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Ministry of Information and Broadcasting  
Government of India

## Interview of stage & Telugu film hero Akkineni Nageswara Rao (ANR) by

P.S. Bhatt in 2011

**Akkineni:** Your initiative is laudable. There are many people who served the theatre and film industry and many of them are passing into the oblivion. In such a situation, it is good that we hear to their experiences in their own voices, which could be of a great help to the future generations. Recording our experiences and preserving them in the archives of the Poona Institute is really an appreciable gesture. We could have missed the experiences of many great personalities by now. It is good that you have taken up the initiative now so that we do not miss more of them. Many people know about me. It will be like repeating the same old story, yet I think some retrospection is necessary.

### Early life

I was born into an illiterate family in a remote village, Venkata Raghavapuram, 9 miles away from Gudivada in Krishna district. My mother gave birth to 9 children but only five of us survived. All five of us were boys. My father passed away when I was four years old. I do not know even his facial features but have a vague figure in my memory. My mother did not have daughters. She used to say that she gave birth to a girl who died too early. So, she used to miss daughters a lot and used to consider me as a daughter, because I was the last child for her. My mother had some illness and though I never helped my brothers seriously with their works, I used to carry lunch from home to the fields for them. At times, I used to get on the bullock cart and make them run as a pastime. There used to be a normal school in our village where we could study up to 4<sup>th</sup>

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class. Every year, we used to have some cultural programmes. Once in the school programmes --none of my family members had any cultural background. None of them were artists. Art was not in our genes but I used to sing some songs even without any training. I used to dance too, though not proficiently. People used to say that I mingled freely with my friends, without any inhibitions and was a happy go lucky child.

At this time, I played the role of Chandramati, a female character, in the play Harischandra. The villagers came to my mother and told her “Punnama, your son is compensating for the lack of daughters.” They used to try to make her happy with their appeasing words and praise me to which my mother used to become overjoyed. She used to treat me like a daughter during my childhood. I also used to help her with household chores whichever she asked for and ensure that she did not feel the absence of daughters.

In such a situation, I began going to the nearest town to study 5<sup>th</sup> class. We used to have 5-6 acres of fields. As my brothers were married and had children, differences cropped up between them when they lived in a joint family and so, all of them got separated. I, being the youngest one, they left me with my mother. During the separation, me and my mother were left with a hut and 5 acres of fields as our share. This happened in 1934 and I was 10 year old then. I was born on September 20 in 1924. I used to help my mother in domestic works and go to school in the nearby town.

### **Introduction to theatre**

Knowing that I had performed the role of ‘*Chandramati*’ well, the farmers of Kudaravalli village asked to me to play the same role in ‘*Kanakatara*’ play during the annual cultural festival in the village. They felt that I was suitable for the role and my third brother took me to the village. There they taught me some singing. There was one Konduri Veera Raghavaiah, who played harmonium for the play. I sang the song and acted simultaneously as was the tradition in all theatre plays in those days. People who do not know singing were not given chance of acting in theatre plays. Though I did not know much singing, I used to somehow sing but people used to appreciate my

performance. Being a small village, that much of performance meant a lot in those days. To practise for the play, we needed a petromax light which works on kerosene and I contributed my share of 25 paise for it. That play became popular and the 'Tara' role which I played became much popular following which people from nearby villages also started calling me for the plays. My uncle Veerabrahmam informed about it to my mother and told her that I had chances of a bright future in this field. He told her many people were praising me and at that time, I was studying in 5<sup>th</sup> class. My mother wanted me to pursue academics and I also had interest in studying. She thought of selling away our fields for my education. Though none of my relatives were literate, my brothers could put signature, with some mistakes though. Because I studied till 4<sup>th</sup> class, I knew how to sign without any mistakes.

Later, what my mother thought was that she would not be able to fund my academics even if she sold off all the 5 acres of fields we owned. Each acre costed Rs 600 in our village. This was in 1934. So  $600 \times 5 = 3,000$ . If all the Rs 3,000 were spent, then I will be able to complete graduation, B.Com or B.A or B.Sc. However, she was not confident that I would pass and even if I passed, she was not sure that I would be able to get a job. A B.Com graduate used to get a salary of Rs 40 per month in 1936. With all the ifs and buts in her mind, she did not want me to pursue academics. She thought that at least we would have the land to lean on if it was not sold and so made me to discontinue studies. As people were praising me when I acted and sang songs, she thought I would be able to shine in the field if some training was given. She conveyed this idea to my elder brother. By that time itself, there used to be professional artistes like Sthanam Narasimha Rao garu, Madhavapeddi, Govindaraju Subbarao garu, Vemuri Gaggayya garu used to be there.

But, I was associated with such group of artistes who were engaged in entertaining the villagers once or twice in a year, when they had some leisure after harvesting the crop. So, my brother and mother thought that as I was having a little talent in acting, I would improve if I was given training in that vocation. Moreover, we did not have enough funds for my education and even if I get educated, getting recruited was another problem and the best a graduate can get at that time was only Rs 40 per month. They

thought if I could prosper in some other field, they can save the five acres of land. They hoped that acting would become a profession for me.

In the dramas which we used to play, the artists were not experts either in singing or dialogue delivery but people who used to pronounce words properly used to tell the dialogues. A harmonist used to be called from outside the village. He used to make some suggestions in the dialogues and songs if he knew anything and we used to learn. Or else, if there was no one to suggest, there used to be a feeling that down the years they will slowly learn and become perfect. As I was very young, I am not able to recollect properly. When I played in the '*Kanaka Tara*' play, I may be some 10-11 years old but I learnt all the songs in the troupe only.

If people in some other villages played the drama, they used to give me Re 1 and take me to their place. After practising for 10 days, they used to pay me Re 1 for one show. By the time I joined the cinemas, I used to take Rs 5 per one play. I earned Rs 1,000 in nine years. In the mean time, I slowly learnt some things necessary for theatre plays. Along with the school boys in Gudivada, I practised Devadevi role and in the troupe, Budaraju Sriram Murthy garu was the permanent harmonist. He taught me all the songs and also made me know the nuances of performing the role. In those days, the harmonist used to have some control over the troupe. They used to act as mini gurus. He taught me everything again. The Vipranarayana movie and play have different stories. I will tell you. The Vipranarayana drama used to be played very frequently in the villages. For the movie, the story was rewritten that Devadevi tried to seduce Vipranarayana and hugged him due to which she started having burning sensation all over the body following which she became his devotee.

In the Vipranarayana I acted, the storyline is different. Vipranarayana burgles a house and steals a small spoon but he gets thrashed. Audience liked my acting. I will tell you the reasons why the story was rewritten for the movie later.

### **Mudinepalli Dramatic Association**

In such a situation, the organisers of a troupe, Mudienpalli Excelsior Dramatic Association, Koduri Acchayya garu, who was the president and our renowned producer Dukkipati Madhusudhan Rao the secretary, thought if new lads keep coming

and bringing new women for the female roles, then the youngsters would get spoilt and hence, decided that males only should play the role of the female character too.

So, they wanted a boy to play the female character. After watching the play in which I acted, these two people gave me a cup, spoke to my brother and took me to Mudinepalli, which is 5-6 miles towards East of Gudivada. Here, I had some real practice. Till now, they used to tell me something and I used to act, without much discipline. In Mudinepalli, I used to get up early in the morning and read all my portion of dialogues. I used to read the remaining portion too for reaction. Action alone was not sufficient here. Reaction also should be there.

It is here I learnt that reacting to others dialogues was also a part of acting. Memorising all my dialogues and also being capable of keeping others dialogues in memory, I learnt all these tactics here. This is a school.

This school was set up by Pendyala Nageswara Rao garu, who later moved to Madras and composed several film songs. Under his direction, we also included some songs in the dramas. By this time, I was 16-17 years old and so could sing and move about here and there on the stage to make it appear like dance. The songs too were modernised. Dramas had a modern approach with songs and dances.

In this company, there used to be some rules and discipline, action, reaction. Here I learnt about what should go into the characters. This is one way of schooling. A good foundation was laid. Koduri Acchayya garu had some interest in fine arts and so, he used to teach the dialogue delivery properly. Madhusudhan Rao garu used to look into the implementation of rules and regulations in the drama company. While one was into the acting side, the other was looking into the functioning of the organisation. I was there for three years in the company.

Meanwhile, in 1939, my co-artistes in Gudivada sent me to Kolhapur saying that one Kaja Venkatramaiah garu, a friend of P. Pullaiah garu, was shooting a movie and that they recommended my name for a small role. I stayed there for two months and came back. In that movie, Santhakumari garu was the first heroine and Bhanumati was the second heroine. Uppuluri Sanjeeva Rao garu son Hanumantha Rao was the hero. It got released in 1940.

Before joining the Mudinepalli Company, there used to be one Y. Bhadracharyulu garu from Ramachandrapuram, who acted in the mookie Bhakta Kuchela drama. I learnt some songs and poems from him and one other, Chandrasekhar, in Gudivada. The Mudinepalli Company played some dramas in Tenali of which Asha Jyothi, Satyanveshana and Telugu Talli became popular. For three years, we enacted plays intensely. In this process, I learnt to take care of my costumes and wigs. I used to take care of my dresses, sarees and get blouses stitched for them. As many of the plays were social dramas, I used to take minute care of my dressing and costumes. Before me shifting to Gudivada from Tenali, I had already taken my mother from our village to Gudivada as I am used to eating home-made food. Hotel meals do not suit my body constitution. While boarding the Bandar train to travel from Tenali to Gudivada, Ghantasala Balaramaiah garu, who produced films like Balaraju, was sitting in 1<sup>st</sup> class and asked me: “Who are you?” while I getting into the 3<sup>rd</sup> class. To this, I replied that I play female characters in dramas. He examined me from top to toe and then asked, “Will you join movies?”. I said “I will”.

When he asked me to whom he speak to, I told him that my mother and brother were there in Gudivada. He went to Bandar, completed his work and came to Gudivada along with some friends.

He said that there was one Kalyanaramudu character and that they were looking for freshers. “We feel he will suit for the role. Please send him,” they told my mother. They also told her that it will take five months to return home.

My family members kept wondering if I would suit for the role because I am always used to playing female roles. We also had a doubt over what should I do when my voice gets transformed into that of a male. I had been playing female characters but we knew that my voice would change into that of a male and that I would not be able to play female roles.

With such thoughts on mind, we did not want to leave the opportunity that knocked on our door and Madhusudhan Rao garu himself took me to Madras and got the agreement signed. In those days, when a picture was being shot, the company used to take a house on rent and lodge all the artistes in it. All of them used to be stage artistes.

I thought I should go because they called me. If I cannot succeed, there is no problem. If it is a success, then there's no problem at all. The only thing I knew was to utilise the opportunity. How could I imagine that I would become famous and that my interview would be preserved in the archives? If I could foresee all this, then it becomes hypocrisy. Then it is acting again. I do not want to act before you again but tell you the realities.

On May 8, 1944, I reached Madras with Madhusudhan Rao garu. My first movie 'Sitarama jananam' was an average hit. At this time, someone called Gudavalli Ramabrahmam garu came enquiring Balaramaiah garu about the new actor he had brought. Ramabrahmam garu was producing a folkore picture, Mayalokam. They wanted a young boy for that movie and by the time I went there, all the senior actors were aged 40 years. Vemuri Gaggayya garu, Parupalli subba Rao garu, Gidug Sitapati garu, Mudigonda Lingamurthy garu, Chitturi Nagayya garu, Ch. Narayana Rao garu, Y.V. Rama Rao garu, C.S.R Anjaeyulu garu were the actors there and all of them were aged 35-40 years. I am the only 19-year-old boy.

I was like a bridge between the old and the new generations. All of them gave their blessings to me. At that time, we did not have any specific schools to teach us dialogue delivery. I had some experience as a stage artist but this led to some unforeseen problems. I had to gradually switch over to the mode of speaking in front of the mike from adding raaga to the dialogues and extending them, speaking at the top of my voice to enable even those in the last seats to hear me. At that time, modern mikes were not present. If I speak in the pitch I am speaking to you now, the audience will not be able to hear me. I should speak in a high pitch.

The mikes used to have Blue Seal, RCA, something or the other. They used to be hung from the top and like in the stage plays, all of us have to gather at that place and deliver the dialogues. Even in theatre plays, mikes used to be set in the same format. By the time I entered the film industry, playback system was not full-fledged. Artistes had to sing and act simultaneously.

In *Sitarama Jananam*, artistes playing the roles of Rama Lakshmana sang Gurubrahma, Guruvishnu, Gurudevo Maheswaraha and when sage Viswamitra took them into the forest too, they acted while singing simultaneously. Similarly, in

*Mayalokam* too, the artistes actually sang poems from the Puranas. At that time, I sang my songs in films *Sitarama Jananam*, *Mayalokam*, *Vetalo Palnadu*, *Mugguru Marathilu*, *Balaraju*, because I was one among the singers. However, I had a challenge. I had to protect my voice for singing in a female voice for which I avoided consuming oil completely. I did not take even the small amount of oil used for tempering various dishes and I also abstained from drinking soda. In *Sitarama Jananam*, I myself felt that there was not much variation in the voice of Sita and Rama, because I sang for both the characters. I could sense that the viewers too were not satisfied with the voices. My songs picturised on Sita and Rama used to have similar voice. Sensing this difficulty, the company began searching for singers.

The playback system was gradually making its entry and people in the film industry were not confident that I would sing as professionally as Ghantasala. Even before entering the film industry, I and Ghantasala knew each other as he also played some roles in a few plays. Both of us used to have relatives in a common place, Choutapalli. When I visited the place, I found that Ghantasala's maternal uncle Pitchaiah garu was a good singer and that he mentored his nephew. Though Ghantasala's voice used to be good, the film industry had never accepted him as a good singer. By the time I started singing, his voice was slowly being accepted. My voice also got modified into that of a male and at this time, I started shivering whenever I sang. I myself could understand that it was not having 'sruthi'. In *Balaraju*, I sang the 'Cheliya Kanarava' song.

Then I went to Ramabrahmam garu and told him that I myself was not satisfied with my singing because after my voice transformed into that of a male, I was not able to maintain the 'sruthi' properly. May be, he too felt the same and immediately, proposed that Ghantasala should sing the song as his voice was good. Ghantasala accepted the proposal. Since then, Ghantasala had been singing till he breathed his last. The song which I sang was also recorded but the picture had Ghantasala's song.

In those days, recording used to be done in Madras and dubbing in Calcutta. So, the record used to come only after 9 months after sending the track. The track of the song which I sang also went for recording, along with others. Even today, the record has my voice only. From then, I stopped singing. If I did not stop singing voluntarily, the industry people would have stopped giving songs to me. I understood that my voice



was not good. That is how my career began. It is true that I faced many hardships. Now, everything has been streamlined and it is easy to get trained for acting. There are many schools exclusively teaching acting. They teach you how to carry yourself before the camera, how to make sound before the fundamentals, how to behave, in what pitch you should speak. During that time, all these were not there. There used to be immense influence of stage plays and so we needed to focus on acting and dialogue delivery system and I had to strive a lot in acquiring the skills.

In those days, the remuneration used to be very less. Balaramaiah garu used to give Rs 250 per month, apart from providing meals while Ramabrahmam used to give Rs 350 per month. For the fifth picture Balaraju, they gave me Rs 600 and these funds used to get exhausted in 5-6 months. After the release of Keelu gurram, they began giving me Rs 1,000. By that time, because I was getting established as an actor and I brought my mother to the town where shootings took place, from our village. They used to give me Rs 1,000 per month, apart from providing meals. I took a separate portion by that time. *Balaraju* got released in 1948 and I got married by then. With my role in *Balaraju*, I became popular as a folklore hero but still, I was not accepted as a hero for social films by the industry people. They finalised that my facial features would not suit for other roles than that of folklore. In such a condition, I was eagerly waiting to be booked in social pictures.

At that time, one out of every six films used to be a folklore. Vahini Studios used to shoot social films. In those social films, Narayana Rao garu or Nagaiah garu used to act. The producers preferred them because I was not a full-fledged man. I was just a teenage boy. The first time I acted in a social picture, I was very anxious. From the age of 12 years, all the plays I acted were social dramas. In the Mudinepalli company, all the plays were social dramas. The type of dialogue delivery and acting scheme was all social but I was made a folklore hero in films. The industry seniors said that my facial features do not suit the social dramas. There used to be one cameraman, Nagaraja Rao. I still remember asking him to dress me up and sporting the spectacles, I got several photos clicked by him. I still have the album. There was so much of propaganda on me that I myself got doubt if I would suit social movies. I had no confidence to act in social movies.

### (Timestamp 30:00)

My first social movie was *'Samsaram'*. I told you know that I got many photos clicked by Nagaraja Rao garu. Seeing those pictures, I thought my face was okay for social movies. I kept wondering why these people were rejecting roles for me in social films. I kept thinking if there would be special features exclusively earmarked for social films? However, I did not speak out my heart fearing censure. I have not reached such a stage where I can assert myself. I was still dependent on somebody's opinions. I was not grown up mentally or physically and hence, though I had strong feelings inside, I never told them to others.

For some time, Ramabrahmam garu had been very affectionate towards me, Balaramaiah garu provided accommodation for me in his house, all this happened before I brought my mother to my place. In the mean time, Balaramaiah garu passed away while *Vetala Palnadu* shooting was underway and L.V. Prasad garu chipped in to complete the movie. Though the movie was not a box office hit, I could gain some recognition in which I played the role of Balachandrudu. *Keelugurram* was another folklore picture. Just as big hits these days, *Keelugurram*, *Balaraju* and then *Ratnamala* were in the theatres for 100 days.

Though I was happy for acting in big hits, I was not able to take pride in the success because there used to be a lot of criticism against me. My voice and walk used to be more like a female than a male. All these negative points turned out to be positive points in the future. All through my life, I passed through a lot of testing times. Even after acting in *Kalidasu*, *Devadasu* and *Vipranarayana*, seniors in the industry used to feel that I was not a worthy guy. There used to be such a talk. The producer of *Devadasu* movie, D.L. Narayana, was told that I was a wrong choice for *Devadasu*. They had doubts that I, who had a strong base in folklore movies, cannot fit into a role which had heavy drama.

In *Vipranarayana*, the lead character says devotion means goodness in any human being. He also expresses doubt if God is there or not. I personally am not a theist or atheist. I do not hate any principles. I believe that God is there wherever there is goodness. I do not know how I developed such a thought. Neither was I told about this nor did I read anywhere. May be I had my own experiences which made me get some

thoughts about God. Since the beginning, I was a workaholic. I used to believe in work. I used to think if I do good things, my parents will definitely appreciate me. Then why is God not appreciating me when I am working hard? So, I was not able to completely believe in God.

In those days, there used to be rehearsals almost every day. Not just for 4-5 days, like in these days. The *Keelugurram* movie was shot for 20 months but fearing that they would not book me in social films then onwards if I asked for Rs 20,000 but accepted Rs 7,000 remuneration.

In *Keelugurram*, I could identify myself with the role I played. A rustic village boy becomes sophisticated after getting educated. L.V. Prasad garu used to making social movies. He also directed *Samsaram* at a later stage, though initially, the film was directed by some other director. It was his 19<sup>th</sup> picture. He took some special interest and ensured that my dialogue delivery suited social movies and I too could do it because I played some roles in social dramas during stage shows.

Prasad garu extracted the best from me. It was then that the industry people believed that I was not a folklore hero but a hero suitable for social films. From then, I could switch to a completely different category of roles. The *Keelugurram* movie was a major hit and now, people started fearing giving me folklore roles. I was happy.

By this time, Rama Rao garu came into the industry. Because of his figure, he was more suitable for folklore and mythological roles and *Patala Bhairavi* was a success. During the planning of *Patala Bhairavi*, the producers chose me and Anjali only but, I was too busy at that time. With nobody to play the role, Rama Rao was booked for it. Strange are the ways of life. I started off with mythology but became a social hero. Rama Rao started off as a social hero and settled as a mythological hero. Who else can play mythological roles so perfectly?

He has a good dominating figure. Because of my success in social films, I became very confident. Now, I need not be too cautious. Success in some films gave 50% strength to me. By that time, there have been many Laila-Majnu romantic movies and I also could register continuous successes. So, I did not feel any problem now.

I could overcome my anxiety in *Sitarama Jananam* itself. The first dialogue in the movie got okayed in the first shot itself and I was very happy. There used to be many

people who used to encourage budding artistes in those days. I too received a lot of encouragement. Kannamba (another actress) also used to teach me how to tell the dialogues. They were all experienced actors like Govindaraju Subbaro garu, Lingamurthy garu, Vemuri Gaggayya garu and many others. In those days, people used not to be so envious like in these days and they used to be very helpful also. They never felt like poking nose into others' matters. We all used to together discuss how to tell the dialogues and come to some decisions. All of them were big guns and I was a small boy. I had the blessings of all my seniors.

I could also switch to polished language from the countryside accent due to acting and interaction with my seniors. Samudrala Raghavachari garu used to write dialogues at that time. At that time, a majority of the movies were based on mythology. I used to have a lot of confusion as many of the dialogues used to encompass a music element. At times, Govindaraju Subbarao garu used to help me or CSR garu used to clarify my doubts. Each of the seniors used to have his version of dialogue delivery and that used to land me in trouble as I could not understand whom to follow.

By nature, I used to accept the suggestions from anybody but I used to like one Daita Gopalam garu. I heard that he trained Kanchanamala garu in delivering dialogues in Sakkubai movie and so, I offered him some money and learnt dialogue delivery in mythological films. When my seniors used to correct me, I used to carefully keep that in mind but deliver the dialogue as was taught by Daita Gopalam garu when the shot was taken for the movies. Finally, I learnt the dialogues with a tinge of social movie base because I had a personal liking towards that type of films.

By that time itself, there used to be a lot of Western movie influence on Indian cinema. I used to like Ashok Kumar. I never believed in realistic acting in movies. Nothing is realistic in movies. When you can sing a song while romancing with someone how can it be called realistic. But in movies, action should make the audience feel as if it was real.

In this sense, without dramatisation, how can one call it a movie? If we cry in the real scene in a movie, we will start having phlegm coming out of our nose but if we keep removing it on the screen, then audience will start laughing. We cannot be natural in movies. If we really cry, even our voice becomes unclear and then, it would not look

good. Being realistic does not match with acting. Movies mean dramatisation. In movies, actors keep singing while crying. In real life, does anybody sing while crying? Even in romantic scenes, nearly 40 members keep dancing behind and can we call it romance?

Action is a make believe process. Everything is planned. A tear drop should fall from the eye at a particular moment or at this instance, voice should become emotional. There is a script and there is a scenario in the brain to act. By trying to act realistically, I am trying to cheat the audience. When I am acting as per the script, there are instructions in my brain and then, how can it be realistic. If something is realistic, there should be no instructions and the actor should go on as he/she wants.

In English movies, action, laughing or any expression for that matter, used to be more natural and I used to like it. Gregory Peck used to act very naturally. In English movies, there are no songs but in Indian movies, there are songs and we are still artificial in acting.

For that matter, while shooting for *Devadasu*, the audience in Telugu land is different from that in Tamil Nadu. The artistes automatically can understand the difference and for Tamil Nadu audience, our pitch automatically increases.

Modulation also increases. I worked in nearly 30 Tamil movies. For Tamil audience, we needed to dramatise scenes and Telugu also needed some exaggeration of expression but I am one of those who usually underplayed roles.

I used to feel that subdued acting, restrained acting will have some benefits. For example, while cooking, if we add excess salt and chilli powder, we cannot remove it from the curry but we add less amount of it, we can make some adjustments. Similarly, while acting too, we can add a little bit of emotion like weeping or laughter, if necessary. I believe that things will have good taste only when there is a deficit of it. If it is in excess, we will face some trouble.

My stories used to be different, demanding varied action. If I am playing the role of Kaaludu, then I will have to overact but when doing the role of *Kalidasu*, my action should be subdued as Kalidasu is a subdued man.

However, after becoming a star, the whole perception has changed. You have to follow some rules and regulations to acquire people's admiration. If only one type of subject

is taken every time, then we cannot show any variety. If a couple of mythological pictures are shot in a year, then it is okay. Even in the social category, all movies should not be run-of-the-mill type. One can be comedy type, the other romantic and the next tragic romantic.

I portrayed different characters in different movies. I acted as a light-hearted romantic doctor, country brute. In 1955, I did different genres of movies simultaneously - *Donga Ramudu*, *Ardhangi*, *Rojulu Marayi*, *Tenali Ramakrishna*. The roles in these films were different or else, the audience will get bored. I used to accept roles without much fuss. However, I used to be careful in not accepting if I was busy. If an actor keeps on playing the role of a doctor, after a point, he will fail to impress the audience because it will be the same dress, same wig, almost similar acting, same old patients.

There used to be many stories and I just picked up whatever I felt was worthy. However, once we become a star, there will be many offers. The subject might be interesting but the director might not be good. It is the producer who takes a call on these issues and I cannot say that I would not act if some X is the director. These things should not be revealed in the public because this will bring disrepute to me.

Suppose, when I felt Varadachari garu dialogues would not suit the movie but the producer has roped in the same person for the picture, I used to sacrifice the role. Some others might try to picturise a movie taking story ideas from two Hindi movies but if I felt the ideas clashed, then also, I used to refuse to do the role. After attaining stardom, there should be some planning. If it is not there, we cannot retain the status for a long time.

People will get bored of same scenes, acting, dialogues. If we have to bring in some novelty, we have to do different subjects.

I feel actors can bring about a change in human psychology. If we play similar roles, do same type of acting and portray similar characters, there will be no longevity and hence, there should be proper planning but there are many tricky situations too.

Things which we have planned might not take shape on scripted lines. For instance, for some time, there was an opinion that I would not suit for social roles and at other times, that I would not suit as a hero in folklore movies. However, the film industry

people felt that Rama Rao would be fitting into the characters of both types of films perfectly.

I rejected a role in *Rani Ratnaprabha* film because the moviemakers thought it was a romantic film while it was a story of vengeance. There was a fundamental problem in weaving the story. According to my opinion, in *Rani Ratnaprabha*, the hero is fooled by the heroine and I differed with the producer in this aspect and rejected it. However, the film was made but it failed.

In the movie, Rani Ratnamma challenges the hero that she would sleep with him and beget a baby from him. To achieve this goal, she puts on different attires and finally succeeds in getting a baby by sleeping with the hero.

In a hero-dominated film world, the heroine wins the challenge in *Rani Ratnaprabha*. The moviemakers branded it as a romantic film but I sensed it would fail and so, did not accept it.

In movies based on folklore, the other elements like technical values dominate acting but in social movies, action has more prominence.

I faced a lot of difficulties while shooting for *Devadasu*. Initially, they said I was not suitable for the lead character and it only increased my determination. Firstly, playing the role of an alcoholic was new to me because I never knew how one would feel after consuming alcohol. While entering into the film industry, I promised to my mother that I would not drink alcohol.

In my childhood itself, my mother decided that I should get married to my maternal uncle's daughter. At that time, all the neighbours warned her that if people enter into films, they will become drunkards and even desert their spouses. They alerted her that she was sending her boy who had no father into the film industry.

Soon, my mother sent a message to her brother that he should come home to discuss about my marriage with his daughter. All this happened without my knowledge. My uncle agreed to the proposal as he used to like me a lot. He told about the proposal to his wife, ie. my aunt. Then it seems my aunt said, "If the mother of the boy itself is not confident that her child would not take to vices, then I too can doubt his integrity."

Hurt over these remarks, my mother started crying in front of my uncle saying that our families were getting separated. When I asked why she was crying, they narrated the

whole episode. Then I said, “I do not know what would be my career, whether I would be a success or a failure. What is all this nonsense? Why this marriage? With this responsibility on my shoulders, will I be able to progress. No. I am not going to marry.” I told my mother, “If you are not able to trust me, why should she (aunt) trust me?” I was impressed by my aunt’s reasoning that how can she believe in my integrity. I will not get married now.” At that time only, I promised that I would not drink alcohol.

Till November 2, 1974, I did not know how alcohol would taste. I even stopped smoking in America. I started off with beedis (a cheaper version of cigarettes) and by the time, I did *Samsaram* movie, I was smoking cigarettes.

Coming back to the point, I was speaking about *Devadasu* movie. People used to think that I was on a fast and grew my moustache and beard and then studied the character a lot, before acting.

Hearing such talk, I used to keep laughing for myself. I never used to reply to questions on *Devadasu*. All what people thought was trash.

In fact, we did just the opposite of what people were thinking. What I did was I began acting normally. Though I was portraying the character of an alcoholic, my eyes were appearing very active. After 3-4 days of shooting, we got a doubt that we were failing and D.L. garu had a doubt that we were not filming perfect shots. He asked how could we get into the groove. I said: “A film had already been done by Saigal on the same Devadas. Can you show me that movie?”

He said, “No, If I show you that film, you will follow him. Saigal is not a big actor. He is a renowned singer. It was not because of his action that the picture had been a hit,” he said. That image should not influence you. Act by your own self.

He said that I should take the help of Raghavaiah Naidu and try to act. But, we did not feel that the scenes picturised on the alcoholic came out perfectly. Then we devised a plan. We decided that all the scenes involving the alcoholic man will be shot in the nights when I would be feeling sleepy. I will keep my brain alert but my eyes will look sleepy and all the scenes will be shot only in the night. My eyelids will be drooping.

In the mean time, I told him that I too would practise to keep my eyes passive without showing any signs of intelligence, by sitting in front of the mirror.



## (Timestamp 01.00)

Raghavaiah Naidu and I were putting in all the efforts and asked all the other artistes in the movie for night call sheets and they obliged. I like to eat curd and so, I used to eat a lot of it so that it would induce sleep and my eyelids would look drooping. Keeping all the dialogues in my mind, I used to act while I used to feel sleepy. That is the success of *Devadasu*. It was just the reverse of fasting that I did while acting for the movie.

When the offer for *Vipranarayana* movie came, K.V. Reddy garu said I should not accept it as I was an atheist in real life. He said that I may fail. At that time, I was doing a lot of social pictures that time and *Vipranarayana* was based on historical facts. I felt that doing the protagonist character in the same story wherein I once acted in the heroine role, Devadevi, would not help me to be successful. So when Samudrala Raghavachari garu asked me for the role, I told him I would not play it. Then he asked me why would I not do it.

At one time, I asked him why were they ruining the character of Vipranarayana by cooking up some stories, while in fact, Vipranarayana was a great man.

Then he told me that he was a Vaishnavite and took me to Connemara library in Chennai and asked the librarian to take out all the books relating to Vipranarayana. Referring to the story of Vipranarayana, Samudrala garu told me that he got the original story for the movie, as he was a Vaishnavite. In fact, the characters of Vipranarayana and Devadevi have mythological significance.

Bhanumati played the role of female lead and she being a voluptuous figure was chosen to seduce Vipranarayana. For a role in Chintamani, I would not have accepted Bhanumati as the actress but for Devdasu and Vipranarayana, her personality suits the best. If the heroine is not charming, then these pictures will fail. As far as Vipranarayana is concerned, Bhanumati is the right choice to portray the character of Devadevi.

*Laila Majnu* is not a Bengali novel. It is in fact of the Hindi people. Many people think Devadasu is a Telugu story as popularised by Chakrapani garu but do not know that even Devadasu is a Bengali story. Does anyone know that *Ardhangi* is a Bengali story.

It is based on Swayamsiddhi written by Asaapoorna Devi. Many people think that it is a Telugu story. Even *Devadasu* is a Bengali story.

*Thodikodallu* was adapted from Bengali novel Badi Didi. All these adaptations of novels were possible because Bengali culture and Telugu culture have many similarities. Our sentiments match with those of the Bengalis. Bengali literature is more popular in Andhra Pradesh and we have made wonderful movies of their novels. Similarly, we have *Tukaram* popularised by C.S.R. Anjaneylu, who played the lead role, and Chakradhari, Sakku Bai too. Sakku Bai was first popularised by Suravaram Venkateswarlu even before Kanchanamala. It was through Samudrala garu that I came to know about the secrets of *Devadasu* and *Vipranarayana*.

When I rejected to do the role of Vipranarayana, I came to know about many things. Whenever I rejected any role or if I was rejected by others for a particular role, those instances turned out to be my plus points as I knew many facts. While doing *Devadasu* and *Kalidasu*, I became determined and also put in a lot of efforts.

For *Kalidasu*, Chakrapani garu said that I would not be suitable and that Rama Rao would be good for the role. Even though, I and Chakrapani garu had huge age difference, we had an argument. As I had been working in films picturised on Sarath Chandra novels, I used to discuss many things with him.

Our argument on *Kalidasu* was on two different issues. Chakrapani garu was speaking about outer appearance while I was arguing about the protagonist's character. Chakrapani garu was saying Rama Rao's personality would suit the character while I was saying even I could play the role. By that time, my individuality was slowly improving. I too started having some hobbies, interests and was able to analyse about various aspects.

I felt that actors playing the role of *Tukaram* need not have physical personality while those playing *Duryodhana* needed good physique. Similarly, to portray the role of Lord Rama, the actor needs good personality. *Bheema* too needs huge personality while *Kalidasu*'s role does not demand good physique. *Vipranarayana* and *Devadasu* also do not stress on personality. These roles demand more of acting skills than physical appearance. *Kalidasu* is a poet. He was not described as a man who was very tall or having a charming face.

Rama Rao acted in *Sampoorna Ramayanam* after *Devadasu* was released. At that time, M.A.B. Venu, Anjali Devi, along with Adinarayana Rao garu, came to me. Though I do not have devotion on Lord Rama, I could analyse his character. I liked Lord Rama's ideals. All the principles followed by Lord Rama were not of Rama but in fact those of Valmiki, who wrote Ramayana. Rama is the child of Valmiki. Valmiki is a great imaginator.

When the rulers were ruthless and autocratic, the people also became merciless. I think at that time, Valmiki created the mythological character of Lord Rama, as a manifestation of goodness and humanity to show light to the world. However, when people considered gentleness as weakness, then Lord Krishna who was very clever and tactful in changing his words was brought into the scene.

I too played the roles of mythological characters. In B.A. Subba Rao garu's picture *Chenchu Lakshmi*, I acted as Lord Vishnu and was successful. I also played the role of Abhimanyu and was successful. I donned the role of Arjuna too and I was not a failure. After all these, in 1957, while I was working on social pictures intensely, I felt like doing a folklore picture again and signed for Anjali Pictures *Suvarna Sundari*. It was a big success. The movie was dubbed in Hindi too and I went to Poona and Nagpur to receive the awards at the silver jubilee functions. I always believed that doing a variety of roles would give an opportunity to bring out the hidden talent in me.

Jayabheri was another movie in which I acted. Pullaiah garu, Sastry and Narayana Rao produced it. It dealt with religion and caste, one of the subjects which I like. That picture had some moral and at the same time, it was filmed in an artistic way. There is good music and thought-provoking dialogues were also written for it. I practised only two songs in it. In my entire career, these two songs were the most difficult. One was *Madi Sarada Devi Mandirame* (heart is a temple of goddess Sarada Devi) and the other was *Rasika rajataguva rama kama* (praising lord Rama), both were very very difficult songs as I had to sing along with the 'taala'. It was like giving a concert and not an easy task. I, being an illiterate in music, had to sing swaras. Where there is difficulty, then you will gain some reputation if you are successful. Unless you take a difficult character to portray, your mettle will not get proved.

Out of my 252 films, 82 pictures were successful. Now, if I look back, I feel *Sudigundalu* is not a failure. At the box office, it might be a disaster. Even *Batasari* is not a failure in my opinion. I had put in my best efforts for both the films and tried to put the best expression possible by thinking of the scenes and that is very difficult for an actor. Asking a question like “Did you have lunch?” is quite different from silently acting to convey the same question. There is a lot of difference. *Beedala Paatlu* movie also dealt with a good subject but it failed at the box office. May be, there was some fault in the screenplay or something. There was no shortcoming in the acting part. May be, the audience compared action by Nagaiah garu and felt it was not up to the mark. A film’s success or failure depends on many factors.

Singing and dancing are individual arts but acting is interdependent. You need to pick a proper subject first and then, go to the characterisation and then for good direction to ensure that all the characters are picturised properly. Your screenplay should be good. Every artiste should be good. Then alone can you can strike a chord with the audience. This is not possible by just one person.

If *Devadasu* alone is played by a good actor, will the picture be a success. Similarly, if *Vipranarayana* alone or Devadevi song alone was sung by a good singer, will the picture be a hit? I should be a good actor, those playing other roles should also act in an impressive manner, there should be good music, singers should be good, script should be engaging, dialogues should be good – only then would the movie be a hit.

As you grow and acquire name and fame, you should be very careful and look after yourself. The actor should become like a well full of water. The more water the director draws, the land underneath the well will ooze the amount of water taken out and try to fill the deficit. Direction depends on how you take work from the actors. Luckily, I had good directors for those pictures.

If acting is not done regularly, then the actor fades away. Why was I able to sustain in the industry for 60 years? Why were all others not able to survive? Were they not efficient? No, they were very good actors and they also had charming faces and acting skills.

They have good voices too. Then why could they not sustain? Because they used their talent sparingly. Brinjal curry tastes good but if we keep cooking it daily, it will not stop tasting delicious. We have to cook it intermittently.

There were bad patches in my career. I never thought success is mine, I never thought failure is mine. If I think success is mine, I have to think failure is also mine. If bad patches have to be overcome, a good subject accompanied by a bad director, bad producer, bad co-artistes director will not help. An ordinary subject, a good director, a good batch of producers can elevate the project and make it an above average picture. If producers and director are not efficient and do not have proper planning, they can diminish a subject, which can be a box office hit, and make it be just an average movie. I lost roughly 22-25% of my movies due to some persons. I do not want to mention their names.

We try to give back to people who had encouraged us when we were freshers in the film industry. I was encouraged by Varadachari garu when I entered the industry and so I too wanted to promote him. If he is not up to the mark in dialogue writing then it will be a problem. At times, he can also be wonderful. Under the Annanpurna Pictures banner (ANR's own production house), we tried to introduce many people who used to write well for theatre plays but felt that many were not able to live up to the standards. Understanding that their talent is limited, we managed the show with ghost writers. This happened many times. We can't replace directors easily. At times, I accepted films even when the directors were newcomers and do not know about their capabilities, if the storyline was good. Then I used to remind myself that I too was a fresher at one time and where would have I landed if Ghantasala Balaramaiah garu and Gudavalli Ramabrahmam garu refused me.

Think the subject is good but the director could not handle it properly. Then what would be my position. I am lost. This is how I lost many times. Sometimes I also must have committed mistakes. After all, I am not from the sky. I am from the earth and I should accept my mistakes. Every artiste has to pass through these troubles. Success never depends only upon you. The maximum you can do is to ensure that you do justice to your role. You need a writer, director and a producer who can keep available all the equipment necessary for the film. You also need an artiste who can express all

emotions. At times, you cannot perform. Your co-artistes might not be able to cooperate with you. Success of a film depends on many other things. I never thought success is mine. Whenever somebody thinks success is theirs, he is a failure according to me. There are many things that play a role for the success of a film. The story should be good. The director, dialogue writer, singers, script writers, lyricists should put in their best. It is then that the role of actors would come into the scene.

By the time, I went into the industry, B.N. Reddy garu's era came to an end. He stopped directing movies. At the fag end of his film career, I started beginning my career. During this transition, one picture was taken.

One thing is certain. There is nothing like success. It leads to further success but if we become egoistic due to the success, we will become a failure. If we channelize our energy properly, strategies for success would emerge and we will be able to plan something different. If we think whatever we do is great, then we will face failures but I did not get failures. I never thought some movie was a success because of me. I never thought that *Devadasu* was a success because of me and I swear on my children that I did not think so.

The reality is there have been several factors behind the success of the movie. Ghantasala can think the movie was a success due to his songs. The scriptwriter also can think that it is because of him the film was a success. Vedantam Raghavaiah garu can think his direction made the movie a success. The producer can think that it was he who arranged the necessary funds for the reels and so think the success of the film belongs to him.

By 1953, it has been a decade since I entered the film industry. It was in 1944 that I took a leap into the films and *Devadasu* was released on June 26, 1953. By this time, I was having good reputation. Now, you have to be careful because directors, who initially said I would not suit for the role, began accepting me. The directors thought my facial features would fit only for folklore movies but now they began giving me roles in social movies too. Directors who had an impression that I cannot handle emotional characters began placing confidence in my action. Now, expectations are very high. You have to be careful and think of proper planning.

A few minutes ago, you asked me why had I agreed to play the role of *Vipranarayana*. Even my co-artistes and directors thought I would never fit into *Vipranarayana*'s role because I never believed in God. But, I was considering my profession and goodness in human beings as God. If Rama was not good, how could he become God? If Krishna was not efficient, how can he become God? We are making movies not to propagate religion but to show the audience variety through various actors.

From now onwards, I stopped thinking of variety and only focussed on the success streak. At this time, I had become successful by essaying the role of protagonist in folklore movies. If your consider *Laila Majnu*, which is a historical movie, it was successful. In social movies, I played as a rustic village boy.

I was successful in *Samsaram*. It was a big success. In *Ardhangi*, I played the role of a mad man and was successful. To play this innocent role, my intelligence was also in the limits. Pullaiah garu told me that he would rope in Rama Rao garu for the lead role and give the second lead role to me but I said 'no'. I will take up this role or else, I am not in your picture. "You are an adamant fellow," he said. However, I said that I would not play the second lead and that Pullaiah garu can do whatever he wanted. I felt playing the lead role in *Ardhangi* will help me in my career.

In the second decade of my career, I had to choose proper subjects to prove my stardom. At this time, I acted in *Donga Ramudu*, *Rojulu Marayi*, *Tenali Ramakrishna*. In the first decade, I successfully played roles in folklore, historical and pathos movies.

**P.S. Bhatt:** Though Ranga was not among the acclaimed directors, why did you act in his film?

**Akkineni:** Ranga was the cameraman for *Laila Majnu*. He was in touch with me regularly. Bharani Ramakrishnagaru introduced him to Telugu film industry. He was from Bombay. We were all happy with the lighting techniques he adapted in *Laila Majnu* and felt that he was clever. The second phase of my career had a lot planning. Apart from being an actor, I also had good planning. This planning was to ensure that I do not lose the fan base I already had acquired. My idea was to acquire fame and then sustain it. Now, all my efforts were aimed at retaining the stardom. All the pictures in the second decade of my career helped me stick to my stardom. *Anarkali*, *Tenali Ramakrishna*, *Rojulu Marayi*, *Donga Ramudu* were released at the same time. All the

movies dealt with different subjects.

I accepted the role in *Tenali Ramakrishna* after I was impressed by the character. With the stardom I attained, I could have refused the roles and they would have changed the subjects. I was in a commanding position and I could have told the producers of *Anarkali* that I would not act. In Hindi, Pradeep Kumar and Bina Rai played the lead roles in the film. I could have told the producer to search for someone else but all the characters were good. Because we were on friendly terms with Anjali Pictures, I accepted the role. *Anarkali* is a historical movie in the romantic genre. I felt like I was a minion compared to the story and thought I should do justice to the character, even if I could not be able to enhance it.

**P.S. Bhatt:** Adinarayana has a special touch. Do you think that *Tukaram* was a hit?

**Akkineni:** Definitely. Who said *Tukarama* was not a success. No, you are mistaken. It was in the movie theatres for a long time. It was released in 1963. At the same time, *Vipranarayana* and *Jayadeva* were also released. *Tukaram* also falls in the same category. *Jayadeva* was not shot properly. *Ashtapadulu* are very popular but the film failed. Then I tried to find the reason and continue doing a variety of films. Planning does not mean I did everything. It means I chose the characters carefully because I had the right to accept or reject. I did not plan the subjects of the movies. I only focused on characters.

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**P.S. Bhatt:** Was shooting movies with the equipment in those days a difficult task?

**Akkineni:** At that time, the equipment available was considered very great. Then I used to speak in a loud voice as I had a weak tone but now, I can know how my voice breaks. I know when Westrex mike came into use in Vahini Studio. Till then, they used to have some old Loopies and RCA recorders. All the people used to speak in one mike only which used to be kept at a distance. Now, the mikes are being brought close and even the slightest sound from the mouth is getting recorded. All this was made possible by Viswanath, Koteswara Rao and a few more youngsters. They have done some course in recording technique and entered the industry. It was then that the latest



equipment was brought. They used to keep experimenting on me. Initially, I used to speak loudly but they used to guide me and try to regulate my voice. By that time, mikes were equipped with such technology that those speaking could know about the output. Machines began regulating our movement. Earlier, we got adapted to the old equipment and used to shout in front of the mikes. After the new equipment was introduced, we began adapting to it. When the mike is near we need not shout. We can speak normally and it would get recorded. Now, I was thinking to be in tune with the industry yet make a mark of my own with my individuality.

**P.S. Bhatt:** Have you seen *Devadasu* movies in other languages?

**Akkineni:** No, I have not seen. Except the *Devadasu* movie in which I acted, I had not seen any other because I do not want to comment on them. If I have to make a comment, then I cannot lie. I do not like hypocrisy. So, I felt it is better not to see. If I see *Devadasu* made in a different language, the reporters will come and ask me about my opinion. "Sir, you have seen *Devadasu* in which some body acted. What is your opinion?," they will ask. What should I say? These days, every normal person is also being given awards. If I go to the award functions, I should speak of them and as I cannot tell lies, I stopped going to those programmes. If people are singing songs, I am going and sitting in those programmes.

**P.S. Bhatt:** In those days, actors used to be very conscious about their looks and re-check themselves on cameras.....

**Akkineni:** There will be no fault in the camera. It depends on the man who is handling the camera. When faces of actors were shown charming during that days, why will they not be good these days with the modern equipment. In the olden days itself, they used to shoot using using diffused light. A person specially used to focus on casting diffused light on the actors during shooting. I used to be very friendly with them and then try to understand the defects in my face, in which angle I was looking good, not looking good. If light was not cast properly, my hollow eyes used to appear black. If a new person used to handle the camera, I used to ask them specifically see if my eyes were looking bright and if not, request them to brighten my eyes. With my experience, I used to get things done without hurting anyone.

**P.S. Bhatt:** In those days, make up used to be primitive. How could you manage the show?

**Akkineni:** All of us used to be made up with the same paraphernalia. In those days, they used to do heavy make up because the cameras were not of high quality. These days there is no need of heavy makeup. In some pictures, I never had makeup. I acted without make up. The cameras these days are so good that they will make you look beautiful. We will get adapted to the new cameras and their technology. Just as we got adapted to improvement of technology in sound, similarly, we got adapted to cameras too. We think the camera is the audience and develop relationship with the camera. We should be able to understand in which angle the camera would capture us properly. It comes by experience or else, the technicians used to tell us. We used to view the rush. If we felt that the shot was not good, we used to ask for a retake. The only advantage cinema had was re-shooting. That is the only difference between theatre and cinema. If we act in a theatre play, it is like getting committed once and for all.

**P.S. Bhatt:** Do you have any actors whom you like the most among your contemporaries?

**Akkineni:** Each artiste has a different talent. I am good at one thing. I will have a different voice. Rama Rao garu will be having a different talent. Jaggaiah garu will have a different voice. Gummadi garu's voice is different. Janaki garu, Anjali Devi, they have their own specialities. They are also very successful. We should not say one artist is good and the other is bad. If we do not like anybody, we should avoid speaking about them. The best we can do is to remain silent without any comment. We should speak about them only if there is something good. That's all. It is unnecessary to take names for criticism.

**P.S. Bhatt:** Do you have any directors who you felt were imaginative or artistic?

**Akkineni:** Be it imaginative or artistic director, I like Adurti Subbarao. I will give first prize to him. It is only after him anybody else can be selected. He is the first director whom I came across with immense talent. I used to feel that he was doing a wonderful job. He never used to go for conventional taking. When he used to think that the actor was acting well, all of a sudden he used to come close to the actor and take a shot. Long shot, mid shot and mid-suggestion shot, close suggestion shot used to be considered as

conventional shots. Without going for these shots, when the actor was immersed in acting, he used to take a close shot suddenly and this was a modern approach. Adurti Subbarao got adapted to that taking.

It was in 1955. I was in Kashmir and Adurti Subba Rao in Madras. I got a letter from Madhusudhan Rao garu. "It seems K.V. Reddy garu will not direct movies. Now, we have to look for a new director and as you know, we prefer pictures on social subjects. Who can be an alternative to Reddy garu in your opinion?," he asked me.

I told him that I saw *Amara Sandesam* movie. I remember one scene in it wherein the heroine gets news that his mother or father passed away. She will be bringing water in a pot from the pond. Usually directors make the actress to shout and then run wailing. But, Adurti shrugged off the convention and when the news was told to her, she puts a blank expression.

Then the camera is tilted down and the pot gets dropped from her hand, breaks and water begins flowing. The shot is continued till the end of the flowing water and here you see some fire and the corpse is burning. There ends the scene. I liked it very much. He has imagination. He avoided that crying and drama. He just arranged the shot with some melancholic music and ended it with the funeral rites. He did not make it miserable. It was neither the heroine nor the hero who died to make it appear dramatic. The character which passed away did not have much significance in the movie and so that treatment is enough.

I replied: "He is a good director as far as social movies are concerned. Now, it is up to you to think and take a call."

That is how we came to book Adurti. Similarly, Viswam garu (K. Viswanath). While working in Vahini Studios, Viswanath was a recording assistant. While I used to review my dialogue portions, he used to make suggestions about the dialogues saying it would have been better if it was told in some other style. Then I used to think that he must be having some stuff. While recording the dialogues, he used to say that my modulation was not proper and ask me to repeat the dialogues. Then I assumed he had some knowledge about dialogues too.

Then I told Madhusudhan Rao garu about Viswanatham garu. By that time, Madhusudhan Rao garu was ill and I told him that he needed some help. I told him that

he (Viswanatham) was a recording assistant in Vahini. Then Madhusudhan Rao garu told me that he knew Viswam's father, who worked as the manager of Vahini Studios, and that he is a native of Vijayawada.

On knowing that we contacted his father, Viswam feared that he was about to lose his job. Adurti Subbarao garu was becoming busy. We told him that Adurti would take two pictures and that he would have to work as his assistant for both -- *Velugu Needalu* and *Chaduvukunna Ammayilu*. He made debut as the director with Atma Gouravam and then he won accolades as a great director. Talent will be hidden, we have to search and identify it. Initially, people in the film industry rejected Ghantasala.

I never thought Adurti Subbarao garu was a conventional director. Subbarao garu can perceive in which angle would a shot look impressive. If the actor does not have an expressive face, he used to manage the show with a mid-shot. If it is an expressive face, then he used to go for a close shot. An intelligent director tries to exploit the actor when he/she is acting good. This will be away from the convention, without any script. It is like digging from a well. The more he draws from the actor, the better he can get. Adurti garu is known for extracting the maximum from the actors. That is what I mean. P. Pullaiah garu is also known for this tactics. There is a mix of antique and modernity in Adurti garu. He is like a Kalidasu sloka. He can accept and mix both the goodness from the old school of thought and the advantages of modern times. There were many who used to follow his footsteps. Of course, now there is no conventional taking in the film industry.

**P.S. Bhatt:** Of all the directors, V. Madhusudhan Rao seems to have a special place?

**Akkineni:** He is also a wonderful director. His biggest asset is he is a good dramatist. People used to say that he enacted in plays in the Praja Natya Mandali. I never saw him acting in plays. He worked as assistant director with Kovelamudi Prakasa Rao and then with Adurti Subba Rao. He worked in our Annapurna Pictures too. He has all the qualities Adurti garu had. Moreover, he used to deliver dialogues and also act.

While Adurti garu would make people act, Madhusudhan Rao garu could act by himself. This is an added advantage of Madhusudhan Rao but there is a problem with such people. Such directors expect the artistes to act like they do and this will be cumbersome for a creative artiste. I am not criticising such directors. This is my

opinion about directors who can act. C.S. Rao garu and Vedantam Raghavaiah garu too can act. K.V. Reddy garu does not act. He used to ask the artiste to deliver the dialogue in a specific manner 10 times or express a feeling till he got the desired output.

**P.S. Bhatt:** Were there directors who used to convey situations symbolically?

**Akkineni:** Adurti Subba Rao garu used to do that. We inducted him in Annapurna Studios for the same reason. Symbolism is something which we can speak of but in a commercial movie it does not have any space. Symbolism comes in handy to appreciate, criticise or speak about the creativity of a director. It is of no use in commercial movies. Commercial movies need different elements. Commerce is altogether different from creation. If creation and commerce have to be mixed, it will be like *Muga Manasulu* movie. Films are categorised as art movies and commercial movies. What for is an art film? There should be some commercial element even in an art film. What is the purpose of making a film if it does not go into every nook and corner of the country? The Bengali and Kerala directors used to make art films and gain recognition for their work but we could not. What does an art film mean? Is art present only in that film? Is it missing in a commercial film? Let people come and tell me that there is no art in *Muga Manasulu*. Is acting not an art? Is music not an art? Acting and music are integral parts of a movie.

**P.S. Bhatt:** We heard that you used to play Jal Tarang?

**Akkineni:** Yes, in *Mayalokam*. In my childhood days, I used to play Jal Tarang and Rythms too.

**P.S. Bhatt:** Producer Rajendra Prasad asked you to direct a movie?

**Akkineni:** He was thinking of producing a film and giving a chance to newcomers but felt that even they need to have little experience. I do not have a passion to be a director nor a producer. My only desire is to be an actor till the end of my career. I had several opportunities to direct a film but I did not do.

**P.S. Bhatt:** Rajendra Prasad also said that it seems!

**Akkineni:** When they asked me to direct a film, I softly turned it down and asked Yoganand to do it. He has knowledge about various aspects in a movie. He knows how to get the dialogues written, getting music composed and in extracting action from the

artistes because he was an actor by himself. In fact, he entered into the film industry to be an artiste.

**P.S. Bhatt:** Yoganand...

**Akkineni:** I know Yoganand from the initial days of entering the film industry.

**P.S. Bhatt:** Did you have any difference of opinion with A.V.M. Chettiyar?

**Akkineni:** No. He used to be very affectionate towards me. I worked for him for my first Tamil film. It was in 1952. *Oliravu*. Later, I did in *Vadina* (Telugu). Then I did in *Mooga Nomu* (Telugu), produced by him. There is nothing that I want to hide. In 1963, I shifted to Hyderabad and by that time, it was 20 years I entered the film industry. Initially, I did not have an idea that any artiste could survive only a maximum of 25 years but later, I came to know of it. I got my children admitted in Church Convent but Telugu was not taught there. I had a belief that forgetting mother tongue was equal to neglecting our mother. Then I thought I might be doing films for another 5 more years. There is one Sarathi Studios in Hyderabad. They were struggling to make profits and may be, they can take one movie every year. Not more than that! Nobody would could from Madras and make pictures in Hyderabad. Then I thought my children would study and grow up in Hyderabad only and do some businesses there only. They have to live in Hyderabad and moreover, I have a studio. It is just a maximum of 5 pictures that I would work and thought I would complete them in Hyderabad only. In 1963, I thought there was not much I would lose by coming to Hyderabad. If I was at the peak of my career and do 20 pictures a year then I would be at loss by shifting to Hyderabad. After doing Devadasu in 1953, I restricted myself to five pictures one year. I thought there would be no variety if I do more than that number of films.

**P.S. Bhatt:** So, had you not lost by shifting to Hyderabad?

**Akkineni:** No, I did not lose anything. My career got extended by another 20 years. You should understand how much I have benefited by it. I was never doubtful about my career. I am a man of grit and determination. I never used to fear anything. As far as we have some talent and see to it that we do not become over-confident, there is no problem. We should carefully choose the subjects and keep working, then, we will not lose anything. Till they become very old, an artiste or a poet can keep working. Of course, a poet's brain should keep working actively. For an actor,

his brain should work and even his face should also be attractive. Because I came to the field at a very early age, I took advantage of it. Usually, many enter the field at the age of 30 years. I entered the industry at the age of 19 years and I had the advantage of working for more years. I worked in the industry for a complete 60 years. Why is Shashti-poorti celebrated? Usually, in those times, human beings did not live for 60 years and hence, so people used to celebrate the occasion if a person lived for the 60 years. After undergoing operation, surprisingly, I became very busy. I took a very active part in films too.

**P.S. Bhatt:** After getting operated, were you worried?

**Akkineni:** No, I was not worried. I too have sweet failures. My non-retirement is a sweet failure. I thought I would not remain an artiste for more than 25 years but I could sustain more than 25 years as an actor. Then I thought I would not be in the profession for more than 50 years but I crossed even that milestone. If I had a heart problem in the second part of my life, I worked with much vigour after getting operated. All these are successes and what more happiness will anyone need in life?

**P.S. Bhatt:** Were there any movies which you had acted on other's advice or to appease others?

**Akkineni:** Yes, sir. In many movies, I had acted as the son of Kannamba. Many people used to think I was the son of Kannamba in reality and even Kannamba garu used to tell my mother, "He is not your son, he is my son." She used to frequently act as my mother. I used to accept some films for her sake. When I was not at home, she used to come to my house and tell my mother that she wanted to take a picture with me. And my mother used to keep on insisting that I should act in her films because she came and pleaded her personally. *Sadaa Rama* and *Vayyari Bhama* were considered failures. I acted in those films out of obligation. There used to be one journalist Srinivas. I think I accepted his movie *Koteeswarudu*.

**P.S. Bhatt:** *Bhale Ramudu* was a disaster!

**Akkineni:** It was a story based on Hindi movie *Kismet*. Ashok Kumar's *Kismet* was a big hit in India. To be frank, of the success, only half of it belonged to me. Even that half success is a success. The songs in the film were a hit.

**P.S. Bhatt:** Why did you act in *Pooja Phalam*?

**Akkineni:** Just for variety. Those characters were very sensitive. They are not loud characters. B.N. Reddy is such a wonderful director. He is a great asset for Andhra Pradesh. Isn't he? He directed many good movies. We should be proud of him. A tasteful man. If an actor does not act at least in one of his movie, it will be a lifelong deficit. He wanted me to act in his film and that movie did not bring any disrepute to me. Of course, he did not go for any commercial gimmicks but he is a very creative man. There is no doubt about it. Hats off to him.

**P.S. Bhatt:** In *Navaratri*, you acted in many different roles!

**Akkineni:** As you have said, all of them were different roles with some new element in them. How can I reject them? The film had roles of all different hues of feelings. Just as we grow nava dhanyas (nine types of grains) in our fields, mine nava ratnas (nine gems) from Mother Earth, just like Nava grahas (nine planets), we have to express all the feelings in our face. It is a great thing. In Tamil, my friend Sivaji Ganeshan acted in it and in Telugu, we did not create anything new in it.

**P.S. Bhatt:** Did you not feel uncomfortable acting with Santha Kumari as she was elder to you?

**Akkineni:** Why should I? In those days, I used to crave for roles. What is embarrassing? She was elder to me. What is the difference if they are younger or older than me? The audience accepted and saw the movie *Mayalokam* for 100 days. Santha Kumari was just 4 years older than me. She always used to essay the roles of mother or grandmother. Pullaiah garu used to start his conversation with 'lanja kodaka' (an abusive word). He got habituated to using that word. Then I set a condition. If he continues using that word, I told him that I would not act as a hero in his film, in a lighter vein. He used to be very frank and is a great man. His wife and children are very close to me.

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**P.S. Bhatt:** Your relationship with Bapu, Ramana?

**Akkineni:** I like Bapu and Ramana very much. I know them since Ramana was a journalist. I used to sit along with them. Once, I asked them if they would work for a



picture if necessary. They said they would work. Later, they worked for some film and incurred loss it seems. After that, they came to me with *Buddhimantudu* script. A wonderful subject, which is close to my heart. I played dual role in it. One of the characters in that movie resembles my mentality. The subject of the movie focuses on a doubt regarding presence of God. Believing that God exists is an illusion. Considering that God does not exist is realistic. God is not beyond one's reach. Trusting that God is one's ownself is realistic. Thinking that God is elsewhere is just an imagination. One of the protagonists in the film thinks he is able to meet God some times and this is just an illusion. During one such meeting, the protagonist urges God to transform his vagabond brother. Will God ever be meeting people? It is just an imagination. I liked both the characters and for the same reason, I bought the negative rights of the movie. I liked that subject.

Even for *Devadasu*, the negative rights for Nizam area are with me. Even for *Sudigundalu* and *Maro Prapancham* and *Donga Ramudu* too.

**P.S. Bhatt:** Why did not Rama Rao shift to Hyderabad, along with you?

**Akkineni:** I too asked him to shift to Hyderabad but he had many commitments. If I had 5 movies in hand, he used to have 10. He did not say that he would not shift to Hyderabad. He bought a theatre in Hyderabad. If both of us together shifted to Hyderabad, the infrastructure here used not to be sufficient. I shifted to Hyderabad not to do some social service or serve the film industry. I just thought there is one Saradhi Studios for me to continue my acting. I thought that it was just five films that were remaining in my career.

My children's education was very important. I never calculated that I would continue acting for more than 5 years at that time. That was my calculation and that is the reason I said "sweet failure". At that time, I was not ill. It was after I crossed 50 years of age, in 1974, I had a heart trouble. I shifted to Hyderabad in 1963. My calculation was that I would not do more than 5 films and my children should learn Telugu language. I felt that Hyderabad is our capital and that I should return to this place any day.

**P.S. Bhatt:** Did you have any feeling that you were not at home while living in Madras?

**Akkineni:** No, sir. In fact, the Tamil audience felt me more close to their heart than Rama Rao. I had worked in Tamil industry even before the entry of Sivaji Ganeshan

and Gemini Ganeshan. I acted in 27 films. The Tamil audience too appreciated me. They did not do any harm to me. Even Madras did not cause any harm to me. I went to Madras as an orphan but returned as a good human being to Hyderabad but when we shift from an old house to the new one, there would be some sentimental feeling associated with both places.

At this time, I had some differences with Rama Rao. People used to say that Rama Rao shifted to Hyderabad to do some good to the film industry while I shifted only for the cause of my children. That is okay. They continued saying that I snatched away some offers given to Rama Rao and vice-versa. I was pained hearing to such talk. Rama Rao himself gave a warm send-off to me while I was shifting to Hyderabad but people in the Telugu land were interpreting it in a different way. Some people tried to widen the gap between me and Rama Rao. In 1963, I went on America tour. After returning, I tried to meet Rama Rao but he did not meet me. However, he realised after some time and then, we acted together again.

People unnecessarily try to create differences. Why should we think that somebody is great? In fact, as a few people said we both were like the wheels of a vehicle and two eyes of a human being. Rama Rao did not do any harm to me or take away my work. Neither did I snatch away his work. Why should we be jealous?

These days, the situation in film industry has changed. Now, the producer is not able to take decisions. The subject of the movie is now in the hands of technicians. Producer has turned into a proposal maker. Producer is now confined to only making a proposal and book rooms for the artistes. The director looks into the story.

Earlier, the producer could finalise a subject visualising the mentality of the public in those days. Similarly, he also had used to think that a particular director and artiste could make the film a success. He also used to take a call on the music director. Producer could pick a specific music director for a romantic film and another for a devotional film. The producer used to have a choice.

These days, the producer has lost control on decision-making. There is no control now. Whether the producers had a say or not, it was not relevant for me. Let me not take any names in this issue because it would only ruin our studio's image. We have to maintain that studio.

**P.S. Bhatt:** What is your opinion about director Kamalakara Kameswara Rao garu?

**Akkineni:** He is a wonderful and creative man. Though he looks very serious, he is a humourous man. There is humour in his words. He is a great man. I could understand that he is very efficient in giving Telugu touch to Sarath Chandra novels. His style is completely different. For example, consider our actress Suryakantam. She is very popular for her roles as a shrew. He used to suggest that instead of wasting some scenes and script to establish the fact the she is a bad-tempered mother-in-law, it would be sufficient if we can show her on the screen. The audience will automatically understand it and there will be no need to describe her atrocities. Similarly, soon as Nageswara Rao comes into the scene, audience will understand that there will be romance.

Kameswara Rao garu used to say that there is no need of going for indicatory shots to express romance. He has a peculiar way of thought. The best part of him was that he could extract whatever he wanted from the actor. But, I had a clash with him while finalising actors for *Kalidasu*. He said that Rama Rao would suit for the role and not me. There is no such rule that Rama Rao should suit for this role. Rama Rao will be the perfect choice for portraying the roles of Duryodhana, Bheema and Bheeshma. I could not accept that only Rama Rao would suit for the roles of Tukarama and Kalidasu but not me. He might suit for those roles but it does not mean that I cannot act in those roles. I acted in *Satyanveshanam*, *Punarvivaham*, *Aasajyothi* plays. During my association with Mudinepalli Dramatic Association, we got the script written for *Telugu Talli*. *Satyanveshanam* was Sobhanbabu garu's creation. *Aasajyothi* was directed by Kogani Kutumba Rao. The movie dealt with Christian-Brahmin subject. That is a modern approach. *Punarvivaham* dealt with widow remarriage. Both the subjects were revolutionary and heavy for those days. We had two versions of those controversial stories and both were popular. I could win appreciation of the audience by doing the roles of even a labour leader.

*Rojulu Marayi* dealt with the same subject. I did the role thinking a labour leader will emerge from the labourers and stories dealing with workforce meant a social subject. I portrayed the roles of a rustic village boy, romantic hero, poet, devotional

characters, tragic characters and had been successful. There were a variety of roles in those days and I was lucky. What more can I ask for?

In those days, subject was given more importance than taking. They used to dramatise a subject and present it in an impressive way. We can say that changes in taking shots began with Adurti Subba Rao garu.

There were some rumours in those days that I and Rama Rao garu were envious of each other but I don't agree with that argument. I was not in such a low position to feel envious of Rama Rao nor was he in such a position. We had two different physiques. He had a physique which was different from me. Even if he was successful in doing the role of Duryodhana, why should I feel jealous of him? By birth, I do not have such a personality. I might be able to deliver dialogues of Ravana's character but cannot have that physique. If I had such a physique like him but could not deliver the dialogues, may then I would feel envious. He too was not in a low position. Neither was I. Both of us were competing neck-to-neck and we used to work together too. Where is the need to feel jealous?

I always preferred quality and variety. Money is next. May be, I could earn the same amount of money what he had in 35 years, in a span of 60 years. If I had worked at the same pace like him, I would not have been in the industry for a long time. 60 years, you see. There is a long term planning. I did a variety of characters and it is just like spraying perfumes of different hues on the audience. In Rama Rao's planning, variety was not there. He used to do every role offered to him, saying that he had many children. Brother! We should be able to give at least Rs 1 crore to each of them. I had no such thoughts. Even if I had so many children, I never thought of the assets I should be giving to them. It is not necessary that everybody should think like the other person. I used to feel that fame would automatically fetch money.

**P.S. Bhatt:** How much remuneration would you charge?

**Akkineni:** I did not charge heavily. The maximum I took was not even Rs 30 lakh. I will tell you later. I never thought that doing more films would make me popular. I believed in smart work and eating less. My mother was alive for 96 years and all her teeth were intact. Similarly, I am 88 years now and my teeth are also intact.

*Pellinati Pramanalu* is a realistic subject. Many people would not accept but if the wife is pregnant and would go to her parents' house for six months, men who are used to having sex would try to get that pleasure through some other means, unless he is a very strong-hearted person. That was the subject of that movie. It was based on an English movie "7 year itch" and K.V. Reddy garu made it. I even wrote my experiences on the same subject because I was in the same situation.

I had 2-3 children by that time. I could understand how one's heart and mind would work and tempt an individual to cheat on his wife. We try to get out of that temptation. So, it is a realistic approach. There would be no one like Lord Sri Rama. At least in their imagination, they would flirt with another woman. 'Husband and wife' is an adventurous element. K.V. Reddy garu was against me acting in *Bharya Bhartalu* movie. He felt that I would not fit into the role because it would tarnish my image as a man committed to wife. Every woman would love to have a lover/husband who is committed to her but in that movie, the protagonist keeps flirting with a different woman every night. I said that there would be no problem and tried to convince him saying that the women would think high of their hero doing such things. I told him that I intentionally agreed to do the film and took him to watch the movie in my car. Reddy garu opposed me for two films, *Vipranarayana* and *Bharya Bhartalu*. After watching both the movies, he appreciated me.

I do not know why *Vagdanam* was a failure. The poetry in it was good for reading. Maybe it was not good for a film. All of Sarath's subjects would also not be good. We should not speak bad about people who are dead but director Madhusudhan Rao garu never knew what he directed or wrote. On a daily basis, just before the shoot, he used to go behind the curtains of the studio painting room and write something on the spot. If the script is written before hand, we can discuss about it and make changes. Else, how will such work look? It used to be like preparing a snack with dough on the spot which can be good or even bad, at times.

**P.S. Bhatt:** Tell us your opinion about director Jandhyala garu?

**Akkineni:** He was an experienced director. Unfortunately, my film with him was a failure. We had a little clash too with him. He was hurt when I told him that the subject would fail, beforehand. At times, we face some difficult situations. Buchireddy

directed *Saptapadi*. I liked the subject very much. It is one of the best best Viswanth's movies. I liked the subject much more than that of *Sankarabharanam*. While taking that picture, initially, I accepted the offer but I told him that there are some defects in the storyline. Then he told me that he would tell the general storyline first and then the intricate plot. After listening to the story, I raised doubt that the movie could be a failure. I even asked him to think about it again. Buchireddy garu told the same to Viswanatham and he felt bad about it. I spoke to Viswanatham garu too and told him that the subject was not good. I tried to tell him that the audience will like it, if we like it in the first step. Even those people associated with the movie should like the subject and then, automatically, it will win the appreciation of the audience. Then I suggested that Buchireddy garu hold a meeting with all the production managers and narrate the storyline to them. I told him that I would work if all the production managers would vote for it. I might be wrong. Buchireddy ensured that all the production managers gave a positive feedback to me. The movie was a disaster at the box office and then Buchireddy came to me. I did not make any remarks on the movie because it would lead to differences between us.

Then Buchireddy told me that he had asked all the production managers to give a positive feedback to me even though the storyline was not good. It is because I promised to act, if others were okay with the storyline that he managed the staff. I made Buchireddy realise the fact that he had cheated himself to satisfy me. He himself suffered a huge loss and finally, he could not pay my remuneration. There ended the matter.

It was Viswanath's first film. We all expected it to be a very good movie. Lyrics of some songs were penned by his daughter and others by Atreya. The lyrics are wonderful. Everything is good but the film was a flop. At times, we cannot predict properly.

Initially, they thought that '*Preminchi Chudu*' would be made with Chalam as hero. After that, I went out of station. May be, Ramana garu suggested that the producer should ask me for one of the characters in the movie as it had been a long time since I played such lighter roles. Then they came and asked me and I felt it was a variety role and so, took it up. It was successful. If I have to speak about the humourous characters

portrayed by me, I can speak of Chakrapani's *Missamma* and *Premminchi Chudu* under Bharani Pictures banner.

I asked for a role in *Missamma* and acted in it. He told me the story and told me that he was not able to get the artistes for it. I accepted that movie soon after *Devadasu* and felt that people would offer me roles of alcoholics, as my earlier picture relating to a similar character was a success. From the beginning, I like comedies and then romantic comedy roles. I used to shuffle my roles between these two types. Every human being has humour in him. Don't you have it? Don't I have it? Is it not there in Chakrapani garu and Madhusudhan Rao garu, who always appears to be very serious. They created wonderful comedy scenes.

**P.S. Bhatt:** Why did they write stories on spoilt sons?

**Akkieni:** *Prem Nagar* was written by Koduri Kousalya Devi. My wife read the novel and suggested that I act in the movie saying that it would bring me fame like *Devadasu*. She told me to accept the role if a good director offered it. I think she read the story when it was published in *Prabha*.

I acted in *Jai Jawan* having confidence in Madhusudhan Rao garu.

**P.S. Bhatt:** Tell us about your heroines?

**Akkieni:** Before Bhanumati, S. Varalakshmi was the popular heroine. She was known as a singer than as an actress. In those days, songs used to have prominence in movies. Bhanumati garu is a versatile artiste. Irrespective of the audience's opinion about her, I used to feel that I would get good name if I acted with her. She was a popular heroine at that time. I used to have a desire to work with her and I got an opportunity. I felt I was lucky. There is no doubt she is a great artiste. I felt that she is a perfect fit for some characters and did not suit for some like *Chintamani*. I used to have respect towards her.

Their company is still operating and I worked as a permanent hero in it. The three films which I like most are *Vipranarayana*, *Laila Majnu*, Chakrapani's *Batasari*. The Tamil version of *Batasari* is 'Bittayikku'. I did many good movies. I am proud to be associated with that company and am grateful for that. In the beginning, I used to feel that it would be great if I would be booked by that company.

I worked for Anjali Pictures too. Though Anjali Devi came into the industry after me, she used to respect me a lot. Her husband, Adinarayana Rao garu, used to be affectionate towards me. Though not a big subject, we first took *Raja Rani*. In that movie, I acted as an old man. In Tamil, Sivaji Ganesan portrayed the same role. You know what a huge success *Suvarna Sundari* was and even in Hindi, they asked me to act. Anjali Devi is an all-rounder. She came as a vamp and then turned as a innocent village girl. Later, she portrayed the character of a devoted wife in *Lakshamma Katha*. *Ilavelpu* is also a hit. She is a wonderful artiste.

Coming to Savitri, she has a soft face which seemed to be made of butter. For *Jakkanna* movie, I went to Belur and Halebedu. On one black stone, Jakkanna and his son Dakkanna carved the nerves in the leg of a statue. The duo could express all their feelings on stones. Similarly, Savitri could melt her butter-like face and give the required expression in the stipulated amount very perfectly. When we both used to act, our characters used to appear like made for each other. Our combination was very good. I know her from the early days when she used to dance. Her personal life is a completely different story.

Then came Jamuna. She also had beautiful facial features. In all our hit pictures, she acted wonderfully. She has some problem due to which she keeps shaking continuously. She used to fit into characters depicting royalty. These days when I go for some programmes, I feel that we missed Jamuna in the role of an affectionate mother.

### **Timestamp (2:30:00)**

Krishna Kumari was also successful. Janaki was also there. Krishna Kumari has an innocent face and that is her advantage. She used to appear as a dependent woman. Men like dependent women. They do not like independent women.

Saroja Devi used to be like a seductress. Though she was not good at language, she was good at sexy movements which used to attract whistles from the audience. We have to be very careful while acting with her.



In the next generation, Jaya Sudha was an efficient artiste. She has a very natural approach and could compete with her peers. Jayaprada is beautiful and at the same time, very good for some characters. Let us take Megha Sandesam. Both of the lead characters acted well in it. Similarly, in *Srivari Muchatlu* too, they acted good.

Then Sridevi is a versatile artiste. Vanisri was also there and she recorded many successes. She used to act well but there used to be some criticism that she overacts a majority of the times but she did not do that in the pictures she acted with me. We were a wonderful combination after Savitri. There are many more artistes.

All these artistes had some special features. Else, audience would not have accepted them. Out of modesty, I might say that I grew up as an actor due to people's support but why would they applaud me if I did not have any stuff. Unless an individual has some speciality, nobody will recognise them. Why would you interview me if I have no greatness? It is a fundamental principle. At the same time, people who have reached great heights in their career should learn to be modest. If they are not modest, they would not lose anything as the public usually thinks. Forget about what other people think about you if you are not modest, your heart itself keeps telling you that you are not going in the right path.

**P.S. Bhatt:** What would advise people who become egoistic, considering that their film had been a success only because of them?

**Akkineni:** If they suffer backlash, they will know about their mistakes. Every individual will have ego. Artistes might think that a film has been successful due to their acting skills. Then why is some other movie a failure if you are a great artiste? When we seek answers to such questions, we will definitely know our drawbacks. This means neither success nor failure is yours. It is not an independent subject. If you give a concert, it is an independent subject because the success depends solely on his voice. In the film industry, it is not like that. The story is created by someone, dialogues are written by other person. Songs are sung by a different person, written by someone else and action is done by another person. There are many people involved in this show. It is more like cooperative cultivation. We are able to entertain the audience only because many people are putting in their efforts and brains. It is not just one person who can manage the complete show. It is not one person dancing by himself and so, we

cannot own success here. The artistes cannot take credit for success and disown a disaster. It will be foolish to think so and this maturity will come through experience.

**P.S. Bhatt:** Can you tell us about Pratyagatma?

**Akkineni:** Pratyagatma garu used to be in Prasad Art Pictures. Its owner, Anumolu Venkata Subba Rao, is a close friend of mine and now, we are relatives as our children got married.

Subba Rao produced one movie with L.V. Prasad garu as the director, Pempudu Koduku. Then Tatineni Prakasa Rao garu was the first assistant and Pratyagatma was second assistant to L.V. Prasad garu. Tatineni became director through *Illarikam* and Pratyagatma became first assistant and Tatineni Rama Rao was second assistant. Later, Pratyagatma became director and shot *Bharya Bhartalu* and Tatineni Rama Rao became first assistant. Then Tatineni Rama Rao became a director. Being a director, Pratyagatma could plan scenes. Though he could not act, he used to be a source of inspiration to the actors. He could extract work from us by making good suggestions. He is not used to taking dramatic scenes. He never dramatised scenes. He was used to taking natural scenes. He is one among the finest directors whom I came across.

In the later period, Kranthi Kumar was the finest director. He took *Sitramayya gari Manavaralu*. By that time, I had some mannerisms like showing my index finger. Kranthi Kumar made it clear that I should be able to act without showing signs of any of my mannerisms. He said that he did not want to see ANR and his suggestions helped me a lot. I did not know that he could control my mannerisms but he did it and I was happy. I never thought that whatever I did was always right. If I had thought so, I would have done only type of acting all the time. Why I always wanted good directors? A horse can always run but it is the trainer who guides it along the path. The trainer can direct the horse in the path in which it can run more speedily. It is said that a horse's efficiency can be extracted by a good trainer but not vice-versa. So a good artiste needs a good director. I have come across wonderful directors. There will be different specialities in different persons. In *Laila Majnu*, Vedantam Raghavaiah garu made me laugh as required in the scene by keeping on demonstrating it to me. He used to be the assistant of Ramakrishna Rao garu in Bharani Pictures.

So, we should know that each person has some strengths. It is because I could grasp all this, I could survive in the industry for a long time. I learnt a lot from my co-artistes too. All of us, Ranga Rao garu, Rama Rao garu, me, Gummadi, Relangi, used to discuss about the scenes and propose some changes too and work like a team. It should be a team work. Else, we will not be able to extract the desired response from the audience. Our work, when put together, should be good. When we view scenes as different entities, they might be good but when put together, all scenes should make a good movie. That is screenplay. Every actor might act good but the effect of all the actors put together is what makes a good movie. All the actors used have some understanding and act accordingly. Just like in a circus, where all the animals are controlled by trainers, in a movie too, actors should be controlled by the directors. Else, nobody will listen.

**P.S. Bhatt:** When did you learn dancing for songs?

**Akkineni:** It emerged from boredom. Let me tell you. Earlier, it used to be only the heroines who used to say that they loved the heroes by making all gestures. Only women used to dance in the movies. I had a thought that why should only women dance and not men. Movies are for entertainment. It is not natural even if women danced. Who would dance and cry while singing songs? Who would go into a room with his partner and keep singing songs? If one's lover dies, then would anybody sing songs? He would cry and grieve but not sing songs.

Initially, other heroes in the film industry were not happy with introduction of dance. They felt uncomfortable as they had to learn dancing, which they felt was a burden, along with acting. Many films like *Ilavelpu*, *Illarikam*, *Bharya Bhartalu*, *Kula Gotralu* were remade in Hindi. Then heroes from Hindi film industry began complaining that the producers were asking them to dance like me.

They asked me what was all this dancing, which is not natural. What is all this nonsense? Then I asked them was it natural to sing songs while crying? When all that is unnatural, dancing is also not natural.

We should keep in mind that we are entertaining the audience. Melody plays a vital role in romance. When in love with someone, we try to show all our feelings, which cannot be expressed by words, in poetry and try to become more expressive. Romantic duets emerged when melody is added to those feelings.

While picturising romantic duets, initially, only the heroines used to dance. I felt that simply standing and moving the limbs was not looking good. Then I started trying to do some dance in Iddaru Mitrulu, which was made in Hyderabad. I felt that dancing made the songs look more romantic. Many people appreciated me. In Dasara Bullodu, we took dancing to the next level. Then everybody started dancing and all the heroes started to move their bodies. Now, dancing has become a mania and the dance is like paralytic movements. These days, there are no pictures being made without dance. When we used to dance, it used to be folk based with importance given to facial expressions too.

For example, there is a song “*Nee kallu cheputunaayi nuvv preminchavani*”. The dance to that number was choreographed in tune with the song. These days, there is no such connection. The lyrics and dance by the actors have become two separate entities. When the song has lyrics like “*Tella cheera kattukuni*”, the heroine would be depicted with a frock or even with minimal dressing. What is all this?

These days, the entire scenario has changed. Why should I criticise it? Things keep happening. As long as the audience watches something, they keep taking such movies. As long as movies are made, people keep watching. It is like an argument over the seed and tree. Which comes first can never be finalised.

**P.S. Bhatt:** Tell us something about the movie on the husband become infertile.

**Akkineni:** *Sumangali*. That is a Tamil story. We felt that it was a hit but the movie did not fare good at the box office. People could not accept that the man was not fit for reproducing babies. In fact, people should feel sympathetic in such a situation. The film would have sold better if we had not gone for a star hero in the lead role. Think of a newly married man who becomes infertile after falling down from a building. We felt that the audience would feel sympathy for him but they did not. Instead, they could not digest their hero becoming crippled. The viewers are happy watching the hero romance with two women.

The fans are enjoying seeing women in the bed with their hero. I could not imagine that they would not be able to accept a hero who could not produce progeny.

Anyway, we had wonderful days and wonderful years. All what I mean to say is we are grateful to the film industry. For an illiterate boy like me, who came from a very poor

family which cannot afford to have two square meals a day, the film industry taught me a lot. If we go to school, teachers make us learn something and introduce us to many new concepts which help us to know about the world but in film industry, lessons means subjects on which movies are made. I am not speaking about the normal academic subjects.

Some people say cinema spoils a few. I am telling you all this to make them know that cinema enlightens some people. Love is endless. Forget about the artistic presentation of it in movies. Will love seek love? Think of *Muga Manasulu*. Is the aim of love only to have sex with a girl or does it have anything more? How does love become a bonding that could travel through births? Can we really love without getting in physical contact just by looking at each other? This is the subject we dealt with in that movie. Even this was appreciated by the audience. We did not go overboard and expose the heroine's body like in movies these days. Then why did they like it? Industry people keep speaking of commerce. What is it not commerce in those days?

In that movie, after the heroine becomes a widow, she goes to the hero, who is sitting under a tree and crying, with a lamp beside him. When asked why he is crying, he says why should our landlord daughter's husband only die? Should the husband of such a nice lady only pass away? I am a vagabond. I should have died instead. The immense love he has towards his landlord's daughter makes him speak such words. This should make us understand that the love has towards her is pure and selfless. Hearing to these dialogues, tears will automatically roll down our cheeks. In *Dharma Daata*, we come to know of what happens to a benevolent man who keeps felicitating all those who praise him.

In *Ardhangi*, we show how a woman tries to transform a man who had become insane after he was administered some intoxicant during his early years to prevent him from being a cry baby. She tries to be his assistant, lover, advisor, sister, mother and finally, presents a completely changed man to the world. The film is based on a Bengali movie. He becomes a man who complains to his wife that his brother is beating him and the wife transforms him into a brave man. The way women have been elevated, is an enlightenment. If people have to experience all this in real life, it takes a lot of time. In

movies, we can complete studying the whole subject in just three months, like a Ph.D. Even Kalidasu is one such movie.

**P.S. Bhatt:** Your opinion about the movie offers which you could not get?

**Akkineni:** I always think of what I have got. Not of what I have not got. There are many things in the world. Will we be able to enjoy everything? There will be many crores in the world? Will we get everything? There are many subjects in the world. Will we be able to learn everything? Could I use all the opportunities given to me, had I acted properly and entertained the audience? Did I learn anything by acting in those movies? I always thought of this alone. Some say people would get spoilt if they entered the film industry but I entered the show industry but did not get spoilt. In fact, I was enlightened. I got every subject as Ph.D. My life is like Kalidasu biography.

I should be a man who should be cultivating fields in Ramapuram but I am able to speak about Kalidasu. Similarly, Kalidasu is one such character who tries to cut the branch on which he is sitting but later transforms into a renowned poet. It is like a Ph.D subject for me.

Why do we cook rice and other curries as a variety. In a similar way, entertainment is the main base. People who exert themselves physically need entertainment. Scholars who have to work with their brain do not come to watch movies. Even if they watch, it is rare and they also criticise. If the movie is good, they just watch once. There is one sloka by Kalidasu. *Puranamityeva na sadhu sarvam. Nachasi kavayam navamitya vadhyam.* Scholars would not like deviating from convention. If we have to experiment with movies, producers naturally fear doing it because more than awards, the film should get rewards. In the industry, we did several experiments like *Sudigundalu, Maro Prapancham, Laila Majnu, Anarkali, Kalidasu.* The money factor plays a major role.

If we keep on taking run-of-the-mill stories, then there will be a loss. I do not know where our defect is but I can tell you one thing, with respect to awards, Telugu film industry is way behind. Telugu film industry is leading in numbers but lagging behind in awards and we have to accept it.

Kannada Raj Kumar is a famous actor and a good friend of mine.

**P.S. Bhatt:** There are no movies on freedom movement?

**Akkineni:** Yes, they have not taken at least on Gandhi. It was the English people who took a movie on Gandhi. Freedom movement is a very old subject. It is not a permanent subject. Love is a permanent subject. Film on freedom movement will be a period picture. Period pictures do not have longevity. Universal subjects have long life.

**P.S. Bhatt:** Your opinion about adventure movies and science fiction.

**Akkineni:** They have a world market. Theirs is a gigantic approach. Even if they spend heavily, they have a world market. If we have to take a film on freedom movement, we have to have 1 lakh people. Apart from paying them Rs 40 or Rs 50, we have provide them food which means it will Rs 100 per person. Where is income in such a huge amount? A Telugu movie might be viewed to a little extent in Kannada, in Tamil it will not run. Not even in Orissa or Bengal or Madhya Pradesh. It is only here it has to make money. How much income will come? We have to think of the returns and investment. We cannot take films in such a huge level as English people do. We have our own fears.

**P.S. Bhatt:** What is your opinion about Left ideology in movies?

**Akkineni:** Left ideology is different from approach. People fear the gun and this has been the same since long. It is with regard to moving around with guns that the government and Naxals differ. Now, Naxals are saying Chandrababu Naidu (the former CM of Andhra Pradesh) is better. This is a subject not concerning us but for a filmmaker, every subject can be picturised. Of course, it is we the people who suffer if policies go wrong.

**P.S. Bhatt:** On one hand, actors from the Praja Natya Mandali entered the film industry but why could not films have a Left leaning?

**Akkineni:** May be, they had a doubt that people would not accept. If they would have accepted, they would have made films on that subject. Be it any matter, if people agree to it, they make films on it. You must have already understood that there is a difference between doing something out of threat and something else out of passion.

**P.S. Bhatt:** Had you been a director, may be your films would have been better.

**Akkineni:** Thinking that something would have been better, if something else would have happened is good. I never had a desire to direct films. I have a studio, my children, money and all other equipment necessary to direct a film but I did not do because I never had such a desire. I always wanted to end up as an actor. I did my bit

as an actor. I did whatever I could to remain in the hearts of the public. People will remember me as long as they hear Ghantasala's songs. Songs have a prominent place in movies, romantic, devotional, philosophical, all types. Ghantasala rendered his beautiful voice to all the above three types of songs. I will definitely be remembered when they hear to Ghantasala songs. That is enough for me. While releasing a book on me titled "Natasamrat: A Living Legend", the former Prime Minister said, "Kingdoms may come and go. Kings may come and go but actors will remain forever." I considered these words as a big award.

### **Timestamp (03:00:00)**

Rama Rao became a Chief Minister of Andhra Pradesh and I opposed him in becoming a politician.

I told him not to make a foray into politics. I told him that we would continue acting. Let us do what all we can for art till we die. If we get into politics, there will be a lot of pressure. I told him that we may not be able to do what all we want to but he became the Chief Minister.

**P.S. Bhatt:** What do you think about your grandson (referring to Sumanth) as an actor?

**Akkineni:** There was one movie Satyam and another Gowri, both of them did good business at the box office. Now, he is catching up. Failures should also be considered as lessons that teach us a lot. People will watch. If there is some talent and skill in the actor, they will watch them but even such actors can fail at times. How long can I guide him? They should know by themselves. Practical knowledge is more important. When I watch their movies, I tell them which part of the movie is good, which part can sustain the interest of the audience. In our family, all of us are critics. My wife criticises me. I will be remembered as a good husband. We are doing well and what else can I ask for? Our family has a unique tradition. All the family members have lunch sitting together.

**P.S. Bhatt:** Tell us about Raghavachari garu.

**Akkineni:** I like Samudrala Raghavachari garu for the poems which he used to write as they could be easily recited while enacting plays. For films, Malladi Ramakrishna Sastry garu could write imaginatively and he used to have good content. Both of them



can be placed beside each other. They are equally talented. Aatreya's dialogues used to be more like our colloquial language rather than something requiring action. At the same time, he used to make it easy for an actor to act. He is very realistic. Narsaraju garu used to be more humourous. Similarly, for *Sitaramayya gari Manavaralu*, the dialogues were written very effectively. The songs of Samudrala Raghavachari and Malladi Ramakrishna Sastry used to be more impressive than their dialogues. Pingali Raghavendra Rao garu is both a lyricist and a good dialogue writer. He experimented with hard words in Telugu and we can say, he used Telugu expressions in a different way.

**P.S. Bhatt:** While making Malleswari, B.N garu....

**Akkineni:** Rama Rao's friend was in touch with the producer. I was busy with some other films. For Malleswari too, Rama Rao was taken. All of them are efficient people. Or else, how could the films be a hit. I worked with Aatreya more. At one time, I asked him why was he not writing properly to which he said, "Who is there to deliver the dialogues properly? Nageswara Rao is not acting in pictures."

In fact, we had a wonderful time. The producers used to directors who were knowledgeable and committed to their work, good artistes, supporting actors, writers, music directors. All of them contributed to an extent but Ghantasala's contribution to any of my movies was 50% because music played a major role in films. I owe half of my success to them. Music plays a vital role behind every successful film. Except for a couple of films, in all of my successful movies, music played a vital role. From *Laila Majnu*, *Balaraju*, *Suvarna Sundari*, *Anarkali*, *Mooga Manasulu*, *Dasara Bullodu* and many others.

**P.S. Bhatt:** Reason behind Pendyala's success.

**Akkineni:** He had the influence of Bala Gandharva on him. He had knowledge about Hindustani melody. Just a couple of his songs are enough to prove his abilities. For me and Ghantasala, two of his songs did magic. Madi Sarada Devi mandiramu, Rasikaraja taguvarama kama. I have both these songs in my car. I cannot stop myself from trying to think of the 'taala'. Ghantasala was at the peak of his career when he sang those two songs. All his skills in singing are exhibited in these songs. Pendayala Nageswara Rao garu's abilities are showcased in providing tunes for those songs. My tactics are in

giving the right lip movement for the songs, which is in fact very hard. Roja Ramani gave good lip movement in *Bhakta Prahlada*. Though she was just a girl, she gave an excellent performance in that movie.

My best is Batasari, next comes Sudigundalu and Kalidasu. In Devadasu story, 50% of the movie is not real story. The first part of the movie was not based on the original story. For Telugu Devadasu, we tweaked with the story. Originally, Devadasu does not give a necklace to the heroine on the marriage day.

**P.S. Bhatt:** Do you think that this shot would have been better in some other way than it was shot?

**Akkineni:** I cannot think of all the shots or the proper taking of the scenes like any normal viewer does.

**P.S. Bhatt:** What do you think after watching a movie for the first time?

**Akkineni:** We do not have that much of time. We are busy both in the mornings and evenings.

**P.S. Bhatt:** I think you would have been a better choice for Malleswari.

**Akkineni:** Rama Rao garu acted well. Initially, B.N. Reddy garu was inclined to take me for the role but I was busy at that time. Rama Rao garu was in a contract with Vahini at that time and so he was available. There used to be two pictures for a year and he used to come whenever he was called for. I was under somebody else's control. People who had booked me should give me permission if I have to act in Malleswari. There was such a problem. B.N. Reddy garu planned to take me and Anjali Devi garu or someone else in the lead roles. In Patala Bhairavi too, he planned the same but we were busy.

**P.S. Bhatt:** Do you have enmity with anyone in the film industry?

**Akkineni:** No, I do not have enmity with anyone. May be, I would have hated people for their behaviour but I do not have enmity with anyone. Enmity will not fetch us anything. I too experience anger many times but whenever I feel troublesome, I keep my mouth shut. I did not speak to Rama Rao for 7 years after he became the Chief Minister. Our differences were not relating to the movies. I am logical and Rama Rao is emotional by nature.

After becoming the CM, he reduced the retirement age from 58 years to 55 years. When I met him at that time, I told him that he had done a mistake by reducing the retirement age limit.

While at a meeting, I said: “Had Rama Rao told me that he was about to reduce the retirement age limit, I would have prevented him. This is a mistake,” I said. People who are making a living beyond 55 years would curse Rama Rao, I said.

I do not believe in god nor do I believe in wavelength and then some people asked me how could I say that somebody else would curse Rama Rao. I told them, “When we were in our 60s, we danced with Sri Devi because our brains were working. Rama Rao could administer a state when he was beyond 60 years of age. Then how can the officers reduce the retirement age?”

Some people who overheard me carried this story to Rama Rao. They also told him that I was envious of his position. Since then, he got all my public speeches in Ravindra Bharati recorded so that he could listen to them later. Understanding this, I stopped going to Ravindra Bharati and began going to Tyagaraya Gana Sabha. Rama Rao became the CM for a second time and then he launched a new land policy. From that time, I hated him. Notices were served to Annapurna Studios that I should hand over some part of it to the government. I moved the court on the same issue and we won. Since then, I stopped speaking to Rama Rao. Later, whenever we met, he used to open a dialogue asking me about my wife, out of courtesy and to show off that he is a very gentleman. But, I never spoke to him. I never wanted to be good just for outward appearance. I never believe in such things. I felt that Rama Rao was being courteous. After becoming the CM for a second time, people in the film industry asked me to preside a meeting because I am a veteran but I said I will not do it and that I hate Rama Rao. I also said that he did not behave properly with me. I told them that I would not attend the meeting. “I had seen many chief ministers and will have to see many more in my lifetime.

Then they asked me what should they tell to Rama Rao if he asks them the reason why I was not attending the meeting. I told them to repeat the same words.

It seems in the meeting, Rama Rao reminded that both of us had been the two eyes of the industry and ensured discipline among the artistes. He even said that he was

feeling dissatisfied due to my absence at the function. “I feel as though half of the industry is not there at the programme. Brother, why are you angry with me,” he said at the programme.

Further, he tendered apology in the programme and my children told me about this. Then I called him up and there ended the matter. We never separated from then. If we keep hearing to tales from others, such differences can arise in life.

We have two ears and one should be used to eliminate all the wasteful things we speak. Retaining all the waste will only reduce our memory space for good things.

During my 60 years of film career, I came across many people and many of them were wonderful people. There may be defects in many and after all, we are human beings. Even I may have some defects.

**P.S. Bhatt:** Tell us about the comedians.

**Akkineni:** Humour is a very important thing in life. After sex, humour is the most important ingredient in life. During the initial days of my career, Siva Rao was the comedian and then came Relangi. After him, it was Ramana Reddy and then Padmanabham. There are a number of people.

**P.S. Bhatt:** Witty scenes provided a variety in movies.

**Akkineni:** Yes, I am also one of the comedians. I too acted in some humourous movies.

**P.S. Bhatt:** Movies which were based on humour did not have good market.

**Akkineni:** No, *Pakkinti Ammayi* starring Anjali Devi was successful. *Missamma* is also a witty movie. *Chakrapani* was also a jovial movie. Similarly, *Preminchu Chudu*.

**P.S. Bhatt:** May be, only 4-5 witty movies did good business.

**Akkineni:** You should understand that humour comes occasionally into one’s life. It is not available in abundance. May be that must be one of the reasons why only a few of the witty movies are successful. Humour is always aimed at providing brief relief but it cannot be taken as the main subject. Chilli powder has to be mixed with other ingredients for taste but it can’t be consumed alone. Similarly, we just can’t eat salt. Relangi and other comedians are talented people. Even being spiteful is also witty but it is good only when it comes out occasionally. We cannot bear a person if the harsh and rude all the time. So wit and retort play a vital role. It should be shuffled with other emotions. We have good comedians. Rajababu was a good comedian, similarly,

Padmanabham was also a good comedian. Peketi Sivaram is also a famous comedian. Joga Rao too. Rama Rao garu also had some wit in him. *Gundamma Katha* is a comedy. It had dignity and humour in equal proportions.

**P.S. Bhatt:** In those days, how do you recount for the success of our themes in Hindi films.

**Akkineni:** At that time, the stories got diluted in the Hindi film industry. Then they started taking our stories. They took all the stories which were successful here. *Sasural* is *Illarikam*. *Jeene ki Raah* is *Bratuku Teruvu*. Similarly, *Sarada* in Hindi is remake of *Ilavelpu*. It was Prasad's own movie. He took all the interesting stories to the Hindi film industry and made them success.

**P.S. Bhatt:** If you are asked to vote for only one director, to whom would you vote?

**Akkineni:** That is very difficult. I can't do it. I have to do a lot of Ph.D work to do it. Each director has his speciality. They have their own forte. We are not fans. We are analysts. My first preference will be for K.V. Reddy garu. Till today, people of all ages right from kids to the elderly can enjoy *Maya Bazaar*.

It is because the film has all the emotions.

**P.S. Bhatt:** As an actor, which film of Rama Rao do you like?

**Akkineni:** Sitarama Kalyanam. In one way, I can say I became an admirer to him. In that movie, he donned a negative role but it was liked by the audience. He depicted the role of Ravana in that film. Ravana is a villain for the people. Hero is Rama. He donned the negative role in the best possible way. In those days, cinema was the best medium to provide enlightenment by filming good content. It also helped in bringing out talent hidden in many people. In these days, it is not being considered as powerful as in those days. I am one among the actors who is grateful to the film industry for all that it had given to me. It gave me immense happiness and also enlightened me about different subjects. Being enlightened is different from feeling happy. I might feel very happy on knowing that I was chosen for the Dada Saheb Phalke award. This will help in making people know my talent but you do not know what some films had given me. I learnt a lot from *Kalidasu*, *Mooga Manasulu*, *Ardhangi*, *Sudigundalu*, *Batasari*. When Tukaram asks God if he is really there, it leads to thoughts like who created god, why did they

create god, from where did god come, where does he really stay. In fact, the dialogue leads to several thoughts and introspection in the viewers.

Cinema is a very powerful medium. Some people might take the negative side of films and get spoilt, instead of looking into the positive side. Every person will have his/her own plus and minus points. I think I made the best use of all the positive things in life to grow as a human being. It is the film industry which had given me the opportunity to speak these few words. During my career in the film industry, as many as 35 great writers incorporated many life experiences in their writings, lyrics and dialogues.

In this context, I remember of one some inspirational saying: “Agaadhamou jalanidhi lona aani mutyamulunnatule, sokala aduguna daagi sukhamunnadile. Yedi tananta radu, sadhinchi sodhinchali. Adi ye dheera gunam.” (Just as pearls are covered beneath depths of water, happiness lies in an ocean of misery. Nothing reveals by itself, it has to be brought out with some efforts and victorious men are known for having this quality.)

Similarly, I also am able to recollect that “kudi edamaite porapatu ledoi” (there is nothing wrong if right becomes left at times in life). It will be better if people can forget the mistakes in the past and look into the future.

There is one song, “Andame anandam aanandame jeevita makarandam” (a thing of beauty is joy forever and happiness is the flavour in life). If there is no happiness, there is no life. We should learn to live happily even after our loved ones pass away by trying to emulate their good qualities and principles in our life. We should express our gratitude by emulating their virtues.

Telling about these facts in simple words is different from expressing them as beautiful thoughts. It is like bringing together all the precious stones and making into a necklace and putting it on to your neck, which means they will have an impact on your mind and soul.

In this manner, films will help in learning a lot, when you view it from a positive perspective. If we think about it from the negative perspective, then we will start saying films are ruining our lives.

It is true that films are also showing some negative ideas too. A murder happens in some remote area and in the film, they picturise it with all the drama as it is an effective

medium. While showing it on the screen, they dramatize it, exaggerate it to draw the audience's attention.

Similarly, they depict love and even death in an effective manner. Art is nearer to reality, far from artificiality. Why do we make up a bride by putting kajal, flowers and try to enhance the beauty of the girl though she is a beautiful girl? We are correcting her physical appearance and making it presentable.

### **Timestamp (03:30:00)**

It is because films are watched by lakhs of people that the directors and other technicians try to decorate it in the best possible way. They try to pack it in a most appealing way to gain the audience's attention and evoke their emotions. It will be good if the viewers also can look at it from a positive perspective. I took it in a positive manner. Mirza Galib says, "Things cannot be made possible easily. It is very hard for a man to become a true human being." If we have to become a real human being, we have to pass through a lot of misery." We have to learn a lot of positive things and leave negative thoughts and ideas. I have been trying to become a good human being. Had I not put in any efforts then I would have remained as a rustic boy and continued speaking in an uncivilised manner. What a lucky man I am to enter into the film industry and have all these laurels, all this knowledge. I am grateful to you sir and to the film industry.