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Interview of First Child Artist Smt. Mandakini Athavale by Bapu Watve

She is also known as Sonu Athavale (Mai), who is the daughter of Dhundiraj Phalke alias Dadasaheb Phalke, Father of the Indian Cinema.

She acted as Krishna (First Child Artist) in his film 'Kaliyamardan' in 1919.

Bapu Watve : Mai, were you born at the time, when Dadasaheb, means your father entered the film world?

Mai : Yes. He had gone abroad to learn about films when I was born. He had gone to watch an English movie named Jesus...

Bapu Watve : at the American India Picture Palace at Girgaon, Mumbai.

Mai : Yes, while watching the movie on Jesus, he wondered why he couldn't make one on 'Krishna'. So, first he learnt the technique of photography, then how it can be done learning the theory and then to gain more practical knowledge, he went further to England to study.

Bapu Watve : Thus he aimed to do it. How old was he at that time?

Mai : He was born in 1870 which means about 40 years.

Bapu Watve : Didn't he owned Laxmi printing press earlier?



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Mai : Yes, it was at Lonavala. Before that, he was working at Archaeology survey of India. There he learnt photography.

Bapu Watve : I heard, he was also a great artist.

Mai : Yes, He was a great artist and also a good singer. He had learnt magic from a German magician and used to do magic shows. He was a good Kirtankar, which was in our family and a hereditary trait.

Bapu Watve : I heard that he even used to paint curtains for theatre (Drama) and also sometimes act in dramas, in the absence of actors.

Mai : When he was in Baroda, working for Kalabhavan, there he would regularly participate in dramas. Even he had taken part in Sanskrit drama. He had acted in Sanskrit Dramas in the absence of actor.

Bapu Watve : Mai, after 40 years, he left his partnership with Laxmi Printing press and came to Mumbai. So you must have a difficult time?

Mai : He was so passionate about the making of movies that he went to Mumbai and from there to England to learn more. For this, he had sold my mother's ornaments and also some policies. We were staying in a joint family, along with Uncle, Aunty and all. But overall financial position had collapsed. He went to England at Studio Walton. At that time, people were not so open. They didn't want to show the studio to everyone. But they found my father very dedicated and intelligent. They showed him the studio, also taught him all the tricks and nooks and insisted him to stay with them. They had offered him a good salary. As He was very patriotic and wanted to come down to India, He learnt everything and came back to India. We were staying at Mathura Bhavan Bungalow, Dadar, Mumbai, where he was making films. He sowed the seeds and put the camera in front of it. Every day, he used to take photographs and made a film. First, the bud sprouted, then the seedling came out. Every second, he took these photographs. Finally, it was completed.

It took a long time. This film was hardly of two minutes.

Bapu Watve : I heard filming the plant took one and a quarter months to make this film. He named it 'Roptyachi Vadh'

Mai : Yes. He showed it to everyone and then people believed him.

Bapu Watve : I remember, rather heard, on 1st February 1912, he had mortgage his policy for Rs.12,000/- with Yashwantrao Nadkarni and who was a photographer. Three days after that you were born. For him, it was like the first daughter brought luck in the form of Laxmi. You must have come to know later about this. That time he was travelling. He came back after two months. He had faced lots of difficulties in making the film. There was no film industry at all.

Mai : Yes. From the making of the film, he used to do everything himself. Even he was not getting actors. After that, he started searching for actors. He had given advertisement in newspapers like he didn't want a lame, nincompoop, person or he didn't want a person with bad habits. From where will he get such kind of person? People from around the places started walking in. Even he wanted lady actors. Even there was no female actress in Drama. Lady from a bad background also didn't want to act in the movies. It was very difficult to choose. Male actors used to act as female actors. Whoever had acted in Kaliyamardan and Lankadahan were male actors who dressed up like woman.

Bapu Watve : The first film he produced of Indian make, the story of that film was of Satwashil Raja Harishchandra. So he named that film Raja Harishchandra. While making this film, more than Raja Harishchandra, he had to go through big challenges. To sketch a picture of Taramati on screen, Dadasaheb had to sell his wife's gold.

Your mother, Saraswati bai had to suffer a lot at that time.

Mai : Yes, She used to help my father a lot. She did every possible thing for him in making the film. She used to help him in perforating the film. She was not educated but whatever Dadasaheb used to tell her to do she did wholeheartedly. The film he had taken on Seed, was fully helped by her.

Bapu Watve : Perforating the film was a difficult task. Sometimes, to perforate one reel, it used to take 18 hours.

After he gathered all the things for this film, where was this shooting took place?

Mai : First movie, Raja Harishchandra he did in Mumbai.

Bapu Watve : That means Raja Harishchandra?

Mai : Yes and when he produced the second Raja Harishchandra, he shifted to Nashik as there was ample space.

Bapu Watve : while making Raja Harishchandra, he must have faced lots of difficulties till the end?

Mai : Yes definitely. To do something new, you have to face the problems.

Bapu Watve : I heard that his movie was ready, but nobody was ready to release the movie. In the end, Nanasaheb Chitre was ready and on 3rd May 1913 it was released. Dadasaheb was not sure whether everyone will like it. So to attract the audience, he had kept Dance of European girls. Even He had kept his own magic show at the start. But on the contrary, it was successful beyond expectation.

Mai : At that time, there was no talkie film. So, for this silent movie, he gave subtitles. At that time, my father had learnt Hindi and English especially for this and made subtitles in Hindi. At that time, Hindi was the medium for everything.

Bapu Watve : At that time, when this movie was released, the Editor of Times of India though he was a European man had praised this movie. Bombay Newspaper had said this movie will run for more than two weeks.

Mai : Movie's filming; editing everything was so great which gave a grand success. He always wanted to give his best. His technique never used to go wrong. The people who worked under him, had turned out the best.

Bapu Watve : I heard, when this movie was to release, on that day, you were down with high fever. You were around one year of age.

Mai : Yes, I was down with fever. My mother wanted to attend this inauguration ceremony but how could she leave her child? My uncle and aunty told her that Saraswati, you go for the function. We will look after her. So, she went to the function

Bapu Watve : It was a great success. There was a huge response from the audience. Gujaratis and Parsis had first given a big response. And Mai, I heard Raja Harishchandra film run for 23 days. Am I right?

Mai : Yes.

Bapu Watve : That means, according to that time, 23 days means it is a silver jubilee. After that, I think you all shifted to Nashik.

Mai : First movie was done in Mumbai. Then we shifted to Nashik. We had our own three-floor bungalow with a big pond in the middle.

Bapu Watve : I just visited your place recently. I purposely went and saw that place.

Mai : It is very big with a pond in the middle.

Bapu Watve : Mai, I think, Biggest advantage of Nashik was outdoor shooting.

Mai : Nashik was of scenic outdoor shooting.

Secondly, people knew him well so there was no manpower problem. He was very attached to his childhood friends so he collected them. There was his friend, named Mr. Telang who was the cameraman.

Bapu Watve : Mai, I think these people were trained by Dadasaheb.

They did not have any technical knowledge nor knew anything related to technique.

Mai : Yes, They were aware of anything. Dadasaheb learnt everything on his own and he taught them. He was writer, Director, Producer, costume designer, everything. Slowly, when these people were ready, his burden was released.

After coming to Nashik, he created the second Harishchandra. The first Harishchandra movie was different and don't know where it is. For this second Harishchandra which is in the **National Film Archive of India**. Many scenes were shot in that big pond of our bungalow. There was a big tree of Makana means Kadulimb. Under that tree, Dadasaheb used to sit. The full yard was covered with white bedsheets as reflectors. Many movie shots were taken there. After that, for the studio, he had a big open shed. All indoor shooting used to take place there. This was all his idea. For that Shed, we used to call it studio and bungalow is Karkhana.

Bapu Watve : Yes, at the time of the interview, he had used the word Karkhana. So this is where he used to shot for films. I believe sometimes you have to go for outdoor shooting.

Mai : In Nashik, near the riverside it is very scenic. If you go a little far as the river flows, places named Saikheda, Chander are very scenic.

Bapu Watve : How do you remember his discipline?

Mai : He was very disciplined and strict. At home also he was very strict. People were fade up of his strictness. Even he was hot-tempered.

Bapu Watve : When you grew big, did you visit the studio?

Mai : Studio was in our house. So we used to be there all time.

Bapu Watve : Which movie shooting you remember now?

Mai : I remember Lankadahan.

Bapu Watve : That time I think you were five years old.

Mai : Even I remember the second Harishchandra Taramati. He used to give trick scenes.

Bapu Watve : Yes. He was an expert in giving trick scenes.

Mai : Do you how he had taken Hanuman flying in the sky scene of Lankadahan? Under the Makhana tree, he had put a big black curtain. In the middle was a big rod. On that rod, Maruti has to lie spreading his hands like flying. Far off, small Maruti was Nilkanth, spreading his hand and moving his legs. After that nearer one was me.

Bapu Watve : That means you have acted as Maruti? So even they had put you make up of Maruti?

Mai : Yes. Like that Maruti was created from small to big. Big maruti was Mama Shinde. Even I remember the burning of Lanka. He had made a model of Lanka and burnt it.

Bapu Watve : Lankadahan movie was big hit.

Mai : It was a big success. At that time, frequently used currency was in the form of coins. My mother told us that the collection of this movie at Madras was on the bullock cart loaded with coins. The sack full coins used to come. He had earned lots of money.

Bapu Watve : I heard this success story spread and financiers came forward. I don't think anyone had come forward with finance before that.

Mai : Yes, he got partners but he lost his freedom.

After Lankadahan, he produced Krishna Janma and Kaliya Mardan. Before that he produced, many. Satyavan Savitri one of it, even Bhasmasur mohini. I will tell you about Krishna Janma.

Bapu Watve : Did you act in Krishna Janma?

Mai : Little bit. In that story, Kans used to see Krishna everywhere. It was not acting as such only our faces as Krishna were shown in the movie.

Nilkanth and I were shown as Krishna. It was not acting as such. The most terrifying part was a face of Kans pops up in the sky and he was screaming. It was very difficult at that time.

Bapu Watve : Yes. It was. Now technology has improved and such kind of shooting is very easy.

Recently, I had taken some interviews at Nashik. They said many Hollywood people had approached him but he didn't go.

Mai : Yes. He didn't want to leave his country. He was very much attached to Maharashtra.

Bapu Watve : Can you tell me something about KaliyaMardan?

Mai : One day I came home from school. Dadasaheb asked me, Babdya, do you want to act in the movie as Krishna. After the Lankadahan movie, he used to call me Babdya Maruti.

Bapu Watve : But I heard while having meal, he had told you the story of Kaliyamardan and you were impressed by the story and said yes?

Mai : No. no. This happened afterward. What you said happened at Saikhede. We had gone there for outdoor shooting. There was a huge house. We were having dinner. Dadasaheb used to explain the scene the previous day. Like that, while having dinner, he told me that Krishna leaves his house, folds his hands from outside and sets towards the river. Then Krishna jumps into the river. When I heard the story, I started crying. Everyone thought, because of spicy food. They were not knowing why I am crying. I was very small and feeling sad as Krishna leaving the house. That scene is very touching.

The next day, at the time of the shoot, with that mindset I did that scene and it turns out well.

Bapu Watve : That means, you felt bad because he folded his hand and left the house.

Mai: Yes. Actually, it is his way of explaining the scene that you tend to act accordingly.

Bapu Watve: That is how the next day at the time of shooting you were crying.

Mai: They have not shown my crying expression but my acting was like that.

Actually, at the beginning of Kaliya Mardan, a girl wears a skirt and blouse, holding books in hand turns into Krishna. Dadasaheb had taught me all the expressions like smiling, angry, sad, laughing n all.

Bapu Watve: Could you able to do it?

Mai: He used to tell me what expression he wants.

This is around 1918.

Bapu Watve: It's almost 70 years back.

Mai: After that, shooting for Gopis was done at the studio. We had created the ambiance of Gokul. Earthen pots were hanged. Cows were drawn on the big screen. Even had Krishna, climbing on the friend's back and eating butter. Knocking off the beard and mustache etc. It was all Krishna mischiefs.

Bapu Watve: Mai, that means you were healthy?

Mai: Yes, I was healthy. Even till recently, I was quite chubby. Now because of age, I am looking thin.

Bapu Watve: Mai, could you tell me more about KaliyaMardan shooting?

Mai: The shooting took place under the Makvana tree.

He made a huge cobra whose girth was about 2 to 3 feet. Its' hood was so massive that a boy could stand on it. He also tied a rope around its' tail to wag it. He had told me to jump on the snake.

Bapu Watve: Were you scared?

Mai : I was scared in the beginning but once my father told me to do so I put my faith in him and jumped. Later I enjoyed it and continued to jump. Later on, we shot some scenes at the Gharporeghat which was close to our house. In the earlier days, the Ghat was filled with sand and we had to carry all our props on a bullock cart. We placed the cobra in the shallow waters of the river and in the scene, all the Nagkanyas would gather around the cobra and plead Lord Krishna to not kill their cobra. The next few scenes were shot at Gangapur road which was 7 kilometres away from our residence.

Bapu Watve : How did you travel to and from the sets at Gangapur road?

Mai : The rest of the crew would travel by bullock carts while Dadasaheb and I rode in a horse cart.

PART 2:

Bapu Watve : Mai, did you ever travel in a motor car?

Mai : Oh no, there were no cars back then. Everyone used to ride in a bullock cart and when they wanted to go to the station, they used the Tram.

Bapu Watve : In an interview, Vasant Lime had mentioned that back then the actors were not pampered the way they are today. Each artist had to carry his own costumes and props and walk for about 7 -8 kilometres.

Mai : Oh yes! That's correct.

Bapu Watve : What about the meals on set? I am aware of the system followed by Prabhat Theatres but Dadasaheb directed films prior to them. What system did he follow?

Mai : The entire staff ate the meals cooked by my mother (Aai) at our house. Dadasaheb also ate along with the entire staff. The meals cooked by my mother were the same for Dadasaheb as well as the rest of the crew.

Bapu Watve : What about the meals on days when you would shoot away from the house?

Mai : We used to carry the ingredients and cook the food near the set. Even on days when we shot scenes at the studio, the entire crew had meals at our house.

Mai : My mother took care of all the members on set. She was very kind-hearted.

Bapu Watve : How many crew members were there in total?

Mai : We had around 40-50 crew members and my mother would cook for all of them. Although she had a few people to assist her, she was the one who used to oversee it all.

Bapu Watve : So you were telling me more about the shooting of Kaliyamardan.

Mai : The scenes were shot at a Waterfall near Gangapur road. The waterfall exists even today. We shot scenes in which Krishna would be drinking water under the waterfall, playing his flute on its banks or enjoying with many of his friends like 'Pendya'.

Bapu Watve : How long did this shooting last, around 15 -20 days?

Mai : I don't remember very well, but I think it lasted for about 2-4 months.

Bapu Watve : Were you scared of the cobra?

Mai : It was in the beginning but then I enjoyed jumping on it, playing 'Murali'...

Bapu Watve : I had also read that, during the shot Dadasaheb had cut his foot on a piece of glass. Is it true?

Mai : Yes, Dadasaheb was cut by a piece of glass. He had made a trunk of glass to try to blow bubbles when Kaliya moved. The trunk burst under the pressure of water and the glass cut Dadasaheb. But Dadasaheb continued the shot. It wasn't in his nature to stand back or take a break.

Bapu Watve : You must have had to wait underwater for the shoot, didn't that scare you?

Mai: No, Dadasaheb would tell me to hold my breath and wait underwater until he told me to come out. Some little fish would start to play in the creases of my dress and I enjoyed watching them when I was underwater.

Bapu Watve : Do you remember any of your co-actors?

Mai : Yes, I do remember Mama Shinde and Krishna Salunke.

Bapu Watve : So do you remember the lady who played the role of Yashoda? Anusayabai or someone else??

Mai: No no no...There were no ladies on the set. In Kaliyamardan the female characters were played by the men as well. We also had a person named Shukla who was like a brother to us. He has now become a celebrity in Nashik. He was raised along with us and played the character of Gopi. I also remember Dabke.

Bapu Watve : Yes, I know of him. Wasn't he the one who played the role of Raja Harishchandra in a movie on Raja Harishchandra?

Mai : Yes, I don't remember the rest of the elders on the set.

Bapu Watve : Yes, because you were a little girl back then.

Mai : Yes, I was very young and also because later on, I had no contact with them whatsoever. We used to frequent Mumbai a lot and the picture was a blockbuster. Whenever I went to the theatre people would recognize me as Krishna. They would take my blessing, lift me up and cheer for me. The fact that the character was played by such a young girl, caused them to admire me even more. But this would be my father's last film in our home studio. The films made after that in our home studio were nothing but a few short films. One of the short films that I remember was Lakshmi cha Galicha. The Galicha or carpet was made in such a manner that pennies would come out of the seat hence leading to the little Lakshmi's seat or Lakshmi cha Galicha. Another short film was the Kadyapeti chi Gammatt. In which the matches would come out of a matchbox of dozen packs, would, in turn, come out of a carton. The matches would then dance and convey the story to the audience. He also directed a short

comedy called Javayibapu Chi Fajita. In this film, a man goes to his in-law's house to escort his wife back home. The in-laws were in a mess to complete the dishes they had made for their son-in-law but the journey had left the man very hungry. So while the in-laws were busy in the next room he decides to open his bag and munch on some snacks. But as soon as he took the first mouthful, the rest of the family walked into the room. Now the man could neither chew his food as this would cause everyone to know he was eating. That would be disrespectful to his in-laws and he couldn't even spit the food out. So he just sat there with his cheeks swollen with food. Now the in-laws saw his swollen cheeks and were very worried. They thought he was very sick. They called the doctor to see what went wrong. It was then that one of the young boys of the family squeezed the man's shut causing him to spit the food out unable to breathe. It was hilarious. A short film called Pithache Hath was directed by my father. In this film, the husband has an affair with the maid while the wife has gone to visit her parents. The wife finds out about the affair by inspecting the handprint of the maid who was making the dough pasted on the back of the husband's coat. One more film I remember Dhandal Bhatji. It was a farcical film. The story was like this. Bhatji (Priest) and Barber both go to the river to take bath. Both were carrying their Samli (means cane basket carrying their business weapons). Those Samli were very much identical. After taking a bath Bhatji in a hurry lifts Barber's Samli. When he goes home he opens Samli he finds Barber's equipment.

It was fun watching Bhatji as well Barber. Dadasaheb also did a magic show. Show name was Kelpha magic show.

Bapu Watve : Mai, I remember Raja Harishchandra movie shifted to Mumbai. Dadasaheb was not sure whether the audience will like it as the movie was made in India.

So to attract the crowd, there used to be dance performance of Anglo Indian girls, followed by Dadasaheb's magic show. He was not sure whether the audience will come for the movie. But the movie was a great hit.

Mai : Dadasaheb was a great magician. I would like to narrate one incident. Near Khandala, there is one point called reversing point near monkey point. A train used to go reverse and stop there for a long time. One day my father and mother were traveling. As the train stopped at the reverse point, my father entertained co-travellers with his magic show.

Bapu Watve : Mai, I have read a lot on Dadasaheb. I have read that Kaliyamardan movie took 9 months to complete. Maybe there was some internal problem. He had worked hard for this movie. And it ran for 10 months continuously. Even next ten years, it was running in some other theatre. People used to put you on stage and praise you.

Mai: Yes. People used to pamper me by prising, chocolates, dolls.

Bapu Watve : I heard this movie was so much in demand that there was shortage of prints. Mr. Bhogilal Dave was sent to America for reprints. Afterwards, the same Mr. Dave became the owner of Sharda Film Company.

That means Kaliyamardan set an example.

Mai: Even Lankadahan was also a big hit.

Bapu Watve : Mai, after Kaliyamardan which movie did he produce?

Mai: After Kaliyamardan, there was a big dispute between partner and Dadasaheb on monetary gain. Dadasaheb was a devotee of art whereas partners were interested in share.

He was very strict wherever art is concerned. Partners were businessmen so obviously they will think about profit. My father couldn't tolerate this. He retired from the movie world and came to Nashik. At this point, some workers stick to Dadasaheb and some went for the money and remain in Company. After retiring from the movie world, he came to Nashik. He spent some time in Mumbai and afterward went to Kashi.

At that time, Mr. Achyutrao Kolhatkar, editor of Sandesh Newspaper had written an article on Dadasaheb under the title 'Death of Dadasaheb'. He was a great fan of Dadasaheb.

Dadasaheb stayed in Kashi for one and half years.

There was money problem for survival but we had many things which could be sold. We had lots of gold and silver to sell. Mr. Madan from Calcutta came to know that Dadasaheb was in Kashi. At that time, Madan was also equally famous like Dadasaheb. The Hindustan Film company was Dadasaheb's company whereas Madan theatres was of Mr. Madan at Calcutta. He called Dadasaheb at Calcutta. Dadasaheb did not go to Calcutta. He did not want to leave Maharashtra and our company. We stayed at Kashi for one and half years.

There I lost my brother who was elder than me.

Bapu Watve : This is news to me that Mr. Madan called him there.

Mai : Mr. Madan had given him a big offer to join him.

But Dadasaheb never thought of money.

He did not want to work under anyone. He didn't go to Calcutta. Then he turned towards Drama.

Bapu Watve : Where were you staying at Kashi?

Mai : We all were staying at House of Angre (Angrewada). We were a full family. That time we were six of us. Five brothers and me along with my parents, all were staying at Kashi. It was very hot at Kashi. My three brothers fell ill, one of them died at the same time.

Bapu Watve : At that time, Dadasaheb was not doing anything.

How did you survive?

Mai : We managed the house by selling Gold and Silver.

We had ample gold and silver.

Then he turned towards drama. He started writing drama. He wrote the drama 'Rangbhoomi', which was a criticism on theatre.

Bapu Watve : Mr. Tapkire has also mentioned it.

Mai : The drama's name was Rangbhoomi. The male characters' name in that drama was Sangeetrao (himself) and the female characters' was Madhu. To write that drama, he had called Narayan Hari Apte at Kashi, the grate novelist. This drama was staged in Pune and Mumbai.

Bapu Watve : Were there any songs in that drama?

Mai : Generally, they sing one stanza ten times in the song.

That he never liked. So he had criticized this in his own drama. People did not like this kind of drama. It couldn't make money. It was a loss. Afterwards, Tatatyasaheb Apte brought him back to Nashik. He stayed in Nashik for many years. At that same time, I got married at the age of 14 in 1926.

Marriage was held in Nashik.

Dadasaheb was a devotee of Krishna and Trimbakeshwar.

Whenever he used to go to Trimbakeshwar, he always performed Pooja with all rituals. But somehow, as he was losing in the film world, he was becoming depressed. It is like when a person suffers from monetary loss then he loses his confidence.

Bapu Watve : Mai, what do you think? At first, he was financially sound but started slowly losing everything. What can be the reason for this? Was he fooled by anyone?

Mai : Dadasaheb was not having any bad habit. He was spending money on making sets. He had spent on Setubandan. Then slowly sound films started. Dadasaheb was not aware of the technique of sound or talkie films. Even he had aged. It was not his age to go abroad and learn new techniques.

Bapu Watve : I think he had completed 60 years.

Mai : In 1935, he went to Kolhapur. He had spent a huge amount on making Setubandan movie audible.

He never gave thought to money.

He wanted everything on his way. Financers did not like him spending on nurturing his art. He never settled for less. The clashes started between him and the financier.

Mai : I remember something of the time when everything was ok. After marriage, along with my elder daughter, I had gone to meet Dadasaheb at Kolhapur.

I put my wish to act in a movie in front of him. He told me to get the permission of my husband.

So, I wrote a letter to my husband at Nashik. My husband replied to me that ask him to give me a role in his film.

Mai : After that Dadasaheb left Kolhapur. He started suffering financially. Sometimes he spent in Pune. There one of my brothers whose name was Shrikrishna expired. He was only 18 years old. Again, he came to Nashik. Mr. Tambe had accepted his story and given it to Shantaram at the Film festival in Mumbai in 1939.

Bapu Watve : First time I saw him there. I was 15 years old at that time.

Mai : He had become old then.

Bapu Watve : For me, to see Dadasaheb was big deal. I was very excited to see the person who had started the film in India. He was very good-looking.

Mai : Yes. He had a great personality. Then he came to Nashik. Mama Shukla told him that now you have aged almost 70 years. You should stay in one place. Whatever money you have now, don't invest in the movie.

Build a house for yourself. He listened to him and this is how he built the house and named it 'Hind-Cine Janakashram'. It's a memory of Dadasaheb. Have you been to that house?

Bapu Watve : No. I couldn't. I have gone to your house.

Mai : This house is at Gole colony. Next to the house of Mama Shukla. Outside near the gate, there is a picture of a projector next to the name. That is the only memory left and we children and our memories. No one was connected to his film industry except me. That is also in childhood. My elder brother was connected but afterwards he also quit.

PART 3

Bapu Watve : Mai, did ever your mother expressed her feelings to work in film, since there was no one to act as female character. Did she ever say that if you mean Dadasaheb is ready to act as Raja Harishchandra then you will play the role of Taramati?

Mai : No. I don't think. At that time, society would have not accepted lady acting in film. Even I don't remember she has ever said something like that.

Bapu Watve : Dadasaheb has mentioned it in some articles.

Mai : Not possible. At that time, ladies from respectable families were not allowed to work in movies. This idea was not acceptable to anyone. It was also out of imagination.

Bapu Watve : Maybe she wanted to help Dadasaheb by solving the problem of female character. Or she must have given him the idea but Dadasaheb must not have accepted it.

Mai : No. I don't think. Dadasaheb was a conservative kind of person. He would not have accepted it. On this, I would like to mention here that he was so conservative that my make-up was done by my maternal uncle (Mama) and also putting on clothes. He didn't allow anyone to do it. My Mama was working with us.

Even I was only 6 years old but was not allowed to mingle with other people and also not allowed to play with children of my age. Just imagine 70 years back atmosphere.

Bapu Watve : This was the atmosphere in our Prabhat Talkies also.

The wife of the owner of Prabhat Talkies was not allowed to come to the studio. You must be right that Saraswati Bai must not have approached him as she knew his nature. I just thought that she must be wanted to help him to solve the female character problem.

So Saraswatibai didn't act in the film.

Mai : No, she didn't. My brother had done the role of Rohidas.

Bapu Watve : So this is true that your elder brother worked in movie.

Mai : My elder brother acted in this new Raja Harishchandra.

Bapu Watve : Mai, so it is true that Saraswatibai has not acted in the movie. Maybe you must not be remembering it as you were young or maybe, you must not have heard this conversation. Why I am asking this question that did Saraswati Bai acted in any movie? I have read somewhere that actor who was acting as Shriyal was down with fever. He was having 103-degree temperature. Though he had high fever he continues with his acting and he fell severely ill.

Even the actress who was playing the role of Changuna fell down and had fractured her leg. Dadasaheb was very worried. He has written in his article that someone whispered in his ears that, "Don't worry. I am with you. Till now I have supported you and will remain by your side." He has further stated that he had acted as Shriyal and he convinced her to play the character of Changuna and even my son was going to act.

He has not stated this movie we all acted and completed. Do you remember something about this?

Mai : This movie has not taken place.

Bapu Watve : This movie has not done at all?

Mai : There is no such movie wherein my father, mother and brother have acted. It is 100 percent sure. Even I don't remember such kind of conversation had taken place.

Bapu Watve : Mai, I have read and heard somewhere so I am asking you these questions. There is one incident at the time of Kaliyamardan. Bapusaheb Pathak was owner of Aryan Cinema, Pune. Dadasaheb and he were very close. Even he had helped Dadasaheb a lot.

Mai : Yes, we were staying at his house in Pune.

For Rangbhoomi, we were staying in his house at Pune.

Bapu Watve : Oh. So while you were in Pune, one English movie was released at Aryan Cinema, name something like - Shielding Shadow. There was a scene of a huge creature taring clothes of man with a whack. That was a thrilling experience to watch that scene. Bapusaheb Pathak told Dadasaheb to show something like this in the movie Kaliyamardan. Though Dadasaheb had produced Krishna Janma, he was encouraged to produce Kaliyamardan. This is what I have read.

Mai : It may be possible. Dadasaheb's movies used to release at Aryan Cinema.

Bapu Watve : Krishna Janma was released on 3rd May 1913

and exactly after 6 years, on 3rd May 1919, Kaliyamardan was released. It might be just a coincidence. Mai, one more thing I want to ask you. When Dadasaheb had gone to bring film-related things to England, he had seen a movie 'A daughter of Bharat.' It was produced in England. The name of the heroine was Mrs. Pandita and the hero's name was Mr. Ramabai. They were given horrible consumes. Hero's consume was given to the heroine and heroine's was given to the hero. They had criticized India and had made fun of Indians.

Dadasaheb was very angry. At that time he didn't say anything but later he met the producer and told them that you are spoiling India's name and culture.

Then Dadasaheb challenged them that he will show what our Indian culture is. After that, he produced Raja Harishchandra, Satyavan-savitri and Bhasmasur Mohini. He had shown our Indian culture through these movies. This is how our real Indian culture was shown to foreign countries.

Mai : Yes. In that foreign film, they had misused our Indian Gods. One of the goddesses was named Ibrahim.

Bapu Watve : Oh my God. They had really made fun of our culture. While discussing yesterday, Mr. Nadkarni was the owner of Photo studio and his father in law Mr. Aabasaheb Chitnis was a solicitor. He had given him loan against the mortgage on policy.

Mai : One more difficulty Dadasaheb had faced, is male characters were not ready to remove their mustaches. In the Hindu religion, one shaves his mustaches only at the time of death. Anna Salunke who had acted as Taramati.

Bapu Watve : His name was Krishna Salunke. I remembered it later.

Mai : Yes, though his name was Krishna Salunke, he was called Anna Salunke. He had played the role of Taramati in Raja Harishchandra was also not ready to take out his mustaches. Though Dadasaheb used to tell him that it will grow again, he was not ready. Somehow, Dadasaheb could convince him to remove mustaches. Dadasaheb had faced many problems at every step.

Bapu Watve : Mai, which year did you get married?

Mai : I got married in February, 1926.

Bapu Watve : I think your husband was a pathologist at that time.

Mai : When we got married, he had appeared for last year MBBS exam. He passed his MBBS and then he went to England to take a diploma in Pathology.

Bapu Watve : That means he was practicing here in Nashik.

Mai : Yes. He had his lab in Nashik. At that time, there was no pathology lab in Nashik and also around Khandesh. No one was aware of the word 'pathology'. He made flyers, giving information about pathology. It was the first laboratory in Nashik at that time.

Bapu Watve : This was 60 years back.

Mai : Yes must be in the year, 1923/24.

Bapu Watve : That means long back. I think people were religious, conservative and also orthodox.

You were from a different background.

Even you had acted in the film. Was there any problem in getting married?

Mai : No. They knew our family well. I was very small at that time, hardly 14 years old.

Athavale family knew Dadasaheb very well so there was no problem. Actually, Athavale family was quite orthodox but still, no one had objected. At least I never heard. On the contrary, when Athavale family had come to our house, Dadasaheb had taken them to the studio and showed them Kaliyamardan film.

Bapu Watve : Coincident is that you got married in 1926 and at the same time, Dadasaheb was called as Chief Guest for Natyasammelan at Kolhapur.

Mai : Yes.

Bapu Watve : This was really a good coincidence. Your brother, Suresh Phalke has written somewhere that they used to play different games compared to other children. The studio was in the house itself, so you all grew with reels, camera etc. We all used to play there.

Mai : I got married very early. Suresh was born in 1925 and I got married in 1926. So the other siblings used to go to play but I used to be in the house.

Bapu Watve : Were there any restrictions on children?

Mai : Not as such. We had a three-floor old-fashioned bungalow. We were staying on the top two floors. On the ground floor, all the work related to films like printing, editing and etc was done. There was a big hall and a big portrait of Lord Gurudeo Dutta was hung so it was called Dutt Hall. All the work would start after praying to Guru Dutta. Every Thursday, there used to be Arati of Guru Dutta. Coconut and sugar were served as Prasad. All the film-related work took place there, so we never went there. It was meaningless to enter there. We were not restricted to go there. It was not a studio as such so we happily used to move around.

Bapu Watve : Dadasaheb must be busy, day and night in his work.

Mai : People were working under him but Dadasaheb was supervising everything. All the work took place under his supervision and guidance.

Bapu Watve : Dadasaheb must be starting his work early in the morning and must be staying back late at night.

Mai : Yes, he used to start early but I don't remember he worked late in the evening. There was no system of night duty at that time. Later, we shifted to Mumbai around 1919.

Bapu Watve : I agreed with what Suresh has written about spending time in the studio in childhood. When we were staying near Prabhat studio, we spent our time playing in Prabhat studio. We had no contact with the other world. Our complete world was around film city. Was it something like this with you?

Mai : A horse cart (baggi) used to come to pick up Dadasaheb, later on, Motor car to go to the studio, Suresh and other children used to go with him. I wasn't there that time. I was married and was at my house.

Bapu Watve : Though you were married still very often you visited them.

Mai : Yes, like other married girls, I visited my parents.

Bapu Watve : Before marriage did you go to the studio? For shooting or some work?

Mai : No, before marriage also I didn't visit the studio.

Before marriage, we were staying in Hardikar's bungalow. As I told you before, after the Rangabhoomi drama, we came back from Pune to Nashik and were staying in Nashik. I got married in that Hardikar's bungalow. Even my three brothers were born in that bungalow. Shivay and Changuna these pictures were made at that time. This is what I was telling you that my mother mustn't have acted in the movie.

Since I was grown big, so I can definitely say, my mother wouldn't say anything about acting in the movie.

Bapu Watve : Since it was written by Dadasaheb, I asked you.

Mai : It could have happened in earlier days but not known to me.

Bapu Watve : I want to ask you one more important question.

Dadasaheb had written an article in the Navyug newspaper. A seer person like Lokmanya Tilak happened to read this article and felt Dadasaheb trustworthy. Lokmanya Tilak felt that film is a powerful medium to spread any message to the public.

This is the easiest and best way to reach the public. Then Lokmanya Tilak, Ratansheth Tata and Mohandas Ramji decided to give Rs.5 lacs to Dadasaheb. It was a big amount but these three were sure Dadasaheb would definitely give a result.

With the blessings and guidance of Lokmanya Tilak, Dadasaheb would have definitely given 100% results. But because of Lokmanya Tilak's going to Jail and there were cases going on him this did not work. You must have heard about it.

Mai : Afterwards when we were at Kashi, Lokmanya Tilak had come to our house. I clearly remember him sitting in the hall.

Bapu Watve : Even You must be remembering Begum Fatma who had come to meet Dadasaheb.

Mai : I do remember she had come to our house.

Bapu Watve : Begum Fatma, the actress had given Rs. 1 Lac to Dadasaheb. I think nothing worked out between them. After she became a film actress and had her own studio. Afterwards, the Hindustan Film Company was established. I am going to ask one more thing. I am really surprised about Dadasaheb. He had great knowledge and had done every possible thing about films. Raja Harishchandra was completed. At that time, there were no distributors. To advertise the film, Dadasaheb used to go around villages with Harmonium and Curtain.

Mai : I remember even we all family members had gone to Lashkar Gwalior. It was very hot there. We were from Nashik. Nashik is a quiet cool place whereas Gwalior was very hot. We used to feel very thirsty and lie on the floor the whole day.

Bapu Watve : One more incident had taken place at Surat.

That time, the Drama ticket was for two Ana whereas the film ticket was for three Ana. Someone told him when I can see drama for five to six hours with two Ana then why should I see your film for one or one and half hour for three Ana?

So Dadasaheb used his brain and created one advertisement. The advertisement was like this - "come to watch the film which contains 57000 photos, having 3/4" width and 2 miles long". The effect of this advertisement was so great that the film started getting a response. People started rushing to watch the movie. What a creative brain he had. Do you remember this kind of advertisement?

Mai : I don't remember seeing this but have just heard about this.

Bapu Watve : That means you don't remember and but heard.

One more thing I remember that I read, at the time of Raja Harishchandra, he had given advertisement, inviting actresses with good look.

Mai : Yes. The actresses should be good-looking, should not be lame, not skinny but should be a little chubby.

Bapu Watve : He had given an advertisement in Hindu Prakash.

Many ladies approached, even bad-looking also. Even some prostitutes approached. One of the prostitutes was really good-looking and was ready to act. She stayed back for four days. Dadasaheb gave her training for four days. She did practice for the film and on the fifth day, her Shetji came. He dragged her out by saying, "you don't have shame. Have you given up your status?" I am surprised that for him, acting in the film was of below dignity than prostitution.

Mai : It was a reality that acting in the film was not considered good behaviour.

Bapu Watve : This also you had heard?

Mai : Not exactly at that time as I was too young to understand. Later on, I heard about this.

Bapu Watve : That means no girls from respectable families could act in films. It was a very opposite approach towards acting in films.

Mai : Sometimes, I feel sad. Dadasaheb wanted everything good. He was very strict. His thinking and behavior were of high category. His focus was more on the Brahmin caste.

Bapu Watve : I think his father's name was Dajishastri and he was Dashgranthi Brahmin.

Mai : I will tell you something about Dajishastri.

Dadasaheb's uncle Bhalchandra was in Mumbai, working for railways. He felt, his brother is so intelligent but wasting his life in Nashik. So to utilize his brain on good work, he called him to Mumbai. There in Mumbai, at Elphinstone College, he got a job as a Sanskrit lecturer. He started working there as a lecturer. One day, one Muslim student entered his class.

He doesn't want to teach Ved Shastra to a Muslim, so immediately he left the college and came home. From there he came back to Nashik. He was so orthodox. Dadasaheb grew in such kind of atmosphere.

That is why he was very disciplined.

At that time, he had done topical of Verulchi Leni. I remember very well as I had seen it. He was more on showing educational films. But he was not having sufficient time. After Kaliyamardan if things would have gone smoothly, if he would have adjusted with finance partners, then things would have very different. You would have seen the film industry in a different shade.

Bapu Watve : I think he started very late around 40 years.

Mai : He was born in 1870 that means had crossed 40 years. On top of it, he had become blind. What his family will do if the bread earner becomes blind. But with his perseverance, he stood back.

Bapu Watve : I really wonder about Dadasaheb.

Yesterday, you told me that he used to show everyone how to smile, cry, act. That is the sign of the best actor. I had read about Satyavan Savitri. In that scene, Yam is riding Reda (male buffalo). For the character of Yam, he had selected a very well-built person but he was scared of sitting on Reda. He was not ready to ride the Reda. To show him and make him sit on Reda, Dadasaheb himself rode that Reda. Still that actor was not ready to sit on it. Finally, Dadasaheb had to change the scene. Instead of riding Reda, he showed that Yum is appearing on earth through one star. He had to change the scene because of this kind of difficulties. You must have heard about this.

Mai : Lots of difficulties Dadasaheb had suffered but he was very adamant.

Bapu Watve : What were you telling me about Setu Bandhan? Before Setu Bandhan, Dadasaheb had decided to do some business. Do you have any idea?

Mai : He had started NML products' factory. He had set a furnace also. Before that, he was making soap at home. He had done many small-scale business at home.

These NML products were made on large scale. There was an industrial exhibition held in Mumbai and these products were displayed in that exhibition. This is in the year 1931/32. There Mr. Visweswara Iyer (engineer and scientist) had given him a certificate for these products. The products were of high quality and that too swadeshi so Dadasaheb got orders from Western railways and southern railways on large scale. I had seen these orders. To fulfill these orders, you need finance. So he had done some negotiations with financiers. Afterwards, one financier had come and Dadasaheb put his terms and conditions. It did not work out. He turned down Dadasaheb's terms and conditions and eventually, that set was gone to waste.

Bapu Watve : What you think, had he become economical or practical with the age?

Mai : No. You cannot say he was practical. When you put unnecessary and unpractical terms and conditions, who will accept it? He should have taken some practical midpoint, but he could not. That is the reason; he was never successful in the terms of finance.

Bapu Watve : What he did with the setup? What happened in the end?

Mai : It all went in scrap.

Bapu Watve : Where was it exactly?

Mai : There is Balaji bungalow on the way to Gharpure Ghat.

If you walk down from Gangapur road to Gharpure Ghat there is a big bungalow of Balaji. We were staying there. At that time, there were plenty of open places. He had set up a big shade there for the big furnace. A technician was called specially for that. He wanted everything best but for that you need money.

PART 4

Bapu Watve : Mai, you were saying something about financial support for business!



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Mai : With the previous experience, Dadasaheb had put rigid terms and conditions which were not acceptable to the financier, so he left. Whatever investment Dadasaheb had done in setting up the business, money invested for furnace, went down the drain. After that, Setubandhan and Gangavataran were produced.

Bapu Watve : Mai, your sister got married. Many problems had occurred at that time. I am asking this question because many problems had come when I got married.

Your sister was the daughter of a filmmaker. What was the experience?

Mai : We did not have any problem in getting her married. I had acted in the movie but there was no problem with me getting married. On the contrary, my father's friend named Pusalkar, his son was of marriageable age. Dadasaheb had expired and my mother was sick. We wanted my sister to get married as early as possible. How can we keep her at home? So, we asked them if they are ready to accept our daughter. Do you know what he answered? He said, "Dadasaheb will come to my house in the form of Malti."

Bapu Watve : So, she got married to Pusalkar's son.

Mai : Dadasaheb expired in February and this marriage took place in May.

Bapu Watve : That means people were so devoted to Dadasaheb.

Mai : You are right. Just now my brother in law that means Malti's husband retired as an undersecretary. He was in Mumbai.

Bapu Watve : Mai, do you have any memories of Setubandhan or Gangavataran.

Mai : Gangavataran was last film and had done its' shooting at Kolhapur. So, I don't remember anything about it. There is nothing much to say about it. I mentioned to you earlier that I had expressed my willingness to work in the movie. That's all.

Bapu Watve : Was he ready to give you a role?

Mai : Dadasaheb told me to ask my husband. I will give you the role if he permits. I had a wish to act in Japanese Pankha. But my husband replied that tell your father even he is ready to act.

Bapu Watve : Was it from the bottom of the heart?

Mai : Yes. This was from the bottom of his heart. He was also fond of acting. He used to act in drama in his college days.

Bapu Watve : That means he had a connection with acting.

Bapu Watve : Mai, do you remember Dadasaheb's last day. Let me tell you what I have read. He had forgotten his achievement in his last days. It was the truth.

Mai : Around April 1943.

Bapu Watve : That means, one year before his death?

Mai : Yes. He was aged also and had suffered a lot. With lots of mental and financial pressure, he was very tired. I had gone to meet them with my daughter, at whose place we are now. While having food, he started saying "Sona, Sona...". My mother asked him, "where is Sona? She has already left." But it didn't register him. He said no she is sitting here only. From that time, it started. My husband was a doctor, so we brought him to stay with us. We started treating him. He recovered and started moving around. He was not going out but remained inside the house. No one could make out that he is suffering from a mental disorder. There was no mark of mental disorder suffering on his face. He used to look very normal.

One day, a known person of Dadasaheb, named Mr. Bakhale, Superintendent. Of Post Office, had come to meet him. He welcomed Mr. Bakhale as usual. Dadasaheb behaved so normally that Mr. Bakhale didn't doubt that Dadasaheb was suffering from any disease. Afterwards children came out and told Mr. Bakhale about his illness.

He was behaving very normally in daily life. But sometimes he couldn't recognize us. For one year, he was like this. After six months of his illness, my mother got a paralysis

stroke. Though Dadasaheb used to look normal, my mother had to do everything for him. After six months of his illness, my mother got a heart attack along with a paralysis stroke. Father was mentally ill and now mother also got paralysis. That was a big problem for our family. We were staying nearby in Nashik, so we shifted mother to my residence. We admitted her to our hospital. My sister Malutai, Suresh and younger brother Devdutta looked after Dadasaheb at his residence. Both my brothers looked after the house very well. They never locked the house because of father's illness and attended school alternately. Teachers also knew the situation so allowed to leave early. The financial position was also not that bad. So my brothers and my sister looked after my father very well.

After that one day, Dadasaheb became unconscious so we all shifted along with my mother to Dadasaheb's house.

Though my mother was paralytic, she had started walking. So we all together went home. We stayed for a long time till his death. That was 16th February 1944.

Mai : I got married on 16th February.

My first granddaughter was born on 16th February. That is the reason this date is fixed in my memory.

Bapu Watve : You had some reels of Kaliyamardan, I think Mr. Nair of the **National Film Archive of India** has taken it.

Mai : When Hindustan Film Company closed down, my brothers collected reels of Dadasaheb's films whatever they could and had bought home and had kept it on the loft. What could have they done with it? They were busy in their own business so had no time to look after it. At the time of the Film Century, Mr. Nair of **National Film Archive of India** brought it from Nashik. He was telling me that it was very difficult to bring it. He bought it driving down 120 km by car. It is very risky since they are highly inflammable.

He said, "I was much tensed till it reached the institute." Actually, It is very difficult to reprint such old films but he could do it easily as the quality of the reels was good.

Bapu Watve : Mai, you must be having lots of memories of Dadasaheb?

Mai : I have lots of memories but don't strike me immediately.

Bapu Watve : We will record it again some other day.

Mai, today, the Indian Film Industry has raised up high like Kutub minar, it is all because of Dadasaheb Phalke. He has sacrificed his life for film and even his entire family too. His entire family had supported him to make this success. In the last 15 years, the Indian Film Industry is on the top of the world film industry. So Indian Film Industry should always honour him. I had attended the celebration of the Golden Jubilee of the Film Industry. Though I was very young at that time, I realised that Dadasaheb Phalke should have been remembered and honoured. Even I heard gossip on this.

Mai : I also heard about it. But what can we do?

Bapu Watve : Not only this. When Dadasaheb expired, on that day, complete industry should have closed down. Forget the industry but at least cinema theatres should have kept closed.

Mai : Forget it.

Bapu Watve : No. People are very ungrateful. I heard even Nashik theatres were also not kept closed on that day.

Mai : Let it be. We are only happy that at the time of century celebration of the film industry, Government had honoured him. Before that Mr. Chandulal Shah had honoured him in the year, 1963. That time, Jawaharlal Nehru was alive and he had come for that ceremony. We, my siblings and me, too had attended this function in Mumbai. We had food with Mr. Nehru. Then, at the time of the Century celebration, we were also invited. Even, the people who worked with Dadasaheb were also honoured.

We were really happy. The postal stamps were printed on Dadasaheb. Even raised Dadasaheb's statue at Nashik, even his name was given to that road and inaugurated it by the hands of Mr. Vasant Naik. At that time, Mr. Vasant Naik was Chief Minister of Maharashtra. Later, Mr. Vasant Desai had done program on him at Rangabhoomi in Mumbai. We all had been invited. This is all done by Government and not by fans of Dadasaheb.

The fans of Dadasaheb were ungrateful. Some of them were wanted to do it but couldn't.

Bapu Watve : The funny part of the whole episode is when Raja Harishchandra was done. Mostly Parsi people and Gujrathi people had appreciated it. Not Marathi people. On the contrary, they had criticized him. After seeing the crowd, these Marathi people went to see the film.

This is history.

Mai : One more thing the Government has done that they have started honouring the person, who has served the film industry for long period and have done noticeable work, with Dadasaheb Phalke award. So maybe because of this award, Dadasaheb is remembered at the function. We are really happy for this. We are happy that Government has noticed his efforts.

Bapu Watve : Yes. Mostly it is vice versa. But here people have not taken note of him but Government did.

Do you remember anything, we will again record it.

Mai : Definitely. My cohabitation with him was very less.

Bapu Watve : You are right as you got married at the age of 14.

Though, you were in Nashik, were busy in your own family life. You are very proud to say and it shows on your face that you are a daughter of such a great man.

Mai : Yes I am.

Bapu Watve : Secondly, it's proud to say that you are the first child artist of the Indian Film Industry.

Mai : My grandchildren feel so great about me working in film. They asked the film institute to arrange to see the film. While leaving for Mumbai, My Son's Children, My daughter's children, all had told me that they are going to see this Kaliyamardan film. I told them to contact Mr. Nair at the **National Film Archive of India**. He will definitely show you. At the time of the century, he had shown us all films. Even Mr. Nair showed them all the films wherein I had acted. When they returned back to Nashik, they told me proudly that they have seen my acting.

Bapu Watve : Now what do you feel while watching your acting in film? Do you remember everything?

Mai : Yes, of course. I remember where those shots were taken.

Bapu Watve : They must be feeling proud.

Mai : After my elder son, Vivek got married, at the time of Film Century function, his in-laws, my daughter's in-laws, all had seen how I have acted in Kaliyamardan film. They saw how I danced as a child artist.

Bapu Watve : This is a proud and satisfying moment for you.

Mai : Thus, full credit of this goes to the **National Film Archive of India**, that is, to the Mr. Nair of Archive has worked very hard on this.

Mai : On this, I remember about the Kaliyamardan shooting.

Krishna, after folding hands, leaves the house. He walks towards the river. Then he jumps into the river from the Kadamba tree. There was a big Kadamba Tree on the bank of the river. I was supposed to jump into the river. The shooting was taken from the top. As I was playing the role of Krishna, I climbed on the tree branch and jumped. I was scared. When I jumped, I didn't jump into the river but on the bank where the

mattress was spread. Later, they took another shot and threw one cotton doll of my size into the river. This is the way they showed that I jumped into the river.

Bapu Watve : I want to ask you about Mr. Pusalkar. When he said, Dadasaheb has come to my house in form of Malti. He had any remembrance of Dadasaheb?

Mai : He was having all the cutting of the articles on Dadasaheb. Whatever was written by Dadasaheb and also on Dadasaheb, even criticizing articles, he had all the cuttings.

Bapu Watve : That means he had faith in Dadasaheb.

Mai : Yes. Even he was his friend. When we were staying at Mangaldas bungalow, where the first film Vatanyachya Akshata, Raja Harishchandra was produced. Behind that bungalow, there was a small chawl.

There they were staying. He was a great friend.

Bapu Watve : Where these cuttings must now?

Mai : Now they don't exist. Even my mother had written Dadasaheb's biography. My mother had narrated and sister in law had written it.

It was after the death of Dadasaheb.

It was written very nicely in beautiful language. It was their history of 44 years of life. We could have published it but my brothers had just started working. They were not financially sound to publish it.

Bapu Watve : It would have created history.

Mai : Really. True history as it was told by my mother. We had heard everything from my mother, names of people, places, and happenings. Otherwise, how we would have known?

Bapu Watve : That means, more about Dadasaheb, you have heard from your mother. What happened to those clippings and written articles?

Mai : One day, someone had come to our house in our absence. Nobody was at home. He told my mother to give that biography to him and he will publish it. My mother was not sure when her son will publish so she trusted that man and handed over all the writing to him. Till date, there is no whereabouts of that man. We asked her, "why did you give him?". She said you were not printing and that man promised me that he will publish. So I gave him. She was a simple lady with a clean mind.

Bapu Watve : Yesterday, we had discussed on new Raja Harishchandra.

It was done after 4 years in 1917.

Mai : Lankadahan and Raja Harishchandra were done together. Lankadahan was the last film of Phalke Films. After that Hindustan Film Company was formed. It produced Krishna Janma.

Mai : I just remember about my mother. Whatever she had written on Dadasaheb, amongst that 2/3 pages were found. It was then published in Amrut magazine of Nashik. One more thing I remember, she died in 1953 and the same year, Manohar magazine had asked for the article. I had given one article on Dadasaheb. When Mr. Chandulal Shah had done function in 1963. At that time, some English Newspaper people had come to take my interview.

I told them all my memories about Dadasaheb. They had published it right on the front page. One sentence I remember amongst that is 'Far away from the glory of this industry, she is quite happy and contented in her quiet home.' After coming home, my husband read that interview.

He said, amongst all, this is the main sentence. I am happy and contented but for my father, I am not. There is a qualm in mind that he was not noticed and not done anything for him. We see around when someone dies in the film industry, so much of the crowd gathers for him. But for my father's last journey, no one had attended.

Bapu Watve : That means the film industry had not taken any note of it?

Mai : Not at all. Even at the end of his life, there was no support.

The 3rd and 4th part of the audio Interview of Smt. Mandakini Athavle aka Mai, the daughter of Dadasaheb Phalke has been recorded on 7th and 13th June 1987 at Pune.

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