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Interview of Movie actor Haribhau Lonare by Bapu Watve

- Bapu Watve** : Haribhau, did you start acting from Setubhandan (सेतुबंधन)?
- Haribhau Lonare** : Setubandhan. That's right.
- Bapu Watve** : Were you with Phalke before that?
- Haribhau Lonare** : No. I was with Gajanan Film Company.
I acted in two or three films with it.
- Bapu Watve** : Okay because you were strong and stout?
- Haribhau Lonare** : Yes. I was a wrestler.
- Bapu Watve** : That's why you were readily picked up by that company.
What was your salary then?
- Haribhau Lonare** : 35 Rs.
- Bapu Watve** : 35 was a good salary in those times How old were you?
- Haribhau Lonare** : May be 25.
- Bapu Watve** : 25 then. How old are you now?
- Haribhau Lonare** : 82 years.
- Bapu Watve** : What was your basic profession?
- Haribhau Lonare** : Brick Making Factory.
- Bapu Watve** : How did you turn to Cinema?

- Haribhau Lonare** : I was called for the role of Maruti (मारुती)
- Bapu Watve** : By whom?
- Haribhau Lonare** : Mr. Phalke
- Bapu Watve** : For Setubandhan?
- Haribhau Lonare** : Yes
- Bapu Watve** : Were you in films before that?
- Haribhau Lonare** : Yes
- Bapu Watve** : In Gajanan Film Co.?
- Haribhau Lonare** : Yes. I started with it.
- Bapu Watve** : Where was that company?
- Haribhau Lonare** : In Nasik only
- Bapu Watve** : You acted in two or three silent movies of that company?
- Haribhau Lonare** : They produced only one film.
- Bapu Watve** : Which one? Do you remember the name? Tell me if you remember. Then came Setubandhan and Dadasaheb Phalke called you for Maruti's role.
- Haribhau Lonare** : Yes.
- Bapu Watve** : Then you did it. That means you worked in only one film for Dada Saheb Phalke.
- Haribhau Lonare** : Yes. Only one.
- Bapu Watve** : Where did you go from there?
- Haribhau Lonare** : To Prabhat Film Company.
- Bapu Watve** : Who were the people with you?
- Haribhau Lonare** : Myself and Ganapatbhai.
- Bapu Watve** : You mean Ganpatrao Tambat?

- Haribhau Lonare** : Tambat .
- Bapu Watve** : Whom did you meet in Prabhat?
- Haribhau Lonare** : Shantaram Bapu.
- Bapu Watve** : Can you remember some incidences from Dadasaheb Phalke's Company? You first narrate them.
- Haribhau Lonare** : Yes.
- Bapu Watve** : Where was Setubandhan Shot?
- Haribhau Lonare** : Here only. Near Pandavnagar. A wooden bridge is there.
- Bapu Watve** : I See.
- Haribhau Lonare** : I had to jump there. There afterwards, we went to Malhar Quarry. There was a huge hillock. I had to jump from that hillock. Then we went to Tambat Ghat. There we had a lot of fights with the Demons.
- Bapu Watve** : You fought.
- Haribhau Lonare** : Fierce fighting. Maruti destructed many things.
- Bapu Watve** : Maruti? Meaning yourself?
- Haribhau Lonare** : Yes. We went to Ratnagiri from there, we had to shoot the Setu (i.e. bridge) scene. Ram, Laxman, Maruti and all people gathered at a place called 'Vileparle' (विलेपार्ले), about a mile away from Ratnagiri. I had to arrange stones in the sea and proceed to Lanka. This was the scene.
- Bapu Watve** : What can you say about Dadasaheb Phalke's direction?
- Haribhau Lonare** : He used to communicate properly.
- Bapu Watve** : Did he enact the role for the actors?
- Haribhau Lonare** : Yes. He would perform himself whatever he wanted from the artists.
- Bapu Watve** : But you acted in only one of his films.

- Haribhau Lonare** : Only one.
- Bapu Watve** : Shooting in Bombay?
- Haribhau Lonare** : Synchronised in Bombay. Films used to be silent then.
- Bapu Watve** : Yes. They would be synchronized later.
- Haribhau Lonare** : We stayed in Bombay for 4 months for synchronization. The whole film was synchronized there.
- Bapu Watve** : How did Setubandhan run?
- Haribhau Lonare** : O.K. Reasonably well.
- Bapu Watve** : Do you remember the name of the film made by Gajanan Film Company?
- Haribhau Lonare** : No. Not yet.
- Bapu Watve** : Tell me if you remember. Then you went to Prabhat Film Company.
- Haribhau Lonare** : Shakkarta Shivaji (शककर्ता शिवाजी)
- Bapu Watve** : I see.
- Haribhau Lonare** : I did 'Shahaji's Role' in it.
- Bapu Watve** : You mean film made by Gajanan Film Company? Who were the other artists in that film?
- Haribhau Lonare** : Bapusaheb.... I don't remember his full name. He was the artist. I was there beside him in Shahaji's role.
- Bapu Watve** : Do you remember the names of actors in Setubandhan?
- Haribhau Lonare** : I remember. Magan played Ram. Laxman was portrayed by Tryambakrao.
- Bapu Watve** : Tryambakrao?
- Haribhau Lonare** : Mali
- Bapu Watve** : Who was Seeta?

- Haribhau Lonare** : Seeta...
- Bapu Watve** : Iqbal was an actress from Bombay. Which role did she play?
- Haribhau Lonare** : Seeta?
- Bapu Watve** : No. She was Mandodari. Was'nt she?
- Haribhau Lonare** : Yes. Mandodari.
- Bapu Watve** : Then you went to Prabhat. Met Shantaram Bapu. What next?
- Haribhau Lonare** : My first role with Prabhat Shantaram Bapu called me from Chandrasena. He gave me the role of Makardhwaj instead of Maruti.
- Bapu Watve** : This was in 1935?
- Haribhau Lonare** : Yes. 1935.
- Bapu Watve** : You did Makaradhvaj and Maruti's role was played by Mane Pahalvan. The famous wrestler then.
- Haribhau Lonare** : True. Mane Pahelwan.
- Bapu Watve** : Which good roles you got with Prabhat later?
- Haribhau Lonare** : Dharmatma! (ॐॐॐॐ)? In Dharmatma, I got the role of an untouchable. Good role.
- Bapu Watve** : I remember you in it. I remember the roles played after this by you. Should I name them?
- Haribhau Lonare** : In Kunku.
- Bapu Watve** : Yes. Kunku. Which role?
- Haribhau Lonare** : Police constable.
- Bapu Watve** : Any role bigger than it?
- Haribhau Lonare** : Chotu Bhai. He played Mama's role.
- Bapu Watve** : No. No. You tell me about your big role.

- Haribhau Lonare** : My big role was in 'Vahan' (वहाँ) I played a dacoit in it. Then came Gopalkrishna.
- Bapu Watve** : You had something before that?
- Haribhau Lonare** : I think so.
- Bapu Watve** : You were in Amar Jyoti.
- Haribhau Lonare** : No. I was not in Amar Jyoti.
- Bapu Watve** : In Maza Mulga (माझा मुलगा)?
- Haribhau Lonare** : No
- Bapu Watve** : In Tukaram?
- Haribhau Lonare** : Yes. I was in Tukaram. Playing a devotee of Lord Vitthala.
- Bapu Watve** : So it was a small role.
- Haribhau Lonare** : Small role. Nothing much.
- Bapu Watve** : What came next?
- Haribhau Lonare** : Rajput Ramani (रजपूत रमणी) Nanasaheb Phatak was in it. I worked as the minister of the king.
- Bapu Watve** : It was a good, big role.
- Haribhau Lonare** : Yes.
- Bapu Watve** : Some more memories about Prabhat? The discipline there... The atmosphere..... Your next big role was in Gopalkrishna I suppose.
- Haribhau Lonare** : Yes.
- Bapu Watve** : Keshi. (केशी). Brother of Kansa (कंस).
- Haribhau Lonare** : Yes. Kansa's brother.
- Bapu Watve** : Who was the director of that film?
- Haribhau Lonare** : Fattelal and Damle.

- Bapu Watve** : They gave you this role? Because both of them were from Nasik?
- Haribhau Lonare** : Yes. They said Keshi's role will go to that chap from Nasik, Haribhau Lonare. They asked Bapu.
- Bapu Watve** : Bapu meaning Shantarambapu?
- Haribhau Lonare** : Shantarambapu gave them a free hand to choose whomsoever they wanted.
- Bapu Watve** : Do you remember that incident from Gopalkrishna?
- Haribhau Lonare** : When two oxen held me from both the sides?
- Bapu Watve** : They almost crushed you.
- Haribhau Lonare** : I had tough combat with them. Finally, they knocked me down. But I still managed to stand up, hold the oxen by their horns and get out. Then the children gathered around....
- Bapu Watve** : Meaning, Gopal Krishna's playmates?
- Haribhau Lonare** : Yes. They almost rolled me up in a cloth bag which was hung to a tree and started playing with me.
- Bapu Watve** : You have worked with Shantarambapu too.
- Haribhau Lonare** : With Damle and Fattelal also.
- Bapu Watve** : How was the working style of these people?
- Haribhau Lonare** : Very good way of narrating. Disciplined too. Explaining in detail.
- Bapu Watve** : But Shantarambapu used to enact the scene in front of you.
- Haribhau Lonare** : Yes. He used to perform himself.
- Bapu Watve** : Damle - Fattelal used to explain well?
- Haribhau Lonare** : Yes. But Shantarambapu performed.
- Bapu Watve** : Raja Nene was assisting Damle - Fattelal?

- Haribhau Lonare** : Yes. Assistant. He used to take down. Writing work.
- Bapu Watve** : Who got the work done by you? Damle - Fattelal?
- Haribhau Lonare** : Yes.
- Bapu Watve** : The Film ran for a long time.
- Haribhau Lonare** : Yes. A good run it had.
- Bapu Watve** : Your salary in Prabhat?
- Haribhau Lonare** : 45 Rs.
- Bapu Watve** : Your starting salary ? 45 Rs.?
- Haribhau Lonare** : Yes.
- Bapu Watve** : What was your salary when Gopal Krishna was made?
- Haribhau Lonare** : 75 Rs. by then.
- Bapu Watve** : Why did you leave Prabhat after such a good role?
- Haribhau Lonare** : My father passed away. Hence I left Prabhat.
- Bapu Watve** : I see.
- Haribhau Lonare** : I lost my father. I lost interest in my work. My brother said, "Enough with your film work now. You look after your family." The film was halfway thru. Still, I resigned.
- Bapu Watve** : Which film was halfway thru?
- Haribhau Lonare** : Gopalkrishna. Half of it was complete. My father expired. I told Shantarambapu about it, showed him the telegramme carrying this information and took leave. The shooting was held for 13 days. I mean the portion in which I was included was not shot for 13 days. Of course, the rest of the work went on.
- Bapu Watve** : Understandable.

Haribhau Lonare : After the Thirteenth day ritual on my father's death got over. I returned and completed the film. The first screening was done in Prabhat to check the mistakes etc. But there was no mistake. Then they allowed me to take my remaining salary and quit. Then I resigned.

Bapu Watve : So you were in Prabhat for 3 or 4 years only.

Haribhau Lonare : 4 years.

Bapu Watve : Had you stayed for a longer time...

Haribhau Lonare : I would have progressed a lot.

Bapu Watve : You could get few significant roles.

Haribhau Lonare : Possible. But I was forced to leave due to my father's demise.

Bapu Watve : Prabhat made some great moves there afterwards.

Haribhau Lonare : Oh yes. Many movies.

Bapu Watve : Dyaneswar, Shezari, Manus, Ramshastri (ज्ञानेश्वर, शेजारी, माणूस... रामशास्त्री). You could get good roles in माणूस or Ramshastri (रामशास्त्री). But you missed it because you went back. Did you ever feel like going back to films?

Haribhau Lonare : Yes. I did. Not that someone from the family asked me otherwise. But I was mentally very upset for almost six months due to our family issues. But I was missing Prabhat. Then I met Mr. Madhavrao Tipnis in Bombay.

Bapu Watve : Madhavrao Tipnis from the theatre I believe.

Haribhau Lonare : Yes. He had called me for a role in a drama. It was the main role. But I can't remember the name now. But I declined his offer. And I did not go.

Bapu Watve : Do you still miss Prabhat?

- Haribhau Lonare** : Oh yes. See, Prabhat had become my life then. I was very well treated there. They were strict disciplinaries but never insulted anybody. So we were always happy to work with them. Particularly Ganpat Bhai and me were pleased.
- Bapu Watve** : Because you belonged to the same town.
- Haribhau Lonare** : Yes. Same place
- Bapu Watve** : You grew together. Can you name a few incidences from Phalke's time?
- Haribhau Lonare** : There were no pictures made by Phalke later. Nothing much happened. Setubhandan was his last film.
- Bapu Watve** : Did you meet Mr. Phalke later?
- Haribhau Lonare** : I used to go to his bungalow to meet him. He passed away after a few days. His sons were in Bombay, Bhaurao being one of them.
- Bapu Watve** : But Phalke gave you a recommendation letter when you went to meet Shantarambapu, I am told.
- Haribhau Lonare** : Yes.
- Bapu Watve** : Saying that you are a good person and a good artist. So you can be employed by him.
- Haribhau Lonare** : Yes. He was fond of me.
- Bapu Watve** : Shantarambapu immediately confirmed you on reading Phalke's recommendation.
- Haribhau Lonare** : He had immediate requirements for Maruti's role. But Setubandhan was in the process of making in Prabhat. He had seen me acting. So he thought of inviting 'that man from Nasik' i.e. me for his forthcoming major role. He wrote me a letter to that effect and I went.
- Bapu Watve** : Nice. You had a toned masculine body then.

- Haribhau Lonare** : Yes.
- Bapu Watve** : But the role did not come to you.
- Haribhau Lonare** : Did not. There was one Mr. Mane Pahelwan.
- Bapu Watve** : Yes.
- Haribhau Lonare** : Mane used to help Shantarambapu for mob scenes. Getting extras for it. Or any other help which he may need. He requested Shantrambapu that he should be given this last role. He won't ask for anything more after that.
- Bapu Watve** : I See.
- Haribhau Lonare** : He said, "Please give the Makardhawaj role designed for me to Haribhau Lonare and I will enact Maruti's Part.
- Bapu Watve** : O.K.
- Haribhau Lonare** : After this, I got the role of Makardhawaj and he did Maruti.
- Bapu Watve** : But in Prabhat films Dharmatma (धर्मत्मा) and Kunku (कुंकु) your roles were memorable albeit small.
- Haribhau Lonare** : True. Memorable roles.
- Bapu Watve** : The aggressive untouchable young man in Dharmatma. And the police constable from 'Kunku'. You did a good job in these roles.
- Haribhau Lonare** : Yes. Kunku is shown frequently.
- Bapu Watve** : Had you continued in films, you would have earned a good name.
- Haribhau Lonare** : Yes. Good Name.
- Bapu Watve** : Ganpatro Tambat stayed put in Prabhat and he got major roles in their films.
- Haribhau Lonare** : Yes he came after 12 years and stayed for the next 12 years with me.

Bapu Watve : Yes and he did important roles.

Haribhau Lonare : He did many roles.

Bapu Watve : Many roles.

Haribhau Lonare : I had to leave the film industry due to my domestic problems. Otherwise even I would have got many films to do.

Bapu Watve : You feel sorry for it?

Haribhau Lonare : Very sorry for it.

Bapu Watve : Very sorry.

Bapu Watve : Summing Up.

Haribhau Lonare's career in films is short but he has done some important roles. In शककर्ता शिवाजी of श्री गजानन पिक्चर्स, he played शहाजी. In Setubandhan of दादासाहेब फाळके, he was हनुमान. In Prabhat, he got a few big roles. Makardhawaj in Chandrasena (चंद्रसेना) An untouchable in Dharmatma and police constable in Kunku were good roles which he played convincingly. Another big role was of Keshi in Gopalkrushna (गोपाळकृष्ण) unfortunately he had to leave the film line or else he would have got many roles. Mr. Haribhau Alwatkar is hearing hard, wants to say a lot but is unable to remember. He has no child. Has a house of his own. The rent he gets from hiring makes both ends meet. He keeps on remembering his old cinema days. In a way, he is in a pathetic condition. But I still remember the huge fight he gave to the giant bulls in Gopalkrushna. It was a Prabhat film and Haribhau played Keshi in it.