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Ministry of Information and Broadcasting
Government of India

Interview of old cine artist Narayan Tambat by Bapu Watve

Bapu Watve : Where were you born?

Narayan Tambat : Nasik.

Bapu Watve : Do you remember the year?

Narayan Tambat : Yes

Bapu Watve : Which year?

Narayan Tambat : 1908 October 29th, Thursday.

Bapu Watve : So you are almost 80 years old now?

Narayan Tambat : Yes

Bapu Watve : What is your education?

Narayan Tambat : English 4th standard.

Bapu Watve : And what were you doing after leaving school?

Narayan Tambat : I became a copper-smith.

Bapu Watve : Ha!

Narayan Tambat : But could not manage.

Bapu Watve : Why? Any health problem?

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Narayan Tambat : Yes. That too. But mainly because I did not like it. So, I told my father that I did not want that work., I will take a job somewhere. He asked where could I find work? I said in film or drama company.

Bapu Watve : But why did you think of the film line?

Narayan Tambat : Because it was a form of art. I used to paint.

Bapu Watve : Hm.

Narayan Tambat : I saw that to succeed in life you have to come in contact with many people. I remembered a poem from my childhood which said that by moving out and going to different places and mixing with different people, one gains knowledge. Secondly, I liked dramas.

Bapu Watve : Hmm.

Narayan Tambat : So, I was tempted to join that line. Another thing, I had my friends there. They also felt that rather than my moving around aimlessly, it would be advisable if I am with them. That is how I entered that profession.

Bapu Watve : Which profession?

Narayan Tambat : Cinema line.

Bapu Watve : How and where?

Narayan Tambat : I left copper-smith work and joined the Cinema company. My father did not like it. He threw me out of the house.

Bapu Watve : How old were you?

Narayan Tambat : Eighteen years old.

Bapu Watve : Which cinema company did you join?

Narayan Tambat : I joined the Hindustan Film Company.

Bapu Watve : Owned by Dadasaheb Phalke'

Narayan Tambat : Yes. Phalke and Apte were partners then.

Bapu Watve : Waman Shridhar Apte? Owner of Kohinoor Mills?

Narayan Tambat : Yes. There I joined. I was employed as Assistant Store Keeper.

Bapu Watve : ok

Narayan Tambat : Actors were not taken as actor only. That was the practice then.

Bapu Watve : Had to do any work?

Narayan Tambat : Yes. Artists had to work in various departments. If an actor is required for any role, he would be called and asked to put on make-up and act.

Bapu Watve : That is what I was enquiring. If a person is working in any other department and is felt suitable for a particular role then he would be called and asked to act that role.

Narayan Tambat : Yes.

Bapu Watve : He could be from any department?

Narayan Tambat : Yes. That was the system then. Another thing, that time all films were mythological. The Social or present type of films was not produced then.

Bapu Watve : Yes.

Narayan Tambat : Historical films were being produced by people like Baburao Painter in Maharashtra Film company.

Bapu Watve : Yes.

Narayan Tambat : But Dadasaheb Phalke wanted to make the mythological film only. That time India was traditional. Unlike today, people would be engaged in prayers and reading of religious books etc.

Bapu Watve : People at that time were of old traditional upbringing.

Narayan Tambat : He produced mythological films. I think, around the time I was in school, Dadasaheb produced his first film 'Kaliyamardan'

Bapu Watve : No. The first film produced by Dadasaheb was 'Raja Harishchandra'.

Narayan Tambat : Ok. After 'Harishchandra' came 'Kaliyamardan'. Sonutai had worked in that film.

Bapu Watve : But 'Kaliyamardan' was produced six years after 'Harishchandra'.

Narayan Tambat : Yes, after six years.

Bapu Watve : In 1919. But do you still remember?

Narayan Tambat : Yes. I remember. But only the name.

Bapu Watve : So, the first film produced by him that you saw is 'Kaliyamardan'.

Narayan Tambat : Yes. I saw the shooting of that film. That is why.

Bapu Watve : His daughter Mandakini had acted role of Krishna.

Narayan Tambat : Yes. She was called Sonutai.

Bapu Watve : Ok

Narayan Tambat : This is how I entered the film line. I have told you that my father had thrown me out of the house since he had not liked that.

Bapu Watve : Thrown out of house? You were working as Assistant Store Keeper with Phalke. Did you get to act in film?

Narayan Tambat : Yes.

Bapu Watve : Which movie?

Narayan Tambat : I used to be in the mock scene. Not an actor.

Bapu Watve : Did you have to paint your face for mob scenes?

Narayan Tambat : Yes. Had to paint.

Bapu Watve : That was the period of silent movies. There were no dialogues.

Narayan Tambat : No dialogues. Only acting the roles. That's how the pictures were then.

Bapu Watve : In which film did you get a decent role?

Narayan Tambat : Never. To be honest. I did not get any roles.

Bapu Watve : Hmm.

Narayan Tambat : In the film line, I a got proper role after joining 'British India' and 'My photo place' from Hyderabad.

Bapu Watve : But Dadasaheb Phalke is the father of the Marathi film industry.

Narayan Tambat : Yes. Father.

Bapu Watve : You have seen his method of working very closely. You got chance to be associated with him. It is very important. Not many people from that era are alive now. This is history and whatever you say is going to be recorded in history.

Narayan Tambat : Yes.

Bapu Watve : Whatever you say is going to be very useful for future generations.

Narayan Tambat : Yes. He had a son 'Nilu'

Bapu Watve : Yes. Neelkanth.

Narayan Tambat : He was in Bombay when I was in Nasik.

Bapu Watve : Yes

Narayan Tambat : We studied in the same class. Later on, I left that cinema company.

Bapu Watve : Phalke's company?

Narayan Tambat : Yes

Bapu Watve : But you must have got some bit parts.

Narayan Tambat : Small bits. Cannot call them prominent roles.

Bapu Watve : You did not get that.

Narayan Tambat : Then the main actor was Datar.

Bapu Watve : Bhaurao Datar

Narayan Tambat : Yes. Bhaurao Datar and Vithoba Pawar.

Bapu Watve : Then.

Narayan Tambat : I was with Hindustan Company till 1926 end.

Bapu Watve : Ha!

Narayan Tambat : I had decided to leave the company and was going to leave in another couple of days.

Bapu Watve : Then

Narayan Tambat : I was walking on the road thinking about it. At that time Balwant Sangeet Company was performing at Vijayanand Theatre.

Bapu Watve : Master Dinanath's

Narayan Tambat : Yes.

Bapu Watve : Dinanath Mangeshkar.

Narayan Tambat : They were three partners. Kolhatkar, Kolhapure & Dinanath.

Bapu Watve : Chintamanrao Kolhatkar and Pandharinath Kolhapure.

Narayan Tambat : I do not remember their first names. His surname was Kolhapure.

Bapu Watve : Ok.

Narayan Tambat : I was going by. Dinanathrao was standing at the door. He stopped me. I was surprised since we were not acquainted. However, I definitely had an interest in their company.

Bapu Watve : Ok.

Narayan Tambat : I asked him. When we do not know each other how have stopped me? He asked me to join their company.

Bapu Watve : Hmm!

Narayan Tambat : I was in a dilemma. And was also pleased that they were calling me on their own. I told him that I did not want to work in a drama company, as far as possible. But since you want me to join, let me see the role you wish to offer. He said let us go to Chintamanrao. Let him and Kolhapure have a look at you. After Going to Chintamanrao told me that Veer Waman Rao Joshi was writing a drama titled 'Shivarayacha Rajyabhishek' or something like that and they are looking for a young man for the role of Shivaji.

Bapu Watve : The one who can look like Shivaji. Because looks are very important. And your nose and chin are very much like Shivaji.

Narayan Tambat : Yes. Looks are important. I have a photo with Kolhatkar. He as Shahaji and me as Shivaji.

Bapu Watve : Ok.

Narayan Tambat : So, he pressed for it and although I was not keen, I joined Balwant Sangeet Mandali. But the drama was not yet written.

Bapu Watve : Ok

Narayan Tambat : I travelled with the company to Bombay, Baroda and Bhavnagar. Then we came to Bombay.

Bapu Watve : Ok.

Narayan Tambat : My uncle was manager at Khatao Makhanji.

Bapu Watve : There is a Sarai under Babulnath Temple where Balwant Sangeet Mandali was staying.

Narayan Tambat : All of a sudden, my uncle saw me there and asked how was I there? He told me that he had been looking for me and my mother was unwell. He wanted to

take me with him to Nasik. I told him that I had no idea but my mother knew my address and why could she not write to me? I was reluctant. But he insisted. I went to Dinanath and told him the circumstances and informed him that I had to go to Nasik and asked for some money. He permitted me to go and asked me to drop a letter to him before returning. Then we went from Bombay to Nasik. I wanted to see my mother and go back. I was surprised to find my mother hale and hearty. When I tried to meet my mother, my father refused and stopped me. I then requested my father to wake her up and at least permit me to have a glimpse of her from distance. I then saw her, paid my respect and returned to Balwant.

Bapu Watve : When did you get back to the cinema again?

Narayan Tambat : I got re-connected with the film line around 1929. Frankly, I have spent about half 50% of my life with cinema.

Bapu Watve : Is it?

Narayan Tambat : Yes, In cinema, drama, folk plays, circus. I was not interested in the freedom movement. I had no support from the father and my wife was very young, as was a practice in those days.

Bapu Watve : Yes. In those days, children were married at a very young age.

Narayan Tambat : So, without family support and till my wife came of age what was I to do? I went wherever I could get work. At 26 I was at ----, at 27 for a year I was in Valunj, at 28 I came here Nashik

Bapu Watve : To Nasik?

Narayan Tambat : Yes. I rented a place and brought my wife. But I gained confidence from house painting. I knew a painter. I use to paint signboards. He called me to assist him since I had no work. In Panchavati there is a Sarai called Vedabaichi Sarai. We went there. We painted that. Then 'British India' started and I joined 'British India'.

Bapu Watve : What job were you given in 'British India'?

Narayan Tambat : I got work there. They were producing a film on Krishna. In that, I got a major role as a comedy actor.

Bapu Watve : Was it role of the Pendya?

Narayan Tambat : No. I do not recollect name of the character. But it was a comedy role.

Bapu Watve : Do you remember the name of the film?

Narayan Tambat : No. After that they made a film, I believe, 'Machchindranath'

Bapu Watve : Ok.

Narayan Tambat : In that, I and Manorama were there. She was my heroin. We had a dramatic scene. She gives birth to Gorakhnath. Like that, I had few main roles.

Bapu Watve : What was your character in 'Machchindranath', Kanifnath?

Narayan Tambat : Something like that. I do not remember.

Bapu Watve : So, you had the role of one of the Naths.

Narayan Tambat : Yes. But later on, most of the Cinema companies appointed me as a make up master.

Bapu Watve : Make up artist. Did you have to do make up in Phalke's films?

Narayan Tambat : No. Datar was Makeup man there.

Bapu Watve : Bhaurao Datar?

Narayan Tambat : Bhaurao Datar.

Bapu Watve : He also acted as Shivaji.

Narayan Tambat : But was also in Make up department.

Bapu Watve : So, he would also act in roles of Shivaji and others.

Narayan Tambat : But he was incharge of makeup department. There were also others in makeup department Sahdeo Rao Tapkire, Vas. Krishna Kumbhar etc.

Bapu Watve : Krishna Kumbhar was also acting woman's role.

Narayan Tambat : Yes. The First person to act woman's role was Sakharam Jadhav.

Bapu Watve : Sakharam Navik

Narayan Tambat : Then Krishna Kumbhar, then Gangu, Shakuntala, Anusuya

Bapu Watve : Lady actors.

Narayan Tambat : Yes. But whenever possible, Dada Phalke would use men for women's roles. Because in those days, there were too many restrictions on women.

Bapu Watve : Did you ever had to act woman's role?

Narayan Tambat : No.

Bapu Watve : I recall that in 'Bhasmasur Mohini' Kamalabai Gokhale had acted, that is before the above-mentioned women acted in films.

Narayan Tambat : Yes.

Bapu Watve : In 1915.

Narayan Tambat : May be.

Bapu Watve : She was the first lady to act in the Indian film industry.

Narayan Tambat : I have also heard something like that.

Bapu Watve : She is still alive. Lives in Pune. Have you seen that film?

Narayan Tambat : No.

Bapu Watve : But she acted in only one film. Later on, other women started acting.

Narayan Tambat : In 1936, the film line was also developing and people have started getting attracted to it and few people had started asking for work in cinema company. Funnily, when I first entered the cinema line, my community had declared me an outcast.

Bapu Watve : Your community.

Narayan Tambat : Yes, my community.

Bapu Watve : Anybody joining the film line was considered an outcast then.

Narayan Tambat : But I felt that community is not going to take care of my future. I had to build up my future myself.

Bapu Watve : Right.

Narayan Tambat : If I had to achieve something in life, I had to neglect community.

Bapu Watve : When you joined Phalke as Asst Store keeper, what was your salary?

Narayan Tambat : Only 15 Rupees.

Bapu Watve : And when you left?

Narayan Tambat : 18 Rupees.

Bapu Watve : From Rs. 15 to Rs. 18. And when you joined a British India company?

Narayan Tambat : Then Rs. 35.

Bapu Watve : How long were you in that company?

Narayan Tambat : That company survived for about two years.

Bapu Watve : Any pay hike?

Narayan Tambat : No.

Bapu Watve : But Rs. 35/- was considered good in those times.

Narayan Tambat : Very good. Later on, when I came to Pune and joined Saraswati....

Bapu Watve : Which year was that?

Narayan Tambat : Around 34-35. After British India, after spending some time here and there.

Bapu Watve : So, after they had produced 'Shamsundar.'

Narayan Tambat : Yes. When I joined they were working on 'Narad Nari'

Bapu Watve : 'Narad Nari'?

Narayan Tambat : Yes. Kusum Deshpande worked in it. And Dinkar Damuanna.

Bapu Watve : Was it directed by Bedekar?

Narayan Tambat : Yes.

Bapu Watve : That film the was first mythological comedy.

Narayan Tambat : Yes. Comedy.

Bapu Watve : You were joining Saraswati then.

Narayan Tambat : Yes. I knew Shantaram Pendnekar. I was searching for a job.

Bapu Watve : You have observed working at Saraswati.

Narayan Tambat : Yes.

Bapu Watve : Did you find any difference in their working style?

Narayan Tambat : Yes. Greatly.

Bapu Watve : At the time you were joining, talking movies had started.

Narayan Tambat : Yes.

Bapu Watve : What do you mean by great difference?

Narayan Tambat : Entire technique had changed. In old days, films were shot in open, in daylight.

Bapu Watve : Yes. But now with lights.

Narayan Tambat : Yes. The film was being made in studio lighting. But I feel that films produced in natural lights were more impressive.

Bapu Watve : Is it?

Narayan Tambat : Yes, because it was a challenge to do film in natural light. The actors who did well in natural light got better recognition.

Bapu Watve : How long were you working in Saraswati?

Narayan Tambat : 1 year.

Bapu Watve : And what was your salary?

Narayan Tambat : 18 rupees.

Bapu Watve : That's all.

Narayan Tambat : Yes. I was staying in Narayan Peth. And secondly, I needed a job badly. In Budhwar Peth, opposite Faraskhana there is Huzurpaga. Near that, there was a painter M.K. Gadgule.

Bapu Watve : Ok.

Narayan Tambat : Before joining Saraswati Cinetone, I was working as a painter with him.

Bapu Watve : Ok

Narayan Tambat : The first board I had painted was for Deccan Swimming Tank. It was of a very different type.

Bapu Watve : Ok

Narayan Tambat : I told M.K. when I worked him that I did not have a place to stay. And Faraskhana is nearby. The reason for mentioning this was because, at that time, I was underground in the national movement and therefore, had assumed the different name. I requested him to give me a place to sleep and if police enquires, to tell them that I am his man and am sleeping there because I do not have a place. So while I was underground I was sleeping right under the nose of the police.

Bapu Watve : Oh.

Narayan Tambat : Then I joined Saraswati under the name K. Narayan Painter.

Bapu Watve : So there also you had not given your real name.

Narayan Tambat : No. There was a manager named Gokhale. He enquired 'K. Narayan? What it means?' I told him ,Kashinath Narayan. He asked how Painter can be a surname? I told him because I undertake painting work.

Bapu Watve : There were Bapurao Painter, Anantrao Painter.

Narayan Tambat : He noted down that name. Then I spent one year in Saraswati. I tried to be careful about the police. If I met a policeman, I would try to cultivate friendship with him, offer him tea. This way I lived underground **in Pune for a year.**

Bapu Watve : Did you continue with the film line after leaving Saraswati?

Narayan Tambat : Yes. I continued my association with this line.

Bapu Watve : Which company?

Narayan Tambat : In Hyderabad, Secunderabad. In Secunderabad at 'My Photo frame. There was one Yuvaraj Murthy. Very nice person.

Bapu Watve : Yes. And in that company, there was one Dhiren Ganguli from Bengal.

Narayan Tambat : They also had a drama company.

Bapu Watve : Have you met Dhiren Ganguli?

Narayan Tambat : Yes. In that the company there was Gujrathi heroin called Hariben. And Shankar Vajire was there. There, I got the role of villain in the film 'Hire Talking'

Bapu Watve : Was it a talking film?

Narayan Tambat : No silent film.

Bapu Watve : Silent?

Narayan Tambat : Silent. Not talking. Then the company got closed down. I came back. I was looking for some work. My friend Murali Kanade was working with Bhikusa Vardhan as a painter. He knew that I could paint. He asked me to meet the proprietor of his company and he would try for a job for me. His boss was Rokde. We took his permission and then went.

Bapu Watve : So, you had a frequent change in a profession in your life.

Narayan Tambat : Yes. Many changes. Life was going on like that. My brothers were not talking to me. My community had declared me as an outcast.

Bapu Watve : Only because you had joined the cinema. This cinema line really harmed you.

Narayan Tambat : Yes but.

Bapu Watve : But you had at least mental satisfaction that you were in a profession of your choice.

Narayan Tambat : I will not say cinema hurt me. Rather it guided me in my life. Because ultimately one has to take care of himself. My father-in-law asked me why am I in this profession?

Bapu Watve : Hmm.

Narayan Tambat : I told him, 'Look, whether I join the cinema line or a drama line or a tamasha (folk art) line, it is my life. You can honestly tell me if you do not approve it. But let me tell you, the day you tell me so, I would sever my relationship with your daughter, touch her feet and call her mother and' Then he said 'It is alright. He has no objection'. Then, there was some change in his approach. It also gave me confidence in my political activities under the garb of this profession. For three years I was doing my politics and in Nasik, the warrant of my arrest was issued twice but could not be executed since I was not found.

Bapu Watve : Oh

Narayan Tambat : Then Gandhiji said that underground activists should come out and expose themselves, face the consequences and then live normal life. We exposed ourselves. But no action was taken against us.

Bapu Watve : Now, I wish to ask you about Dadasaheb Phalke's method of working.

Narayan Tambat : I was finally going to tell you. But since you have asked now, I will tell. He was whimsical but a very good artist. Very imaginative and always experimenting to create something new.

Bapu Watve : Yes. There was no other way to learn.

Narayan Tambat : There was no option. The Film industry did not exist before that time and one had to experiment and learn from one's mistakes. Without caring for profit or loss he strived for progress and development. Because of the continuous stress, he had become aloof and, therefore, people use to call him irritable.

Bapu Watve : Yes.

Narayan Tambat : But tell me, a good artist who is obsessed with his art will be considered irritable by others.

Bapu Watve : That is right.

Narayan Tambat : But I always found him calm and quiet.

Bapu Watve : That was your experience.

Narayan Tambat : Other thing is, he was the pioneer of the film industry in India.

Bapu Watve : Yes. He started it.

Narayan Tambat : He also developed the concept of trick scenes. A matchbox appears, then gets opened, the matches get spread and come together to form letters "Phalke Cine Film Company". This scene was developed by him.

Bapu Watve : I thought the letters were formed with flowers.

Narayan Tambat : That too. After learning about it, the people from Hollywood got interested. They requested Phalke to come and show them the trick scene. I think one person from Hollywood had come to Bombay.

Bapu Watve : Then?

Narayan Tambat : Phalke refused. He told them; I will not come. I wish to serve my country. I have entered the film line to serve my country. I have no attraction for Hollywood. Let me do it here.

Bapu Watve : Ok.

Narayan Tambat : He stayed here and continued with determination.

Bapu Watve : Did they ask any questions to Dadasaheb?

Narayan Tambat : They did. They wanted to learn how he had created trick scenes. Dadasaheb said it is all in his memory. He would not tell them anything. He asked them to carry out experiments and learn for themselves. He refused to teach them.

Bapu Watve : Ok

Narayan Tambat : There is a reason why he kept quiet and refused to train them

Bapu Watve : Why.

Narayan Tambat : Because he wanted Hindustan to get credit and earn name and fame. Then man from Hollywood went.

Bapu Watve : Had to go back.

Narayan Tambat : Then Phalke created so many trick scenes on screen. Maruti flying, going to an abyss, coming out from abyss etc so many.

Bapu Watve : Or in film 'Kaliyamardan'

Narayan Tambat : That trick scene became famous in the world.

Bapu Watve : Wow.

Narayan Tambat : Because of that Phalke name got famous, not only in India but all over the world.

Bapu Watve : All over the world.

Narayan Tambat : Yes. He became immortal because he created brilliant trick scenes.

Bapu Watve : Ok

Narayan Tambat : He was particular and fussy about picturising a scene exactly the way he wanted, even if it resulted in the loss. He would make people deliver results, sometimes by shouting, or by cajoling. Because of this and due to his whimsical nature, he exhausted all his capital and had to do something for survival. That is when Apte entered the company. I remember Dadasaheb requesting Apte to release him from the

company, but Apte persuaded him to stay and told him that he would continue to get the same respect in the company as he got earlier and although Apte was now owner of the company, Phalke would continue to be treated as the real owner.

Bapu Watve : Ok.

Narayan Tambat : That time films ‘Draupadi Vastraharan’ and ‘Raja Roopman’ were under production. Shinde was the director. These pictures got produced but then the company got wound up.

Bapu Watve : Ok

Narayan Tambat : Then some people from here collected some funds and set up a new company ‘Godavari Cinetone’

Bapu Watve : Ok.

Narayan Tambat : Some film was produced. But due to some misunderstanding, Phalke left that company and settled here.

-----End of Part One-----

Second part of Narayan Tambat’s Interview

Bapu Watve : You described us to about Phalke’s capabilities. You had seen him closely. Apte had requested him not to leave the company. What happened then?

Narayan Tambat : After completing the work in progress, he closed the company. Phalke started the work of making boards here. He was employing people. My elder brother was an artist and he got the job. I also use to go there because I could also paint. Once while talking, Dadasaheb asked us both to work with him as a painter because he found us suitable. Honestly, after the demise of my father, I was left with nothing. I was looking for something for survival. Dadasaheb said “We all have to do something for living. I will take care of the two of you. You work with me, earn for yourself and also for me.” I told him, “Dada, do not worry. We will survive on backing from you and your efforts. We will do whatever you say.” He gained confidence.

Bapu Watve : Then

Narayan Tambat : He said he wanted to start work on 'Setubandhan'. Then he managed to raise funds from somewhere and produced 'Setubandhan'. Then it was taken to Bombay for further processing and synchronizing.

Bapu Watve : Was 'Setubandhan' shot in Nasik?

Narayan Tambat : Yes. At Nasik.

Bapu Watve : Entire film?

Narayan Tambat : No. Some scenes were shot at other places.

Bapu Watve : Like Hampi?

Narayan Tambat : Yes. Somewhere there.

Bapu Watve : Were you present during the filming of 'Setubandhan'?

Narayan Tambat : No. But my brother was there.

Bapu Watve : Is That so? What is his name?

Narayan Tambat : R.M. Tambat.

Bapu Watve : What does R.M. stand for?

Narayan Tambat : Ratanlal Manav.

Bapu Watve : He was the film's art director.

Narayan Tambat : Yes.

Bapu Watve : Is he alive now?

Narayan Tambat : No. He died.

Bapu Watve : In that film, Haribhau Lonar had enacted the role of Maruti.

Narayan Tambat : Yes. He was taken because he was an experienced actor. He and some other actors.

Bapu Watve : Who else?

Narayan Tambat : Experienced people like Raghunath Bedane, Bhaurao Patil were taken so that work will progress fast and the film will not be wasted.

Bapu Watve : They were cast in 'Setubandhan'?

Narayan Tambat : But after completion of the film it did not do well.

Bapu Watve : No. Sound was added later on.

Narayan Tambat : Later on, at Bombay.

Bapu Watve : Yes.

Narayan Tambat : It had to be synchronized.

Bapu Watve : Because by that time talking film were being made.

Narayan Tambat : Yes. Talking film were being made. I think 'Alam aara' was the first talkie.

Bapu Watve : Yes Right. 14 March 1931.

Narayan Tambat : I do not remember the year. But I think there was one Bilimoria, who had produced it at Soniya Film Company in Bangalore. I had gone to Bangalore.

Bapu Watve : To Soniya Film Company? It was well known then.

Narayan Tambat : Yes. For asking for a job. It did not work out.

Bapu Watve : Otherwise, you would have resumed your association with film line and that too in the south.

Narayan Tambat : Yes. In south. But it did not happen. Then I thought, rather than wasting my time, since I was interested in politics, I should establish contacts with big people. So I tried. By coincidence, first person who I got acquainted with was Kakasaheb Gadgil in Pune. Kakasaheb liked me. I also became friend with Pralhad Keshav Atre. But I left him because he was an addict and I hated addiction. I always told him that it was wrong. But he could not kick his habit. Later on, he made a film.

Bapu Watve : ‘Mahatma Phule’.

Narayan Tambat : When I was in ‘Saraswathi Cinetone’, I came in contact with Bhalaji Pendharkar because his company was next door.

Bapu Watve : Can you tell me anything about Bhalaji Pendharkar’s working?

Narayan Tambat : No. Because I use to go to his company very rarely to meet few actors whom I knew. But I will tell you one thing about Bhalaji Pendharkar. He was a very clever man. He knew the pulse of the audience and had capability of making films that would attract the audience to theatre. I got acquainted with him only through my friend. He wanted me to join his company.

Bapu Watve : Do you remember the last days of Dadasaheb?

Narayan Tambat : In his last days he had a very bad time. He had built a house on Gangapur Road. He was living there in extreme poverty.

Bapu Watve : Were you in touch with him then?

Narayan Tambat : Yes. I used to meet him.

Bapu Watve : What were his thoughts then? What did he discuss?

Narayan Tambat : He always said that rather than living with history, one should think about the future. He was very pleased that people called him ‘father of Indian Films’. A plaque stating that is fitted on his house.

He was never emotional and was always positive in his thinking. He would say that every person who is born must die someday. The person must decide for himself whether to live life happily or in sorrow. He would engage himself in prayers and forget about problems.

He said life is a continuous struggle. He said that he was very happy that during this struggle, he has become world -famous and will now embrace death happily. He had become old. But luckily for him, his children were with him when he died.

Bapu Watve : 16 February 1944. Do you remember that day?

Narayan Tambat : Yes.

Bapu Watve : Great man. Father of the Indian film industry. How many people joined his funeral procession?

Narayan Tambat : A few. I had gone.

Bapu Watve : That is also my impression. Considering his achievement, more people should have joined.

Narayan Tambat : Yes. More people should have joined.

Bapu Watve : What was the reason for low attendance, according to you?

Narayan Tambat : Because people do not like somebody else getting accolades or prosperity.

Bapu Watve : Oh.

Narayan Tambat : If I am living in a middle house between two houses and if I am jealous, I cannot digest their progress. People were not educated and were jealous of Dadasaheb's achievements. But Dadasaheb used to say that "he is called 'Father of Indian Cinema' and whatever he has achieved it was through his own struggle, determination and ambition and he wished that everybody will show the same determination to achieve his goal."

Bapu Watve : Do you remember the names of any technicians from Dadasaheb's company?

Narayan Tambat : Yes. Should I tell you?

Bapu Watve : Yes.

Narayan Tambat : Bhaurao Datar, Dattapant, Kiran, Sagar, Madhav Bhokane, Vishnu Kolhapurkar, Nathoba Pawar, Bhat, Yesoba Pendhkar, Shakuntala, Anusuya were there. Datta was cameraman and Shindemama was director.

Bapu Watve : Was Cameraman Prabhakar Chavan there?

Narayan Tambat : Yes. Before Vasant Shinde.

Bapu Watve : Vasant Shinde must have been very young.

Narayan Tambat : Yes. A kid.

Bapu Watve : Baburao Patil also must have been there.

Narayan Tambat : That was later. I think at the time of ‘Setubandhan’.

Bapu Watve : In the end, do you wish to add anything about Dadasaheb?

Narayan Tambat : What more can I say. Very respectable person. Exemplary person. If anybody wants to make career in art, he should show love and determination shown by Dadasaheb.

Bapu Watve : You must be proud that you spent some time with ‘Father of Indian Cinema’.

Narayan Tambat : Definitely. He was also my father’s friend. After every 2 or 3 days, he would come to my father. I have heard their conversation closely. After I left my home, I considered him as my father. We were that close. He always gave me confidence that if I can learn some art like him, I can also achieve something in life. Honestly, a person like me, who was always worried about his next meal, and sometimes had to starve for four days, is living happily only because of art and his blessings.

Bapu Watve : Ok.

Narayan Tambat : I think, I am the happiest person in the world.

***Bapu Watve :** Tambat has spent a long time in the company of Dadasaheb Phalke and gives credit for all his achievements to Dadasaheb Phalke. With advancing age, Tambat has lost his teeth and his speech is a blur and we have to make out the meaning of what he says. But we can make out that he is totally devoted to Dada and worships him.*