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Interview of old Cine Artist Baburao Patil by Babu Watve

Babu Watve : Baburao, what is your birthplace?

Baburao Patil : Nashik.

Babu Watve : And what was your education?

Baburao Patil : Non-matric.

Babu Watve : Means you were educated till matric. So in those times, this was a lot of education.

Baburao Patil : Yes.

Babu Watve : What was the profession of your father?

Baburao Patil : Father had 2-3 businesses. He was a trader in the timber market. Also, our uncle had an old business of liquor; after his uncle's death, he closed it down. Then he bought farmland here at Nashik. At that time, he purchased nearly two hundred fifty acres of land. So that ----- . Myself, Nilubhau, his sister who had played the role of Krishna in that..

Babu Watve : Yes Kaliyamardan.

Baburao Patil : Yes.



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Bapu Watve : Mandakini.

Baburao Patil : Yes, we called her Tai, We did not know any other name than Tai. And heroine coming... The people used to be surprised. Phalke's lifestyle was like that of a prince. During his bad days, I had Nilubhau and his younger son as two friends. Nilubhau had started a German teaching class in Mumbai and the younger one played Harmonium in the Kirtans. I had a business of chiwada. When he came to Nashik he used to meet me. Nilubhau had stayed with me. Then the one who played harmonium started a business of agarbattis. He brought packs of agarbattis. Out of that nearly fifty packs I used to take and sell. In this way, we were helping each other, due to our old friendship.

Bapu Watve : But how did you work in his film?

Baburao Patil : I did. At that time he put us as extras. When that film Kaliyamardan was made, my physique was good, I was young. By wearing a langoti, (loin-cloth) putting on a cap and shirt, they made us gawalis (cowherds). We had to dance with him as gopa boys with a stick in hand. I was not very tall then, but I was good-looking. Like that, I was in the film Setubandhan. That was also as an extra. Because I used to go to them after school. At that time I did not know about a hero or such work and did not want to do it. I did not want to leave school. But later on, as----- And then I left the school and then the work was in film company only, that I remember. I think in 1936 or 1937. There was Godavari Cinetone here. There they decided to make a film Sati Sulochana. Some roles were to be given to teachers. At that time my height was not much, my physique was good, the face was neat. They called me for the role of Ram and approved me. There was Mama Shinde as Director. Salunke was a photographer. One Kane from Kolhapur was recordist.

Bapu Watve : Yes, yes, Datta Kane. He is still there.

Baburao Patil : Yes, then Godbole, Sadubhau Godbole from a gym in Pune, he was given the role of Ravan.

Bapu Watve : Yes, right.

Baburao Patil : Role of Indrajeet. He left his timber business and entered agriculture. Then I was born in 1914.

Bapu Watve : So you are 73 years old now.

Baburao Patil : Yes 73 running. 3rd July 1914. My uncle passed away when I was 4year old.

Bapu Watve : Ok.

Baburao Patil : So I remember him only a little. But he was a prominent leader in Nashik and took part in public affairs with much enthusiasm, did a lot of charity. Because of his philanthropy, people were always after him. My father also had a strong association with people, he also did charity.

Bapu Watve : What was the name of your father.

Baburao Patil : Khanduji Patil. So my father gave 18 acres of land to our community for education, for community institution, here at Gangapur Road corner. He donated it by making a Gift Deed. That institution is now still working. Another thing, as a memory of my uncle, there is a board in the temple of Nivruttinath Maharaj placed at a place after climbing three steps. I got the marble courtyard built. That board has now become faded because of people walking. Then our grandfather was also famous for his charity work. Here there is a temple of Yashwantrao Maharaj. In front of it, he got a stone courtyard built having an area of 9 khans. But when that old temple was

demolished, while building a new one, that board, the marble and that tortoise was removed. But there is a record.

Bapu Watve : But what did you do after finishing or leaving the education?

Baburao Patil : After finishing education, I did 2-3 businesses and this movie company business eventually earned.

Bapu Watve : That was the important thing we wanted to ask you.

Baburao Patil : I am telling that. Nilubhau, meaning number two son of Dadasaheb Phalke.

Bapu Watve : Neelkanth Phalke.

Baburao Patil : Yes. He was my classmate. In high school, we used to sit with each other in first and second standards.

Bapu Watve : Neelkanth Phalke and you used to sit with each other in the class.

Baburao Patil : Yes, sat beside each other. We were thick friends. So often used to go to his house. His house was beside the high school. Where the Central station is now, directly opposite that there was a property of Hardikar. There was a big bungalow of Hardikar. That whole big bungalow was taken on rent. I used to go to that bungalow always.

Bapu Watve : Ok.

Baburao Patil : So, there was Baba, Nilubhau's elder brother, after him was Nilubhau. He is here now. He plays the harmonium again in the Kirtan. I got to know them all in childhood. Then what happened, I got a chance to go to Hindustan Film Company for something, with Nilubhau. Chance means we got permission. There was a guard, a Pathan, who did not allow anyone to enter. But when we used to go in, in front of him we felt quite proud.

Bapu Watve : He does not allow others, but

Baburao Patil : We went.

Bapu Watve : We could enter in front of him

Baburao Patil : So we knew Dadasaheb for a long time. He had contact with our uncle also because some scenes of wrestling were filmed in 'Dandekar Talim'. We are one of the founders of 'Dandekar Talim', so as wrestlers, their matches were filmed and photographed.

Bapu Watve : Did you do regular exercise?

Baburao Patil : Yes, in my younger days I have done wrestling also. Exercise means four hundred push-ups and eight squats in one go. I was also very fond of swimming. Nashik has a reputation that swimming is one of our considered pride. When there was a great flood in 1939, it was a record-breaker in Nashik's history. Its waters smashed through one and a half stories of Kapad Peth and submerged 14 steps of Sarkarwada.

Bapu Watve : Means such a flood was till then

Baburao Patil : Had not occurred and will not occur in future also. And in that I was the one who swam without pumpkin, Swimming with a pumpkin was a tradition of a sort in Nashik. But I had a habit of swimming without pumpkin. I went from the Maruti of Sati Ghat, into it. Traffic on the bridge was stopped at that time. Baburao Patil goes swimming, jumped in, so all people broke the police cordon with joy.

Bapu Watve : But what must have been your age at that time?

Baburao Patil : My age in the year 1939?

Bapu Watve : May be 25 years.

Baburao Patil : Yes, 24 or 25.

Bapu Watve : Hmm

Baburao Patil : So this is a story from a young age.

Bapu Watve : Yes at a young age.

Baburao Patil : At that time, my weight was 230 pounds, my chest was 52, the abdomen was 48. I could easily lift two men.

Bapu Watve : So you were a wrestler.

Baburao Patil : Yes but not a wrestler in the records, but something like that.

Bapu Watve : Means you were like a wrestler.

Baburao Patil : Yes, like a wrestler.

Bapu Watve : So you had a good and, muscular body.

Baburao Patil : Yes, muscular. Used to control the muscles, control everything. So in this way, I swam in the year 1939. When I used to go to Dadasaheb, I used to go with Nilubhau to his house also. At that time Dadasaheb lived like a king. He had three pats (flat wooden seats) to keep the food, one in between to sit and things to lean back against. All utensils were silver.

Bapu Watve : So you had seen all this wealth..

Baburao Patil : So he had servants to serve food. Butter, ghee, good chapatis, excellent dal and there used to be at least 10-12 people with him for food.

Bapu Watve : For eating along with him.

Baburao Patil : Yes, for eating together. So during his prime days of wealth, I stayed with him, meaning with Nilu and he also treated me with affection. He was very strict, but that strictness was in his factory.

Bapu Watve : Meaning in the studio.

Baburao Patil : There was strictness at home but that was with affection. His word had to be obeyed, and work to be done on time. He was very particular about time. He had

a big car, it was imported. He was our driver. I was given the role of Ram and for the part of Laxman, it was our V. V. Shirwadkar.

Bapu Watve : Yes, the poet Kusumagraj. He has appeared on screen once.

Baburao Patil : So I have had a friendship with him also since childhood.

Bapu Watve : You have his photograph with you.

Baburao Patil : Yes it is. Since he used to stay at our Balaji, I knew him well. He went to college by road. We had our house then. Then when I started the business of milk, I supplied milk to him. So he was Laxman. The role of Maruti was given to a wrestler from Dhule. He was older, but his face was like Maruti in appearance and he had a rather big belly. He was not very quick or active. So I had to play his role also with doing makeup.

Bapu Watve : I see, so Ram and Maruti were the same.

Baburao Patil : While showing the belly, then slightly it was done, then belly and tail, thus the scenes were taken. It was in the math of Shankaracharya. He comes to take the vaidya. To give strength to Laxman some vaidya is required. So that shooting was done in the math of Shankaracharya. He carries the vaidya by lifting him on a cot, while he is asleep. So he could not do it and I had to do that because it was a job of weightlifting. A dummy was kept there, but the dummy and a cot, and then he was required to jump. So when he jumps the film is run in reverse and then it is a tricky scene.

Bapu Watve : Yes, right.

Baburao Patil : So as he jumps from above, he flies up. There were two scenes for him. In both, he could not jump, got injured his heel and he became sick for a month.

Bapu Watve : This means he had a fracture.

Baburao Patil : Not fracture, but he could not walk. So I did that role of Maruti also. Then the cinema company closed down due to financial problems. Technicians were relieved and the shareholders of Godavari did not know anything of this. After getting the money from the Marwari, the film went to the moneylenders. The film ran but the distributor took much of the money and gave them very little. After that, I went to Mumbai. There was our Tapkire who was a makeup man there. He had a big name in the Film City. A godown institution was established.

Bapu Watve : Was it of Shahad Alim?

Baburao Patil : I have no idea about that.

Bapu Watve : Ok.

Baburao Patil : So he was the make-up master. With his acquaintance, I went there. At that time Jayashreebai, who later worked with Shantaram in Shakuntala, had also come there and at that time she had some squint in her eyes.

Bapu Watve : Hmm

Baburao Patil : I hear that her eyes were set right by doing surgery.

Bapu Watve : At the time of Shejari.

Baburao Patil : I do not know about that. There I got a little work as an extra.

Bapu Watve : In which movie?

Baburao Patil : It was a historical film, based on -----

Bapu Watve : Ok, something like Swarajyachya Shiledaar...

Baburao Patil : No it was set in the time of Shivaji, but I do not remember the name. I had a role in that as an extra. There were battle scenes with swords and shields. I was used to that here.

Bapu Watve : So at that time you got the role of a soldier.

Baburao Patil : Got the role of a soldier.

Bapu Watve : Was this movie in Marathi or Hindi?

Baburao Patil : No it was Hindi.

Bapu Watve : It was Hindi.

Baburao Patil : But I had no dialogue.

Bapu Watve : But you do not remember the name of the movie.

Baburao Patil : The name was that one who did treachery with Shivaji.

Bapu Watve : Nimbalkar

Baburao Patil : Not Nimbalkar, our

Bapu Watve : Ghorpade, More

Baburao Patil : Chandrarao More, correct, that was the movie.

Bapu Watve : Chandrarao More was in Marathi also.

Baburao Patil : But this was in Hindi.

Bapu Watve : That which was made by Vishnupant Dabholkar

Baburao Patil : No, that was made in Kolhapur and this was made in Mumbai.

Bapu Watve : But the name of this movie also was Chandrarao More.

Baburao Patil : Yes.

Bapu Watve : Ok.

Baburao Patil : So after doing Chandrarao More I returned. Our domestic situation was good. I had a stepmother. My father had married her after the death of my mother and she also had... So I had six brothers and seven sisters. The burden of all of them was dumped on me by my father. So I had to give up the film line. But after that Baburao Samant made a film Jyoti at Nashik. After doing Jyoti film, he had taken a story of Markandeya. In that story he wanted a person to play the part of Yama. I had a big

physique and after applying moustache etc. I was looking at the past. So he called me and I went..... There was a make-up master there. Our make-up was done and shown. Our house means just after crossing the road, it was on college road, and the studio was here in Khatip bungalow. So coming and going was very easy. So in Markandeya, the role of Yama. The film was completed, but I did not know what happened to it afterwards.

Bapu Watve : Who did the makeup?

Baburao Patil : Narayanrao Tambat. He used to do the make up. His brother was Aryan Tambat.

Bapu Watve : He was art director.

Baburao Patil : Yes. So shooting was done day and night. Then

Bapu Watve : Who were the other artists in the movie?

Baburao Patil : Arun Damle was there.

Bapu Watve : One who used to sing.

Baburao Patil : Yes the singer.

Bapu Watve : I think Nutan Pendharkar...

Baburao Patil : Yes he was there. Then our..... Krishnarao. He did female roles. His wife was the mother of Markandeya. Then the role of Markandeya's father was by, I think.. Thus many people were there, but now I do not remember.

Bapu Watve : Ok, then which was the movie after that?

Baburao Patil : No, I left the film company after that and started managing my house and all estate. The milk business which I had started, was running very successfully.

Bapu Watve : Means in other businesses

Baburao Patil : Yes other.

Bapu Watve : But while doing these other businesses did you get the memories of the film business? Do you still feel that I should have been there?

Baburao Patil : Yes, I still feel like that. Again, in stage plays also I was given a chance by Shirwadkar. There was his play called Becket.

Bapu Watve : Yes Becket

Baburao Patil : Again he did one play Soubhadra in the drama competition. I was given the role of Ghatotkacha. Then people used to come here for outdoor. They also called me as one past in it.

Bapu Watve : Means Hindi pictures.

Baburao Patil : So in Hindi pictures also. In that one, Dilip Kumar's shots of 'Hu Tu Tu' were taken here.

Bapu Watve : In Ganga Jamuna

Baburao Patil : Yes Ganga Jamuna

Bapu Watve : Means you had worked in Ganga Jamuna

Baburao Patil : No, worked means as an extra.

Bapu Watve : So what, as an extra.

Baburao Patil : Yes, like that 'Hu Tu Tu', I have done roles. So I have experience of speaking in front of a microphone. People get nervous in front of a microphone

Bapu Watve : They are frightened.

Baburao Patil : No, the camera is at the back and there is a crowd around that. And in front of a huge crowd the actor, or the person who is playing the part gets nervous.

Bapu Watve : Yes, right.

Baburao Patil : So I had developed some courage in the film company and drama company. So most of the work in any mob or some, I did it well.

Bapu Watve : Now you were quite close to Dadasaheb Phalke.

Baburao Patil : Yes.

Bapu Watve : Just like a son.

Baburao Patil : Yes, just like a son.

Bapu Watve : Do you have any last memories of him?

Baburao Patil : His bungalow was built on our Gangapur road. We often had to pass that bungalow on our way to the farm. There when Nilubhau was talking to him, he used to pat on my back.

Bapu Watve : Dadasaheb used to say that.

Baburao Patil : Yes, strive hard . Do not be afraid of defeat or hunger. I had faced many setbacks.

Bapu Watve : At that time he used to encourage.

Baburao Patil : Gave encouragement and his principle was that in any crisis one should never lose courage. So in swimming, that quality of courage came. Then from the business of milk came the quality of hard work because in that business I did buffalo's...

Bapu Watve : But the encouragement behind that was from Dadasaheb Phalke.

Baburao Patil : For the hard work. Never give up hard work and courage. When we started a business of chiwda, at that time my situation was very bad but became famous in Nashik. The team of chiwda was Makaji, Kondaji and Madhavji. Makaji had six shops, Kondaji five and Madhavji four. Then I gave up the business of milk and I started living alone separately. Thought about what business to do. So one day I went to Mumbai for some work. Our Tamhankar Brothers were there. Not Tamhankar, but Dhamankar. Their Adarsh Bakery is run very well by them. So he used to buy

Madhavji's chiwada and sell it in Bhuleshwar. So once I was going through Bhuleshwar, he called me, his name was Ram. "Baburao, what are you doing". "I am selling chiwada here". "Then you must have become rich". No, when the Gujarathi people come to Mumbai they take chiwda worth Rs. 100, and they say to me, give me chiwda worth four annas. There are no big customers. Now I want to dispose off this. I said to dispose off it, but for what price. He said I will sell it for a thousand rupees. I said I will buy this for thousand rupees, give it to me. He said done. Then I bought that shop there. Now, who will run it? So there was a nephew of that Dhamankar, a Marathi man. I said to him, I will pay you salary, and I will send you the chiwda. So I started making and sending chiwda. At that time, I was living at Nehru chowk in a rented house. So used to make and send chiwda from there. But started this on the day of Nag Panchami, which is in the rainy season. There was no plastic then, plates made of dried leaves were put in the container and it was filled with chiwda.

Bapu Watve : So how many years ago, this took place?

Baburao Patil : This was in 1946, no, in 1952.

Bapu Watve : Yes so nearly 35-36 years...

Baburao Patil : Yes, yes, so in this manner, I started sending chiwda. But he sent money two-three times and then did not send money and did not continue in work. The chiwda containers were stacked in the shop of a sweet vendor as a subtenant. They asked me to take back these chiwda containers. When we went there, the rent was pending. That rent was paid and brought back the chiwda. Then it was distributed to all. It had become soggy. But I thought it does not matter, we will continue the business of chiwda. And at that time, I brought one payali poha and started on that. Sat in the Nehru chowk on a stool with a big pan. People were surprised, Baburao, you are selling

chiwda? I said yes, why? You are having land, plots and you are doing this business? I said, there is nothing to be ashamed about it. I just know that one should not steal and deceive anyone. There was a reputed merchant called Hiranman sheth, who saw this. He came and said, what is going on? I said nothing, Dada, I have started this business of chiwda. But how will it run here? Come to the main road. There was his shop of selling spirit there, which was closed. He gave that shop to me. After getting shop, I started the business there. But at that time there were many court cases involving me regarding land matters. For that, I had to go to court after every one or two days. Then our lawyer Kakasaheb Appu made efforts and won all cases. So when I became free from the court, then focused on business. At that time on the main road, there was Makaji shop on one side, Madhavji's shop on the other and my shop was in between. I started to keep the elder son also in the shop. He was withdrawn from the school in the fifth standard English. He said people tease me, as chiwdawala. I said why do you cry? He became angry with me and went to his aunt at Pune. I became free. After becoming free I started focusing on that business. Then there was no money with me. So there was a friend named Joshi who was doing business of advertising. I met him and told him I want to advertise, I have no money now, I will give it to you after one month. So there was my ad saying there will be half a sher chiwda free to anyone buying one sher chiwda.

Bapu Watve : This means the advertisement was quite imaginative.

Baburao Patil : Yes the rate for a sher was one rupee and half a sher free, so not very cheap but the quantity was quite a lot, and at that time the spices were very cheap so plenty of them. The taste was very good with Nashik's Krishna oil and dalchini masala. When we started, people thought, how these people can give one and half sher chiwda,

Makaji and Kondaji cannot give that and these are giving one and a half sher for one rupee. They started ridiculing us. But on the auspicious day of Ganesh Chaturthi, I placed an advertisement and prepared five paylees of chiwda. So in the morning people were standing before the shop opened. Patil, there is your ad, so give one and half sher chiwda, show the sample first. They were happy after seeing the sample. That five paylees were finished in fifteen minutes.

Bapu Watve : Ok.

Baburao Patil : The capital for that was 15 rupees, it became 35 rupees. Rs. 20 margin. On that, I again made 10 paylees chiwda. It was finished in 10 minutes. In the evening I prepared a sack full of chiwda and it was finished on that day and I had 150 rupees capital with me. From then on, I was ahead of all in this chiwda business and on that, I became more famous than Patil or an actor. Now my son is also happy in this business. When people called me chiwdawala, it was nothing to be ashamed of, it is effort...and because of that

Bapu Watve : Another thing I want to say Narayan was lucky, he got the company of people like Dadasaheb Phalke and you also got it.

Baburao Patil : I was fortunate to have his company.

Bapu Watve : Right but like his son.

Baburao Patil : No, no Nilubhau and me.

Bapu Watve : Yes, means he gave affection to you just like a son.

Baburao Patil : Yes, yes.

Bapu Watve : In the narration of Baburao Patil there was one mistake due to a lapse of memory. He said about Chandrarao More that this movie was Hindi and Marathi was made in Kolhapur. This information is not correct, because Chandrarao More was a

movie made in the year 1938 only in Marathi. It was written by Vishnupant and he also played the role of Chandrarao More. Besides there were Amina, Jayashree Shantaram, Baburao Datar, in Shivaji's role there was Babasaheb Nandekar, then Dinkar Kamanna, Zunjarrao Pawar, Marutrao Pahilwan etc actors were in the movie. The movie did well. One thing is noted that Baburao did Shriram or Yama, few important roles. He could have continued in the film industry, but due to the situation at home, he had to leave this business and he kept on getting memories of this business. But he became very successful in the chiwda business and finally, he gives credit to Dadasaheb Phalke. He says he always received Phalke's blessings and inspiration. He is grateful to Dadasaheb that due to his inspiration, he could do something in life.