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Interview of Senior Film Artist M K RADHA by RANDOR GUY

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Q: This is Randor Guy interviewing Mr. M K Radha, one of the senior most film artistes of South India. This interview is being held on February 13th in the morning at the residence of Mr. Radha. Mr. M K Radha speaks in Tamil.

Q: Mr. Radha, I am very happy to meet you. I am grateful to you for your support and cooperation for this Film History project. Greetings.

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Q: I'll begin with some preliminary questions. Can you tell me what is the expansion of your name M K Radha?

A: First of all, I would like to whole heartedly thank you for coming to me to do this programme. In the early days, my name was M K Radhakrishnan. M stands for Mylai. K stands for my father's name Kandasamy Mudaliar. I was his only son and therefore I was known as Madras Kandasamy Radha. During my theatre days, I felt the name Radhakrishnan was too long. So, I shortened it to Radha. The whole world now knows me by the name M K Radha. There was another theatre personality M R Radha who passed away recently. We all belong to the same Gurukul. We all learnt from the same place, in the same company, under the same guru.

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Q: Your guru is your father, right?

A: Yes, my father is my guru.

Q: Can you tell me something about him?

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A: To talk about him, the day won't be enough, not even weeks, months or years. Such is his contribution to the field of theatre. When he was in the Christian college working under the Principal, he brought together the students to do dramas. He was very passionate about dramas. His dream was to make the students perform in plays.

Q: In which languages were these plays performed?

A: In Tamil. He took Shakespeare's plays like Hamlet, Romeo Juliet, wrote the synopsis, summary, explained it to the students and made them perform in front of the principal. This brought him great name and fame. He was a BA graduate of that times. You can't compare that time's BA with today's times. He always felt somebody must take our body of work forward after our times. His contemporaries were people like Pammal Sambandha Mudaliar and Vadivelu Mudaliar. They all started a Sabha called Suguna Vilas Sabha as a part of their hobby. They were all in different professions, Judge, advocates..this was started for them to feel good about in the evenings when they got together. They used to do these amateur dramas. Sambandha Mudaliar is somebody who has written all of Shakespeare's plays in Tamil. He had written them for the Sabha plays. It was his hobby. They all wanted to bring my father into it as an actor and make him do a role in it. The first role my father played was a female role. There was a play called Manohara, a very famous play. Pammal Sambandha Mudaliyar is the actor who would play Manohara. My father would play the role of Vasantha Sena.

Q: The Vamp?

A: Yes. Not just the vamp character but he could play every role irrespective of male and female roles. He had a talent to play all the roles with the same grace. Since he had extreme passion towards drama, the Boys' Company was started. In those days, when you talk about theatre, Sankaradasa Swamigal was known as the father of drama.

Q: They have a theatre named after him.

A: The reason behind naming a theatre stage hall after his name is because of his contribution. He was a staunch devotee. He belongs to Thoothukudi. In those days, outdoor drama means Street plays. He felt the street plays should be brought to the stage and performed. When he got this thought, he wrote some plays like Alli Arjuna, Kovilan, Valli Thirumanam, Pavalakkodi etc.

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Q: These are the plays he wrote?

A: Yes. The ones he had written. If you take the case of the special drama artistes who could today light a lamp at their respective houses, it is all because of Sankaradasa Swamigal. They all are indebted to him for life.

Q: Can you name a few actors?

A: K Chellappa Iyer, Anantha Narayana Iyer, C S Velu Naicker, all of them are actors who went on to become huge figures in the field of theatre.

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Q: Did any of them come to cinema, among the names you mentioned?

A: After many year, P S Velu naicker was called to be a part of Gemini's Gnana Soundari..

Q: The one you acted in

A: Yes. My father was his guru too. It is not that my father taught only boys and men. In Kumbakonam, there was a Balamani ammal. She was an entrepreneur. Everything from sweet to betel nuts were under the Balamani ammal brand.

Q: That famous?

A: Yes. In her theatre company, there were no men. Only ladies. Whatever role it may be male or female, only the ladies would play. A monarch, you can call her. There was a woman by the name Rajambal in her company. My father was in a way the pioneer who brought out the plays that are high on moral values. Social plays, you can call them. He would read novels by writers and would adapt them into plays. He would direct the plays and take it to the people.

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Q: Your father was a big playwright?

A: Not just playwright. Play conductor too. His method of rehearsal was the main thing.

Q: He would train everyone?

A: He trains everyone so well. I would like to tell an incident. He felt that a woman actor by name Rajambal should get a deserving role. When he was in Madurai, at a bookstore, he saw a novel. When he went through other books, he found one that was titled 'Rajambal'.

Q: The name of the novel is also Rajambal?

A: Yes. Written by J R Rangaraj. He was reminded of the girl Rajambal in the company. He felt how wonderful it would be to cast Rajambal as Rajambal based on this book. He wrote the play and made the script and she enacted it beautifully. In Manohara, the chained sequence is very famous. He was also the guru for Velu Naicker. Velu Naicker could speak well, sing well, but acting was average. He is no more but till the time he was active in theatre, he always made it a point to tell before every performance that he is remembering his master Kandasamy Mudaliar. Saying so, he would apply the first make-up powder on his face. He always had that respect. When I was young, there was a company called Velu Naicker company. He was running it on his own. When they were planning to perform 'Manohara' play, they called my father to train them. One of the main mottos for my father was that rehearsals should be the main thing for any play. Everyone must rehearse the play top to bottom. How many ever days it would take, he wouldn't announce the dates till he is satisfied with the rehearsals and the result it yields. One day, while practising the chained sequence in the Manohara play, he insisted to do it on stage.

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Q: Stage rehearsal?

A: Yes. Stage rehearsal. My father was sitting and watching it. He had high fever that day. He was engrossed in the play. He didn't even care about his high fever. He gave a feedback on the chained sequence that 'how great is this scene! How impactful a moment in the play! Shouldn't you be doing it this way and not that way? Only then you would get claps from the audience'. He can foresee the clap-worthy moments in a play and wherever he says there would be appreciation, there would be claps in the audience. He was that thorough with dramatics. He got up from his seat and got on to the stage. My father asked him to remove the chains and wore it on himself. He was till then shivering in fever. At that moment, nobody could see where the fever disappeared. He performed that scene. Nobody could believe he was having fever all the while. Such was his passion. It is difficult to teach the play to men. It is even more difficult to teach women the play written for men. But his concern was only about getting the dramatics right. The performance should be impeccable. He would be angry if anyone misses that. Some people requested him to run a Boys' Company. There were many boys companies. Like in a banyan tree, how the roots fall to become new trees, the main banyan tree with many such branches was the 'Original Boys' Company'. After that, there were Madura Bala Deenarajani Sangeetha Sabha, Madura Bala Mohana Ranjani Sangeetha Sabha etc.

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Q: Many such came?

A: Madurai Bala Shanmugananda Sabha was the one run by T K Brothers. He trained many such Boys' Company. If many actors are well established today, it is because of my father's contribution. I would like to say something. I am somebody who went on stage to perform at the age of 10.

Q: That was your first time?

A: Yes. Because of that, my education was affected. The first school I went to was a Telugu medium school.

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Q: Do you remember where was it?

A: Here in Madras. I was born in Madras.

Q: Which area?

A: Mylapore. Even my name has Mailai in it.

Q: The school was also in Mylapore?

A: It was in George Town. We were living there then. It was a Telugu medium school. You may ask how I learnt Tamil. Theatre taught me the language. I learnt it by doing plays in Tamil. I used to write my Tamil dialogues in Telugu.

Q: I see you wrote them in Telugu.

A: Yes. I used to write it in Telugu but speak them in Tamil. But no one would have the suspicion whether a Telugu speaking person would be able to speak Tamil. Most of them would not even know I am a Telugu speaking person. My pronunciations were perfect.

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Q: Do you remember which play was this? The one you first acted in?

A: It was in 1920. I was 10 years then. I was born in 1910. Five partners came together and started a Sri Kumaralakshmi Vilasa Sabha. It was named by the initials of the people involved in founding it. Since my father was part of it, the Sri Kumara name comes from his name. His other name was that. I was made to give the introductory speech for it and I was the first one to put on the make-up and go on stage. Then there was a Thyagaraja chettiyar.

Q: The Thyagaraya Nagar is named after him.

A: Yes. In those days, he was named as a patron and the plays began. The play was Valli Thirumanam.

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Q: Which role did you play in it?

A: I played Subramanyar in that. You may think that Subramanya role demands a skill to sing songs as it had many songs. If you take my mother's earlier generation, my grandmother's name is Pushpavalli. She and Veera Dhanammal..

Q: Yes, she is famous.

A: Yes. They both were students at the same time under the same guru, learning Veena.

Q: Do you remember the name of their guru?

A: They used to tell his name as Krishna Iyer or something. I don't remember it well as I was only 7 years old then. They both learnt it religiously under the guru. They started playing Veena independently. The music knowledge would get passed down naturally. My grandmother would wake up early during the Dhanu month. What do you say for that? Margazhi masam (December) and do pooja as it is a special month for women. Other months are also good but there are not enough pooja opportunities in other months as much as in the Margazhi month. So, it was a practice to wake up early in winter, do pooja and pray to the god. Her offering is playing Veena. Once when she was doing that, I've heard others say that I used to sit by her side and play talam on a brass pot.

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Q: Like a ghatam?

A: Yes, like a ghatam. People say so. I assume I had some rhythm knowledge back then. Not everyone is privileged to have the listening knowledge. Many people even though they learn music, they don't have the listening knowledge. they would only keep shaking their heads. If you ask them why are you shaking your heads, they would say you were shaking yours, so I did too. Even my mother used to sing very well. I am not a great singer but since I came in that lineage, I was able to sing for my parts. Even in my cinema roles, I've sung for myself. You have to sing if you are doing theatre. People doing theatre plays

must have knowledge about all arts. How would you feel if I told you that I used to dance? You may ask how did I do. I have even played female roles.

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Q: In theatre? Which ones did you play?

A: Any kind of play. If you take the Ramayana, we know all the roles by heart.

Q: All the roles?

A: Yes. I've played Dasaratha, Sita's father Janaka, Rama, Lakshmana, Bharata and even Kaikeyi. More than all this, I've played Ravana also. In those days, to play Ravana one must have a huge built. Only if you can carry the 10 heads, one would feel you are Ravana. More than paying attention to how I look, I concentrate on how through my performance I can create the effect and compensate the look. That attitude of mine has brought me to this stature. One more thing I want to tell. After doing theatre, in 1936, I entered Cinema.

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Q: You mentioned the Boys' Company. Do you remember the people who were acting with you?

A: So many people. Kamakshi, Santhanakrishnan..

Q: But any of them who came to films later?

A: Among people who came to cinema..P U Chinnappa, T S Balaiah, they were also part of the company. The present comedian K A Thangavelu. All of them were part of the Boys' Company. The present Chief minister of Tamil Nadu M G Ramachandran was also part of the Boys' Company.

Q: MGR was there with you?

A: Yes, he was very much there with me. My father is his guru too. All the stalwarts in acting that you see in Cinema are all products of theatre. Theatre is the mother. Cinema is one of its babies. Now even grandchildren are born. Most of the actors who were there with me at that time are no more. They have passed away. Only some of us are left. Me, Sarangapani, P K Ramaswamy...After coming to cinema in 1936, till 1942 I was acting in films. At that time, M K Thyagaraja Bhagavathar was the most popular.

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Q: MKT

A: M K T Bhagavathar, the singer. His acting skill is limited. Even his fans acknowledge that fact. Whether it is social subjects or characters that wear

suits, folklore subjects, historical or mythological subjects, people would say that I am one of the actors of that time who would fit into all roles. My face now looks very different from that time. Some people may even ask who am I. But if you ask the young generation, they would say 'yes, I have heard somebody like that existed'. I thank my father not just for myself but for all actors for whom he was a guiding light. The foundation for us all is theatre. The practice of being in theatre formed the foundation for us. As we were all part of the gurukul tradition, we were taught equality way back then through life in theatre. For gurus, there is no difference in religion or caste. Everyone is equal. Everyone in the theatre must sit and eat together whether they are upper caste or lower caste. That is the way to worship god. There was not a single actor in that time who was not devoted. That discipline was set long back and because we all devoted ourselves to it, I am where I am today. It is all blessings of the elders. I went to S S Vasan's Gemini in 1942.

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Q: You said you first acted in 1936. Can you tell me the name of the film?

A: The makers of the film came from Coimbatore. There was a play called Pathi Bhakti in those days. A playwright called Krishnaswamy Pavalar had written it. It was copyright free. That play was being performed in Wall Tax Theatre.

Q: Kothavada theatre?

A: Yes. When it was being performed, the trend of the time was that of social subjects. Social subjects used to run very well and collect money. Though people were watching them, my father felt it must reach the young students in colleges. He felt students from places like Guindy engineering college, Loyola college must come and watch it. So we did Sunday matinee shows.

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Q: Even theatres had matinee shows then?

A: Yes. It was there. Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday night plays. Matinee on Sundays.

Q: That was only in Madras?

A: Yes. The matinee thing was only in Madras. In other places, nobody would turn up for Sunday Matinees. That particular play would have been performed at least 270 times. Which means daily a show. In the printing press, you need not tell anything. Just change the date and time. Rest was working like a well-oiled machine. The subject was about how a group of people spoil a man from a good family with the habit of alcohol. It was much appreciated

at that time. The press would write about the 'M K Radha's drunk man character'. Everyone recommended the play as a must watch. They described my acting so realistic that one wouldn't believe it wasn't a real drunk man.

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Q: So you did Pathi Bhakthi as the first film?

A: I was brought to do that film. But people from the 'Original Bioscope' company claimed that they were making it with K P Kesavan and they have the copyright. So, my father went to Vasam. That was the time when Vasam and Kalki were working together.

Q: That was the time when they were running Ananda Vikatan. Gemini was not formed. A: Yes. Gemini wasn't born then. They only had a distribution office.

Q: Where was it? In Broadway?

A: Yes, it was there in Broadway. Ananda vikatan office was there.

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Q: Vasam had begun with distribution?

A: yes, that's how he began

Q: The production, studio all came later

A: Yes. He began with race. He became a writer. Went on to become editor for many magazines. Then he began Ananda Vikatan. Kalki was also with him on that. Some misunderstanding happened and they split. Kalki started Kalki on his own and Vasam started Gemini.

Q: By approaching K Subramanyam

A: Yes.

00:28:15

Q: So, what about this Pathi Bhakti film?

A: There was a studio named National movie tone back then.

Q: Where was it?

A: Poonamalle. On Poonamallee high road where the Income Tax office stands.

Q: The Kushaldas Bungalow?

A: Yes, the same. That place was the National movie tone. They said they were going to make Pathi Bhakti with K P Kesavan. Before that, Pathi Bhakti was already made in Hindi. After watching the film in Hindi, Vasan had written a novel in Tamil. Based on the hindi film. He named this as Sathi Leelavati. The heroine in Pathi Bhakti is also named Leelavati. He renamed other characters.

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Q: So Sathi Leelavathi was a novel Vasan had written? A: Yes.

Q: It got published as a book?

A: Yes. My father went and met him. The makers who wanted to do the film Pathi Bhakti with me told my father that they were disappointed about how somebody else is making it. He took them all to Vasan and told the matter.

Q: Do you remember the producers of that?

A: Chellan Talkies who made films like Bama Vijayam. The managing director of that Marudhachalam Chettiyar was a respectable man.

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Q: Is it the same Bama Vijayam that Prafulla Ghosh directed?

A: The one with the Bengali director in which Ratnabai acted. That one. Those time films had 100 songs. I don't know how but people used to love that but the film collected a lot also. Dambaachari, Nallathangaal - all needed to have songs, as audience were used to listening to the songs in the play and they would expect the same. So, they had met Vasan to ask for the story he had written. Vasan jokingly asked 'is that so, my story is really that worthy to make a film out of?'. He said 'please go ahead and make it.' My father asked if there were any copyright formalities. Vasan said 'you please make it. We'll see after you make it. Let us see if people like this story.' So we started the film in 1936. M G R was there in it.

Q: What role did MGR play in it?

A: He played an inspector. A small role.

Q: You were the hero?

A: Yes. All the actors who were acting in it were from my father's drama company. He took them all and introduced them to the producers of Sathi Leelavati. You may ask who directed the film. He was a filmmaker who came

from America. His name was Duncan.

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Q: Ellis R Duncan.

A: Yes. He was the director. We were all wondering how would he make it, whether he knows the Tamil culture or practices. But he is a legend. In all aspects. Be it camera, make up or direction, he is excellent in all that. They had decided him as the director of the film.

Q: He knows Tamil?

A: No. He doesn't.

Q: How did he manage it then?

A: My father is a BA graduate. So, if a scene has to be rehearsed today, he would type out the synopsis of the scene, the characters, dialogues and other things and give it to my father. Duncan can spot if we missed a line or delivered a line in a wrong way by just looking at the script. For some days, we were following this method. Duncan developed a good relationship with my father.

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Q: Naturally.

A: He became so close that he would address my father as Daddy. He would say "Daddy, you do it, you do it"

Q: How old was he then?

A: Duncan would be 25 to 30 then.

Q: I see. Young man

A: Yes very young. And a foreigner behaving so well and warm with us made us very happy. He wouldn't get irritated or lose patience. He would always remain calm. He would see through the camera and roll it himself.

Q: Who was the cameraman in it? Himself?

A: A Bengali cameraman had come from Calcutta for it. You would ask which studio it was shot.

Q: Yes please

A: Vel's nagar, Vel picture.

00:34:42

Q: Where was it, in Eldams road?

A: Yes. You see the Raja Bungalow there? That whole area was Vel pictures. When we were acting, the same year they made the Pattinathar film with Dandapani Desigar. What was famous about the Pathi Bhakti play was that, there was a song called 'Theyila Thottathile'. A very famous song it was. Sundara Vathiyar had written that song. Even in theatre performance, if you miss the song in a scene, you must sing it somewhere else. That much demand it had.

Q: So, you had the same song in the film?

A: Yes. We used the same set of songs in the film.

Q: Have you sung those songs?

A: Yes. I have only sung all the songs in it. Only after coming to Gemini there was this called playback. I didn't say I won't sing. They had an opinion to use the playback. Even though it was like that, there was a film called Kannamma en Kadhali. I have sung all the songs in that film.

Q: Is that so?

A: Yes. Rajeshwara Rao was the music director. M D Parthasarathy also did it.

00:36:10

Q: Who was the music director for Sathi Leelavati, do you remember?

A: It was Sharma brothers. Three brothers. The Saraswathi stores was Odeon before that. The three brothers used to work there.

Q: Who was the heroine in that film? Who played the Leelavathi character?

A: Leelavathi was played by Gnanambal. When we were performing the Pathi Bhakti play, we auditioned some actors. They all saw the play and felt they can't play the role of a woman who gets beaten up by a drunk man. So, they had asked my father that if he doesn't mind, would he cast Mrs. Radha in that role.

00:37:27

Q: I see, Is Gnanambal your wife?

A: Yes. She is my wife. Nobody in her place would have taken the duty of being a wife in real life and on stage bearing all the torture she had to go through for the play.

Q: When did you get married?

A: In 1931.

Q: So, when this film was being made, you were married then?

A: Yes, we were. And then from 1936 onwards my career in film began.

Q: How was this film received by the audience? Did it collect well?

A: Ran very well. Still people haven't forgotten that film. Vasana made a copy of that film and had stored it with him always. It was a very close to heart film for him. He would frequently screen it for his friends and family.

00:38:28

Q: So, your debut film was a good success

A: Yes. It was a great success. After that, I did Chandramohana Samoothathodu. Under Raja Chandrashekar direction. We shot it in Bombay.

Q: I see. Which studio did you shoot in Bombay?

A: There was something called Film center. In Tardeo. In that film, my pair was T N Meenakshi. She was a popular actress of that time. Like K T Rukmini.

00:39:07

Q: Who were the other artistes in that film?

A: S V Venkataraman who is a music director now, was my villain in that film. If you see him, you will feel 'he looks so innocent, how can he be a villain?'. We had fight scenes but when it comes to acting, fighting, getting hurt are all part of the performance.

Q: You mentioned fighting. Did the film have stunt scenes?

A: Yes. There were many. But not like today's stunts. These days, in stunts, they hit each other with whatever they find in their hand. Be it a sickle or stone. In those days, everything used to be measured. Even the fights used to be nothing more, nothing less.

00:40:09

Q: Now you have many fight composers and choreographers like Judo Rathnam. Did you have such people back then?

A: Now there are many such people. But in those times, you see we are theatre people. We are trained in it and we are used to with those things of fighting, falling and getting hurt. I forgot to tell you when I spoke about Ramayana. I have also played Hanuman. I have played all possible roles. In our company, age 6-10 is one batch, 10-20 is one batch. This would be the average age of

actors in the Boys' Company. So, people like us know every part of every play, by heart. So, if anyone is sick or has gone on leave, somebody else can replace them. Audience will never know about the change.

Q: Nowadays there is this use of stunt double what you call as dupes. Only the close ups are done by the actors. Rest the body double would do.

A: In those days nothing of that sorts were used. No dupes. We only have to bear everything ourselves. Cinema was in its nascent stage. The art was just taking shape. Nothing of those difficulties felt like difficulties. We were all very passionate about films

00:41:59

Q: You said you sang many songs in Sathi Leelavathi. Was the playback method popular then? A: No, it wasn't there. Playback came into being in 1932 after the Alam Ara, the first talkie in Hindi. Here, in 1937 or 38 we made a film called Thulasidas. After Chandramohana we did Thulasidas. In East India, Calcutta.

Q: In Sathi Leelavathi, were songs recorded beforehand and played on set and lip sync-ed to it or did you sing it on set?

A: Don't ask me about that. There were too many things that we had to be careful about. We need to wear the make-up, costume and perform. And also sing keeping in mind where the mic is. If we miss it, it won't record well. The camera is fixed and our positions are given. A bit here or there, our faces would go out of frame or the ears would get cut, top of the head would get cut. And as I sing, the set of musicians would sit outside the frame and play their instruments. I also have to listen to them carefully. I can't sing out of tune also. Now the size of the microphones is that of a pen. In those days, it looks like big boxes. It would hang on top of our heads. If you are not careful, it can hit your head. Any mistake like that happens, we would go for take 2, take 3. So many things at the same time. I would like to share an incident from the set of Thulasidas.

Q: Please tell

A: In Thulasidas, the father is scolding the boy for going to the Dasi's house. They are worried whether the boy would return from her place at all. There is an internal transformation that happens to him that makes him go in search of Rama.

00:43:51

Q: A character change.

A: Yes. A lot of actors and actresses who struggled in those times would have said this. I am not going to tell anything new. But my experience is mine and would like to share that. When that scene happens, the situation is that he goes in search of Rama.

Q: Who Thulasidas?

A: Yes. Thulasidas goes in search of Rama. For that shot, at least a 100 feet long track and trolley was laid out on the floor. I had to walk in the middle of it singing and acting. I should have the expression on my face that shows that I am going in search of my god. The story is of a spiritual nature. The song begins in a close up, goes to a mid-shot and ends as a long shot. Parallel to that is laid out another track and trolley upon which are seated the harmonist, Tabla player and other musicians. So as this trolley moves, another man pushes the other trolley too. That song came out well and turned out to be a success too.

Q: Which song was this?

A: Some song that meant 'Rama I am coming in search of you'. Don't make me sing that now. The voice is not the same. In the times when M K Thyagaraja Bhagavathar was reigning, the times when people say no other song other than M K T songs would be popular, somebody gave me 10 songs in a film. You may ask who is the music director who has given me 10 songs. It was the late fiddle player Jayaram Iyer.

Q: T K Jayaram Iyer?

A: Yes. Srivaikuntam Parthasarathy Iyengar, Gottu vadyam. That film had an ensemble of many great musicians.

00:46:10

Q: Who was the producer for this film?

A: Murugan talkies in Madurai. It is only because of them; these musicians came on board. They were Saurashtrians. They had a big Sabha there.

Q: In Madurai?

A: Yes. In that Sabha, every month one concert would happen. They pay respect to many musicians by inviting them to perform there. They were making a film on Thulasidas, a film that is high on spiritual values. It would have many songs, so they insisted on having the best people on board from the Carnatic music world. So, these people were taken for the film. Sathi Leelavathi, Chandramohana, Thulasidas, Anadai Penn. That was a social subject. For these four films, my father had written the dialogues.

Q: He was the dialogue writer for all the four films?

A: Yes. He had written the dialogues so well, understanding and suiting the situations in them. You know there were no dialogue writers as such in those times. You have to search for them. We were all under contract of 90 days. If we start from here and reach there, 45 days shoot. After the 45 days of shoot, they come out with a copy. That quick it would be. It is not like going for 10 days to shoot. These days one artiste acts in 7 films at the same time. It is very surprising to hear that. I don't know how he is able to do it.

Q: It was not like that back then

A: Not at all. There would be this feeling of when would this be over so that we can go to our native places. But the passion towards art and cinema would keep us engrossed and engaged. We all had the sincere intention to better the art of cinema, take it forward, to act well and get recognition for it. And also, with an intention that our producers must earn a good profit with that film. I am not saying these days, people are not sincere. They are. I must not be cribbing about what is missing in today's times. There would be limitations in all times. But we should take what is positive out of it. 90 days was the calculation in those days. If they exceed the contract time of 90 days we all would get paid for it on per day basis. The remuneration wasn't much during that time. Now people take in lacs. We used to get in thousands.

Q: But the value of rupee was also different.

A: But still, having a 1000 rupee is like having today's 50,000 rupees in hand. Our payments had a limit of about 2500-5000. Not more than that.

00:49:34

Q: Did you shoot Thulasidas also in Bombay?

A: In Calcutta. It was called East India Film Company.

Q: Who was the director for Thulasidas?

A: Raja Chandrashekhar. He had done with me Chandramohana, Thulasidas, Maya Machindra. There was a film called Maya Machindra you would have heard.

Q: Yes, I have heard about it.

A: "Jai Alak Niranjana". It was a film that ran very well.

Q: Raja Chandrashekhar is T R Raghunath's brother.

A: Yes. T R Raghunath was a very good recordist.

Q: Sound recordist?

A: Yes. There was a Srinivasa Cinetone in Pursalwakkam. At that time, Mr Narayanan..

00:50:28

Q: A Narayanan. It was his company?

A: Yes. His wife Meenakshi Narayanan was also a recordist. When she was there, he had worked there.

Q: Who, Raghunath?

A: Yes. He was a recordist for a while before becoming a director. After being with his brother for some time, he started directing himself. I also got a chance to be part of Raja Sandow's film. While making Anadai Penn, Raja Sandow had a good relation with Jupiter pictures. It was then he saw me on the set. He thought he should remake the films he did in Hindi. He had acted in a film called 'Madlabi Duniya'.

00:51:26

Q: Who Raja Sandow? In Hindi?

A: Yes. He wanted to remake that film with me in Tamil. But Jupiter had other opinions regarding that. That is understandable but for me not having worked with Raja Sandow is a loss. I have worked with other directors of that time but not with him. That still remains as an unfulfilled desire.

00:51:50

Q: You said you did Thulasidas in Calcutta. Do you remember other artistes in the film? A: If you ask about other actors in the film, there was one Savitha Devi.

Q: Was she a Tamil artiste?

A: No Telugu. From Andhra side. From Vijayanagaram I think. N S Krishnan and Madhuram were also there.

Q: I see, for comedy?

A: Yes. For comedy. There was T E Krishnamachari also. He played my father in Chandralekha and quite a few films. In Thulasidas too, he was my father. He was Thyagaraja Bhagavathar's father too in Haridas. He has done important characters too. They shot a storm scene in Thulasidas. I struggled a lot for that bit.

Q: Who was the cameraman for it?

A: Cameraman was Sailen Bose. There was a Bengali cameraman called Krishnan under whom Sailen Bose and Kamal Ghosh were assistants. Them, make up man Hari babu, they were all people From East India. At that time Bradburn, a recordist..

00:53:32

Q: I've heard about him.

A: His name was Fidelitone God. There was a recording system called Fidlelitone. It gives an excellent natural voice. Bradburn was a German. Whatever we speak or sing, he would understand the essence of it and reproduces it without losing the natural quality of it. That much skilled he was. They all acknowledged me as a great actor. I want to share one more thing when we talk about this.

Q: Please share.

A: In that scene, Thulasidas is braving a heavy storm. He is coming to his wife's home looking for her. On that day, a Hindi film called Milap was also being shot. Ram Pyaare, a yesteryear heroine. I don't know if you have heard of her. She was very popular at that time.

Q: I see.

A: You see actors like Raj Kapoor these days. His father Prithviraj Kapoor was the hero in it. He had dropped in to see who is acting what is happening. Looking at me performing as if I am suffering in the rain and falling, he came running to me calling 'bhaiyaa...' and picked me up. He was very fond of me from then on. If my shooting is going on, he would stop his shoot and drop by to see mine. I am fortunate for receiving blessings of an actor of such a high reputation.

00:55:26

Q: How did you shoot the storm scene then? Was it indoor?

A: Just behind the studio, was a dense forest. In Calcutta. They had a propeller there. The one you see in aeroplanes. Using the propeller, they created the rain and wind effect. It was shot in the night. From evening 6 to morning 6. We shot that scene alone for 3 days. After the night shoot, the next day till 4 pm I would remain exhausted.

Q: Such was the effort

A: It was very stressful. When we were shooting that film, Chinthamani was also being shot.

Q: Y V Rao's. That was also in Calcutta?

A: Yes. Starring M K Thyagaraja Bhagavathar, Aswathamma. That film ran well because of his songs and this Thulasidas also ran well because of its story and performances.

00:56:35

Q: Do you remember which year Thulasidas was released?

A: 1938. Chandramohana Samoothathodu was released in 1937. Also, Anadai penn.

Q: Was Anadai Penn before Thulasidas?

A: Yes. Before that. Anadai Penn story was Kothanayagi Ammal's novel.

Q: Where was Anadai Penn shot?

A: It was a film by Jupiter. Somu and S K Moideen. They were like brothers. They asked her for the copyright of the novel as they were interested in making it into a film. She asked them who are they casting or planning to cast for it. They told her that they were planning to do with M K Radha. She said 'M K Radha? I was thinking of him while writing this Dorairaj character in the novel.' When she said so, Jupiter people felt she is aligned with their idea. They were particular about her giving them the copyright and not to anyone else. She gave them the copyright and asked them to invite her to see some portions so that she can give some feedback. She said 'though M K Radha's performance needs no feedback. It would be perfect'. It meant like a big compliment for me coming from a writer like her. Hence, they decided to make this story into a film. They were contemplating whom to take for the director. They were also thinking of Raja Sandow. He said he has many films and hence not in a position to take it up. Then there was a director named Prakash.

Q: I see Raghupathi Venkiah's son

A: Now you see the Purasalwakkam Globe theatre. And there was one Elphinstone theatre on mount road. It is still there I think opposite to Anna statue.

Recording interrupted

00:59:15



ntai

Q: Last week we started talking about Anadai Penn. Can you tell me which year it was produced?

A: 1937.

Q: Who were the producers?

A: Jupiter pictures.

Q: And the director?

A: There was this Raghupathi Venkaiah. He was one of people who were instrumental in bringing the photographique to Madras. His son was R Prakash. He was not just a director. In the early days, he went to America and learnt film cinematographic technique from the people there. He was the first Indian to go and learn this there. He was a cameraman. He had shot many films in the North. In Bombay. He was very successful. When they were looking for a director for the film 'Anadai Penn', Jupiter pictures approached him and asked him direct the film. At that time, he had said I wouldn't be a cameraman anymore I want to become a director. He was a very kind man, very well-behaved man. He doesn't have the arrogance of a director. He would behave kind with each and every one. A very simple man. The Anadaipenn as I told you is a story by Kothanayagi Ammal. The female lead in it is an orphan girl and they were particular in finding a girl who would look believable as an orphan. None of the actresses of that time were suitable for it. They searched outside Madras and finally found somebody in Mayavaram. Her name is T A Sundarambal. She was well trained in music. They approached her and asked if she would be willing to act in the film. She got frightened listening to it.

01:01:47

Q: Why? Was cinema feared in those days?

A: They were all into music full time. Maybe an invite to join films would have frightened her.

Q: In those days, acting in cinema was considered a bit low.

A: Yes. Very much. Now it is a very glamorous world. In those days' cinema world was full of insecurities. They finally gave an assurance to her parents that doing such a film wouldn't bring her bad name. She was very suitable for the role. Director Prakash had himself gone to them and requested. The whole crew went with him and brought her for the film. She was given training and rehearsals. She used to do classical concerts. So, her singing was beautiful. She had a good voice. They did a mic test and it came out very well. She indeed looked like an orphan.

Q: You mean her face?

A: Yes. It was naturally like that. That is the most important, isn't it? In cinema first comes facial expressions, body structure. If it suits the character he or she is playing, it would be a success.

Q: Correct casting as they would say

A: Yes. They made the film with her playing the role. It ran very well. The actor who was there in it was somebody who was there in our company, P U Chinnappa. He played my villain in that film.

01:03:29

Q: You were the hero?

A: Yes. Sundarambal was the heroine. Kothamangalam Subbu was also there in the film.

Q: What role did he play in it?

A: He played a Nattukodi Chettiar in it.

Q: What does the Chettiar do in the story?

A: The story goes like this. He plays a Chettiar who lends money on interest. At a point, where he is suffering from losses, a group of people convince him to make a film in order to earn money. He doesn't know anything about films but believes he would become a richer man by making a film.

Q: I see, a film within a film.

A: Yes. It had its fair share of comedy too. There are scenes where he would go to the lab and be curious at the way the film would be winding. He makes a remark of his money all being wasted on people sitting idle and spinning the wheels. Then they explain it to him and make him understand. They take him through all technical areas one by one and finally when he reaches the lab, he will be shocked to see the developing of negatives. He makes a remark that "I spent so much money but you all are putting it into water. Wouldn't everything be washed away?" It was be hilarious.

01:05:14

Q: The comedy.

A: Since he is from Kothamangalam, he would know how the Nattukottai Chettiar behave. He was well known for that role. It ran also very well. After assuring nothing will happen, they ask him to come to the projection room to

see it. He starts ranting “how long has it been. You are not showing me anything from the film”. Only after he watches it in the theatre, he realises how much work goes behind making of a film.

Q: Do you remember who was the dialogue writer for the film?

A: My father only had written the dialogues.

Q: Even the comedy scenes?

A: Everything. He and Kothamangalam Subbu both sat and wrote the comedy portions. Kothanayaki Ammal wanted to watch the film when it was done. She had asked for that before we even began. After we showed the film to her, she was very satisfied. She commented that Sundarambal had performed the character very well and suits perfectly for the role of the orphan girl. And M K Radha has performed the Dorairaj character ten times better than what I had imagined while writing. And though everyone is wearing suits, to see M K Radha in suit is a delight. They all felt a great potential in me and saw a bright future as an actor. Immediately I was given the title ‘Udhaya Suriyan’. (Rising sun).

01:07:18

Q: I see, you got the title as early as that?

A: Yes, thanks to that, still that name is popular.

Q: Did R Prakash do the cinematography himself?

A: No, he only directed that film.

Q: I see he said he won't touch the camera in it

A: Yes.

Q: Who did the camera for it?

A: Camera was B S Ranga I don't know if you have heard of him

Q: I know him very well

A: Yes. He had a studio and a lab in Bangalore. He was working for Gemini. He was also an assistant to Kamal Ghosh. Anadai Penn was his first film as an independent cinematographer. It all went very well. In that film, comedian M R Swaminathan...

Q: Very famous actor

A: Yes, very popular. He was somebody who was with T K Brothers and was

trained under my father.

Q: What role did he play in it?

A: He played the servant to Dorairaj. This Dorairaj, when he is leaving to London to play hockey...

Q: I see the hero was a hockey player.

A: Yes, yes. We went to the harbor, spoke with authorities and got a ship to shoot. We did a lot of shooting there.

Q: That was the location. You went to the harbor and shot

A: Yes.

01:08:48

Q: It would have been new for those time isn't it?

A: Very new experience. The scene was seeing him off in a ship after throwing a party. He is leaving for London. When he is returning from London, he is remembering this girl and that effect was achieved in the camera through masking.

Q: How was it?

A: My character is in London. And the orphan girl is working in a house here. She is always in thoughts of him. My image appears for her. And for my character, her image appears when he thinks of her. Those shots appear in a song.

01:09:32

Q: How did they show you were in London? Did you go there and shoot?

A: Not at all. London was put up as a set in Madras studio. If you see it would look exactly like London. Many wrote letter to me asking when I went to London.

Q: Which studio was this?

A: It was in Mahalakshmi studios. It is presently Gemini.

Q: It was earlier called Mahalakshmi studios?

A: Yes.

Q: Who was running it then?

A: M S Ramaswamy Chettiar.

01:10:05

Q: I see the Hotel Oceanic owner. He worked in cinema as well?

A: He was running the studio. After going to K Subramanyam they made films like Seva Sadanam, Thyaga Bhoomi there.

Q: It was the Motion Picture Combines

A: Yes. The Mahalakshmi studios later became Motion Picture Combines. At that time, K Subramanyam was running a body. It was to distribute films. He was a prominent director of that time. There is not a single day I wouldn't think of him. The actresses whom he engaged went on to become big stars. Rajakumari who acted with me in Chandralekha was spotted first by K Subramanyam for the film Kacha Devayani. He is a lucky charm to many. He lived well. Now he is no more.

01:11:07

Q: Who was the music director for Anadai Penn? Was it S V Venkatraman?

A: No, he wasn't a music director then. He was an actor then. He was doing theatre acting then. At that time, there was an orchestra under Saraswathi stores. They brought them for the film.

Q: Was there no Music director as such for it?

A: No there was no one. At that time, people go and pick their respective music instruments. It has become a unit only now.

Q: The songs were all sung on set only?

A: Yes, everything happens on the set only

Q: Have you sung those songs?

A: Yes, there were many songs. I had a duet also. The one me and Sundarambal would sing.

01:12:08

Q: That was all in a set?

A: Yes, it has to be shot in a set only. There is this Poes Gardens in Madras now. Many English people used to live there. We shot the outdoors in their premises and gardens. We walk as we sing and the musicians would walk along as I sing.

Q: You said you were singing songs outside. There would be birds and other noises outside. How did you manage them?

A: They would first burst a cracker. Immediately after it goes off, you can't hear any bird sounds.

Q: But what about wind noises?

A: There was a recordist named Viswanathan. He was in the studio for a long time. In the Mahalakshmi studios. A lot of people were trained under him. He was a very strict man. He would record it very well.

01:13:25

Q: He would control the wind noises?

A: Very much. Like how we wear sweaters when we feel cold, a similar thing is given to the microphone. It protects wind from hitting it. It was made very well and the film ran also very well. Even today if you say the name Anadai Penn, it is very popular.

Q: The stills are also very famous. The one with suit.

A: I see, You have seen it. I used to do roles wearing a dhoti, that of a simpleton. But looking at me in suit, M K Thyagaraja Bhagavathar and also the audience say I got the body frame suited for such looks. I don't put any extra effort to get that look. Since I am from theatre, all these roles come naturally to me as I have done many social subjects.

Q: You had great training in that.

A: A lot of training. After the Anadai Penn shooting was over, I left for Madurai. Madurai is my wife's place.

01:14:49

Q: Your in-laws lived there.

A: Yes. When I was there, I got a letter for Thulasidas. Asking me to join them in Calcutta. I've told you before about Thulasidas. After coming back from Thulasidas shooting, in 1938, I told you I had gone to Madurai after doing Anadai Penn. We had taken the whole crew from the Boys' Company for that film. It had our chief minister MGR, Balaiah, everybody. We were doing plays in Kothavada theatre under the name of Madras Dramatics Boys' Company. We were playing there for a year. After we all went our ways, the company had become lean. There were about 17 boys in it and they had put up a camp in Puthukkottai to send these boys home. To send them home, they requested us to come and do a special play to raise money. So, we played Pathi Bhakthi and

Ramadas there. In Puthukkottai there was a Thambudu Bhagavathar. That's the name we call. His name was Puthukkottai Chidambara Bhagavathar. He was very popular and an excellent orator who does Harikatha. He had written a play called Ramadas. He had written it as a play, as a book, in the style he speaks. There was a Nawab Rajamanikkam. He was very famous. He had come and was part of the camp and we performed the play. Even though other characters were good, the Tani Shah Nawab was a standout character. Rajamanikkam Pillai is also somebody who was under a guru. The people who were trained under my father had become gurus in other schools where they would teach 200 students. They were talking with me to organize this play. That was the play that we did in Puthukkottai. We did two plays. Each play earned 3000 rupees profit.

Q: In that time only?

A: Yes, because we were all in films by then. Myself, Balaiah everyone. So, it earned well. A total of about 6000 rupees we earned. For the Ramadas play, they wanted to perform it in front of Chidambara Bhagavathar. When he was watching the play, that was the first time he saw me playing the role of that Nawab Tani Shah. He was so engrossed and overwhelmed by it that he came up on the stage and blessed me and spoke to the audience that what I have thought and written for the Nawab role, what I couldn't express through words, M K Radha has done it through his performance. It felt like a real Nawab from Hyderabad has come. If you all may agree, in your presence I would like to give M K Radha the title of Nawab.

Q: I see you were given the Nawab title?

A: That is what they call me Nawab M K Radha. Even Chidambara Bhagavathar wasn't given a Nawab title. People in theatre, when they shine in a certain role, they are known after that name. Like how they name as Raja Sigamani. This, he gave it to me as a certificate signed.

01:20:04

Q: Like how we say Dickie Madhava Rao?

A: Yes. After finishing that play, we left for Thulasidas shooting. After finishing Thulasidas, I went to do Maya Machindra. I had to go to Calcutta for the shooting of the film.

Q: I see you shot Maya Machindra in Calcutta. Which year was this?

A: 1938 end. It released in 39.

01:20:27

Q: Who was the Producer for that film?

A: Khemka. Of the East India company

Q: A person from Calcutta?

A: Yes. I think he is a Bengali B M Khemka. It was shot in his studio.

Q: East India studio?

A: Yes. The supporting actors who acted with me in that film were M M Radhabai. She was the younger sister of Vazhuvoor Ramaiyya Pillai. She lives in Mayavaram. She acted in a film called Daksha Yagnya. In that film, Mannarkudi Nataraja Pillai played Daksha and Radhabai acted as heroine. This is her second film.

01:21:20

Q: Looking at the title Maya Machindra, it feels like a folklore film.

A: It was a story like How Alli was ruling her kingdom. A guru has a sishya. The sishya was played by Krishnamoorthy who is the brother of Maharajapuram Viswanatha Iyer. He is a good singer. He had acted before that also. He was chosen for this film. In her kingdom, no young man can enter the fort from outside. It is a kingdom ruled by women. The sishya goes to his guru and tells about how arrogant is the woman who rules a kingdom where men cannot enter. We have to by any means control it. When they reach there, the fort walls are all closed. When he says a spell 'Jai Alak Niranjan', the doors all open on its own. Her maids go and tell her about how the sanyasis have opened the closed windows with their spells. She orders them to chain their necks with big stones. Raja Chandrasekhar was the director. The people working there, like the carpenters were all from their state. He went and told them to make a realistic looking rock that is round in shape and should be a bit heavy that should be tied to their necks. They were asked to make it in plywood. We are all actors. We can do as if the stone is very heavy even if it is not. We know how to show that on our faces. The art director had asked them to make it in plywood. The people not understanding it clearly, made it in teakwood so heavy that even 15 people can't lift it. Shooting was scheduled. I was playing the guru. We were tied to the chains and the queen comes to see. She orders them to put the stone on their head and "leave it there. They will die eventually". Having said so, she walks away. This guru with all his magical powers agrees for it. He has got a long beard. I was sitting there holding my hand forward. I didn't know that this is made of teak and is that heavy. My body was in a good

shape then. The stone was brought and kept. The shot began to roll. Since I was involved with my character, I was lost in it and this thing didn't bother me much. The shot is rolling and three cameras were rolling. There was one camera above, two on the floor. What happens is because of his magical powers the stone bursts into small pieces and shatters all over. It was that kind of a scene. The lights were on and the chained stone started slipping slowly and it held my chest tight. I couldn't breathe. The cameras were running. I didn't know what to do. I kept sitting eyes closed. At the end of the shot this would burst. When it did, I also fell along with that. I lost my consciousness, lost breath and eyes blacked out. My father always accompanies wherever I go. He had also written the dialogues for the film. Raghunath was the assistant director.

Q: Chandrasekhar's younger brother.

A: Yes. I was taken out and Raja Chandrasekhar was frightened. My father got to know about it and came running. He started shouting at them that they have all killed his son who had come to act out of passion. Doctors were brought and I was given injection. I was bed ridden for five days.

Q: The work was stopped

A: Yes. Finally, that scene was over. So, what happens is after the stone bursts, his appearance changes. He becomes a 22-year-old handsome prince. Looking at that she develops an attraction towards him.

Recording interrupted

01:28:38

Q: You said how they shot the scene in Maya Machindra with the stone bursting. Do you remember how they executed that scene in those days?

A: That is a scene you cannot rehearse. Once broken, it can't be put together. So, it was made in a way that small blocks of wood were interlocked and arranged in a way that it becomes a round shaped rock. If you drop it, it would break into many pieces. It was made by the carpenter in that fashion.

Q: I see like sections placed together?

A: Yes. And when I shake my body, the rocks must break and fall in all directions. That was the technique then. Now a lot of techniques have come. It was a time when a lot of techniques hadn't come. They did with whatever they had. They didn't even have zoom lens. Trolley shot, close up, mid shot. Even masks were not being used then. Then when he transforms into a prince...

Q: How did they shoot that transition? Did they use dissolve?

A: Yes. After the shot was over, I had to go get a make-up and costume change. I have to come and sit at the same spot. They would have marked that place. The camera wouldn't have moved from that position. Two cameras would be operational. One would be steady.

Q: Do you remember the cameraman in it?

A: Cameraman was Krishnan, a Bengali. I had told you that Sailen Bose, Kamal Ghosh were all his assistants. When the Gemini lab had begun, Krishnan was running a lab in Bombay. He was the one who proposed to start a color lab like that here in Madras. When the lab was opened here, Vasan had invited him. Bradburn was the recordist.

Q: Did the Maya Machindra have any mythological connection?

A: Yes, it was there in the purana. In the northern region this story was popular. It is the story of a saint. It was said to be real characters. The Urmila Devi character and the place the story happened etc. Before this, they have made the same film in Hindi. This film was a remake of that. But it ran very well in our Tamil Nadu also. It collected well. And whoever sees me, calls me by the spell I say in the film 'Alak Niranjan'. That spell was a popular line for a long time. When someone would get down from a tram, to not trip and fall, they say this spell 'Jai Alak Niranjan'. Even vegetable vendors used that phrase. The year was 1939. N S Krishnan, Madhuram were also part of the cast.

Q: They acted in it?

A: Yes.

01:33:02

Q: What role did N S Krishnan play?

A: He played the role of one of the disciples of the Sanyasi. He would come all along the story with me. In a comic role. In the Queen's kingdom, there would be a Queen's friend played by Madhuram. They both are a pair in the film. The comedy in the film is not a separate track. It was written along with the story.

Q: What film did you do after Maya Machindra?

A: It released in 1939.

01:33:40

Q: The war had begun by then?

A: Yes. It was 39, 40...yes. my father also fell sick. We were here in Madras in Purasalwakkam then.

Q: Where were you in Pursalwakkam?

A: Near the highway. We were there for 3 or 4 years. In 1939, wherever I go I take my family along. I don't go alone anywhere. I don't stay in the company house. Father would never be without me around. As I was his only child, he was very affectionate towards me. It was a winter season. It is said that the Calcutta mist isn't bad for health. People say it wouldn't cause any harm. But it was for the people there. For people going from here, it was problematic. He didn't have any other disease but he was asthmatic. He developed breathing problems there. The doctors were called and they had given him injections. Half of my film is left unfinished. Me, my wife we were all living in one place. They give us a separate place to stay. The doctors tried a lot but he was suffering. They advised me to take him to Madras as the cold is affecting him. We were all hesitant to tell him this. Even the director felt hesitant. When he told my father so, he refused. He said he wouldn't leave till the work is over. He was adamant. Then I fell on his feet and respectfully asked him to listen to our advice. I assured that I would return safe and I sent him back home. He went to Madras. After coming to Madras he was diagnosed with cardio-asthma. A doctor by name Gunasekaran would give him 3 injections a day. It was going on like that. But he was always worried about me. Everyone has parents and children. But the parenting I got was something special. He used to write 3 letters a day. Morning as soon as he wakes up, one letter at 8 am. It would just have 'doctor had come and gave me an injection.' This is one letter. In the afternoon, 'I've had my medicines and food. The doctor has advised me to take rest'. In the evening, he would write 'the doctor had come and has given me sleeping pills for the night. You take care, I am doing fine here'. But I get all these letters together. I have to open them all one by one read and reply. I wrote 'don't stress yourself. Please take rest and write one letter that is enough'. He wouldn't listen. They would deliver a whole bunch of letters to me. But my father had one quality, a practise. Since he was into theatre, it would be 3 am by the time he would go to bed. Just next to his pillow would be a few English novels, some Shakespeare plays, a pencil and one paper clipped to a pad. We don't know when he would get up in the middle of the night to note down something. And he would wake up at 5. I am telling about how the body used to function. On the other hand, I am sleeping till 9 am. That was his lifestyle. I returned home after the shoot was over. On March 8th, 1939, he expired. They were shooting a film with Thyagaraja Bhagavathar in New Tone. Nawab Rajamanikkam had a theatre called Royal Theatre in Salt kota. It is not there anymore. They were doing a play in that theatre. T K Brothers

were in Thiruvannamalai. Letters were sent to all their dear students who are in different places. They were shooting a scene with Serukalathur Sama under Raja Sandow's direction. When they heard the news, they stopped the shooting. The plays were also stopped. They all had come to send him off in a respectable way. N S K was by my side consoling me the whole night. They all left only after 2 or 3 days to resume shooting. They were all like children to him. He was very affectionate to all of them. If there are 100 people in the theatre and if I am also there, he wouldn't do anything special for me. He would tell the boys 'if you perform this part well, I'll give you a first-class shirt. If you perform this role and get claps in the film, I'll give you a gold ring.' He encourages them so much and make them better. He brought a boy who was a cowherd. To act in theatre. Now you see brokers, we had artiste brokers at that time. Their work is to take one actor from a company and put him in some other company and send one from here to there. They would take money and not work also at times.

Q: It was like business

A: It was business. If they hear one boy is shining and is making money in a particular company, he is taken from there and put somewhere else. Children in theatre used to sing very well. These brokers would bring them by hook and crook. At times they bring them by saying your father is sick, come with me. We theatre people know all type of work except theft, we can't do crimes. All these roles, we have done in theatre, all acting. There is a court scene in the Rajambal play. That boy he brought doesn't know Tamil at all. He was the advocate in the play. All night my father would sit up and write it in a way the boy could understand, in big fonts. A language coach was appointed for him and then would be rehearsed over and over again. You must see the argument he does in Rajambal court scene. My father would make senior judges and advocates as patrons. They would all tell my father 'Kandaswamy, we all are trained in law. Still we can't speak so well. How do you manage to get your boys speak so well.' The characters would argue in the play. Enquiring whether the character committed murder or not. I play the judge. Guindy Jagannatha iyer was there and there was an actor called 'Judge Mani'. He also acted in Sathi Leelavathi. He is no more. All of them have left. I am just recollecting memories of times when they were alive.

01:43:43

Q: Which film did you do after your father passed away?

A: After he passed away, I did Sathi Murali.

Q: Who was the producer?

A: Producer was Oceanic Ramaswamy Chettiar and Sriramulu Naidu. Pakshiraja studio.

Q: Was Pakshiraja studios there at that time?

A: No. not at that point. He was the General manager at Central studios.

Q: Who Sriramulu Naidu?

A: Yes. They both talked about a partnership deal between them and decided to make the Sathi Murali film.

Q: I see it was an independent venture?

A: Yes. And it was a devotional subject.

01:44:25

Q: Was it from the Puranas?

A: Yes, it is from the puranas. I play a brahman in it. T R Mahalingam acted as my character's junior part. S Varalakshmi played the junior part of Santhana Lakshmi's character. They were both a pair. Not in real life. In the film I meant. All that happened later. They were young then. Maybe it is the experience of working together in Sathi Murali, they both started being together. There are many stories about it. Not of our concern. I was booked for the role in the film. We left for Coimbatore after that. Sriramulu Naidu is someone who thinks one should obey what he says. He wouldn't change anything if somebody has another opinion. But he is a good human being, a pure heart he has. He respects us a lot. But we should tell the qualities we don't agree with also, right. We went for the make-up test. I had good hair in those days. Since it is needed for all kind of roles, be it mythological, historical or social. I don't feel free wearing a wig. In those times, there was a thing called the 'Bhagavathar crop'. After that Chinnappa crop came. After Anadai Penn released, many would come for the barber here and get my hairstyle done on them. That is another interesting story. My fans in many places what they did was, they used to carry one mirror and a comb with them. They would want to keep hairstyle like mine. There was one man who would keep combing his hair all the time to get that look. One person asked him why is he doing so. The man replied "I am trying to get the hair like M K R." The person told him to not try in vain. I get to hear such funny stories from my fans. They had decided on having a make-up test for Sathi Murali. Because it was a role of a brahman and had to be in a particular way. I had hair till my shoulder. I wore the sacred thread and did the makeup. Everyone was happy to see my appearance. But Sriramulu Naidu didn't like it.

He wanted it to be like the brahmin boys who get they Vedic education. With shaven head and a knotted bunch of hair, uchikudumi in the back. He felt it should be like that. Chettiar, the person who brought me into it, tried convincing him. But he refused to accept it. He wanted it to be like that. Chettiar came to me and said it is not just his film but Sriramulu Naidu was also a partner. He requested if I could do it. I refused it. I asked him to take back his advance and said “I would leave with my family. There is a ritual to shave the head when one’s father passes away. I didn’t do even then. The thing I didn’t do for my father, should I do it for this role?” I was about to leave returning my advance. He went and told this to Sriramulu Naidu and he said “let him go if he doesn’t want to do it. We’ll find somebody else.” Chettiar was swinging between this and that like a pendulum. Santhanalakshmi came to me. She is a like a younger sister to me. She was very close to our family since the theatre days. That Santhanalakshmi is my son’s in law now. She came to my wife and said ‘sister, please ask brother to do what they say. It would be difficult for all of us if not.’. Everyone came and spoke to me. They all were trying to convince me. At the end, Sriramulu Naidu himself came and spoke high about art and artistes. How I come from a reputed family, son of a legend. I told him to tell what he wanted. He said it would look natural only if you remove the hair. I agreed. I told him “I have not removed it even for my father. Not for this film, I will go to Tirupathi and sacrifice the hair as an offering to god.” I went to Tirupathi, shaved my head and came back to them. So, they did the make-up test again. Everyone praised the look. Why I said this was to tell how this hair and moustache are valuable to many. People fight over it. My only intention is that people should love the character and the film. I agreed to it and finished the shooting.

01:52:14

Q: What was special about the Sathi Murali story?

A: In the story, the heroine is devoted to Krishna. Her name is Murali. Played by Santhanalakshmi. Her father is someone who is well versed in texts. He teaches students Vedic texts. He is also teaching this boy who is a poor brahman. He is also teaching this boy. He asks him to stay at his place only. The boy and the girl eventually fall for each other and the girl decides if she has to marry someone, it must be this boy. But the boy doesn’t have that intention. He thinks he is with his Guru who is teaching him knowledge. He thinks about her like a sister. Towards the end, she starts disturbing him. The father gets to know about it. The father tells him there is no barrier between caste or class if a girl falls in love with a man. If she decides on someone, he becomes her god. You must marry her. Saying so, he marries them off. And he passes away. The

girl is always in devotion for Krishna. He tells her it is good to be so but one has to take care of the family matters as well. She doesn't like it. He tells her that if that is your desire, then I don't deserve to live a life with you. And he leaves to the forest to spend rest of the life there. When he is leaving, she also goes behind him. When they reach the forest, it catches fire. He falls into the fire. She also jumps into the fire thinking she has to give up her life. At that moment, Krishna appears and tells her that you continue rest of your life as Sathi Murali remembering me.

01:55:02

Q: How did you shoot the forest fire scene? Did they really light fire?

A: Yes. They spotted a forest near Mettupalayam. They found a spot with some trees. They poured petrol as petrol used to be cheap. They got barrels of petrol. They had taken permission from the superintendent. They achieved the effect what they intended to achieve.

Q: Who was the director of this film?

A: B N Rao. He was permanent in Gemini. A very good man. Narayana Menon was his name. Even though he had left Malabar long back, he would speak Tamil with a Malabar accent. He would dress up neat and was clear in giving directions. He would do the movements very well.

Q: What type of movement?

A: The way the artists move around. The way he designs the shots. He would get the movement of the actors and camera very well. He wouldn't torture anyone to achieve that. The way he explains it is very good. Only if you have a knack for acting, only then you can teach the actors what they want. These days I don't know what to call them. They are unable to act or they don't know how to explain. Having said that there are no directors who had elevated actors to a new level. Only one man has done that, that is Raja Sandow. He wouldn't leave you till he gets what he wants. Or else he would call for a pack up saying 'ah teri saala'. He wants what he wants. But I am not saying that the directors these days don't know about acting. They know for sure.

Recording interrupted.

01:57:55

Q: After Sathi Murali which film did you do?

A: After that, I left to join Vanamohini.

Q: I see, it is a famous film.

A: Yes.

Q: Which year was it?

A: 1940.

Q: When did it release? A: In 1941.

Q: Who was the Producer for this film?

A: There is a place called Thripoonithura in Malabar. Near Ernakulam. There was a Viswanatha Iyer there. He was the Producer. But the story came from director Bhagawan.

Q: The one who was a comedian in Hindi.

A: Yes. He is someone who could do a variety of roles. Very talented man. He could also do English dances well. It was a story he recommended. Once he decided to make the film, he was thinking whom to cast.

Q: For the hero?

A: No. Hero was me. But we wanted the heroine. As the Vanamohini. They said they saw many mohinis but didn't get a Vanamohini. Bhagawan suggested the team to check out Ceylon (Sri Lanka).

Q: I see, they left the country for it?

A: Yes. In Vana mohini, the girl is from a forest. Her parents are dead. She is alone and surrounded by savages. The character Kolathur Mani played is the king of the savages. Since she is alone, all these people try to abduct her. She has an elephant with her, named Chandru. The elephant's real name was also that. The elephant obeys whatever she asks him to do. The size of the elephant is such that if you see from below, one can only see some girl sitting above it but won't be able to identify whom. The tusks reach a long distance. But a gentle giant.

02:01:04

Q: It was a trained elephant?

A: Yes yes.

Q: Where did they get it from? A circus or a temple?

A: No not circus. Somebody owned it. The elephant used to pick wooden logs in Kerala. It obeys instructions. We didn't shoot it in Madras as the necessary forest and scenery won't be available.

Q: Where did you shoot that then?

A: I'll finish this story first. When they approached many actresses for the role, they all refused to play the character. But it wasn't a vulgar role. Vulgar is in one's view. How would a girl living in a forest dress up? Would she be wearing a gown or a saree? It wouldn't be. The audience can't enjoy it. So, they finalized Thavamani and went to book her. She has done a film before that. One film by Modern theatres T R Sundaram.

Q: He was the one who introduced her?

A: Yes. But that film didn't run well. Sathi Ahalya. Vanamohini is her second film. She is an educated girl. Thavamani Devi. Usually people from Ceylon would be well educated. They would have had convent education. She asked them who was the hero. They said M K Radha. I think she already was fond of me as an actor. My films have run well in Ceylon.

Q: You had a good popularity there

A: Yes. It is still there. Now and then, I have visitors from Ceylon coming in to enquire how I was. She immediately agreed listening to my name. She felt it would be good to act with an actor like me. After coming to Madras, we were all thinking where to shoot and how. There is a place called Thodupuzha, Moovattupuzha in Kerala. They set up a company house in Thodupuzha where the production staff would stay. The Malankara estate where we planned to shoot is 12 miles from there. It is situated on top of a mountain. Since he is from Thripoonithura, he knows the place well. One Mr. John was the superintendent of the Malankara estate.

Q: He was an Englishman?

A: No, a Christian, Syrian Christian. He looks intimidating but a very gentle man. You can't see him without the rifle in his hand.

Q: Since it is a forest area?

A: Yes. Also, they have a habit of drinking. It is part of their life. His drunk eyes and the rifle look intimidating. The crew even thought of asking him to play a role. But it is difficult to handle him. So, they dropped the plan. They finally decided Malankara estate to be the location. So, when I left to Thodupuzha from Madras, I went with my family. A separate house was arranged for me. Since it was 12 miles from Thodupuzha, we leave early morning at around 5 am. So, what he had done was, he had set up many huts for us like how the adivasis would make. Most of the film was shot there only.

Q: In the forest?

A: Yes. Also, since the elephant was already there, it was better. It is difficult to bring the elephant to Madras. The shots we took in Madras were in the set and the entire outdoor we did there. So every day, we would go from Thodupuzha and return by 6 in the evening.

Q: How long did you shoot it?

A: It went on like this for 3 months. 90 days. Most of the film was finished there. The character was very well portrayed by that girl, Thavamani. In the film, she doesn't know Tamil. She lives in the forest. She speaks their indigenous language. When the savages are about to abduct her, a raja who is there for hunting...

Q: You played that role?

A: Yes. Going behind an elephant that he comes across, he reaches a place. After reaching the place, he meets her. She is unable to talk at that moment. He then asks her in sign language who she is and what the matter is. She develops a liking towards him. He feels like marrying her. He takes her to the kingdom. In the meanwhile, the savages come chasing and there obviously would be fights to counter that.

02:07:27

Q: Did Bhagawan know Tamil?

A: He doesn't know but he understands. He works with an assistant. Even people like Vaidyanatha Iyer can speak Hindi very well. The music director Ramachandra worked on it.

Q: C Ramachandra. The one who became popular later.

A: Yes. Later he changed name to Chitalkar.

Q: Yes, even Ram Chitalkar name is printed in some places. He passed away recently. In that film the 'Ariyathay Enbathum' song became a big hit, right?

A: Yes, it was very popular. It was in fact more popular than Thyagaraja Bhagavathar's. The records sale was big for that.

Q: Thavamani herself sang this?

A: Yes. She can sing very well. Everything came together well for that film. After shooting there, we came back and some portions we shot here. In the Admiralty house. A studio called Prabjyothi.

Q: Which later became Pragathi?

A: Pragathi is different Prabjyothi is different. That studio was run by a North Indian by the name Munshi. It was taken for lease by him.

Q: He lived in Madras?

A: Yes, he came from North India. At that time, a film called College Girl had released. Kuchalakumari's mother Damayanthi was the heroine in that film.

Q: College Girl was made by Soundararaja Iyengar?

A: Yes. That film was made at Prabjyothi. When we were making our film, we heard a film called College Girl is being made.

02:09:25

Q: That's when you were shooting the indoors for Vanamohini?

A: Yes. For Vanamohini. The film was also very successful. After Vanamohini shoot, after coming to Madras, evacuation was announced.

Q: I remember. Everyone was asked to leave the place. I was a little boy then.

A: Is that so? When that was announced I thought there won't be a comeback again to Madras. The cinema, the life everything is over. I have to leave from here. It looked like village life would be our future. We all left.

Q: Did you go to Madurai?

A: Yes, to Madurai. And from there, to a place called Nattham where I had a lot of fans. They all took us there to live with them. We spent about six months there. After that, after Vanamohini, Prema Bandhan by Raja Gopichandan.

02:10:23

Q: I have been thinking of asking you something about Vanamohini for a long time. I have not seen it as I was a small boy then. I have heard people saying that the film is a sexy one. Do you think so?

A: There was no sexiness in those times. There was no sex appeal. It was not like these days where young boys also talk about sex. We as adults didn't have such intentions back then. If we dress in a certain way, some people see it as a sexy. For some eyes, it is. It is all that I think. If you get a chance to watch the film...

Q: Do you know where one can find its print?

A: This is a request I get usually from my fans who write letters to me. The maker is no more. Nobody knows who has it now. Even the whole family is not there. I've heard somebody in Ceylon has a print. I also enquired about it. Haven't heard anything yet.

Q: Where did you shoot Prema Bandhan?

A: We shot it in Bombay

Q: Which studio do you remember?

A: Not just one studio. We shot over many places. In those days, there would be standing sets of Mythological films erected in many studios. Those were permanent ones. If we get a set designed according to our requirement, it would be delivered after a month. We were in a hurry to make the film and couldn't wait that long. So we shot in existing sets in Imperial studio, Ranjit studio and...

Q: Everything in Bombay?

A: Yes

Q: What kind of story is Prema Bandhan?

A: It was a social subject. It was made by Deccan Cinetone.

Q: They were Bombay people?

A: Yes. There was a studio run by Ramaniklal Mohanlal in Andheri. The stunt films with K T Rukmini were shot there. P A Srinivasa Rao went and played the hero. He was a BA graduate. He was the first Tamil hero to go and become hero in Hindi. They shot many Tamil films also there. Deccan Queen starring R B Lakshmi Devi. She has acted with me in Prema Bandhan

02:13:58

Q: Who wrote story, dialogues for Prema Bandhan?

A: It was a social subject. Bhagawan was the person who wrote it. We finished that film very soon.

Q: Was Bhagawan the director?

A: Yes. He saw me in it and felt I should play Vanamohini. In Prema Bandhan, Surya Kumari was my heroine.

Q: She was a popular singer. She lives in America now

A: Yes. She was also married to Prakasam of Congress. She used to sing very well. She was an educated girl. Could have become even bigger. But I heard she retired into her family life. R B Lakshmi Devi is somewhere nearby. A couple of months back, I met her at a marriage function. She saw me in the crowd and hugged me saying 'oh my hero!'. I asked her not to put me into trouble now. She said 'what mister. You are indeed my hero.' She is a very enthusiastic girl. She could do all possible roles. She now lives with her sons in Hyderabad.

Q: Was Ram Chitalkar music director for Prema Bandhan?

A: No. it was a music director called Motilal from Bombay. Over there, music directors are abundant. A street would have 10 music directors. After one song is done with one music director, the next song with the next. I thought only our side had this kind of thing. I realised this is much higher there.

Q: Did Prema Bandhan run well?

A: It ran well.

Q: Not as much as Vanamohini?

A: Yes. It was average. The films would at least run for a few weeks in those days.

Q: Would it collect back the money in a month?

A: It should. It should have collected. But who tells the truth. In those days, people who came to produce films had money in their hand. They would have something in the bank, some in hand. They would withdraw, invest, put it back again. These days, it is not like that. They put their names as producers and would approach somebody else for money. The one who puts in money has no connection to the story. They would want it their way. So, people who are ignorant about films are making it. Some films work some would flop. But there is a reason why the yesteryear films and actors are fondly remembered.

02:17:46

Q: You mentioned about Raja Gopichand made after Prema Bandhan. Was that shot in Bombay too?

A: Yes.

Q: What kind of film is that?

A: It is a folklore.

Q: I see it is an already existing story. Not something Bhagwan wrote.

A: No no. It is about a king who is consumed by worldly pleasures.

Q: Why I asked you is because recently in Telugu, a film called Raja Gopichand released with A Nageswara Rao. I thought it would be a remake of the film.

A: It is about a king who had women all around him doing things for him. He would be obedient to his mother though. He becomes a sanyasi in the end and asks for alms from his own wife.

Q: I see. It is the same story then. It is a remake of the film you are talking about. A: Maybe. I haven't seen it.

Q: The original is in Hindi?

A: Yes. It was made first in Hindi and remade to Tamil.

02:18:55

Q: Who was the producer for this film?

A: It was produced by M K Thyagaraja Bhagavathar's uncle. Govinda Acharya. There is a person called Murugabhooshanam who married Bhagavathar's younger sister. His uncle had a good taste in cinema. They were doing distribution through their company. It is an important thing I have to mention about Gopichand. His nephew, Bhagavathar was very popular at that time. He went and told the story to him. He said "I am not suitable for this role. Drop the idea that I should play the role. This character demands performance." He said "the person whom I consider as my elder brother, is suitable for the role". He asked who is that actor. M K T told him "you just come home tomorrow morning, we'll take the car and go there." Then I was in Purusalwakkam. I saw a car stopping by my place in the morning. Bhagavathar got down. He came and hugged me calling 'brother...'. I invited them inside and spoke for a while. I asked him if his films are running well. He said "I am shouting something in it and people are making them run well. Nothing is in my hand." I told him "don't say like that. Your songs ring in everyone's ears. After Kittappa, it is your songs that have got this reach. Your voice should remain unaffected." He then introduced me to his uncle. "He is planning to make a film. He wanted me to play it. I felt I am not suitable for it. I brought him to you for it." I said "it is not fair. He wants to cast you. It would be bad if you refuse it." He said "yes he came to cast me. But there is something called suitability. It would be possible only if the actor is suitable for the role. You must play this role." I always believed only an artist can understand and respect other artists. I said "I didn't expect that you would bring your uncle to me out of love and respect." When they asked about the remuneration, I said "all that you talk and decide

among yourselves. I am humbled that you have come all way to respectfully ask me to be part of the film. You already know how to recognize an artist. I have nothing to tell you about how further you must.” After some time, we began shooting for the film.

Q: Where did you shoot Raja Gopichand?

A: We shot that in Bombay. Deccan Cinetone ‘Prema Bandhan’ booked me first. Followed by Raja Gopichand. I told them this is the matter. A film is already happening. If a producer asks me it shouldn’t clash with the other. I would give them a week and you a week. If you are okay with that arrangement, we can go ahead. They agreed to that and did the film accordingly.

Q: Who all were the other artists in that film?

A: An actress called Meenalochani. From Madurai

Q: M K Meenalochani?

A: Yes. And one more girl, Rajamani. They both were the queens in the film.

02:24:41

Q: Was it Periyanyaki’s sister?

A: No, not that Rajamani. This girl is from Madurai. She was settled in Bombay. Meenalochani’s mother Rajam played her mother in the film. Prema Bandhan was over but this was delayed because of financial crisis. It finally got made and it ran decently too.

Q: Who was the music director for it?

A: Motilal, for both these films.

Q: Who directed Raja Gopichand?

A: It was done by Dave. He was a big cameraman.

Q: I see. He was a director-cameraman.

A: Yes. He was working for Wadia Movietone.

02:25:55

Q: Has he done any other Tamil film before that?

A: No. this was his first but he was experienced. He knew very well how to

design a scene and shots. He had experience doing films there but when it comes to making a Tamil film, people were usually hesitant. He made it quite well and the film also ran well. I don't know much about its business.

Q: You are not concerned about it?

A: Why should I be. Look at films these days. If it runs for 7 days, they would print posters in big fonts.

Q: I am writing a story. For a novel. It is related to cinema. In that one character sticks a poster that says 'for sure the first show will be played'.

A: Is it so? very interesting.

Q: It wouldn't be surprising to see it on posters in future

A: That's true.

Q: Did you come back to Madras after finishing Raja Gopichand?

A: Yes.

Recording interrupted.

02:26:56

Q: The recording could not be completed unfortunately due to the demise of Mr. M K Radha. He was a heart patient for a number of years. And in fact, his glorious career and one of the most handsome and successful heroes of Tamil Cinema had to be curtailed at its height because of his ill health. Though he had a number of offers to play character roles later on, he refused every one of them for the simple reason that he was not healthy enough. Even this interview on which we have both worked, for quite a few months, he undertook with certain amount of reservation and hesitance. But I had hoped, I would be able to complete it. But sadly, it was not to be. His health deteriorated over a period of time and he developed asthmatic trouble which led to breathlessness. And my hopes of interviewing him again, did not fortify. Mr. M K Radha, hit the headlines around the country and beyond with S S Vasan's Chandralekha which was made in Tamil and Hindi in 1948. He was one of the permanent artistes on the roles of Gemini studios, Madras and he did a number of films for Gemini like Chandralekha, Strange Brothers in Tamil and Telugu, Samsaram, Avvaiyaar and a number of others. Later, after leaving Gemini studios, he did a film for Mr T R Sundaram of Modern Theatres, Salem. This film called Pasavalai which was kind of a rehash of an old Tamil play called Ali Badushah. It was a great success. This film indeed

besides being a success, was one of the memorable movies that came out of Sundaram's studios in Salem. For almost 10-15 years of his later part of life, he led a retired life, keeping to himself at home, because of his ill-health. He had a large family with his sons mostly working as executives or industrialists in and around Madras. And he has spent his time with his son, grandchildren and so on. He died in September 1985 leaving behind him a large body of fans and admirers. One of the most famous fans per say is Mr. M G Ramachandran, better known as MGR, currently Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu and one of the super stars of Indian cinema. Mr M G Ramachandran had spent his earlier days when he was a street artiste, in the company of Mr. M K Radha. MGR used to call M K Radha, his elder brother. That was the interview and the post script with Mr. M K Radha, Tamil film hero, and one of the most respected personalities of South Indian cinema. Though he was a top star of his day, the hero of Chandralekha, Strange Brothers, Samsaram and others, he is a very humble person coming from a very orthodox, sophisticated talk. He knew how to get on with people and he never threw his weight around like heroes of today. The Tamil actor V Gopalakrishnan, better known as Gopi recalls an incident about Mr Radha. Mr. Radha worked for Mr. S S Vasam. Even though, he was the highest paid hero, or rather the highest paid artiste in the Gemini studio, Radha according to Gopi, never (inaudible) in the presence of S S Vasam. Even though he was requested to do so. Such was his respect, regard and admiration for the Producer-Director Studio owner and boss Mr. Vasam. Looking at it, from the situation, that prevailed today in Indian cinema, or at least in Madras, I don't think we will come across a person of this caliber. Mr. M K Radha was a kind friend, generous with advice to new comers, whoever they are, whether the new comer is known to him or not. And it is interesting to note, that even till the last day of his life, from countries like Singapore, Burma, Malaysia and Sri Lanka used to call on him and pay their respect and offer him their best wishes and compliments.

This is Randor Guy saying good bye and rest in peace to M K Radha. The interview with him was spread over a couple of years or even more which was mainly because of his ill health and deteriorating condition.