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## Interview of Veteran Movie actor Chandrakant Gokhale

by Bapu Watve

**Chandrakant Gokhale :** Whether it is Drama or Cinema, I am fully satisfied with my years of work.

**Bapu Watve :** Is there any role which you would have liked to play but could not?

**Chandrakant Gokhale :** Not really. I would have liked to play the role of son played by Dilip Prabhawalkar, in 'Nati Goti', and I mentioned that to Tondwalkar. But he said had I been younger by thirty years, he would have definitely given me that role. He also said that I was much elder for that role and it was neither my fault nor his, maybe it's of that role.

**Bapu Watve :** You were going to say something about God.

**Chandrakant Gokhale :** Yes. That is important. I believe that there is no God. In so many specific areas God is termed as human.....

**Bapu Watve :** We call it as Rangdevata.....

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**Chandrakant Gokhale :** Every deity whom we worship as God are actually men from this earth only. In their times, these people did work that was beneficial for society and therefore, these men were called God. God did not come from heaven. Nothing can come from the sky. When we jump up, we fall down. If one goes up with the help of a rocket, he will go up for some distance but will also fall down on earth.

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

**Chandrakant Gokhale :** So, if nothing can come down unless first thrown up, God can also not come from the sky. This means God Rama or Krishna etc, all worshipped by the people, were actually men who, in their times, did good work for people.

You will ask, what good deed was done by Krishna? In my opinion, he was a social reformer of that time. After the death of Jarasandh, when sixteen thousand women, abducted and imprisoned by him, went back to their homes, their foolish Hindu fathers, brothers, husbands refused to accept them saying that they were spoiled. How could the girls be spoiled? Who was the real culprit? When the girls were abducted in presence of their husbands, fathers and brothers, how could the girls be the culprit? If a girl had gone to some man, on her own will, she could have been called corrupt. How can the girl abducted in presence of her husband be corrupt? Who is the real culprit? The girls or their husbands? Then, the girls went back to Lord Krishna saying that they were not being accepted in their home. Lord Krishna asked them not to worry and consider him as their brother or father and stay with him. Our scoundrel priests said sixteen thousand girls got husband. This was further sensationalized by painters and poets. Thus the characters of great men were distorted. In my opinion, there is no God. Real gods are Shivaji Maharaja, Dnyaneshwar, Ramdas Swami, Tukaram Maharaja, who all did something good for society. Ramdas has written 350 years back.

**Bapu Watve :** Dnyaneshwar.

**Chandrakant Gokhale :** Dnyaneshwar is there but I am talking of Ramdas. They are God. Because of Shivaji Maharaj, we Hindus have survived as Hindus. These people

are real Gods. But whom do we worship? We worship 'Satyanarayana'. In my opinion, the story narrated on the occasion of 'Satyanarayana worship' is foolish and humbug. But still, people worship Satyanarayan with all sincerity. If God is omnipresent and knows what is in mind of his disciple, then he should have felt that Sadhu Wani who preferred going to work rather than waiting for Satyanaran offerings (Prasad) was right. He should have appreciated that instead of wasting his time waiting to get some sweets, he went to attend his work. But instead of blessing him, God Vishnu cursed him. Is Vishnu not a big fool? He is a fool. The people behaving like this cannot be God. Many times, God Shankar tests his worshippers. If he understands what is in the mind of everybody, why does he have to test? Did he not understand that Bhasmasur was deceiving him by worshipping? Then was he not an ass? What kind of a mind-reader was he? He was a big fool who only indulged in drinking wine and applying ash to his body. This is my definition of God. And I will never change. I say, instead of worshipping Satyanarayan, worship Dnyaneshwar, Ramdas, Tukaram, Shivaji Maharaj, Sawarkar, all of whom, did something good for the society. Am I wrong?

**Bapu Watve :** No. Now, a personal question. In old days, that is, in your time not now, people in the field of arts, that is artists from cinema or drama, found it difficult to get a bride. You must have also experienced it.

**Chandrakant Gokhale :** Yes. In my case, my wife's father was not willing to marry his daughter to me. But his daughter and I knew each other well and daughter insisted that she would marry, only me and nobody else. Father, who loved his daughter, succumbed to her pressure and arranged our marriage.

**Bapu Watve :** She always stood by your side, even in your difficult times.

**Chandrakant Gokhale :** Yes. She made me 'Chandrakant Gokhale'. She and my mother. Otherwise, I would have been doing some menial jobs, smoking bidis. 99% credit goes to her. These two women taught me how to live with pride even in bad times.

**Bapu Watve :** Do you remember in how many films, both Marathi and Hindi together, have you acted in your long-acting career?

**Chandrakant Gokhale :** I do not know for sure but Mr. Patel from Mumbai told me that I have acted in 115 Marathi films and about 7 or 8 Hindi films.

**Bapu Watve :** More than 140.

**Chandrakant Gokhale :** No. Approximately 125.

**Bapu Watve :** In Hindi films, did you get an opportunity to act with big stars?

**Chandrakant Gokhale :** My favourite big star from the Hindi film was 'Dadamuni' that is 'Ashok Kumar'.

**Bapu Watve :** Yes.

**Chandrakant Gokhale :** I have acted with him in the film 'Nyay Dand'.

**Bapu Watve :** Any other Hindi star? I believe you have acted with Shatrughna Sinha.

**Chandrakant Gokhale :** I have worked with him in 'Hirasat' but that was for only one scene. Not much.

**Bapu Watve :** I think Juhi Chawla was there.

**Chandrakant Gokhale :** No. I do not know who were other actors but I think it was Hema Malini.

**Bapu Watve :** Ok. Was Sunil Shetty also there?



**Chandrakant Gokhale :** No that was a different film. In 'Vishwasghat', Sunil Shetty, Anupam Kher, Shatrughna Sinha were there. Then Anil Kapur in 'Loafer' and some other film.

**Bapu Watve :** In which movie was Juhi Chawla?

**Chandrakant Gokhale :** In 'Loafer'

**Bapu Watve :** So you have worked with her.

**Chandrakant Gokhale :** We were in the same film, but we did not share the screen.

**Bapu Watve :** You had mentioned that Jayawant Dalvi is your favourite author. Who was or were your favourite writers in films?

**Chandrakant Gokhale :** I do not know if Jayawant Dalvi has ever written for films. I liked 'Baba' that is Bhalaji Pandharkar's writing very much. Then G.D. Madgulkar had written dialogues for ' Maza Ghar Mazi Manasa'. These 2/3 people I liked. I have not read Khandekar or Athale so cannot say anything about them. But they were big people so their language must have been good.

**Bapu Watve :** Which are the roles you liked most? One or more?

**Chandrakant Gokhale :** There are 7/8 films in which I liked my roles. But they were failures at the box office and were shown on screen for a very short time.

**Bapu Watve :** They got good reviews.

**Chandrakant Gokhale :** Got critical acclaim but no financial success.

**Bapu Watve :** Yes.

**Chandrakant Gokhale :** I liked my roles in 'Maharani Yesubai', 'Dharmakanya', 'Dhakati Jaau', 'Manini'.

**Bapu Watve :** Who was your favourite director?

**Chandrakant Gokhale :** Everyone had a specialty.

**Bapu Watve :** You can name more than one. With whom did you like to work?

**Chandrakant Gokhale :** Raja Thakur was a very good director.

**Bapu Watve :** Yes. I have also worked with him in one film.

**Chandrakant Gokhale :** He was also a good editor. So he knew how long each shot should last. He was a good technician but could not teach dialogues. But he had a good understanding of literature.

**Bapu Watve :** Yes. He would only tell you what he expects.

**Chandrakant Gokhale :** Yes. He only told us his visualization. But he liked reading and writing. I liked him as a director. The second person I liked was Raja Paranjape.

**Bapu Watve :** Ok

**Chandrakant Gokhale :** Rajabhau Paranjape was good at prose, Music, acting, everything. But on the technical side, he had less knowledge as compared with Raja Thakur. He was also not an editor. And the third person was Anant Mane. He knew Prose, editing, cinema technique, everything because he had worked with Shantaram

Bapu and Shantaram Bapu was a great man who knew every single aspect of film making. I have worked under all three of them and I liked them as Director.

**Bapu Watve :** And the dramas that you liked?

**Chandrakant Gokhale :** Drama!! Shri. S.N.Na. Pendse's 'Raje Master', directed by Pu.La.'s younger brother Ramakant Deshpande. Then 'Natasamrat', then ' Bhau Murarrao', I do not remember the name of the writer now. I acted in these dramas. Sometimes unexpected things happen. 'Devmanus' was a runaway hit and it also earned critical acclaim. But I had not liked the story of that film. Because the character of 'Dada' in that film, although very noble, goes about telling how he has been helping others. Now if I help Bapu Watve, I should not be going about telling it to others. If others mention that Chandrakant Gokhale helped Bapu Watve in a particular manner, then it has value. I did not like that.

**Bapu Watve :** Right.

**Chandrakant Gokhale :** This character was always telling how he has been helping his brother.

**Bapu Watve :** Indulged in self-praise.

**Chandrakant Gokhale :** Yes. I did not like it. But once we step on the stage, we artists, have to forget our likes and dislikes and say the lines written by the writer. We are not to apply our brains. But sometimes one does not like such dramas. I also did not like many old dramas.

**Bapu Watve :** Can you narrate any instances? About concentration. And to what degree should you get involved?

**Chandrakant Gokhale :** This is a very controversial topic now. In the last 30 or 40 years, a new style is getting established which requires you to be aloof from the character that you are portraying. You should create an illusion of fully being in the role that you are enacting but should not get immersed in it. This trend is started by people like Dr. Lagu, Alkazee etc. I do not underestimate this? thought. It is very difficult. But I like to forget that I am Chandrakant Gokhale and fully get under the skin of the character.

**Bapu Watve :** Oh.

**Chandrakant Gokhale :** I will give an example of the Dronacharya testing skill of young Pandavas. He had tied a parrot to a tree and wanted his pupil to hit the parrot's eye. He asked each one to tell what they saw. Everyone was describing tree branches and all, except Arjun who said he sees the only eye of the parrot. Dronacharya then asked him to release the arrow and Arjun hit the parrot's eye. I like that kind of concentration. While enacting 'Natasamrat' or any other role I use to forget myself. But one should also not go too far and go to an extreme. I shall tell you one case of crossing limits.

In Pune, in 'Vijayanand' theatre in Dane Ali, we had our show. Babaurao Pendharkar was Zunjarrao and I was the villain Jadhavrao and was responsible for a tragedy that had taken place. Jadhavrao's wife tells Zunzarrao that Jadhavrao was responsible for the tragedy. When Jadhavrao learns that his wife has betrayed him, he gets very angry and kills his wife with a dagger. For that show, I forgot to take my dagger and realized it when the actual scene was being enacted on stage. I had to do something. So I pushed Sarala Gupte, who played the role of my wife, down and sat on her and started strangling her. She was scratching me and hitting me but I was so engrossed in my character that I continued to strangle her. Baburao then realized that there is something wrong.

**Bapu Watve :** Baburao Pendharkar?



**Chandrakant Gokhale :** Yes. He realized that something has gone wrong and I am strangling her instead of using a dagger. He came and hit me with his sword and I fell down. Then I regained my senses. After the show got over, I apologized to the girl. It is bad to get so engrossed. The girl could have died that day.

**Bapu Watve :** Yes.

**Chandrakant Gokhale :** Had Baburao did not attack me with a sword, I would have killed her. I have heard a similar English story. I do not know the name of the story.

**Bapu Watve :** The name of the film is 'Double Line'

**Chandrakant Gokhale :** In that, the hero had killed his wife. It is bad to get so engrossed. If your sixth sense is awake, you can take care of any situation. That is my experience. We had a show in the summer at Shivaji Mandir. It was my third or fourth show in 'Natasamrat'. Art Direction, Make-up and Dress designing were by J.G. Godse, who was very intelligent but very irritable. He could not tolerate anything, against his will. I had large moustaches, fur cap, rich suit etc. Due to heat, my moustache on the right side got loose and started touching my moustache on the left side, whenever I spoke. I did not know what to do? Then an idea struck. I told my wife, children and son-in-law that I have forgotten something important and shall bring it, till then they could continue their talks.

**Bapu Watve :** Presence of mind.

**Chandrakant Gokhale :** Then I went in and looked for our make-up man Krushna Borkar and asked him to get glue. He came with gum, stuck my moustache and then I re-entered the stage with a cheque in my hand. I handed over a cheque for Rs. 40000/- to my son-in-law, daughter and son and told them that I had forgotten it on the table

and without it, I could not have continued my talk with them. That is how I covered the scene.

**Bapu Watve :** Every actor must have this sense. Particularly on stage when there is no re-take.

**Chandrakant Gokhale :** No. Now about Shantabai. She used to wear a wig. At one show in Shivaji Mandir, there was a gap in her wig and her black hairs were visible.

**Bapu Watve :** Ok.

**Chandrakant Gokhale :** I called her near and told her in-ear, that her black hairs are visible. She started perspiring.

**Bapu Watve :** Oh!

**Chandrakant Gokhale :** For every show, at the entry, she used to perspire.

**Bapu Watve :** Yes. I Know. That was her weak point. She would perspire, then wipe her sweat, and then enter the stage. Was it out of fear? I do not know. But once she entered the stage, she would be free.

**Chandrakant Gokhale :** In this way, total immersion in the role can be harmful. But the new generation has different views.

**Bapu Watve :** No. No. The great foreign actor Paul Muni says that in the role of Emil Zola, the audience must feel that he is Emil Zola. They should not call him Paul Muni.

**Chandrakant Gokhale :** I have seen his both films.

**Bapu Watve :** In one film where he is a Chinese farmer, he looked real Chinese farmer. There are so many examples. He said you must leave your mannerisms and adopt manners of character.

**Chandrakant Gokhale :** One example of Paul Muni. For the role of Napoleon, he had perfectly adopted all mannerisms of Napoleon. He had studied all his mannerisms like raising his shoulders from time to time etc. I have not seen Napoleon but have read about it.

**Bapu Watve :** He was a great actor. Any other memories from the past?

**Chandrakant Gokhale :** I shall narrate some comic incidences. In the drama 'Panditraj Jagannath', I was a scholar employed by the king, whom the king respected. I had respect and love for Panditraj Jagannath. I went to Panditraj Jagannath and extended him the invitation of the king. But Panditraj Jagannath insults me and the king. But still, my respect for him is not diminished. About 20 Brahmins in the court despised Panditraj Jagannath for having married a Muslim girl and for having converted her to Hinduism. They should have been proud of him but these fools blamed him. Having got fed up with the continuous mental torture this man, who was also a great devotee of god, decided to end his life and jumped in the river Ganga. This is the story. This happens in my presence and I lament that such a great man felt like committing suicide. While this scene was being enacted on stage, the river was flowing on the right side of the audience. During my dialogue, suddenly it started flowing on the left side of the audience. I quickly changed my direction and completed my sentence. The audience clapped for a long time.

**Bapu Watve :** Yes. Presence of mind is required on stage. There must have been many more stories like that.

**Chandrakant Gokhale :** Another incidence is about 20/25 years back or could be even 40 years back. Mostly at Malwan. Damle was acting 'Subhadra's role and I was Arjun. I

was singing. I used to sing then in dramas although I had not studied music. In the story, Arjun is passing his time in the forest during his period of 'disappearance' (Adnyatwas). Shri Krishna plans a meeting between him and Subhadra and orders Ghatotkach to take Subhadra to the forest in an unconscious state. Accordingly, Ghatotkach drops unconscious Subhadra to the area where Arjun is roaming around. Subhadra was lying there with her face up. I come there and am surprised to see her and bend near her. Suddenly my feet slipped and I fell down on Subhadra. Imagine Subhadra lying down and me lying on top of her. The audience was laughing and shouting. In the melee of headgear, bow and arrow, I could also not get up. Damle was trying to push me. I was not able to move. Then Damle slapped me and I fell on the side and Subhadra could get free and so did I.

**Bapu Watve :** Any other incident?

**Chandrakant Gokhale :** There is a fixed idea in dramas about archers like Arjun or Ram, that these persons must carry bows and arrows made of gold. Now, tell me with such a heavy, bow by the time the person bends and attaches a string to the bow and gets ready, will the opposite warrior not cut his head off? And secondly, an arrow of gold must weigh 30 to 40 tolas. Now in present times, if somebody learns that he is going to be killed by such an arrow, there will be a queue of people to get killed. In one stroke the person will be getting 60/70 tolas of gold.

There was a show of drama 'Shivasambhav'. Around 1944 Mr. Bhalerao revived the drama industry and started establishing special pandals for drama shows.

**Bapu Watve :** Yes.

**Chandrakant Gokhale :** They say that in history, Lakhojirao Jadhav chased Jijabai. For this drama, a new Muslim character Ishan was created. I was doing that role. He chases Jijabai and as he approaches her she warns him. Now imagine. Jijabai is standing there, Nana Pendse is Lakhojirao, Dinkar Mandlik is Jijabai. The stage is 30



feet by 40 feet in size and at a raised height. As I approach Jijabai to catch her she threatens me. But by misfortune Mandlik's throat was sore that day. His voice was hoarse and could be made out that of a man.

**Bapu Watve :** And he was enacting Jijabai's role?

**Chandrakant Gokhale :** In his young days he was so beautiful, that people use to bet whether he is a man or woman in real life. But that day his voice was hoarse and was manly. Now Jijabai's dialogue was, "if you take one more step, I shall shoot the arrow to your chaste". I took a step ahead. She says "I am "Releasing", "Releasing", "Releasing". With that sentence from her, I fell down on stage and the audience started clapping. They continued clapping for about half a minute. I was surprised. Was my acting such great that people will clap for half a minute! I opened my eyes slightly and then found that Jijabai was not on stage. She had run away. The arrow meant to kill me was so heavy that it had not gone far and was lying at her feet. After realizing the fiasco, I got up and ran. The audience was still clapping.

**Bapu Watve :** It was sarcastic.

**Chandrakant Gokhale :** Yes. They were enjoying the fun.

**Bapu Watve :** If you get a chance to act in films again what kind of roles would you prefer?

**Chandrakant Gokhale :** I like the villain's role. This crying all the time!!

**Bapu Watve :** You have cried a lot.

**Chandrakant Gokhale :** Yes. I am being given that type of role only. Sometimes I cry because my daughter is sick, sometimes because her husband has abandoned her, I am

tired of crying. I would like to have the villain's role. I have enacted a villain's role in one film.

**Bapu Watve :** Yes. And you had won an award for that role. I remember.

**Chandrakant Gokhale :** I loved that role in 'Vrundavan' and wish I would get more such roles. But I know 100% that I will not get such roles. Chandrakant Gokhale is called only if roles require crying.

**Bapu Watve :** You want to change your image.

**Chandrakant Gokhale :** Yes. I desire that. But it will never get changed.

**Bapu Watve :** If you are re-born, would you like to be an artist?

**Chandrakant Gokhale :** Yes. I would like to be an artist only. I would like to have the same mother who was a great artist herself, I would like to have the same wife who is my wife at present and I would like to have the same children Vikram, Bhishma and Aparajita who are my children in the present life. This is my prayer to God.

**Bapu Watve :** A question about your daughter 'Neena'. She was good-looking and was a good actress. She used to act in dramas and I remember her role in 'Durvanchi Judi'. Why did she stop acting?

**Chandrakant Gokhale :** Because of my son-in-law. He would stand in the wing all the time observing closely. He could not tolerate any other man touching his wife. My daughter tried to convince him that for her he was the only man and what he observes on stage is only acting and his standing in the wings puts her under pressure.

**Bapu Watve :** Right.

**Chandrakant Gokhale :** But he could never accept that. He started getting annoyed even at the mention of drama. Then, my daughter explained the situation and told me although she desires to act, she is married to a man who dislikes art. Otherwise, he is a very good man. But he hates all arts.

**Bapu Watve :** We lost a good artist. She was talented.

**Chandrakant Gokhale :** Yes. She was so good in my daughter's role in 'Natasamrat', that she inspired me for the next scenes. She used to give very good responses. But her bad luck.

**Bapu Watve :** Yes.

**Chandrakant Gokhale :** And now she is no longer young so nobody would cast her.

**Bapu Watve :** Are you satisfied with your life as a cinema and drama actor?

**Chandrakant Gokhale :** Yes. Fully. Even in my bad times, I did not regret having entered this line. I will live and die as an artist only. And I have only one wish, even if some people call me mad, so long as I am earning well, I would like to serve our armed forces in Army, Navy and Air force. For that reason, I pray to God to give me a long and healthy life.

**Bapu Watve :** And I wish you a long life.