio. My print was complete. A negative was received from Shantaram Bapu for further processing.

At that time the facilities of laboratory printing and machinery for editing etc were available only at Jaiprabha Studio in Kolhapur. Work on Hindi film 'Mere Lal' by Baba Gajbar was complete and final work on titles was going on. When the news reached us in the evening, workers left and the company got closed. The camera remained mounted on a stand. We decided to complete the work the next day and closed the company. The next day, around 11 am, when we arrived at the studio we found the studio on fire. We were frightened. Entire machinery was gutted. Films of 'Mere Lal', 'Meeth Bhakar' were fully gutted. Around 200 workers of the company had lost their jobs. The people who had set the fire had not considered the livelihood of workers from their city who were dependent on the studio. By setting fire to the studio, the wrong deed was not going to be righted, but the poor worker faced the consequences which were very sad.

**Bapu Watve:** But Bhalaji decided to shoot the film again?

**Suryakant Mandhare:** Yes.

**Bapu Watve:** I have heard that all artists had decided not to take enumeration for the film.

**Suryakant Mandhare:** That's right. Baba alias was a very courageous person. Any other person would have got shattered after such a loss.

**Bapu Watve:** Yes.

**Suryakant Mandhare:** When a leader from Kolhapur, Madhavrao Bagal, visited Baba to express regrets and offer condolences, Baba simply smiled and said, he had entered this world without anything.

**Bapu Watve:** Ok

**Suryakant Mandhare:** And will also leave the world without anything. 'I have slept on the footpath as well as a soft mattress. I do not feel sorry. I will create again'. With determination and stubbornness, he rebuilt the studio from ashes like a phoenix bird. He appealed to all artists that he wants to film 'Meeth Bhakar' again but the original script is burnt so the artists should return their copies. From those copies, he wrote the script again, called the artists, re-built the set in that burnt studio, started shooting again. None of the artists or workers took any remuneration knowing the heavy losses Baba had suffered. It was their small help to Baba.

**Bapu Watve:** Well done.

**Suryakant Mandhare:** The love and attachment shown by Kolhapur technicians and the artists for the film line were commendable. Professionally speaking they could have said that they had completed their assignment in the movie and had got paid for the same and they should be paid again but not only they worked free but would also bring their own lunch from home. That is why while two studios in Pune perished, both the studios in Kolhapur survived with help from artists and technicians. This is history.

**Bapu Watve:** Who were the artists in 'Meeth Bhakar'?

**Suryakant Mandhare:** Chandrakant, Sulochanabai, Master Vitthal, Anjali Tarkar, Baba's two children Prabhakar and Baby or Saroj, Jaishankar Danwe, Gopal Bakre, Ganapati Patil etc many artists from Kolhapur were there. I also acted in a small role of a policeman. I was then working in the Camera department and if any character was missing Baba would ask me to enact that role.

That was Baba's training. Even after having enacted the hero's role we did not consider any role small and would be asked to enact any role.

**Bapu Watve:** Quite different from present days

**Suryakant Mandhare:** There was love and attachment which is missing now. Now people only bother about their work and the payment they get for that. Present artists are not willing to work hard for preparing for and enacting their role now. In our time we did not feel below our dignity in acting other than the hero's roles. Let me narrate to you an incident in the movie 'Ganimi Kawa'

**Bapu Watve:** By.

**Suryakant Mandhare:** Yes. There was a role of an old man. I was working as an assistant to Baba. The old man had just a few dialogues. I was enacting Shivaji's role in the film and was also an assistant director. The artist assigned for the role did not turn up and Baba was worried. I told him to wait for five minutes and assured him that the artist would come. I went to the make-up room, put on huge moustaches, a denture and wore earrings and thus changed my entire appearance. Then I went to Baba. Baba asked me who I was and I told him it was me. Baba said you are enacting Shivaji's role and people will recognize your voice. I changed my voice and said the dialogue for Baba. Then, I enacted the entire scene for the movie. Baba was also surprised. That shot is there in "Ganimi Kava". I have enacted the role of Shivaji and have also enacted the small role of an old man.

**Bapu Watve:** That is because in the old days workers had loyalty to the organisation and now everybody works for himself. Earlier people wanted the institute to do well and prosper whereas now they only care about the money they get.

**Suryakant Mandhare:** Once Baba told me that he has a role of villain for me in the movie 'Mazi Jameen'. I did not like it. I told him so far I have always been a Hero and the audience may not accept me as Villain. Baba told me just one thing. He said let us see. You are my disciple and you should not get typecast. Whether the role is of Hero or villain, whether a movie is mythological or historical, you should be able to act in any role. If you get a role of a watchman, that also can be acted in a distinct manner. Then only you can be my disciple. I did Villain's role and my work was greatly appreciated even by V.Shantaram and he told me that Baba had mentioned to him that I did not want the villain's role.

**Suryakant Mandhare:** In that movie Mohan Baxi was hero and Rekha was heroin. Others in the film were Madgulkar, Krushnarao Solanki, Sulochanabai, Chintamanrao Kolhatkar and me.

**Bapu Watve:** ‘Meeth Bhakar’ fared well at the box office.

**Suryakant Mandhare:** Yes. Very well. It celebrated Silver Jubilee.

**Bapu Watve:** Yes.

**Suryakant Mandhare:** It was an excellent movie based on rural background. It depicted affection between brothers, family bonding in a joint family system and how everybody helps a brother. Nowadays, the joint family system is vanishing.

**Bapu Watve:** That’s right.

**Suryakant Mandhare:** Now you do not see that attachment, love for sister-in-law, mother, sister. Nowadays, film scripts are also different. The script shows family members not getting along, the son and his wife are separated from the family. We are from old culture.

**Bapu Watve:** You just mentioned that ‘Meeth Bhakar’ was based on rural background and depicted rural life precisely.

**Suryakant Mandhare:** Yes.

**Bapu Watve:** Suryakant, in which movie did you enact your first love scene?

**Suryakant Mandhare:** In “ Ketakichya Banat”.

**Bapu Watve:** Were you tense while enacting that scene?

**Suryakant Mandhare:** I felt nervous only in my first film as Hero. But in that film, I did not have any love scenes. They were amongst Raj and Neena. Oldtimer Ranjanabai ( Kusum Deshpande’s sister) was the heroin of the film. They were seasoned artists. I was new to Pune and this was my first film as a hero. So I felt some pressure. But I was concentrating on my acting and studying the character I was to play. Baba had taught me that while playing any role I must study and visualize the character fully. I must study the nature of the person as envisaged by the writer, the dress he would be wearing, thought process of the character. He would say irrespective of whether the audience likes or not, you must be fully satisfied that you have enacted the role after

complete study. Appreciation by one knowledgeable person is more important than what thousand ordinary people say.

Initially, while enacting love scenes, I was a bit conscious but then decided that it is part of work and other established people must feel that I am equal to them.

**Bapu Watve:** For a new hero, the love scene is a test. He can enact other scenes but fumbles in love scenes.

**Suryakant Mandhare:** But I was trained by Baba so never felt any difficulty. During practice sessions, Baba use to act the scene himself. So we could see how heroin acts and her movements during a love scene. So I did not face any difficulty. While acting with new heroin, I would first ask her if she is agreeable to my holding her hand. Then Ranjana would say since you are a hero you can hold my hand.

**Bapu Watve:** This is the case of a cooperative artist. But you must have also met an actress who would be un-cooperative and try to put you down.

**Suryakant Mandhare:** Yes. My next picture was “ Bala Jo Jo Re” in which Usha Kiran was heroin for the first time. I was new at the time but she had the experience of Hindi films so she was putting on airs.

**Bapu Watve:** Ok.

**Suryakant Mandhare:** Every person has different nature. I think it was her way of ragging me. During shooting, she would suddenly mention that I am not saying the dialogue correctly. I would then rehearse the dialogue in my mind again but during the take, I was fumbling. Dharmadhikari would ask me why I am unable to give a good shot when I am good during rehearsals. I was also perplexed. Then the recordist came and told me that I am not doing anything wrong but the heroin Ushakiran was deliberately disturbing me. He advised me to neglect her. He said I was doing fine, he was the recordist and if I really did anything wrong he would tell me. I wondered why such a senior and good actress should indulge in such mischief. I then told her that I am a student of great Bhalaji Pendharkar and I am well trained and her mischief will not disturb me. She should worry about her dialogues and I would speak my dialogues. If I go wrong either the Director or the Recordist will tell me and she should not bother.

**Bapu Watve:** But later on Ushakiran and Suryakant was considered a lucky pair.

**Suryakant Mandhare:** Yes. She was my heroin in exactly 12 pictures like Bala Jo Jo Re, Stree Janma ..etc. In every picture, I was a tough masculine hero who would beat

heroin and drag her. In 'Kanchanganga' I had one such scene in which, only I had dialogue and at the end, I slapped her twice. But that lady was a great artist. She never flinched. She told me 'Suryakant this is your scene. Do not worry about me getting hurt. In a movie, your scene must look authentic.' I then slapped her real hard and she fell down. We had to wait for a while because there were my finger marks on her cheek. After shooting she said Madhavrao now you must produce a movie in which I beat this hero badly.

I told her even if a writer writes a scene like that the audience will not accept me getting beaten because of my screen image of a rough and tough hero.

**Bapu Watve:** I think there was a similar scene in the film 'Vaijayant'

**Suryakant Mandhare:** With Leela Gandhi. She was also a very good artist who had come up because of her talent. She was a folk dancer.

**Bapu Watve:** Yes.

**Suryakant Mandhare:** She was natural dancer. Had a great rhythm in her body which dazzled the audience. She was also a keen learner of acting and dialogue delivery. She would always ask whether she is doing right and would request us to tell her if she is making mistake. In one scene I had to slap her.

**Bapu Watve:** In 'Vaijayant'

**Suryakant Mandhare:** Yes. I told the Director and Leelabai when I slap, you continue with your dialogue. Whether right or wrong do not force a re-take. Accordingly, I did the scene which was very effective and her angry dialogue after getting slapped was a brilliant piece of acting. I told her that her acting was brilliant. She enquired if it was really good otherwise we could repeat the scene.

**Bapu Watve:** A real artist.

**Suryakant Mandhare:** Yes. We do not see this approach in the present days.

**Bapu Watve:** That is right. About love scenes. The reason for my asking is that some heroines have a habit of discouraging. I recall one incident in Prabhat around 1946/47. The film "Aage Badho". Dev Anand was a hero. He was new. And Khurshid, who was experienced, was heroin. Frequently she would humiliate him and discourage him. It is a different matter that later on he became a big star.



While some people have a habit of discouraging others, there are many artists who take care and encourage newcomers. You must have also been encouraged by a few when you were new.

**Suryakant Mandhare:** I will tell you about one incident. I was working in Sudhir Phadke's film "Ratnadhari". I was a hero in the film. Other artists were Madan Mohan, Baby Shakuntala. Lalita Pawar, Raja Paranjape. Since it was a Hindi movie I had a language problem and, therefore, I was a bit conscious. But Lalitabai would always encourage me. She knew how to take care of the co-artist and she encouraged me. She would say 'You are a good actor, you know Marathi well, why are you apprehensive of Hindi? Don't worry. I am there with you.'

In Marathi films, Baburao Pendharkar was one such actor. When I was with Baba doing bit side roles, I did a small role with Baburao. Baburao was a big actor and we used to be apprehensive while working with him. But Baburao would always encourage, guide and take care of the newcomer. This is how new artists learn. Since I had idols like them, I also always encouraged and guided new artists.

**Bapu Watve:** You do not discourage them

**Suryakant Mandhare:** Never discourage.

**Bapu Watve:** While you easily enacted roles in numerous rural or historic films you also acted few comedy roles.

**Suryakant Mandhare:** Yes.

**Bapu Watve:** I recall 'Amhi Jato Amuchya Gava', 'Akher Jamala' etc.

**Suryakant Mandhare:** Right

**Bapu Watve:** And you have also acted in the mythological film 'Subhadraharan'

**Suryakant Mandhare:** Yes, Yes.

**Bapu Watve:** And also acted as a villain. Did you get any different feeling while acting in other than rural or historic films?

**Suryakant Mandhare:** No. In the films based on rural background, every time the characters are not identical. Even in villages, people of different nature exist. In some, the village head can be generous, in some a womanizer, in some a bad man. The

characters are different. So from that angle, I accepted challenging roles and not in the same mould. I told you about Baba.

**Bapu Watve:** Yes

**Suryakant Mandhare:** In different roles, I would create different traits to the characters. Every character would have a different manner of wearing headgear or some different habit. The same in historic roles. I enacted Shivaji Maharaja's role, Tanaji's role, Netaji's role, Bahirji's role. For every role, I would talk to the writer, study the role and then I played that role. I enjoyed that.

**Bapu Watve:** But the comedy roles were different than your usual pattern.

**Suryakant Mandhare:** Yes.

**Bapu Watve:** Or Villain was different. Or Arjun's role in mythological 'Subhadraharan'. Did you get a different feeling while enacting these unusual roles.?

**Suryakant Mandhare:** No. When I accepted any role first thing I did was to study that role. In Torne's 'Amhi Jato Amchya Gawa', Dhumal and Ganesh Solanki were regular comedy artists. I was not a comedy artist.

**Bapu Watve:** No.

**Suryakant Mandhare:** I was the hero of Social films, not a comedy artist. But Kamalakar Torne dared. People were surprised. Originally, Sharad Talwalkar was to enact that role. But there was a dates problem and Torne decided that Suryakant will play that role. There was a reason. Torne had also worked as an assistant director with Baba in Kolhapur. He had seen me acting with Baba and had seen Baba's practice sessions. Baba would teach comedy roles also. Since I was from that school, Kamalakar Torne gave me that role and said that he was confident that Suryakant will play that role very well. Everybody opposed him. But I accepted that role and showed that in that different type of role I could match comedy artists.

In Subhadraharan, I had the role of Arjun. When Baba was producing the film Karna I was working in the camera department.

**Bapu Watve:** 'Maharathi Karna'? Hindi?

**Suryakant Mandhare:** Yes. Hindi. Chandrakant had enacted Arjun's part in that film and I had seen Baba's practice sessions. Arjun is the same whether in Subhadraharan

or in Karna and since I had seen preparation for Arjun's part earlier, I faced no difficulty.

**Bapu Watve:** One more question. You have acted in all types of movies. Mythological, Social, Rural etc. Do you have a preference for any particular type and dislike any type?

**Suryakant Mandhare:** Not at all. But the role must be challenging. I enjoy challenging roles. Like the character I played in 'Sadhi Manasa'. Acting in that role was a challenge. The blacksmith played by me had to look like a blacksmith. The character when Kalamalakar Torne cast me in 'Netaji Palkar', for the shooting of sword fighting scenes, the fighters from Bombay that were brought to train us were showing us sword holding techniques and moves that I was quietly observing. They were teaching us moves of English sword fighting and not Maratha sword fighting. The shape of a Maratha sword is not straight but is of half-moon shape and the steps of fighting with that sword are different. I told them, allow me to show you what Maratha fight is. I showed them the steps and sword action when the warrior is facing the enemy closing on him from all sides. Then the head of that fighter unit bowed to me and told me that they cannot teach me anything new since I was already an expert.

Every actor must study the requirements of the role. Today's actor cannot wear Dhoti, cannot tie a headgear, do not know to fight, riding or swimming. They are even shy of showing their bare body.

**Bapu Watve:** This is very important. I thought that you or your brother must be preferring rural films because your personality really suits that role.

**Suryakant Mandhare:** That is because we have a physique suitable for a villager and since the rural area is near our city of Kolhapur, we have observed and stayed with village people. We have closely observed the mannerism or dresses of a village chief. Therefore, we can easily act a villager. It suits our personality and we can easily adapt to that role.

**Bapu Watve:** My other observation is that when you or Dada used to act in rural films in your younger days, the rural films of that time appeared genuinely rural. That is not the case now. The rural films these days are neither rural or urban but are a cross in between. Rural films do not look genuinely rural. Why?

**Suryakant Mandhare:** The reason is that the difference between city life and village life has now narrowed down. The village folks are now adopting the city lifestyle. In old days a villager or rural hero would ride a bullock cart or a horse. Now a farmer

rides a motorcycle or a tractor. Now a farmer does not wear Dhoti or a light shirt. He wears a striped shirt and pant. The story writer has also changed. He says the times have changed. Things have improved with time. So the rural hero described by current writers wears full pant, rides a tractor, watches film or folk drama. He is nothing but a city hero and is a rural hero only because the film is shot in a village. If you go to a village now you will find a radio or a TV near the buffalo shed which everybody is enjoying. There is not much change in houses. But other things have changed.

**Bapu Watve:** Have you ever enacted the role of a modern village hero?

**Suryakant Mandhare:** Yes. I did one such role in the film 'Kunku Maza Bhagyacha'. The world has changed. There is improvement everywhere. Villages have changed. So the village hero also got to change. This is what the writer and I thought. I rode a bullet, had an alsatian dog but had exuded masculinity, power, style of speech and pride. This is not seen in the present-day heroes because they appear weak, not having a strong body. But cannot be helped.

**Bapu Watve:** You have worked a lot on your physic.

**Suryakant Mandhare:** Daily exercise was a rule in our house. What capital do you need in the film line? In any other business money is the capital. But for an actor, his physic and personality is the capital. You cannot survive for long in this business if you lose this capital.

**Bapu Watve:** That will result in loss.

**Suryakant Mandhare:** Total insolvency. Maximum four pictures. I am in this line for 48 years. People still call for me and recognize me. I enacted Netaji Palkar's role at my age of 53. Today I am 63 and am still willing to work. People recognize me because I have still retained my capital and have maintained my physic. I have always stayed away from things that can damage my health.

**Bapu Watve:** You can say that for your brother Chandrakant also who is very fit at his age of 75.

**Suryakant Mandhare:** Yes.

**Bapu Watve:** Now there is a system of using Dummy for dangerous shots. You have never used Dummy. Can you describe any dangerous scenes or incident when you faced danger to your life?

**Suryakant Mandhare:** Many times. I will narrate you a few.' Shikaleli Bayako' Movie with a rural setting. In that film, there is a bullock cart race. 10 Bullock carts. All bulls were really strong. Madhvrao suggested that he would take few close-ups of mine and for long shots, he will use a Dummy. But I refused. I told him that I will myself ride the Bullock cart, nobody else and in the race of 10 bullock carts, I will come first. I tell you Bapusaheb, the bulls were so strong that my hands would get soaked in blood while controlling them with the casserole. In one shot during the race, the cart gets broken and the bulls run and my hands are stuck in a casserole and I am dragged along on the ground. This was the shot. I insisted that I would give the shot. I was hurt on my stomach and legs. People praised my daring act.

#### **Fourth part of the interview on 12<sup>th</sup> May 1987**

**Bapu Watve:** Suryakant, you described the scene of being dragged which you yourself performed.

**Suryakant Mandhare:** Yes. In 'Shikleli Bayako'

**Bapu Watve:** Did Dada get angry with you?

**Suryakant Mandhare:** Yes. He really scolded me. When I came home my wife told Dada about my scene. Dada asked me if the producer was going to give a medal or was he going to reimburse my life if anything had happened to me? What would have happened if I had broken my hand or leg? I had imbibed this courageous attitude from Master Vitthal. You may not be aware, but whenever I saw Master Vitthal's stunt movies, the hero in the films use to influence me very much and I liked to copy his courageous deeds. Let me narrate to you another incident from the film 'Shikleli Bayako'. Hero named Motwani removed his clothes and jumped in a well for swimming. The well was 40 feet deep. While I was swimming my father, whose role was enacted by Vishnupant Joag, arrived and called me up. A mote ( Pur) was being used for lifting water from the well. I swam to the pur and came up in it. This was being done for the first time by any hero in a rural film.

**Bapu Watve:** And will not be done again.

**Suryakant Mandhare:** In 'Shikleli Bayako' director Madhavrao Shinde was wondering how to depict the hero's entry in the film. The hero was illiterate. Many films had shown illiterate hero's first appearance in a bullock cart. We were doing it outdoor on Chandiwadikar's farm. There a villager had reared a goat and he was training the goat for a head fight. I saw that and decided that if we show the shot of the hero training the goat for a fight, it will be a new entry being introduced for the first

time in a film. When I told this to Madhavrao, he also liked the idea but cautioned me that if I miss any step the wild goat will strike me on my body. But I insisted on incorporating that scene. But there was a small problem. The writer was not there. He was in Bombay. But having worked in a number of movies I did not feel any problem in writing dialogue and told them to write down the scene and dialogue narrated by me. Thus I wrote a small dialogue with my name as Raghunath. In 'Shikleli Bayako' this is my entry in the film with my back to the camera. The audience then knew that I was illiterate.

**Bapu Watve:** Did you then feel like directing a movie?

**Suryakant Mandhare:** Yes. I had started thinking about it. So then onwards, after my shot was over, unlike other actors, who used to go out and sit somewhere, I started staying back on the set and started observing the director's work. I used to study whether the director takes the next shot close-up or three-fourth or full-figure and why. When he would cut the shot. How he plans shot division. Without telling anybody I was studying all these aspects.

**Bapu Watve:** That is how you developed your knowledge of Direction. You were going to narrate one more incident.

**Suryakant Mandhare:** Yes that incident is from the film 'Murali Malhar Raya'. There was an outdoor scene in which the villain catches hold of heroin, whips her and asks her to dance. He is sitting on a rock. Hero had to save the heroin. Hero comes galloping on a horse, jumps on the villain and then there was a fight. These were the shots. The Director had assumed that I will not jump from running horse on the villain. So he had called for people from Bombay who were used to doing such jumps. Govind Kulkarni was director and Suryakant Lavande was cameraman. Director told me 'Suryakant, once you come near, give us a signal and we shall cut the shot and further shot will be taken with the jump-man wearing your clothes'. I was not happy with the idea. Till then, I had never used a Dummy. This was a different kind of shot. But I had the courage and self-confidence that I could do it. So-called Suryakant Lavande to aside and told him that I was going to give this shot directly and he should not cut the shot after Director asked to cut it. I asked him to increase the field of the shot and not to cut the shot. Suryakant Lavande was stunned to learn that Suryakant himself was giving shot. As decided I rode to a distance on the horse and waited for the director's signal. Once he said START, I came in full gallop, and after coming near I left the horse and jumped on the villain and both of us came rolling down the slope. This shot is there in the movie. However, one thing happened. When I jumped my both feet stuck the rock and got hurt from the knee downwards. In a short time, my legs were swollen like nearby hills.

**Bapu Watve:** Oh God!.

**Suryakant Mandhare:** However, the shot was good. Everybody appreciated. But Chittaranjan was very angry with me, asking why did I do it? How am I going to walk back home? he asked. But it was out of his affection for me.

**Bapu Watve:** Yes.

**Suryakant Mandhare:** He said you should not have taken such a risk. Had there been any serious damage it would have finished my career. He was saying this with my well-being at heart. But I had courageous nature. Even with my injured legs, I attended a full day's shooting and even after seeing my injuries the director or anybody else did not suggest shooting pack up. Had it been a case of heroin getting a prick in her leg, a car would have rushed to take her to a Kolhapur Doctor and the shooting would have been cancelled for the next 8-10 days. But not in my case. This is my grievance about the Marathi film line. That they do not take proper care of their artists. Do not give proper justice. I was shooting full day even on a cliff. In that shot, I was holding on to a tree root with a deep valley below. Shot was taken from the top and from the bottom. I was hanging on to the root with one hand, with me down and villain up. Even this shot I gave courageously. After the day's work was over, the fighters brought for outdoor shooting told me "Suryakant, you had taken too big a risk. We are here for that. If we get hurt or injured, it is acceptable because that is our profession. We have jumped like that many times. Even in Hindi films no hero shows such courage." Surprisingly, they nursed me in the night. They massaged my legs in their fashion. They asked for some Chapaties, put cooking oil on that and put turmeric on that and tied those Chapaties to my legs. Next day swelling on my legs had reduced substantially. It was like our potis treatment. They nursed me throughout the night. They really loved me. They had never seen such hero.

**Bapu Watve:** Suryakant, you are masculine not only in your appearance but also in your heart. That is why you could do it.

**Suryakant Mandhare:** I was young then with strength and was stubborn.

**Bapu Watve:** There are many young heroes these days. But they cannot. In one film you had a fight with a tiger.

**Suryakant Mandhare:** Yes. I mentioned you about Sudhir Phadke's film Ratnadhari . It was story of two hunter friends. The scene was, in the forest, a tiger suddenly jumps on one of them. At the time of filming the shot Sudhir Phadke briefed me about the shot

and asked for my views and said ‘Deval Circus was in Pune. Their people are used to the animals. We will dress up one of their person in your dress and use him as your duplicate and take few close-ups of you.’ I remained silent for a while. This was something different. It was dealing with a tiger. But then I told Sudhirji that I will be performing the act myself. I asked him to take me to Deval Circus and introduce me to Mr. Deval and I would like to practice with tiger for 8-10 days. My friend Vasat Shinde cursed me for the risk I was taking.

**Bapu Watve:** That comedy artist?

**Suryakant Mandhare:** Yes. He is my close friend. He advised me not to take this risk and he does not approve it. But I told him Vasant, in Hindi films, Premnath fights with a lion, he gets hurt and is hospitalized but he sent a message not to cancel shooting and he is ready to shoot. If a Hindi actor could show so much courage why a strong Maratha from these rocky mountains of Sahyadri not display the same courage?

**Bapu Watve:** We are even more courageous.

**Suryakant Mandhare:** Yes. I wanted to show that Marathi hero can also show such courage. He said it can be dangerous to your life. I said nothing will happen. But he accompanied me daily.

On the first day of our visit to Deval Circus, Deval took me to tiger’s cage and moved his hand over tiger’s body and I did the same. The next day, Deval felt that we would not come. But we went. He expressed surprise and said he felt we are people from the cinema line and would not come for 8-10 days. But he confessed that he was wrong and asked his man to get Bharat. I thought Bharat must be the name of a servant but it was the name of the tiger. Cage was brought etc and the tiger jumped out. After jumping the tiger began digging the soil with his paws. I asked Deval what the tiger is doing? He said the tiger is just stretching its limbs. I got a bit frightened.

**Bapu Watve:** Naturally.

**Suryakant Mandhare:** Because it was the first time I was facing a tiger. Deval ordered and the tiger went and sat on a stool. Then I stood up. I wondered what must be tiger’s weight. I am a powerful person and was overconfident. He ordered the tiger to jump and Bharat jumped from the stool on me. His front legs were on my shoulders and in that position, his head was about one foot above my head and with his weight my entire body got bent like a bow. Somehow with my full strength I pushed him. Then Deval gave me some instructions. He said this is a tiger from circus so I should not keep more distance between my legs or the tiger would try to go through the gap and fell me. While standing my head should always be behind my body because when the tiger



jumps if his head butts my face, I would lose all my teeth. And third thing I should not fall down. If I fell the tiger will hit me with his paws, and circus will not be responsible because the tiger should never feel that I am a weak person. With these instruction in my mind, for next ten days I practiced to take tiger's jump on my body and hold it. Those ten days, I would dream of tiger purring at night. My body used to ache as if I had wrestled with a seasoned wrestler. I had not informed this to my home at Kolhapur because Dada would not have approved this. But then my misfortune turned up.

In the Botanical garden at Pune, with the help of all Mandap Contractors, cage was built up and atmosphere of forest was created. We had to shoot next day early morning because Deval had told us that all shooting with tiger should be finished before the weather starts getting warm. They cannot control the animal in hot weather. And then, although they would be standing outside the cage with their pistols ready, they cannot guaranty safety of the artist inside the cage. I was prepared for the shot.

Then Sudhir Phadke's manager Deuskar came to me at 11:30 at night and woke me up. I thought it was already morning and told him I will get ready in 15 minutes and then we can leave for shooting. He said no it is 11:30 at night and he had come to inform me that shooting is cancelled and I can go back to Kolhapur. He informed that Deval had asked for Rs 1000/- and company is unable to pay so shooting is cancelled. I felt very bad. In film, there is nothing as bad, if after taking so much efforts, you cannot shoot.

**Bapu Watve:** You must have also come across some life threatening risky instances, not necessarily faced by you but a dangerous situation that had got created. That incident in 'Ranwara'

**Suryakant Mandhare:** Yes. In that movie, I was a Police Inspector and Shubha Khote, who was heroin, was a dacoit. We were going in a jeep. The shooting was going on in Prabhat.

**Bapu Watve:** Prabhat Studio.

**Suryakant Mandhare:** Arvind Lad was Cameraman, Bhai --- was Director, and the Jeep belonged to Sahebrao

**Bapu Watve:** Fattelal.

**Suryakant Mandhare:** Yes. It was Fattelal's open jeep. I was sitting in front. The jeep was going down a slope. The jeep started and after travelling a bit the driver told me that the breaks have failed. The vehicle was going down the slope with breaks not working. The camera was located in the front, shooting was in progress and the cameraman did not understand why the jeep was going to the camera. He left the camera and ran. I told Arvind driver 'Camera'. He turned to steer slightly but then

Kaka Damle, the recordist was there. I felt we were going to collide. There was also a sound truck there but the driver managed to turn the jeep and drove through the gap between and hit a tree ahead. As I saw the car hit the tree, I tried to jump and with the impact, I jumped about 7 feet high.

**Bapu Watve:** My God.

**Suryakant Mandhare:** My thigh was injured and there was heavy swelling. Ameya Chakravati had come for some work to Prabhat at that time. We were taken to Sassoon hospital in his car. There, as an accident case, they immediately called for stretchers. Shubha Khote required stitches on her legs. I told I do not need a stretcher. Ameya Chakravati wondered whether I was a man or a Devil! When my friend Charu Sarpotdar learnt about the incident, he came to the ward, took me to Dr. Gharpure. There, after x-ray examination, it was revealed that there was no bone fracture although muscles were torn. The doctor remarked that it was because of my strong body. Otherwise, there was the possibility of thigh bone fracture. Thus even without my engaging in a courageous act, I had faced danger.

**Bapu Watve:** There is also a recent incident of your horse

**Suryakant Mandhare:** Yes. It is from the recent film which I left. I am an expert horse rider and have rode in so many movies. Every horse has certain traits. This horse had a habit of raising two front legs. I had taken a long ride on this horse so that the horse also knows that I know to ride.

At the time of taking shot, he raised his front legs. I was ready for that. But this time he raised them in 90 degrees. Therefore, the mount on its back slid down. It was not the horse's fault. But because the mount had slid down the rein in my hands got further pulled down and because of that, his hind legs slid. Both my legs were stuck in the stirrup. Both of us fell down with the horse falling in between my two legs with all its four legs up. The horse quickly got up. I also got up with some efforts. And since I was feeling unwell I went to Doctor. He checked my ribs and found that about one and a half inch of my front muscle was torn off. He forced me to rest for 15 days and then gave me discharge. I told him I will walk. He advised me not to and asked me to use a stretcher since there were stairs but I insisted. The doctor was surprised and commented that only because I had worked on my body, my ribs were not fractured in spite of having come under the full weight of horse.

**Bapu Watve:** The movie was 'Deva Shappath Khara Sangen'

**Suryakant Mandhare:** Yes. It was released on 1<sup>st</sup> March 1984.

**Bapu Watve:** Who was your first heroin?

**Suryakant Mandhare:** I did 12 pictures with Usha Kiran. Ours was a lucky pair. Then I did almost 27 films with Jayashri Gadkar. Recently Jayashri Gadkar was felicitated for having reached the landmark of 30 years in the film industry. There, she mentioned that out of thirty years she must have spent about 20-25 years with me since we had acted together in 27 movies.

**Bapu Watve:** Any other artist whose name you would like to mention especially?

**Suryakant Mandhare:** Sulochanabai. That way I have acted with many actors but with Sulochanabai all possible relations are exhausted. She has acted as my mother, my lover, my wife, my heroin, my sister-in-law, my sister, my mother-in-law.

**Bapu Watve:** Is there any big artists with whom you felt happy and proud to work with?

**Suryakant Mandhare:** That way, I got chance to work with Chintaman Rao Kolhatkar , then with Chittaranjan Kolhatkar . Both these artist were very good actors. I also derived pleasure from working with Baburao Pendharkar and Sulochanabai. Acting with Chandrakant, Lalitabai or Jayashri use to be a sort of competition as to who could act better. That was fun.

**Bapu Watve:** You got benefited from Master Vitthal also.

**Suryakant Mandhare:** Yes. I got benefited from Master Vitthal greatly. Initially, I learnt fighting from Narayan Rao who was employed by our company. Master Vitthal used to come to our company every day at four in the evening to teach us about fights in historic films. He taught us every move and steps of sword fighting. I have got great respect for him. In my book also I have written one article on him. I will tell you about one incident. In earlier "Bahirji Naik" he had acted role of Bahirji and I was Shivaji. Later on, in 'Mohityanchi Manjula' produced by Baba, I was Bahirji and he had acted Aba Sondeo. When Muhurt shot was being filmed on me, I saw Vitthalrao standing at the back in that crowd. He was a very simple man, without any airs. He had earned a lot but had then lost everything and was even auctioned once. He was standing at the back. After Muhurt shot, I paid my respect to Baba and then to Chandrakant and then went to Vitthalrao and paid my respect. He was embarrassed. But I told him that I value his blessings and because I am going to enact the role of Bahirji once enacted by him I need his blessings. He patted me on my back and said I

am the only person who could enact all the historical roles, needing courage, which was once enacted by him.

**Bapu Watve:** Wow. His case was pleaded by Barrister Jinnah. I feel that this artist has remained neglected and his contribution is not recognized.

**Suryakant Mandhare:** In my book, I have written many events of him. We were so close that he was like my elder brother to me. Our friendship was so strong that if on a day I could not meet him, he would come to my home and took few books from me for reading. Very good-natured person.

**Bapu Watve:** He was a big star at one time.

**Suryakant Mandhare:** Yes. He was. In that period, he was getting a salary of twelve hundred rupees. But everything got auctioned in the fight of two companies. No other big or small star had seen such a success. In the days when people could manage their family in a monthly income of Rs. 10/-, this actor got paid Rs. 1200/- per month. The first actor to own a Bullet car. Bhagwanrao told us that people used to line up the street to see him at the sound of a bullet. No actor had earned such fame. When Hindi actor Premnath and few others came to Kolhapur for shooting of film “Aurat” they searched his house and went to see him and paid their respect and called him Guru. They were surprised to see his fitness even at the age of 55-60. Even at that age, he had dimples in his cheeks. He was a real body-builder in Kolhapur tradition.

**Bapu Watve:** While on this topic, let me tell you the background of this visit. In ‘Aan’ movie Premnath tried to boast. Then Mahboob Khan told him ‘what would you have done had you been like Master Vitthal?’ You are no patch on Master Vitthal. Then Premnath decided to find out who this Master Vitthal is. Master Vitthal had earned such a name that even rulers of princely states used to invite him to visit their state.

**Suryakant Mandhare:** I will also narrate one story. In the Filmistan shooting of my films, ‘Dilya Ghari Tu Sukhi Raha’ and ‘Pahila Prem’ was going on. At the same time Shammi Kapur was shooting for ‘Tumasa Nahi Dekha’. I was dressed in a Nehru Kurta. That time Shammi Kapur came from behind and started feeling my biceps. I asked him what was he doing? He said ‘Nothing. Just checking if it is real. What a body build you have!’ I said ‘ Yes. I am from Kolhapur’

**Bapu Watve:** Marathi people are always lagging behind because they do not project themselves. They do not have the necessary showmanship. Vitthalrao was not a showman.

**Suryakant Mandhare:** Yes.

**Bapu Watve:** One more question. I was also in film line for a while. Films were a loss-making business.. The way of earning money was by not paying others.

**Suryakant Mandhare:** As the end of the shooting schedule started approaching and if the producer or a director started keeping his arm over your shoulder, we would realize that we are not going to get paid the last instalment.

**Bapu Watve:** Do you recall any incident when the artist was badly in need of money and suffered because the producer did not pay that artist

**Suryakant Mandhare:** I do not know if I should mention the name of the producer.

**Bapu Watve:** No. If you have seen

**Suryakant Mandhare:** Not only seen, have experienced. One Balasaheb Phatak was the producer. The movie was 'Aukshwant Ho'. I was the hero of film and old artist Shakuntalabai Satav

**Bapu Watve:** Heroin of 'Saraswati Sur'?

**Suryakant Mandhare:** Yes. But because of her age, she was enacting my mother. She was suffering from extreme poverty. I was sitting in his office. I had gone there to ask for my instalments. That time this lady came and pleaded for money. She told Balasaheb that she did not have money even to buy food items. Then he said what does she need money for? And gave her two rupees. I started considering that this woman, who is a good artist, was doing the role of my mother and this producer is offering her one, two or five rupees! This is not fair. I told him that you are insulting an artist. He said when he gives money, she spends them all. He would pay her the full amount in one final instalment. The picture got finished. After few days, I read in the paper that she died as a destitute and her dead body was found lying in the passage of the Pune Post office. I felt very bad. Some producers really treated artists very badly. Not all producers are like that. There are some producers who respect artists.

**Bapu Watve:** I know that Pendharkar was one of them

**Suryakant Mandhare:** And there was one Dattarao Gaikwad, who is no more. He would give respect. In my first film 'Murali Malhari Rayachi', I worked with whatever terms he offered. I wanted to work with him. In my second film with him, I think, 'Patalachi Sun' he gave the contract to me without mentioning any amount and asked

me to write the figure. He insisted that I should write the figure whatever I wanted. I then put my normal price. Then he offered me full payment in advance. But I told him not to pay me then. I wanted to buy a car and had booked. I told him that and asked him to pay when I get my car allotment. One day the car came to my home. I was not in Kolhapur. I was out for a drama. But my son had contacted him because I had told him. I have never seen such a producer. Great.

**Bapu Watve:** And the important part is that his profession was 'Building Contractor'.

**Suryakant Mandhare:** Whatever may be the profession it shows a person's upbringing.

**Bapu Watve:** And the goodness of heart.

**Suryakant Mandhare:** Yes.

**Bapu Watve:** You have acted in 101 movies so far. Which is your most favourite role. And also mention 4 more roles which you especially liked.

**Suryakant Mandhare:** My favourite role is from 'Sadhi Manase', and I also liked Villain's role in 'Mazee Jameen'.

**Bapu Watve:** Because that was challenging.

**Suryakant Mandhare:** Yes. And my brother insisted I must do it.

**Bapu Watve:** Which was that film?

**Suryakant Mandhare:** 'Mazee Jamin'

**Bapu Watve:** Who was a hero in that film?

**Suryakant Mandhare:** Madan Mohan Baxi.

**Bapu Watve:** Ok. Who were the other artists?

**Suryakant Mandhare:** Krushnarao Sonkar, G.D.Madgulkar, Sulochanabai, Chintamanrao Kolhatkar etc.

**Bapu Watve:** And you were villain.

**Suryakant Mandhare:** Yes.

**Bapu Watve:** And that is your favourite?

**Suryakant Mandhare:** Yes. That was my favourite rural role. Then I also like the role of Shivaji enacted by me in the film 'Pawankhind'

**Bapu Watve:** You acted Shivaji a number of times.

**Suryakant Mandhare:** Five times I acted Shivaji. And that too only with Baba.

**Bapu Watve:** And Sambhaji?

**Suryakant Mandhare:** Yes. Sambhaji also. Shivaji and Sambhaji were always enacted by a Mandhare.

**Bapu Watve:** Any more?

**Suryakant Mandhare:** Yes. There was a comedy role in 'Amhi Jato Amuchya Gava' which I did well.

**Bapu Watve:** Yes. That was challenging.

**Suryakant Mandhare:** I also liked roles in 'Netaji Palkar' and 'Jyotibacha Nawas'. Then one porter was so impressed by my role in 'Warnecha Wagh', that he used to see 9 o'clock show everyday. Throughout the day he used to work as porter. One day he came to see me and recited all my dialogues in the film. This is an example how the audience love an actor. He told that he is a porter and after working for the day he sees the show every night. He said nobody else can act role of Sattu Bhosale in the film. Then what I did, I told the producer to give him a letter that so long the film is being shown there, he should get free entry. He was happy and said now I can drink milk from the money saved.

**Bapu Watve:** Wow.

**Suryakant Mandhare:** And saw picture every day.

**Bapu Watve:** You had experimented with a denture once.

**Suryakant Mandhare:** When I was Hero in the film 'Akashganga', Ramesh Deo was the villain. Normally in a film hero is a hunting villain and therefore he changes his

appearance often. Sometimes he wears a beard, sometimes goggle, different headgears etc. But the man does not change. I was thinking about it all the time. In my view, the villain is the most intelligent character in the film. The film story progresses because of the villain.

**Bapu Watve:** Right.

**Suryakant Mandhare:** Then to deceive such an intelligent man one has to put on really a good act. When I accept a role, I am continuously thinking about the character. I used to see my face in the mirror and would be thinking as to how can I change my get up so that audience who is familiar with my face, does not recognize me. And I have to bring about that change without make-up because people can make out. I decided that I must alter my face-cut. I went to a dentist and asked him to make a denture for me that can be fitted over my existing tooth-line and which can be easily fitted and removed. That denture completely changed my face and lips. I have a peculiar Shivaji type nose which was recognizable by the audience. I fitted two rings to my nose which bloated my nose. Then, I squinted my eyes. All this was done without any makeup. While I was trying out these ideas, I had not informed anybody. Then I decided to take a trial at home first. I put on the denture and rings and came home. I pressed the doorbell. My wife opened the door and immediately closed and told me from inside that I am not at home and to come after some time.

**Bapu Watve:** So your experiment was successful in the very first attempt.

**Suryakant Mandhare:** Yes. Then I told her its me. She opened the door and started looking around and then told me she did not recognize me. I have been experimenting like this quite often. During the filming of 'Sangate Aika' I made one such trial which deceived Anantrao Mane, Shankarrao Damle, E. Mohammad. I have got a letter from E. Mohammad.

**Bapu Watve:** Any funny incident with that?

**Suryakant Mandhare:** Yes. While leaving for shooting Datta Mane, who was production in charge brought a car to pick me up. I was sitting in the car with a denture and had taken only Datta Mane in confidence. Then our car went to pick Jayashribai. As per her habit, while entering the car she looked at me and said 'Good Morning Suryakant'. But then immediately said 'I am sorry, I thought it was Suryakant'. She sat beside me and asked Datta Mane who am I. Datta Mane told her I am his friend, a tobacco dealer from Nipani, who has come to see the shooting. After reaching the studio when I went to the makeup room, makeup artist Rambhau came and told me that it was Suryakant's room and I should go to make room meant for the mob.



**Bapu Watve:** He told this to you?

**Suryakant Mandhare:** Yes and made me sit in mob's room. I took Datta Mane aside and told the problem. Datta Mane told Rambhau that Suryakant is going to be delayed and till then he should use Suryakant's make room for me. Inside the makeup room, I removed my denture. Rajabhau wondered what is this? I told him not to mention it to anyone. After my shooting for the day got over, I fitted the denture again and went to the studio. Shankarrao Damle was sitting outside the recording car talking to some friends. Like a newcomer, I asked where is Datta Mane. He did not recognize me and directed me to set. Till then, Jayashri for the whole day was telling stories of Datta mane's friend, that is me, how his teeth looked and all that to Anantrao Mane. Then I went there and Datta Mane introduced me as his friend. Jayashribai had to give some close-up shots then and she asked for my removal and refused to give shots in my presence.

**Bapu Watve:** Then?

**Suryakant Mandhare:** I informed Anantrao that I wish to act in the film. He asked Kaka, that is , Shankarrao Damle to take my sound test. Shankarrao Damle wondered what is going on. He asked to finish close-up shots first and then he took my test. I played 2-3 dialogues of a hotel boy from 'Lagnachi Bedi'. Anantrao Mane asked me if I was married and I demurred. I deceived them with my acting. Anantrao told Datta to take me to a hotel and give me tea and said he would consider me for his next film. After shooting, Cameraman and Director started going in a car. When I tried to join them Anantrao asked me to stay back and talk to Datta who would make arrangement for my car. Then I removed my denture and told him it's me. He was stunned. He came out of the car and saluted me. Mohammad said he is such a big cameraman and how could he get deceived. Thus my experiment was successful. Isak Mujawar of Rasarang had written about this incident in Rasarang. Madhusudan Kalelkar, later on, produced a film based on this story.

#### **Fifth part of interview conducted on 13<sup>th</sup> May 1987**

**Bapu Watve:** Suryakant, Kalelkar produced his film 'Lagnala Jato me' based on your denture. Which role did you play?

**Suryakant Mandhare:** I was the Hero of the film as well as a villain. I would be the villain with the denture and the hero without the denture. That was a comedy.

**Bapu Watve:** You had fun with your denture a number of times later on.

**Suryakant Mandhare:** Yes. Many times. Once there was reading of a new drama and I was invited for that session. I was shooting in Pune at that time and had told them that I will join after the completion of the shooting. The shooting got cancelled and I reached there in time. Nobody recognized me and they kept on waiting for me. They waited for me for a long although I was present there with them. After some time they started reading saying that they will give the script to Suryakant later on. They read the full script which I listened. They were wondering why have I not come. Then I could not hold myself. I was sitting among them only. I removed my denture and told the writer that I was present there for a full reading session and have heard the drama. They were all shocked. I was experimenting for a change of personality without the use of makeup which was a success. In this manner, I made fun many times and if I were to narrate all incident, 10 recording tapes will be inadequate.

**Bapu Watve:** So your face would change completely just with the help of a denture. Normally a villain would have a beard, or spectacle or a different hairstyle. You carried out a new experiment.

**Suryakant Mandhare:** Yes totally new experiment

**Bapu Watve:** Which was very successful.

**Suryakant Mandhare:** Yes. Very. Do you see What is the school for artists? It is society. When we move around in this society we come across many type of personalities with different manners. Someone will have a peculiar way of walk, someone will have a peculiar way of talking, someone will lift his shoulders while talking or someone will tilt his neck. An artist has to be observant. Society is his study centre.

One time, I was acting in the drama 'Atharava Varees Lagnacha'. In that, I was a police inspector who changes his appearances. I was keen that the audience should not recognize me when I change my appearance. I tried denture but the audience would know me. I tried nose rings but to no effect. I squinted my eyes and also tried to put on a false stomach but the audience would still recognize me. Then I realized that it was my voice that was familiar to the audience. I was searching for a peculiar voice and one day I found the owner of Ramnivas.

**Bapu Watve:** That hotel in Mumbai?

**Suryakant Mandhare:** Yes. The brother of the owner of that hotel was Shankarrao and he had a typical voice and intonation. Whenever we went to that hotel for lunch he would enquire about me and Chandrakant in a very peculiar voice. There I found the

voice for my role in changed appearance. People then could not recognize me. Once my brother had come to see that drama.

**Bapu Watve:** Chandrakant?

**Suryakant Mandhare:** Yes. It was a folk drama. I told him that I know you do not like folk dramas so if you do not like you can just leave but please do not come inside to lecture me on what type of drama I was working in etc. I liked it because the role was very good and challenging. I arranged for him a front seat in first row. He came to see the drama. Saw the first two acts. Then could not hold himself and come inside. By this time I had removed makeup of changed appearance and was in the Inspector's role. He asked me who was that artist doing Patil's role? His acting is brilliant. All artists were looking at us. I had told them not to say anything. They told Dada to see the entire drama to know the artist. In the last entry of the last act on the stage itself, I remove my make up and stand there in the original inspector's get up. When Chandrakant saw that he was so surprised that he came inside and embraced me. He admitted that in spite of being my real brother he was deceived. My walk and talk were so different and the acting was brilliant. This was his certificate to me. I had been experimenting like this always.

**Bapu Watve:** For this, one has to be obsessed.

**Suryakant Mandhare:** Yes. One has to be obsessed and trying out something new.

**Bapu Watve:** Artist has to be continuously observing and thinking. Then only he can last.

**Suryakant Mandhare:** Yes. That is the only way he can last.

**Bapu Watve:** Now some delicate questions. You acted as a hero in many films and you must have enacted love scenes on screen.

**Suryakant Mandhare:** Yes. Many times.

**Bapu Watve:** How did your wife, Sulochanavahini, react to seeing your love scenes.

**Suryakant Mandhare:** Before our marriage, she knew that I work in films and I am an actor. She knew that everything in films is false. The wife is false, the brother is false, the father is false. Everything is appearance.

**Bapu Watve:** Right.

**Suryakant Mandhare:** I told her that company pays me for enacting these love scenes. I get paid for love scenes. But you are the only person whom I really love.

**Bapu Watve:** That love is paid for. This love is not. It is real. Did she accept?

**Suryakant Mandhare:** She has full faith in me. She is confident that her husband will not go astray. This faith is very important.

**Bapu Watve:** And particularly, for a movie actor or actress loss of this faith is very damaging. That is why you got all the co-operation from her in everything that you did.

**Suryakant Mandhare:** We are very happily married.

**Bapu Watve:** That is why you never worried about your home front.

**Suryakant Mandhare:** Absolutely not.

**Bapu Watve:** You never worried what will your wife think while enacting love scenes.

**Suryakant Mandhare:** No.

**Bapu Watve:** Suryakant, did you act in any Hindi movies?

**Suryakant Mandhare:** Yes. Once a manager had taken me to Satyen Bose. He wanted to make Kanyadan film in Hindi.

**Bapu Watve:** That Marathi Kanyadan film which was a big hit.

**Suryakant Mandhare:** Honestly Bapusaheb, I did not like that atmosphere. Attending parties, going to Director's home a number of times just to pay him respect and enquire his wellbeing. I wondered why these false formalities. I started thinking, why do I want to work in Hindi films? To earn more money? Or to get known all over India because Hindi films have a wider reach? The false display of respect and sycophancy is not in my nature. If I spend that much time with my parents, look after them and care for them, I would be blessed and they would also be pleased. It was my duty to see that they are happy. So I did not try for Hindi films. I had earned plenty of love and affection from the Marathi audience to last me for life and I was happy with whatever I earned from the Marathi industry and did not crave for more. And what would I do by earning more money? Only worry about how to save on income tax! I did not want to lose my sleep over that. An artist needs time to sleep and think and ponder. I was

getting my mental peace in Marathi so I did not try for Hindi. I was not prepared to get roles by sycophancy. I was prepared to work only if I get the role on my merit. When an artist goes to a producer or director asking for work his value drops down to zero. When a Producer or Director comes to an artist offering him the role and insists on his accepting it then the artist's value goes up.

**Bapu Watve:** There was no actor having a masculine personality like yours or Dada's in Hindi or Marathi. It is true even to this day. Had somebody wanted, he could have made good use of you. But you refused to compromise on your principle and self-respect and turned your back on Hindi.

**Suryakant Mandhare:** Yes. Because it is not in my nature. I do not mind getting less income. I am satisfied.

**Bapu Watve:** Suryakant, you were a busy actor and your films were getting released one after the other. Did you ever have to sit at home without work?

**Suryakant Mandhare:** Yes. I have faced a time when I did not have work for years. Many Producers and Directors had then thought that I would go to them asking for work. But even in those times, I did not approach anybody. I having many talents. I am a good painter. I earned money by drawing portraits. I was not depending only on film line to earn my living. I do not waste my time gossiping.

**Bapu Watve:** Or chit chatting

**Suryakant Mandhare:** I do not like to gossip.

**Bapu Watve:** You enjoyed living in your art world.

**Suryakant Mandhare:** I drew portraits of many people and earned income. I earned it by selling my paintings. I also like to write. I started writing my old memories. I like reading. I have, at home, a small personal library having three to four hundred books, all purchased by me.

**Bapu Watve:** Wow.

**Bapu Watve:** When you started accepting work in dramas, you were already doing well in the film line.

**Suryakant Mandhare:** Yes. But still, I started acting in dramas 'Agryahun Sutaka' and 'Bebandshahi'. I started working in 'Bebandshahi' because of the great artist

Nanasaheb Phatak. In 'Agryahun Sutaka' I did Shivaji's role. Nanasaheb was doing the role of Sambhaji in 'Bebandshahi'. Both drama parties were touring together in the Kokan-Karwar area. I used to see his drama daily and he would see my drama daily. One day he casually asked me if I can take over Sambhaji's role in 'Bebandshahi' since he was getting old and cannot work for long.

**Bapu Watve:** That is great. Nanasaheb would not commend anybody easily.

**Suryakant Mandhare:** After seeing my build and personality, he felt I would suit the role. I told him that if he would train me for the role then I would accept. During that period of one month, I practised with him every afternoon.

**Bapu Watve:** How did you find his method of training?

**Suryakant Mandhare:** His dialogue delivery was very good. He knew which sentence would impress the audience. He taught me actions and postures. Many old-timers commented that they see in me a resemblance of Nanasaheb. I liked 'Bebandshahi' very much. There is one scene in that. We had a show in Sawargad. In that drama, Chittaranjan was playing Khandoji's role. In the last scene, Khandoji comes to meet Sambhaji in a different disguise and they had a discussion. That day Chittaranjan and I got very involved and emotionally charged while enacting the scene. In the end he was supposed to salute and leave but that day he put his hand under my shoes, took dust from underneath, and put it on his head. The audience had also got so involved that tears were rolling down the faces of people sitting in the front row. Tears were also filled in eyes of both of us. I felt charged and after his exit to the wing, he fell down and became hysterical. I too became blank and forgot my further dialogues. People were prompting me from the wing but I was in a trance. I will remember that show for ever. It shows how an artist gets under the skin of the character if his fellow artist is equally good. Chittaranjan and my pair as Khandoji and Sambhaji was fully appreciated by the audience.

**Bapu Watve:** The technique of acting in a drama and in films is different. In films, there are only 3 or 4 sentences and there are retakes. Did you face any difficulty in dramas? Which was your first drama?

**Suryakant Mandhare:** No. My first drama was 'Agryahun Sutaka'. I had acted Shivaji's role in that. My first role in films was Shivaji's and in drama also my first role was Shivaji. Sulochanabai had acted role of Rajkunvar. Sulochanabai has acted in only two dramas 'Agryahun Sutaka' and 'Kareen ti Purva' but she was excellent. After seeing her in those dramas Baba gave her role of heroin in 'Jay Bhawani'.

**Bapu Watve:** Ok. Was it 'Jay Bhawani' or 'Sasurwas'?

**Suryakant Mandhare:** Jay Bhawani. In Sasurwas she had a secondary character. She was there in the film with me but not as heroin. Shanta Jog was heroin in that. But Sulochana was heroin in Jay Bhawani. Baba saw her enacting role of Gajara in 'Kareen Ti Purva' and said he has found the right heroin for his film. In Jay Bhawani she was there as heroin, Master Vitthal was there and I was selected for Shivaji's role. From then onwards I got permanently identified with Shivaji.

**Bapu Watve:** You were narrating your experience of theatre.

**Suryakant Mandhare:** I started with 'Agryahoon Sutka'. Since I have a strong memory, I did not face any difficulty. But on stage, you have to give an appropriate response to other actors. You have to always act to maintain the mood of the scene. At first after seeing audience one feels pressure. But now I have got used to it and do not get affected even if there are thousand people in the audience.

**Bapu Watve:** Not now but initially/

**Suryakant Mandhare:** Initially yes. Any artist feels pressure when he enters a new field. But he gets used to it.

**Bapu Watve:** Can you narrate any specific response from an appreciative audience to your role on stage?

**Suryakant Mandhare:** There was one show of 'Bebandshahi' in Sangli in front of a big audience. After the first act during the interval, a very old man came to see me holding the hand of his young grandson. He said, 'Young chap. I have seen many historical dramas, but you have acted very well and are looking very cute and I have to perform the ritual of cast away any spell from evil eyes'. He had brought salt and water and performed his ritual.

**Bapu Watve:** Anyone like that at Shivaji Mandir?

**Suryakant Mandhare:** In Bombay, there is a practice of having a midnight show which would start at 1:30 a.m. It was Bebandshahi. I was playing Sambhaji's role. After the show and after removing makeup, around five-thirty in the morning when I was coming down the stairs, one middle-aged lame man was standing on his crutches. His name was Shelar and he was waiting for me. When I inquired about his work, he said he has got Darshan of Chatrapati Shivaji. He had come specially to see my acting which he liked very much. He bent down awkwardly to touch my feet. I held him up and told

him not to touch my feet. I told him that for an artist getting such appreciation from the audience is the reward and I am very happy that he liked my act. This was a very satisfying experience.

**Bapu Watve:** Did any renowned, established actor appreciated your work?

**Suryakant Mandhare:** Yes. I got such appreciation from Master Dattaram. In Sahitya Sangh, our play 'Pahuna Ala Re' was being staged. It was based on the story of two brothers. I was the elder brother and the younger brother's role was played by Krushnakant Dalwi. Other cast included Baba Pendse, Ashu, Mai Bhide, Shanta Tambe etc. In an emotional scene, a brother tells others that his mother is sick, you are settled in city but mother is remembering you so you come to our village to our mother. He refuses. I was very emotional in enacting that scene. That day Master Dattaram had come to see the show and was sitting in the front row. After the act Dattaram Bapu came inside and embraced me and said so far he had never cried while watching a drama scene but that day I made him cry and I was brilliant and he embraced me.

**Bapu Watve:** So you received accolades in dramatics also. In how many dramas did you act?

**Suryakant Mandhare:** About thirty five-thirty six.

**Bapu Watve:** Which of them were widely acclaimed?

**Suryakant Mandhare:** 'Agryahoon Sutka', 'Bebandshahi', 'Pahuna Ala Re', 'Dilya Ghari Tu Sukhi Raha', 'Atharava Varis Lagnacha' were acclaimed.

**Bapu Watve:** Let us now change the subject. How did you turn movie director?

**Suryakant Mandhare:** It all began with a challenge. I had an argument with Director Vasant Rao Pendkar who questioned my knowledge and ability. He said I do not know anything and challenged me to direct a movie. I accepted the challenge. My friend had written a story

"Irsha" which I had liked. I decided to make a film on that. I wrote the screenplay. Mr D.M Mirasdar wrote dialogues for the same. Jagdish Khebudkar wrote the songs. I directed the film. It was so good that in spite of this being the first film made by me, even the Censors praised my film. I had accepted that challenge because many times earlier, Vasant Rao Pendkar had used my ideas for his films.

**Bapu Watve:** Is it?



**Suryakant Mandhare:** Yes. For his films ‘Tila Lavate Raktacha’, ‘Warnecha Wagh’ etc I had sat with him for writing screenplay.

**Bapu Watve:** And one more film ‘Bara Varshe’

**Suryakant Mandhare:** Yes . ‘Bara Varshe Saha Mahine Teen Diwas’. For writing screenplay, I used to sit with him and give ideas. He would appreciate my suggestions and request me to come every day for writing a screenplay. So he had made films on my ideas and now he was challenging me. So I accepted it. If somebody challenged me it used to spur me on.

On the earlier occasion, when I wanted to come to the film line I had requested Vasanttrao Pendharkar a number of times because I knew Vasanttrao for a long time.

**Bapu Watve:** Yes.

**Suryakant Mandhare:** He was good friend of Chandrakant. He had seen me as a young man. So many times I had requested him that when he makes so many films, he should give me some work. But he told me that your brother can manage but you will not be able to act. You be a technician or a camera department recordist but you cannot be a hero. When I became a hero and won an award for the first time he was in Mumbai. I told him that I am getting an award for my hero’s role in that day’s function. He accepted that I have become a hero. Later on, when he came from Hindi films to Kolhapur and started making Marathi films, he came to me first and said I have to work in his film. I asked him if he accepts that I have become a hero? He said yes, I accept. Then I worked in his film. Thus, because somebody challenged me I became a Producer, Director, Hero as well. I worked in his film and that picture was a success.

**Bapu Watve:** You were a Producer, Director and Hero of the film. What was your experience as a Producer?

**Suryakant Mandhare:** As a Producer!!!!. I was an artist but I knew nothing of commerce. But my partner was good at business and accounts etc.

**Bapu Watve:** Was very shrewd.

**Suryakant Mandhare:** Yes. Yes. So shrewd, he made full use of me. Through my contacts, he managed to rope in all good artists and when the movie turned out to be good and started earning good money, he did not give me a single paisa in spite of my being a partner.

**Bapu Watve:** Had you invested your own money?

**Suryakant Mandhare:** Yes I had invested one lac rupees. I considered it as expenses for my education.

**Bapu Watve:** Rs. one lac?

**Suryakant Mandhare:** Yes.

**Bapu Watve:** Just to be called Producer?

**Suryakant Mandhare:** Yes. But I was determined to produce and direct a film which I did.

**Bapu Watve:** But you had a very bad experience.

**Suryakant Mandhare:** The experience taught me that an artist does not understand commerce. He looks at all commercial matters from an artistic angle only. His thinking is restricted to making a good movie. He is continuously engaged in that only.

**Bapu Watve:** Suryakant, you have three sons. How is it that none of them joined the film line. Did you forbid them?

**Suryakant Mandhare:** No. But in this line, you do not get a steady income. You get work only when somebody else gives it to you. So I told my sons to get a good education and then choose a profession that they like. My children chose their own business lines and they are fully busy in that. My eldest son has a liking for acting and he acts sometimes as a hobby. In my film 'Irsha' he has acted role of Patil's son. Names of sons are Uday, Kiran and Prakash.

**Bapu Watve:** All related to sun.

**Suryakant Mandhare:** That time some people commented that because I have worked in 12 films with Usha Kiran, I have named my son 'Kiran'. But I told them that I have not copied anybody. My own name Suryakant was coined by. My son's names are of Sun. 'Uday, Kiran and Prakash.'

**Bapu Watve:** Up till now we have talked about your acting in films and on stage and writing. But that writing was screen playwriting. When and how did you start actually writing? Recently your autobiography is published. Were you writing earlier? And who inspired you to write?

**Suryakant Mandhare:** I got introduced to Babasaheb Purandare. I have acted in so many movies. While chitchatting with him I narrated him many incidences. In 1967, I narrated him the one of tiger fight. After listening, he asked me to write it down and said he would be publishing it in the Manos Diwali issue. I told him I cannot write and asked him to write it. He insisted that I must write myself. Initially, I thought that he is pulling my leg and so did not take it seriously. I went to Kolhapur. But Babasaheb kept on sending me reminders. Finally, as Diwali started approaching, he threatened that if I do not give him my article by a particular date he would leave few pages of the Diwali issue blank and on the first page he would write that Suryakant had promised but not sent his article so he is leaving the pages blank. I got afraid and started writing. But once I started writing I got into the mood and at a stretch wrote 17 instances. I read them out to Babasaheb told him to go through my writing and rectify them wherever necessary. But he published that without any changes.

Then, next Diwali he wrote to me asking for other incidences from films. I, then, wrote the article 'Yogayog' describing how I came to film line and how I became an actor, which he published. Every year, Lalit magazine writes a review of all Diwali issues published and it mentioned about my article and commented that if Suryakant has really written the article 'Yogayog' himself, it is commendable.

**Bapu Watve:** Ok

**Suryakant Mandhare:** Babasaheb sent that to me and then I thought about writing my memories and bought a notebook

## **SIXTH PART OF INTERVIEW**

**Bapu Watve:** You mentioned of buying a notebook. What did you do with it?

**Suryakant Mandhare:** I started writing my old memories. Charudatta Sarpotdar is my old friend. He is in fact a close friend of all artists. If ever any artist needs any help, Charudatta will rush there to help like an angel. He will do anything for friends. Such a rare person he is.

Whenever I came for shooting, I used to go to my room for writing. He enquired what am I doing in the room. I told him that I am writing for fun just to kill time. Once our friend Bapusaheb Watve came there. Charudatta said to him 'You are a writer, a litterateur. The woman is writing something. Bapusaheb came and browsed through the notebook and said you are writing well. Let me take the book home for reading. He gave that notebook to Kothawale first who also read and liked it.

**Bapu Watve:** Kothawale of Majestic Book stall?

**Suryakant Mandhare:** For some reason, he could not do anything with it and he gave the notebook to Antarkar who started publishing it through his magazine 'Hans' in a serial form. He named it 'Dhakati Pati'. So, thanks to the encouragement given by my friends, in spite of my not being a litterateur, my writing started getting published. I kept on writing. I wrote total of 10 parts. Babasaheb Purandare, who had initially encouraged me to write, read them and telephoned me and told me that he would publish it, in book form, through his Purandare Prakashan and not to commit it to anybody else. He encouraged me and therefore I developed a liking for writing.

**Bapu Watve:** You became confident. Bapusaheb Watve had also given you important advice of not getting it written through anybody else, but to write yourself, in your own style, which he felt, people would like more. Was that your experience after the publication of the book?

**Suryakant Mandhare:** Yes. When he advised me, I had doubts since I was not a writer and did not know good language and rules of writing. But he insisted that I should write in my own language which I did. After the publication of the book, many people wrote to me appreciating my style.

**Bapu Watve:** I feel that because you wrote in your own style, people accepted your autobiography as genuine. Are you still learning drawing?

**Suryakant Mandhare:** Yes. Now.

**Bapu Watve:** I have a complaint. Dada continued his passion for drawing. Both of you studied drawing under Baba Gajbar. Dada earned name and fame as an actor and also for his drawings. You are good at drawing but people do not recognize you for that.

**Suryakant Mandhare:** That is correct. There is a reason. When my brother entered the film industry, it was in good financial condition. On the contrary, when I joined the film industry it was doing very badly. Chandrakant use to earn Rs. 25000/- for each film, whereas I started with Rs. 1000/- to 1200/- per film. I was independent and married. To take care of my family I had to accept any work that came my way. I worked in the camera department, acted in drama, drew posters, did card show. This did not leave me with time to pursue drawing. I could progress only up to powder shading. I had to work in drama to earn living. Chandrakant did not act in the drama. He never needed it. But I had to. As a result, drawing got neglected.

**Bapu Watve:** You worked with a number of directors. Whom would you rate ideal? Somebody from whom you could learn?

**Suryakant Mandhare:** In the initial days Pendharkar, Raja Paranjape, any director who could teach acting.

**Bapu Watve:** No. Not necessarily a director who would show you how to act but the director should at least be able to explain the role and make you visualize the scene.

**Suryakant Mandhare:** The directors in old days were of that type from whom you could learn. Raja Paranjape, Raja Thakur, or Baba Pendharkar were in that category. The directors these days leave everything to artists. An artist can study and think about one role but artists these days do not get time since they work in 8 or 10 films at one time. How can he concentrate on the character? In our days we worked in one or two films at a time and artist got time to think about the character. Nowadays it is different. Director comes, gives dialogues, actors say those dialogues and leave, go for second shooting. How can he do justice to any role? Old directors would make you repeat the scene and would not allow you to go till they are satisfied with the acting. The present generation thinks the system of practice sessions is the old style. But I think that was the correct system.

**Bapu Watve:** Do you consider the present generation of Producers, Directors or Writers are of lesser quality? Some senior artists are more experienced than the new Producers, Directors or Writers. Do they fall short?

**Suryakant Mandhare:** No. No. They do not fall short. Even experienced artists or writers are helpless. If a producer insists on a particular scene in a particular way people have to accept. Times have changed. Producer can dictate which scenes to be written and shown which way, which actress to be selected. He can ask a scene to be scrapped and to add a new scene as he perceives. Today for the producer it is a business. In the old day, movies were made as art. There were institutes like Prabhat. People working there were living like a family. There was an attachment. Not any more. Writer is happy with getting money, the artist is happy with money, the director is satisfied with the money he earns and the producer is keen to see that film runs well and he earns good money.

**Bapu Watve:** No. But the present generation of Producers, Directors or Writers lacks in quality.

**Suryakant Mandhare:** No. They have to write what is suitable for present time and times have changed. You have to produce and direct a film that will be liked by the present generation of audience. I agree with you that there is less study going into film making. In the old days, while finalizing a story, four or five people would take a meeting and discuss. Different ideas use to emerge from such meetings. But now nobody has time. People come for work for two or four hours and leave in four hours. Shooting has to be finished within those four hours. When can one think? In old days it was art. Now it is business.

**Bapu Watve:** In the old days person would not be Director easily. Director is the leader of the film. But nowadays a person becomes Director within few years of joining film line. A person can become Director because he is a friend of the Producer.

**Suryakant Mandhare:** Correct. It is happening and will continue to happen.

**Bapu Watve:** The quality of Marathi films have now gone down. Who do you think is responsible for that?

**Suryakant Mandhare:** To some extent audience.

**Bapu Watve:** Some extent or to a large extent?

**Suryakant Mandhare:** I would say to a large extent. When a producer invests Rs. 1500000/- in a film he expects to earn at least 1000000/- out of it. He is not trying to improve society. The audience has to think about what the effect on his family will be and on society when a particular film is exhibited. If audience thinks and if any film is bad and audience decides not to see it the producer will not produce that kind of film again. It is law of demand and supply. Producer will produce kind of film audience wants. If films with dances, rape scenes, women with scanty clothes is demanded by audience, a producer will produce that type of film. I told you earlier. Now it is business not art.

**Bapu Watve:** Yes. You always give an example of a cloth merchant.

**Suryakant Mandhare:** Yes when a cloth merchant displays a revealing saree, the customer has to think whether, at home, he would like his wife or mother to wear it.

**Bapu Watve:** A see-through

**Suryakant Mandhare:** Yes, a see-through. If demand for that saree goes down, the shop keeper will not bring it to his shop. I told you earlier, it is demand and supply.

**Bapu Watve:** What difference do you see between the two periods?

**Suryakant Mandhare:** Which period?

**Bapu Watve:** Your time and now.

**Suryakant Mandhare:** There is lot of development now from old days, particularly on technical side with the arrival of new machinery. In other angles the films have changed with time. The new film now depicts present social scenario. In old days there would be backyard with Tulas Vrundavan and women wearing nine yard saree. Where do you see that now? Today people plant Tulas in a Dalda can. So the writer and artists have to move on with the time. That is the difference. If you make a movie like old days now, it will not run.

**Bapu Watve:** One bad experience in old days, of which I was also a victim, was that agreed payment will not be made. Writers and actors would always be paid short.

**Bapu Watve:** Now, I wish to ask about the artist's remuneration. Has the artist's remuneration gone up with time?

**Suryakant Mandhare:** As compared to my times it has increased considerably. That time when I was the topmost hero, I was getting paid Rs. 6000/-. Now, even for the role of father, people are ready to pay me Rs.15 or 20 thousand. When I entered the film line, the industry was going through bad times. Now I do not act hero. I take side roles but am paid 15 to 20000/-. So much has changed with time.

**Bapu Watve:** Yes I have seen that time. Nowadays cases of not getting paid are not there.

**Suryakant Mandhare:** No. But I have to tell to the artists that this film is like a large valuable cloth. Even if a single strand is bad that cloth loses its value. The artist must be careful about their behaviour. This world of drama and films is neither bad nor good. The artist has to take care of its image. For the newcomers to this field, I emphasize that you must draw a 'Laxmanresha' in your behaviour. If every artist is careful about his behaviour, then only this art will grow. Today audience do not have respect for artists. They honour the artist for his work in films but with his behaviour artist loses his dignity. The whole industry gets a bad name and the good people are also looked down upon. An artist must realize that this field is like walking on a tight rope. Lakhs of people are looking at you and observing your behaviour, your living style, the type of people you mix with. If you want your audience to respect you then you must exercise some limits. Society observes certain norm of behaviour and you must live within those norms. If you feel because you are a big star you can behave free of any controls, it will not be acceptable. Such an artist will not survive even for a day.

**Bapu Watve:** Right. No profession is bad. It is the person who is bad. There are bad people in all fields. But the affairs of cinema and drama artists get more publicized. In this line, there are more opportunities for fatal attraction which according to you must be avoided. Otherwise, that artist will be blown away like a tree leaf in a storm.

**Suryakant Mandhare:** Yes. Then we lament that such a good artist finished too early. An artist should behave in a way that he does not have to face such tragedy and the audience remembers him for a long time.

**Bapu Watve:** People should respect him.

**Suryakant Mandhare:** Yes.

**Bapu Watve:** In the end I wish to ask you, just as you and Dada lived a decent life and earned respect, maintained your good health, you have no addictions, whatever money you earned you saved judiciously and managed your family life, both of you



built your own houses. When one sees your two-storied building 'Manisha', one feels proud that a Marathi actor has built his own house which many Hindi artists also have not managed. Your children have turned out to be good and are earning well, you live together with your grandchildren. There is nothing more left for you to achieve. You are living a happy life. Do you have any advice for the audience?

**Suryakant Mandhare:** I can say a lot. I have narrated my full life as an artist. I will never forget one incident. After the celebration of my sixty-first birthday, I was invited as a chief guest for a book publication ceremony in village Kedgaon near Kolhapur. After reaching there, the author took me walking through a lane. In that lane, the women started coming out and washing my feet and started worshipping. A local leader Bapusaheb Patil was with us. I asked him what was going on.

He said "Suryakant, we are respected only till we occupy the chair. But you have earned a place in people's heart and nobody can displace you from there. Nobody will wash our feet because after three years somebody else will be occupying our chair. But the roles that you have played and the messages that you have conveyed to people is great work."

I said "I have not done anything. The writers have written on various social problems. I have only conveyed those messages to the people. I have acted only as a medium."

He said "But that is important and not many people can do it. The respect people have for Suryakant and Chndrakant is proof of that." I was overwhelmed.

I wish to tell the audience only one thing, whenever you see any good thing being done do appreciate it and encourage it.

**Bapu Watve:** The village you visited and the people who welcomed you were they all illiterate?

**Suryakant Mandhare:** Yes. illiterate.

**Bapu Watve:** But still they had respect for you, What else an artist want?

**Suryakant Mandhare:** Nobody enquires how much money you have in which bank. How you lived your life and your behaviour with others is important. Today, I

remember my friend Charudatta because of the help he rendered to others. In this world, there are only two things which you cannot show. God and Love. We believe in God only when we experience it. I mentioned Charudatta to describe love because at one time I was in difficulty. I needed money. The film production had got halted. I phoned him and he told me not to worry he would arrange for the money. That is when I realized the affection of a real friend. That is why I said that Love and God are the things to be experienced, not seen.

**Bapu Watve:** Are you satisfied as an artist?

**Suryakant Mandhare:** Yes. Fully.

**Bapu Watve:** Suryakant, You were born on 2<sup>nd</sup> June 1926. You are now 62 years old. Even today you are as fit as a wrestler. In all our talk one thing that never came out is that you are also a large-hearted person. I narrate one incident. In 1961, when Pune got devastated by a flood caused by the Panshet dam burst, the house of your friend Vasant Shinde had got washed off. When you got this news in Kolhapur, you immediately sent a man to Pune and sent a message that you will not touch food till he comes to Kolhapur. You knew that Vasant Shinde was a shy person and would not ask for help. You took him to Kolhapur and the family stayed with you for eight months. Such a large-heartedness is rarely seen. So I wish to say that not only you are a great artist but as a person also you are equally great. Suryakant one more thing is worth mentioning, that the **Chitranagri** which is being developed at your native place, Kolhapur has the considerable contribution of Mandhare brothers and especially yours is remarkable. It is noteworthy as you have worked very hard for it.