



National Film Archive of India

Ministry of Information and Broadcasting
Government of India

Interview of Cinematographer, Director M. Masthan in Tamil Cinema by Randor Guy

Tape 01 Side A

00:00:01

Randor Guy : This is Randor Guy interviewing Mr. M. Masthan is one of the seniors most technicians of South Indian cinema who has been in films for almost half a century or 50 years. He started as a still photographer then became a cinematographer. In between, he became very eminent. Then graduated to direction and also to production. He has worked with almost all the eminent directors of South India, right from the late 1930s up to almost the late 70s or early 80s including some of the giants of the industry like Raja Sandow, Raja Chandrashekar, B. N. Reddy, A. Ramnath, ASA Sami and many others. He also worked in a number of studios like the Newton, Jupiter, Modern theatres and also Narasu's. This interview, the first one, with Mr. Mastan takes place on the morning of Thursday, January 21st 1988, at this residence in Nungambakkam, Madras. Mr. Mastan speaks in English and also in Tamil. Good Morning Mr. Mastan. It's very nice of you.

Mr. Masthan : Good Morning.

Randor Guy : You are agreed to spare some of your time for this project of National Film Archive of India. As I Explained to you, the idea is to go to the original sources of

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cinema, senior technicians who are (inaudible) around, who are able to talk like you. So that this material is available for research for all time to come and for posterity it is kept in the National Film Archive of India at Poona. And this is an Aural Film History Project under the which I have done quite a few of eminent figures like M. K. Radha, S. B. Subbalakshmi, A. B. Krishnaswamy, A. S. A. Sami and others. Now you have come for help for which we are very nice of you. Now, let me start by asking can you tell us something about your early life before you came into the films? Where were you born and where were you educated and...

Mr. Masthan : Well Sir, I belong to a business community and somehow my father was in Ceylon and...

Randor Guy : What was the business of his?

Mr. Masthan : He was in Hill stations.

Randor Guy : What business was he doing?

Mr. Masthan : ... supplies means where you come across everything almost (Inaudible) because in the state in ... supply you get one shop or two shops where in people must come and shop for everything.

Randor Guy : So were you born in Sri Lanka?

Mr. Masthan : No no.

Randor Guy : You were born in India.

Mr. Masthan : I was born in India and (inaudible) during the absence of my father, my mother couldn't control me (inaudible) to my father in Ceylon.

Randor Guy : So where was your education, early education?

Mr. Masthan : My early education was in Ceylon.

Randor Guy : In Colombo? Which part of Ceylon?

Mr. Masthan : Nuwara Eliya, that's central part of Sri Lanka.

Randor Guy : Is it a town or a village?

Mr. Masthan : It's a town.

Randor Guy : Nuwara Eliya.

Mr. Masthan : Yes. It's a town and now it has become a very big town when I last saw it in 68.

Randor Guy : So, your education is in Ceylon, when did you come back to India?

Mr. Masthan : In fact, in 1935 I came back to India hoping to join in engineering or medicine or in a professional course.

Randor Guy : You wanted to take a professional course.

Mr. Masthan : Yes, and it so happened, I did get a place in a school of technology for a seat in LEE.

Randor Guy : Licentiate in Electrical Engineering. Where was this school or university? (inaudible).

Mr. Masthan : That's right. The building is still there. Its name was changed.

Randor Guy : But you did not join that place? Did you?

Mr. Masthan : I did. I did join and I was (Inaudible) six months.

Randor Guy : Six months you studied.

Mr. Masthan : Yes and by the side that there was another (inaudible) where (inaudible) there used to be. I don't know whether it is there now, Massy Crons (inaudible).

Randor Guy : What was that?

Mr. Masthan : That's a workshop, a German workshop.

Randor Guy : Massy Johns?

Mr. Masthan : Massy Crons. Crons were mainly distributing cables

Randor Guy : I see. It was a German farm.

Mr. Masthan : Yes, a German farm and I was an apprentice there.

Randor Guy : To learn electrical engineering.

Mr. Masthan : Yes, yes. I was there for 4 to 6 months and I found I couldn't cope up probably this maths and things like these (inaudible) I hate them all... So, even without hearing to my brother who was responsible for putting me into that institution I got out of it. My brother was very unhappy about it but I couldn't help it then my uncle stepped in.

Randor Guy : Who was your uncle?

Mr. Masthan : Mr. Nagur.

Randor Guy : Mr. S. Nagur famous art director and producer at Newton Studio. How was he related to you?

Mr. Masthan : Mother's brother.

Randor Guy : So he was your mother's brother means your maternal uncle.

Mr. Masthan : Yes, maternal uncle.

Randor Guy : So, you went and met him? He stepped in it.

Mr. Masthan : Yes. He stepped in and he said all right let this boy come and stay with me.

Randor Guy : At that time he was in Madras?

Mr. Masthan : He was in Madras.

Randor Guy : What was he doing?

Mr. Masthan : He was the art director in the National Movietone.

Randor Guy : That is in Poonamallee high road near Chidambaram (inaudible).

Mr. Masthan : Yes.

Randor Guy : So, he was already working there as an Art Director.

Mr. Masthan : At his residence was somewhere in (inaudible).

Randor Guy : (inaudible) he told me that once. So, you lived with him in (inaudible)?

Mr. Masthan : I lived with him...

Randor Guy : And what were you doing at that time

Mr. Masthan : Then, in fact, I was killing times. Then he suggested why not you start a studio.

Randor Guy : what studio was that?

Mr. Masthan : It's Phoenix studio. We chose a place at marina near the beach we called it Marina Studio.

Randor Guy : Where exactly was this Marina studio? Do you remember?

Mr. Masthan : It's the end of White House Road where the bus terminus is there. The last building there, the first floor. I was in (Inaudible).

Randor Guy : There you ran this marina studio.

Mr. Masthan : Yes.

Randor Guy : Did you have any experience of still photography when you started it?

Mr. Masthan : No.

Randor Guy : You Learnt it?

Mr. Masthan : I learnt it. There was one Mr. Somasundaram Pillai who later became still photographer in Gemini studio. In fact, he was my guru. He told me what is what in photography and I was there for about 2 years in marina studio. In the meanwhile, since my uncle was there in films, I used to get these negatives - still photos taken in movie studios for (inaudible).

Randor Guy : So, you were not doing any still work in the studio.

Mr. Masthan : (inaudible),

Randor Guy : Who was the still photographer in National Movietone? Do you remember?

Mr. Masthan : (Inaudible) Mr. Somasundaram...

Randor Guy : So, Somasundaramam was the still photographer. So, he used to expose and (inaudible) the negatives.

Mr. Masthan : Some of the negatives. Partly they used to process there and partly used to come to me. So, there during these two years I discussed lot of work and in a large number (inaudible) and all those things and also, we used to do a lot of publicity work for release of films. (Inaudible).

Randor Guy : (Inaudible) layouts, slides. I see.

Mr. Masthan : This column hit me. I was (inaudible) towards the film media and then in 1938 they started the Newton studio.

Randor Guy : 38 was the beginning of Newton Studio.

Mr. Masthan : Yes.

Randor Guy : Now going back to this National Movietone, do you remember any of the films that was made in National Movietone? (Inaudible) you developed. Do you remember any of the various movies?

Mr. Masthan : Pathi Bhakthi.

Randor Guy : It was based on the Madurai Original Boy's Company's play starring K. P. Kesavan.

Mr. Masthan : Yes.

Randor Guy : That was done with National Movietone.

Mr. Masthan : Yes.

Randor Guy : Who directed that film?

Mr. Masthan : Altekar.

Randor Guy : P. Y. Altekar directed Pathi Bhakthi.

Mr. Masthan : Yes and it was photographed by Jitan Banerji, sound recorded by one Mr. Jadav.

Randor Guy : Not Dinshaw?

Mr. Masthan : Not Dinshaw.

Randor Guy : I see. Jadav. he was the recordist and archaeologist.

Mr. Masthan : Then there was another Parvati Kalyanam, I remember.

Randor Guy : Parvati Kalyanam.

Mr. Masthan : Yes.

Randor Guy : Was it their own production?

Mr. Masthan : It was their own production. Then, some Dhanalakshmi...

Randor Guy : S. P. L. Dhanalakshmi.

Mr. Masthan : Yes. She acted and her sister Damayanti also acted. But who were the main characters I don't remember.

Randor Guy : So, these were two films you remember which were made at the National Movietone.

Mr. Masthan : And also there was one picture directed by Raja Sandow and produced by Jupiter Pictures then known as Olympic Pictures or so...

Randor Guy : What was that picture? Do you remember? Was it Chandrakanta? Minor Rajamani?

Mr. Masthan : No.

Randor Guy : Name of the film?

Blank for sometime

Randor Guy : So, that was the National Movietone. Then what happened? You joined the Newtown Studio when it was started?

Mr. Masthan : I joined when it started. Then my uncle said (Inaudible).

Randor Guy : Do you remember how Newtown Studio came into existence?

Mr. Masthan : That is the prime (not audible) Mr. Nagu. Because they had some misunderstanding with Chettiar there that National Movietone was almost closed. So, these people had to have some other place to work in. (Inaudible) studio and Mr. Nagur and some other influential people like (inaudible), Thyagaraja Bhagavathar, Chidambaram Jeppiar. They were about 7 in number, I think.

Randor Guy : The main investors.

Mr. Masthan : Yes, the main investors. And they started a studio. Their first camera was Debrai.

Randor Guy : Debricam?

Mr. Masthan : Yes. Debric Camera.

Randor Guy : How many lenses did it have??

Mr. Masthan : 5 lenses it has and (inaudible) sound equipped.

Randor Guy : On the top of these 5 lenses what kind of lenses were there? I mean what was the widest? 28 mm?

Mr. Masthan : 28 mm, 40 mm, 75 mm, 100 mm (Inaudible).

Randor Guy : So, even 100 mm lens was there.

Mr. Masthan : Yes yes.

Randor Guy : I see.

Mr. Masthan : But only the size was so big issue.

Randor Guy : Camera size was so big. I see.

Mr. Masthan : And you know in Debric camera I don't think (inaudible). It used to be so very heavy.

Randor Guy : I have seen only photographs. I have not seen anything.

Mr. Masthan : It took two people to lift it.

Randor Guy : It was so heavy.

Mr. Masthan : It was so heavy. Two people were to lift it and place it on the stand.

Randor Guy : I see.

Mr. Masthan : I saw only one man lifting it with two hands and that was Raja Sandow.

Randor Guy : Because he was a (inaudible).

Mr. Masthan : On the sets our cameraman Mr. Jitan Banerji was telling (Inaudible) then he just came in and with his two hands he just lifted the camera and put it on the stand.

Randor Guy : Because he was a great wrestler and boxer and what not. And who were the other technicians at Newtown at the time they started out? Mr. Nagur was the art director...

Mr. Masthan : Yes, the art director, Dinsha K. Tehrani was the recordist, Mr. Jitan Banerji was the cameraman and Mr. Purushottam was the assistant - the late Mr. Purushottam.

Randor Guy : He is no more.

Mr. Masthan : Yes and myself. And I had a double duty that is lighting was my job and also still photography.

Randor Guy : Did you have a number of lights there? What kind of lights?

Mr. Masthan : For the first time, you see, we had some closed spots, solar spots (Inaudible). We had quite a (inaudible) lights.

Randor Guy : Were they all MR lights?

Mr. Masthan : Yes, all MR lights and some open type lamps also we had.

Randor Guy : I see.

Randor Guy : You need not have sun (inaudible) and all that at that time?

Mr. Masthan : No, no.

Randor Guy : You had condors for lights at that time? Those (inaudible) lights for condors?

Mr. Masthan : Yes, we had and also, we used to make certain things to cut off lights with open type of (inaudible) like score boards, card boards (inaudible) which used to help us. Because lighting in those days was mostly on a (inaudible).

Randor Guy : Because the film was slow. It was not very fast. What was the speed of the films in those days? Is it about 50 or less? 58 Days?

Mr. Masthan : Yes. Above 58 days.

Randor Guy : It was quite slow. What was the start product and (inaudible)?

Mr. Masthan : You know to start with, we were only using Agfa films.

Randor Guy : Agfa?

Mr. Masthan : Yes, Agfa - the German product.

Randor Guy : Why were people (inaudible) for Agfa? Because of the (inaudible) available for (inaudible)?

Mr. Masthan : I don't know about that. Our cameraman you know, he had a (inaudible) only for Agfa.

Randor Guy : Jitan Banerji.

Mr. Masthan : Yes, Jitan Banerji. He was shooting mostly in Agfa. Later, Kodak came in. Then Mr. Ramnath came to shooting Vande Mataram.

Randor Guy : Because he was in Kodak as an apprentice or something.

Mr. Masthan : So he used Kodak. And then, you know, the results of the Agfa and Kodak - we had some differences of opinions. The Kodak was giving better quality. So, actually we tested it side by side putting two cameras with the same opening, with the same lightning. We shot something and then processed down here and someone went to Kodak laboratories somewhere in Calcutta and the results were cross

checked and we found that Kodak gave superior results than Agfa. Then gradually, Mr. Jiten Banerji turned to Kodak. But there was also another reason – the war came in and Agfa went along.

Randor Guy : What was the first movie made at Newtown? Do you remember?

Mr. Masthan : It was Bhakta Meera by Y. V. Rao.

Randor Guy : This was the first version he made which was M. S. Subbulakshmi...

Mr. Masthan : Yes, yes.

Randor Guy : Who were the artist in Bhakta Meera?

Mr. Masthan : His brother acted as Rana, I remember.

Randor Guy : Y. H. Rao.

Mr. Masthan : Yes, Y. H. Rao.

Randor Guy : I see, the Lion.

Mr. Masthan : And there was a new lady who acted as...

Randor Guy : Vasundhara was supposed to do that role which I believe she refused.

Mr. Masthan : Yes and he brought another lady and called her Vasundhara.

Randor Guy : Yes, I have heard about that. Was it a success? This Bhakta Meera?

Mr. Masthan : No. It was not at all.

Randor Guy : And Y. V. Rao himself did not play any role?

Mr. Masthan : No. But he did play a small role where he came as somebody from Delhi – Akbar’s Coach. (Inaudible).

Randor Guy : Did you have anything to do with Bhakta Meera?

Mr. Masthan : Yes. I was the camera assistant there for the picture and was also doing still photography.

Randor Guy : You are talking of Newtown. Sorry to interrupt you, Mr. R. M. Krishnaswamy was also a cameraman before he became a director and producer like you. I did a similar programme with him for the same project. He told me that before Newtown came into existence in 1937 or 38 there was something as a studio on the same place in (inaudible). Originally there was some kind of a laboratory doing printing work about which Mr. Nagur had spoken to me. And he was very clear. He said one Telugu film called Kavilajuniyam in which the great actor Kalam Narsimha Rao acted was shot there and he said a camera man by name Dwaratna, do you remember that Dwaratna?

Mr. Masthan : I remember Mr. Dwaratna.

Randor Guy : He shot it, I believe it. But at that time, he said, it was not yet Newtown. And That's what he remembered but he did not...

Mr. Masthan : I remember, somebody was telling me that there was a lab.

Randor Guy : Yes lab, Mr. Nagur told me about this.

Mr. Masthan : Yes. Later that lab was improved by Newtown Studio, But about the studio I have no idea. There were number of studios all around. There was one Kubera by...

Randor Guy : Nilupil.

Mr. Masthan : Yes.

Randor Guy : Who did Markandeya. Where was that studio?

Mr. Masthan : It was somewhere near Newtown. (Inaudible).

Randor Guy : 7 studios.

Mr. Masthan : Yes.

Randor Guy : For Kubera, they had own studio building.

Mr. Masthan : Yes and on (inaudible) road, they had something like a studio and lab.

Randor Guy : Where was this exactly? Do you recall the exact location?

Mr. Masthan : Somewhere there near the school, the Christian colony.

Randor Guy : Harrington road.

Mr. Masthan : Yes.

Randor Guy : There was a studio in Harrington Road.

Mr. Masthan : Yes, there was.

Randor Guy : What was it called?

Mr. Masthan : I don't know.

Randor Guy : When was this?

Mr. Masthan : That was in the 1930s.

Randor Guy : This is something nobody has told me about that. There was a studio on Harrington road.

Mr. Masthan : (inaudible). There was the Kubera studio and there was another. There, the street - some canvas street and all those things where they directed a set and they started the shooting where there now at present Liberal Church is there on that Landon Road or something.

Randor Guy : Landons Road, (Inaudible)

Mr. Masthan : (Inaudible)

Randor Guy : On Landons Road?

Mr. Masthan : Yes. (inaudible)

Randor Guy : The Southern Studio is on the end of the Landons Road which became (inaudible).

Mr. Masthan : (Inaudible)

Randor Guy : That is where the Kothari school is there.

Mr. Masthan : Yes. There was another road right behind that Kothari school. On that road...

Randor Guy : On that road, there was a studio? (Inaudible).

Mr. Masthan : Yes. (Inaudible).

Randor Guy : Very close to Newtown there.

Mr. Masthan : (inaudible) was one of the recordists. he was working as recordist there and from there he came on to Newtown.

Randor Guy : His Kumara Kulahtunga. Do you remember anything about that film?

Mr. Masthan : No. (Laughs)

Randor Guy : Because that was supposed to be first picture of T. R. Rajakumari. Because, why I am asking you this question is there is some different two versions about the entry of Rajkumari into cinema. In one of the interviews, Mr. K. Subramaniam has said which has gone on record that he discovered her for Kachadevayani and he gave her a break. This story is quite interesting to narrate that he went to see S.P.L. Dhanalakshmi whom he we wanted to book. And you know Rajkumari is (inaudible) sister's daughter and this girl Rajkumari was very young a teenager brought coffee for the producer and Mr. Subramaniam and they were taken up by her looks. But they thought - because she was (inaudible). Then Subramaniam said why don't we cast her. The producer said that she looks like the

maid, we have come to book the heroine here and you are talking about the maid. Subramaniam said - it doesn't matter she is a maid or not, she looks very photogenic and he said that's how we discovered Rajakumari. But actually, if you look into the facts of the film history she did a picture called Mandaravathi which was shot at National Movietone. (inaudible) who had the studio on the lease and this Kumara Kulahtunga was earlier that time and I have seen advertisements of Kumara Kulahtunga in old magazines in which T. R. Rajakumari's name is mentioned as one of the artists and this was much much earlier than Kachadevayani. What makes it a little more intriguing is - this Kumara Kulahtunga is also a Subramaniam production, it is also an N.P.P.C production. I don't know whether they were getting the facts mixed up or trying to recall confusing one with the other. But I don't think he was deliberating a mistake. That's why I asked you, do you remember anything about this Kumara Kulahtunga.

Mr. Masthan : No. I don't know anything much about this Kumara Kulahtunga except that it was shot outdoor and tent there, that was covered with canvas (inaudible).

Randor Guy : Do you know who was running that studio?

Mr. Masthan : No. I don't know, I have no idea. But, about this Rajakumari, I can tell you one thing, that is when I was staying with my uncle Mr. Nagur S. P. L. Dhanalakshmi and Damayanti all these people were living right around there and they were working in some pictures in Newtown Studios and along with them the teenager Rajkumari was also living there.

Randor Guy : You remember seeing her there?

Mr. Masthan : Yes.

Randor Guy : But she was not there in films?

Mr. Masthan : I had no idea whether she was there in films or not but, mainly I don't think she was there in films because only these people were engaged Damayanti and S. P. L.

Randor Guy : And I asked Mr. Kottamangalam Seenu into another programme. She and Kottamangalam Seenu did a film called Surya Puthri in which he was the hero and she was the heroine. He also said that Kachadevayani was her third film and Kumar Kulathunga was the first. But he said Surya Puthri and Kachadevayani were started at the same time and Kachadevayani came earlier than Surya Puthri. That's what he said because he was also hero in that movie. Surya Puthri was directed by (inaudible) and Dungan and he said Duncan never used to come to the sets, it was (inaudible) who carried on and Dungan's name was put but I have never seen him on sets even one day.

Mr. Masthan : (Inaudible) was living right down this road.

Randor Guy : The same road?

Mr. Masthan : Yes, the other side of the road that is (Inaudible) or something.

Randor Guy : Do you know him very well?

Mr. Masthan : Yes.

Randor Guy : Then After this entry in Newton after the Bhakta Meera which was the first film of Mr. Y. V. Rao. Then what happened? What did you do? What happened at Newtown?

Mr. Masthan : (Inaudible) and new producers were coming.

Randor Guy : Studio picked up.

Mr. Masthan : Yes. It was picked up. There was new equipment, brand new (Inaudible) recording machine and the new camera all those things which were picked up.

Randor Guy : How many floors did you have there?

Mr. Masthan : To start with there was only one.

Randor Guy : Later on there ...

Mr. Masthan : There were very small floors. There were only two and later on towards the end they had one more floor, open floor where they used to direct sets and shoot in the night. Then this Bhagavathar's production - Thiruneelakantar...

Randor Guy : It was in 1939.

Mr. Masthan : Yes and along with this came Shantha Sakku Bai.

Randor Guy : Where Kottamangalam Seenu acted.

Mr. Masthan : Yes.

Randor Guy : Sundar Rao Nandkarni directed. Pani Bai, Aawathamma acted.

Mr. Masthan : Yes.

Randor Guy : Did you work in Sakku Bai?

Mr. Masthan : Yes. I did.

Randor Guy : You were one of the Cameramen in Sakku Bai. Talking of Thiruneelakantar, I think Raja Sandow directed the film. Can you tell us something about Raja Sandow? You must have known him quite well.

Mr. Masthan : He was a very very frank man.

Randor Guy : Forthright.

Mr. Masthan : Yes, forthright in his actions. He called (inaudible) and he never hesitated. (Inaudible). Whenever he came on to the sets artists used to shiver. He had a very frank nature. He wanted films to be done (inaudible). He wouldn't make any compromises.

Randor Guy : Was he a very good technician?

Mr. Masthan : Yes, He was and he looked after technicians very well.

Randor Guy : I see.

Mr. Masthan : And before he ate, he always used to know what others were going to eat. He was very particular about it. (Inaudible).

Tape 01 Side B

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Randor Guy : Can you tell us something about the making of Thiruneelakantar? It was own production of Bhagavathar, the Trichy Thyagaraja Films and the music director was Papanasam Sivan, Raja Sandow directed it.

Mr. Masthan : Jiten and we were behind the camera. For set direction, I remember that these people went all the way to Chidambaram and made a sketch and put some photographs of that (inaudible) of the place. (inaudible). Exact to size they made the set in Newton. And it was Thiruneelakantar, I think the recording was done on BAFA - British Acoustic Film (inaudible).

Randor Guy : That was sound negative?

Mr. Masthan : Sound recording equipment.

Randor Guy : It was brought specially for Bhagavathar?

Mr. Masthan : Yes. (inaudible).

Randor Guy : Bhagavathar was one of the investors in Newtown Studio. Wasn't it?

Mr. Masthan : Yes, yes. One of the partners. and BAFA was brought in there.

Randor Guy : And where was the outdoor of Thiruneelakantar shot?

Mr. Masthan : Where we shot Thiruneelakantar, now it's all blooming township, new colonies now.

Randor Guy : Where?

Mr. Masthan : (inaudible) and all these places right from the temple. There that (inaudible) tank. It is in the tank that the last scene was shot. Here these people go in and come out as (inaudible) - it was shot there and right from that area we shot we shot almost all songs and scenes and everything. Because it was easily accessible and then there was a temple close by and there was no crowd, not many people around. (inaudible) so, it was easy for us to shoot.

Randor Guy : You were talking of Raja Sandow. You told me some time ago an incident connecting how he made the heroine trend. (inaudible) Papa - she died recently, 2 months back. I know because I did a serial in Maalai Malar - the Daily Thantir's evening version about the Bhagavathar's life and also the Lakshmikanthan Murder Case. That became a very successful serial. Nearly about 20 weeks I wrote it and by the side of my almost a full page - instalment of each issue, they used to publish letters received from readers about Bhagavathar. And there was one letter from Singal Velley Papa saying how did she recalls the Bhagavathar's days after she read my story and all that. Then a few days later, they published a photograph and since she passed away suddenly. So, I knew about Singal Velley Papa died in Thiruneelakantar. But what happened in that incidence? Who was this Singal Velley Papa? Was she a stage artist or what?

Mr. Masthan : No, I think when she came, she was all new with a new face and she had nothing to do with films writing or anything. If at all she has done anything the credit goes to Mr. Raja Sandow of having got all those things. Actually, even these people you know for crying scenes and laughing scenes, he used to crack jokes and get them to laugh and for crying, you know he used to sometimes come out with chill factors and called them names using all the vulgar languages and naturally they broke down and started crying.

Randor Guy : (inaudible) So he was a man who knew psychology.

Mr. Masthan : Yes and immediately the shot came to his liking he would just off the camera, he would cut, he used to go to embrace the artist and took them run down the floor.

Randor Guy : I see because he was a weightlifter, he could do all those things.

Mr. Masthan : Yes.

Randor Guy : He was usually a physical cheeriest, wrestler, boxer and supposed to had gone to Bombay. Mr. Omar Sobani, famous textile magnate and author, he was the one who discovered him. Omar Sobani was a multi-millionaire of Bombay with a lot of textile mills. He was a great philanthropist; a Muslim engineer and he had an interest in wrestling himself. So, he heard about this man and took him to Bombay. One of his close friends in Bombay was Ardeshir Irani - the man who made Alam Ara, the father of Cinema. When he had a look at Raja Sandow (he was then P. K. Nagalingam as you know

) then he took him into his film and made him a hero. He said you look like a Raja, so you are a Sandow. You must be called Raja Sandow. That is why his name has been...

Mr. Masthan : In most of his films he acted with (inaudible).

Randor Guy : Yes, Ranjit, Chandulal Shah. He became a director then. This is the story which I've heard about Raja Sandow from some of his old friends and of course he is gone. That was the only film you did with Raja Sandow. The film Thiruneelakantar.

Mr. Masthan : Yes.

Randor Guy : It was a very big success. Wasn't it?

Mr. Masthan : Yes. Very big success. A huge success. Bhagavathar's songs and all.

Randor Guy : I know, (inaudible) became an all-time favourite.

Mr. Masthan : It was on the lips of everybody.

Randor Guy : I know. Still sung by many.

Mr. Masthan : Even today, you see, it is heard in the radio.

Randor Guy : And where were the songs recorded? Do you remember?

Mr. Masthan : They were recorded here in the Newtown Studio.

Randor Guy : You had your own recording section.

Mr. Masthan : Yes, yes.

Randor Guy : By Dinshaw Irani?

Mr. Masthan : Of course, they had no recording rooms or anything but I remember we had a shed, like (inaudible) shed.

Randor Guy : Just a (inaudible) shed?

Mr. Masthan : Yes. Here almost all the recording done for (inaudible) pictures. There, you know, songs used to be recorded. Recordist was Mr. Saigal.

Randor Guy : I know, A. K. Saigal.

Mr. Masthan : Yes. He used to record the songs and even dialogues on the sets.

Randor Guy : If you had (inaudible) shed, what about the acoustic? What about external noises?

Mr. Masthan : It was all there but they did the recording. Mostly the recordings used to be kept for the night.

Randor Guy : Because of the less of external noises.

Mr. Masthan : Yes, for all those things.

Randor Guy : What about shooting being done at night? Was this the reason? This noise?

Mr. Masthan : No. Sometimes, the lights were unbearable. So, then they used to put it for the night. There with the artificial lighting they used to shoot. Many shots were taken, you know, the group shots and all those things (inaudible). You know, sometimes we used to get back lights, sometimes front lights. We couldn't start early in the morning to get enough light for (inaudible). So, under these circumstances we usually (inaudible).

Randor Guy : Another thing I want to ask, you know, talking of lighting. I've heard from some of the older cameraman like you, telling me that in those days, they never used to work with top lights. They used to stop shooting by about 11:30 or 12 and again start by about 2.33. So that the top light, when you get shadows of your own nose, eyes and all used to be avoided. Was that right?

Mr. Masthan : Yes, yes. It was.

Randor Guy : (inaudible).

Mr. Masthan : Now, if you ask me to shoot, I would just wait. Otherwise, I will bring in a shadow. Of course, there are several ways of getting over it now. Then of course, we all thought about those things. So, we didn't have to visit the studio. Now, you know, you can take one of the halogen lamps also (inaudible).

Randor Guy : Now, even for the daylights we have all these (inaudible) and shadows - that's possible but in those days, you did not have it.

Mr. Masthan : Yes. At the most, what we used to do is to have a screen lighting. (inaudible) which used to hold over head and then put a little shadow and things like that and use the light.

Randor Guy : The different conditions which brings out the engineer (inaudible). We say that necessity is the mother of invention. So, that was the Thiruneelakantar shot at...

Mr. Masthan : At the same time, side by side. This picture Shantha Sakku Bai was also directed...

Randor Guy : Shantha Sakku Bai was directed by Sundar Rao Nadkarni.

Mr. Masthan : Yes. He was an employee of this (inaudible) then. They were the distributors (inaudible).

Randor Guy : He came here to demonstrate some cameras to Sathappa Chettiar.

Mr. Masthan : Yes. Sathappa Chettiar was then running Sundaram Song Studios.

Randor Guy : In Adayar. It is now Sathya Studios.

Mr. Masthan : Yes.

Randor Guy : You had Aswathamma there in Sakkubai.

Masatn- Yes, yes.

Randor Guy : Can you tell us something about Aswathamma? He remains very mysterious. We are not many seem to know about her because she died at very early age, like very young and...

Mr. Masthan : Yes. Even as she was acting, what I heard was that she was a TB patient and very thin and tall. Those were her songs...

Randor Guy : I know she was good singer. Recently, I saw some excerpts from Chintamani at a full course where Nair brought some clippings and Chintamani saw some two - three reels, which was of course shot in Calcutta, as you know, by Y. V. Rao. (inaudible) some songs were shot and some other songs. She looked very thin and tall. Was she a very good artist or just a singer?

Mr. Masthan : She was just a singer. In fact, there must be certain gramophone records.

Randor Guy : Yes, yes. She was a gramophone recordist.

Mr. Masthan : Yes and from there (inaudible) somehow, she was brought into the...

Randor Guy : She did Sadarame with Gubbi Veeranna and after that only she came to chintamani.

Mr. Masthan : Sakubai is after Chintamani because the success of Sakku Bai made them to get...

Randor Guy : Chintamani's success maybe brought.

Mr. Masthan : Yes, yes.

Randor Guy : And Sarangapani played a key role.

Mr. Masthan : Yes, the hero.

Randor Guy : And for the exteriors where Sakku Bai is supposed to have gone to Pandaripur and all that, I don't think you went to Pandaripura and ...

Mr. Masthan : No, no. It was Thiruneermalai (laughs).

Randor Guy : Thiruneermalai as Pandaripura. Nobody thought of going that far. And all.

Mr. Masthan : of course, (inaudible).

Randor Guy : Was Sakku Bai a big success?

Mr. Masthan : It wase.

Randor Guy : Because recently screened on TV. I don't know whether you saw it. I saw it on TV. At that time, I was too young to see movies. It was quite interesting in his own way, Sarangapani and all. Some of the songs are very popular, I believe. One particular song when Aswathamma brings water (Inaudible) - I think having a possibly taken from some new theatres (inaudible) because the songs, music from the (inaudible). After Sakku Bai what happen? What did you do?

Mr. Masthan : Then I think the next big picture was Shakutala.

Randor Guy : Shankutala was done before B. N. Reddy came there with Vande Matram?

Mr. Masthan : No, no. B. N. Reddy came in almost immediately Newtown Studio was started. That day itself he came with this Vande Mataram.

Randor Guy : Vande Mataram released in 39.

Mr. Masthan : Yes, 39. Then soon after that they started making Sumangali.

Randor Guy : Sumangali with (inaudible).

Mr. Masthan : Yes.

Randor Guy : And this talking of B. N. Reddy, you know, I have a special interest. I did a book on him at all. But that was the time when you came to know Ramnath and Shekhar.

Mr. Masthan : I suppose.

Randor Guy : Or you do them earlier?

Mr. Masthan : No. It is from (inaudible).

Randor Guy : When B. N. Reddy brought them there.

Mr. Masthan : Yes, yes.

Randor Guy : They were called the famous trio - Reddy-Ramnath-Shekhar. As they used to call it. How long did Vande Mataram take? B. N. was a very slow worker as I know.

Mr. Masthan : Those days pictures should have taken 1 year.

Randor Guy : 1 year for each film. What was the reason for such a long time to be taken? Was it because you were preparing so long or...

Mr. Masthan : Sets.

Randor Guy : Direction of sets.

Mr. Masthan : Yes. Because we depended entirely on sets (inaudible).

Randor Guy : I see. Even for a street scene, I remember in old films, they had sets. They did not go to any particular street and shoot as we do now.

Mr. Masthan : Because, you see, there are now lamp posts and (inaudible) in each street (Inaudible). Things were cheaper.

Randor Guy : So, directing a set was cheaper. What was the cost of picture negative? Do you remember? Black and White picture negative? A. P. K. told me it was about 40 rupees for 1000 feet roll. Is it right?

Mr. Masthan : That is for positive.

Randor Guy : What was about picture negative?

Mr. Masthan : 90 Rupees.

Randor Guy : Today it is (inaudible).

Mr. Masthan : It was 90 Rupees for black and White and 40 or 45 Rupees for sound positive.

Randor Guy : I see. This Vande Mataram, now we'll discuss a little more about Mr. Ramnath and also Mr. Shekhar. You worked with Ramnath and you were quite close to him. Can you tell us something about Mr. Ramnath because I am doing a book on him as you know for the archives.

Mr. Masthan : Ramnath is one of the most brilliant workers if you think. (inaudible) I had a lot to learn from him just by observation. He doesn't talk much. He was very silent man but he does these for you to observe and be educated.

Randor Guy : Do you remember any incident there in the making of Vande Mataram which brings out the various aspects? Now you were telling me about this speed variation in some songs with every camera. Can you tell us something about it?

Mr. Masthan : I think that was in Sumangali.

Randor Guy : Sumangali, not in Vande Mataram.

Mr. Masthan : Yes.

Randor Guy : That was the second picture of B. N. Reddy.

Mr. Masthan : Yes. One whole night he was shooting a song with the Debris camera and in Debris camera, for playback and for the sound direct recording, you have to change the cycles of the (inaudible). So, one was for direct recording - it was 50 and for the song...

Randor Guy : It had a very good (inaudible).

Mr. Masthan : Yes. It was in 40 speed. So, arrangement is still there. What you have got to do is to just turn it. So, I was working. I had all excitement perhaps I forgot all about

it. It could be shot the whole night - the whole song and it was one of these street songs that goes on (inaudible). At four o'clock early morning, the artists had gone with taking their makeup and all those things. I just opened the camera to find that it wasn't the recording version of the play back.

Randor Guy : It was in 50.

Mr. Masthan : Yes.

Randor Guy : It was in 50 not in 48.

Mr. Masthan : Yes, not in 48. I had a shot and fortunately Mr. Ramnath was there, I told him "Sir, this has happened". He said "All we need to solve (inaudible).

Randor Guy : I see. He didn't get shocked.

Mr. Masthan : No, not at all.

Randor Guy : He took it easy. He was such a calm man.

Mr. Masthan : Yes, very calm man and he was not at all disturbed about it. He just said "All the clips are developing. We will see it tomorrow". Next day, he saw the rushes and said "Go man, I think you have to sit here in this table and start manipulating the whole thing". (inaudible).

Randor Guy : (inaudible) He was very good editor also, I believe.

Mr. Masthan : He was. Though they had an editor...

Randor Guy : Who was the editor? Mani?

Mr. Masthan : Mani.

Randor Guy : Mani. You told me about it.

Mr. Masthan : He always had the final say (inaudible). After he okayed on it, we started.

Randor Guy : What was Shekhar doing A. K. Shekhar apart from art direction in Vande Mataram and Sumangali? He was also recording sound as audiographer.

Mr. Masthan : Yes, as an audiographer he was recording sound. On the sets he used to be present.

Randor Guy : Who used to operate the camera? Ramnath?

Mr. Masthan : Ramnath himself used to operate the camera and another thing, still photography was done by Mr. Shekhar. He used to expose, that is he had a graphex. Graphex is the part of the camera which he used to use and then I used to develop it and get it printed.

Randor Guy : Where? In your Marina Street?

Mr. Masthan : Yes, yes.

Randor Guy : It was still in existence?

Mr. Masthan : Yes, yes.

Randor Guy : Who was running it when you came in Newtown?

Mr. Masthan : One of the assistants, there (inaudible).

Randor Guy : Who was there?

Mr. Masthan : One (inaudible).

Randor Guy : I see, he used to work here. Why I'm asking is I have a still with me. I will bring it and show it to you. That is the shooting of Sumangali. It shows Malati in bed. (inaudible) she went to die or something like that and it shows that it's a working still. It shows B. N. Reddy, Kamalakara Kameswara Rao who I think was the assistant director, Ramnath is behind the camera he carried (inaudible) - something like a leather jacket he is wearing and you are also there, looking very young. I'm sure that you would like to see that.

Mr. Masthan : Yes, yes.

Randor Guy : That photograph I have with me. Kameswara Rao gave it to me. I will show it to you and somebody else is also there with you - another assistant, I suppose.

Mr. Masthan : I think, one Mr. Natrajan who was as a relative of Mr. Ramnath.

Randor Guy : I see. Is he still in between?

Mr. Masthan : No. He left the field and now he is a Hindi Pandit or somebody else.

Randor Guy : Where?

Mr. Masthan : (inaudible).

Randor Guy : I am asking you this because, when this photograph was shown, the other person whom now you said might be Natrajan, they are not able to identify. And that was Vande Mataram & Sumangali. What was the (inaudible) that you said about Sakuntalai? That was a production of Sadasivam and M. S. Subbulakshmi - Chandra Prabha Cinetone.

Mr. Masthan : Chandra Prabha Cinetone and the Royal Talkies.

Randor Guy : Royal Talkies in Madurai - famous distributors and producers.

Mr. Masthan : Yes.

Randor Guy : It was a Joint Production.

Mr. Masthan : And, you know, they produced all great films - on one side Sumangali, on another side Thiruneelakantar and Sakku Bai and other side we had this Sakuntalai. So all...

Randor Guy : Many great films made at the same time.

Mr. Masthan : Very big films we made.

Randor Guy : Who directed the Sankutalai? Ellis R. Dungan?

Mr. Masthan : Yes.

Randor Guy : Can you Tell me something about Dungan? How did he come to India? He's an American.

Mr. Masthan : He's an American. But the earlier part of it, you know...

Randor Guy : You knew him very well?

Mr. Masthan : From Sakuntalai onwards I knew him.

Randor Guy : Where was he living in Madras?

Mr. Masthan : There was a new Ambassador Hotels.

Randor Guy : Next to Spencer's. behind (inaudible) now.

Mr. Masthan : Yes. He had a room there and he lived there.

Randor Guy : He was a bachelor?

Mr. Masthan : Yes, a bachelor. He all around lived there and he was a very fine technicians to work with.

Randor Guy : As a cameraman, I believe you also put lot of makeup and things like that.

Mr. Masthan : (inaudible). Whenever you suggest something there are people who don't like.

Randor Guy : Don't like being told.

Mr. Masthan : Yes but (inaudible) he used to take it.

Randor Guy : He was open to all.

Mr. Masthan : Yes, open to all (inaudible).

Randor Guy : I suppose he did not know any Tamil being an American.

Mr. Masthan : No.

Randor Guy : Then how did he manage?

Mr. Masthan : He had an assistant called Mani who used to translate everything for him (inaudible).

Randor Guy : Do you remember anything about the making of Sakuntalai? It is a memorable film with M. S. Subbulakshmi, G. N. Balasubramaniam, Serukalathur Sama, N. S. Krishnan – a galaxy of artists. Do you remember the making of Sakuntalai? Anything interesting?

Mr. Masthan : I know, one interesting thing I can tell you. Our sound engineer Mr. Dinshaw Irani was shooting in this Government Estate of India of forest scenes.

Randor Guy : They used to allow there in those days?

Mr. Masthan : Yes, yes. This man (inaudible) jumped onto another horse (inaudible) and the horse went on a man's (inaudible).

Randor Guy : Oh God! Then?

Mr. Masthan : Then it threw him down and he got his spine broken. He was in the hospital nearly three to four months.

Randor Guy : What scene did you shoot in that the Government Estate of India?

Mr. Masthan : (inaudible)

Randor Guy : They were all shot in the Government Estate?

Mr. Masthan : Yes. (inaudible) and he had a launch two-seater.

Randor Guy : Who?

Mr. Masthan : Dungan.

Randor Guy : He had a launch car, two-seater.

Mr. Masthan : With a platform built on trolley. (Inaudible). He was a very innovative man (inaudible).

Randor Guy : Do you remember G. N. Balasubramaniam playing Dushyanta. He was the famous Carnatic musician. He was not much of an actor.

Mr. Masthan : Yes, yes.

Randor Guy : Do you remember any connection with G. N. B. in that film?

Mr. Masthan : No. I had never gone (inaudible).

Randor Guy : What about M. S. Subbulakshmi? What do you remember about her? Because you have worked in two films with her and what about Sadasivam her husband? What do you think of her as a film artist? Because as a musician, she's unparalleled.

Mr. Masthan : I think as an artist she did her best in these two films and one who moves with everybody very well.

Randor Guy : Excellent person. No two opinions about it. Thinks of courtesy, politeness, humility and all that.

Mr. Masthan : I wish, I could meet her once.

Randor Guy : She was very close to you. (inaudible). You should do that. Talking of this Sakuntalai, this is a matter of interest today. Do you remember in the court scene, in the Darbaar scene of Dushyanta, there is a dance? The main dancer is our V. N. Janaki, the current Chief Minister of Madras. Do you remember it?

Mr. Masthan : No. Most unfortunately, towards back end of the production or when the production was about three fourth finished, I had gone home for my marriage.

Randor Guy : So, you got married around Sakuntalai?

Mr. Masthan : And then I put some of the scenes - Darbaar scenes and all those things (inaudible).

Randor Guy : Recently, I saw it about two years ago. There was a screening of Sakuntalai in one of the film societies. The print was brought from Film Archive of Pune. They have a print. Interestingly, I saw it with R. Ram Murthy, who was the Assistant Editor in that film. His name appears in the credit titles. (inaudible). You must have known Ram Murthy very well. He makes Kannada films.

Mr. Masthan : Oh, yeah.

Randor Guy : He was the Assistant Editor and I sat with him. In an interesting way, when his name appeared on the card, we all clapped - three of us. People are wondering why they are clapping in and we explain it. In that, the sequence, she was very slim at that time. There is a group of people dancing and she's in the middle. Mr. Ram Murthy and I said yes that yes V. N. Janaki can make (inaudible). You don't remember Janaki doing this dance. You were not there, you said.

Mr. Masthan : No. In fact, (inaudible).

Randor Guy : (inaudible) Janaki during Jupiter times. Velaikari - much later.

Mr. Masthan : Yes.

Randor Guy : After Sakuntalai, what did you do? You were working in almost every film made at Newtown?

Mr. Masthan : That's right.

Randor Guy : As a regular camera assistant, whatever be the language. What are the Telugu films, you remember, you worked on there? Apart from B N Reddy's.

Mr. Masthan : I worked on Malli Pelli.

Randor Guy : That was Y. V. Rao. That was the same time as Sumangali. That was also shot at Newtown. Kanchanamala and Y. V. Rao. Do you remember Kanchanamala?

Mr. Masthan : Yes.

Randor Guy : What do you think of her?

Mr. Masthan : A very fine artist.

Randor Guy : Later on she became mentally unbalanced and she died without covering her senses at all.

Mr. Masthan : And (inaudible).

Randor Guy : (inaudible). That was also shot there, not at Gemini?

Mr. Masthan : Yes and then Patni by Ramabrahmam.

Randor Guy : That was Kannagi in Tamil.

Mr. Masthan : Yes.

Randor Guy : Prakash Rao, Rushiyendramani. They acted.

Mr. Masthan : Yes.

Randor Guy : I read a book on Ramabrahmam also. At that time, I did a lot of work on these things. All of them were shot in Newtown.

Mr. Masthan : Ramabrahmam, another character...

Randor Guy : Do you remember anything about Ramabrahmam? What you remember about him?

Mr. Masthan : Very nice person. Always he had a (inaudible).

Randor Guy : Very nice person. You were not involved in his Mala Pilla and other films.

Mr. Masthan : In Mala Pilla, I was there. That (inaudible), the writer. What was his name?

Randor Guy : Tapi Dharma Rao.

Mr. Masthan : No.

Randor Guy : Not Tapi Dharma Rao?

Mr. Masthan : The writer of Mala Pilla also acted in that film.

Randor Guy : Govindarajula Subba Rao.

Mr. Masthan : Yes. [Note- In the credits of the film only Tapi Dharma Rao's name has been written as the writer]

Randor Guy : He acted. You know Govindarajula Subba Rao?

Mr. Masthan : The language difficulties were there.

Randor Guy : You couldn't talk. You did not know much Telugu at that time and They did not know Tamil at that time.

Mr. Masthan : Yes. (laughs). Even now I do not know much Telugu.

Randor Guy : I see. When (inaudible) what happened to Newtown Studio? Went on with the work? Kannagi was also made there.

Mr. Masthan : Yes, yes.

Randor Guy : It was 42. That means they must have started in 41. You were involved in Kannagi also?

Mr. Masthan : Yes, in fact, I independently shot some scenes with Mr. Raghunath.

Randor Guy : Now, in the credits of Kannagi, the name of R. S. Mani appears and in the original advertisement, Mr. Somasundaram's name appears. Now, Raghunath tells me that he directed.

Mr. Masthan : He directed some part of it.

Randor Guy : Who exactly directed what? Can you tell us something? That was a very memorable film.

Mr. Masthan : It is R. S. Mani who did it.

Randor Guy : Completely?

Mr. Masthan : A part of it was done by Mr. Raghunath also.

Randor Guy : How did Raghunath come into the picture?

Mr. Masthan : I worked as his cameraman.

Randor Guy : Raghunath's?

Mr. Masthan : Yes.

Randor Guy : Who worked for R. S. Mani?

Mr. Masthan : There were two other people. It was started with Subba Rao.

Randor Guy : W. R. Subba Rao?

Mr. Masthan : Yes. He was brought all the way from Modern Theatres.

Randor Guy : He was working in Modern Theatres at that time.

Mr. Masthan : Yes. As the cameraman, he was brought there. Then way to that Newtown Studio these people found some responsibilities that not up to the mark to Subba Rao. Then finally

Tape 02 Side A

00:00:30

Randor Guy : Yesterday, you were talking about a film which was directed by Raja Sandow for Olympic pictures. The name id Minor Rajamani. I checked last night in the directory. I think Olympic Pictures was again another option for Jupiter Pictures of Mr. Somasundaram and S. K. Mohideen. I don't think any other film under that banner. Now we know that production under that name. This Minor Rajamani again was something film with some social significance. Do you remember that film? Where was it made?

Mr. Masthan : It was made in National Movietone but I was not involved in that.

Randor Guy : You didn't know any.....

Mr. Masthan : I used to be a just a visitor.

Randor Guy : because I understand Raja Sandow made liked to make films with some kind of social significance or message like Anadhai penn, (inaudible).

Mr. Masthan : Yes and this untouchability was a practice in those days.

Randor Guy : I think this Minor Rajamani had some kind of (inaudible) like untouchability. by C V Ramalingam..... And we left it yesterday when we came to

the making of Kannagi in 1942 by Jupiter Pictures, which is one of the big hits of Tamil cinema. And also supposed to be a classic. Where was this Kannagi made, in Newtown?

Mr. Masthan : Newtown Studios.

Randor Guy : The thing is that, at that time Jupiter was not in Coimbatore.

Mr. Masthan : No, they were not there. They found this studio much later. In fact, they established themselves in Madras with these people.

Randor Guy : And then in Coimbatore.

Mr. Masthan : And then they produce another picture also Mahamaya.

Randor Guy : That was also done in Madras?

Mr. Masthan : Yes, at Newtown Studio.

Randor Guy : Can you tell us something about this Kannagi, which was one of the landmarks of Tamil Cinema.

Mr. Masthan : The photography of Kannagi was supposed to be done by W. R. Subba Rao. But somehow (inaudible) they had some differences of opinions and Subba Rao went out of it. And finally, it was done by a Mr. Marcus Bartley.

Randor Guy : Was it one of his early films?

Mr. Masthan : Yes.

Randor Guy : But was he on the rolls of Newtown Studio or he was a freelancer cameraman (inaudible) for this film?

Mr. Masthan : I think he was not on the rolls but (inaudible) by the producer. I don't know, I am doubtful about it because later on he came on the rolls of Newtown Studio. In the next production Tamizharyum Perumal directed by Mr. T. R. Raghunath and produced by Mr. Ramanathan Chettiar.

Randor Guy : This Kannagi, was written by Elangovan, the famous dialogue writer. And he became famous with Ambikapathy based on the (Tamil). I think that was also

the film (i.e. Kannagi) which shot Kannamba into limelight for her delivery of dialogue. Did she know Tamil at that time?

Mr. Masthan : (Inaudible)

Randor Guy : Because, Kannamba's step son i.e. Nagabhushanam's son by his first wife was in college with me. He was a lawyer; he died some years back in a sad accident. He used to tell me that when his step mother Kannamba made this film, she was not fully conversant with Tamil. And the entire dialogue had to be written in Telugu. And with that Telugu script she used to come up with such wonderful delivery.

Mr. Masthan : She used to mug it up (Inaudible) and she had a way of delivery. The dialogue writers those days used to sit with the artists and train them in such a way... Sometimes they used to go to the artists' houses for giving rehearsals - how to deliver dialogues and all. Even the sound recordists used to correct them for delivery of dialogues and all these things...

Randor Guy : And what about the role the director in Kannagi because there are so many artists R. S. Mani, Raghunath.

Mr. Masthan : I think it is finally Mr. Somasundaram's name that was there

Randor Guy : R. S Mani Also.

Mr. Masthan : Yes, R. S Mani.

Randor Guy : I asked Mr. S. V. Venkatraman who was the Music Director and also Mr. S. V. Sahasranamam, who not only played a role, he also told me that he was also going to be the assistant director in that film. He worked on the directorial side. They both told me that the Raghunath did mostly the music and dance numbers, because they were supposed to be good at it while Mani did all the dialogue part and the other dramatic part of the picture. Mr. Venkatraman also agreed to a very correct way of deciding to do it. Can you say something about it ?

Mr. Masthan : It is right. In that, Saroja did most of the dance.

Randor Guy : Who later on became Mrs. Raghunath.

Mr. Masthan : Yes, later on became Mrs. Raghunath, so they are right who told it, Mr. Raghunath dance numbers, I photographed some of them with him.

Randor Guy : How do you do that quick shot?

Mr. Masthan : You know if and when it is a boom sound boom, carries at all the dance across the camera they cut there and you know they reversed the camera and stagnant away from the next answer when it is run rightly...

Randor Guy : So you reversed it, so you did not do any special effects on it, though reversing the camera..... Did you have any equipment for doing special effects in those days like optical printer?

Mr. Masthan : support and special effects, you have to take over access.

Randor Guy : Did you do it like that in Kannagi?

Mr. Masthan : (Inaudible)

Randor Guy : How did you do that scene of Chiannappa.

Mr. Masthan : We had made some and then fall in cyberspace and the you know (inaudible) things put the man in ... Covered our face and (Inaudible) the whole thing, but that's man you know? And Before this optical resources and although (Inaudible). It is still like

Randor Guy : Yes yes, I had some work with him much, much later.....

Randor Guy : And Kannagi was a very big success.

Mr. Masthan : Very big success, he put that exactly main Mr. Raman Bhrahma.

Randor Guy :

Mr. Masthan : No no,was after

Randor Guy : Are you sure?

Mr. Masthan : Yes, it after Kannagi, But then thereafter, I think they change something.....

Randor Guy : Did you work in also?

Mr. Masthan : Yes, I was there.

Randor Guy : Mrs. Ramabhramha, Did it shot in Newton?

Mr. Masthan : It was shot in Newton, cameraman was Mr. Girish Sakat. (Inaudible)

Randor Guy : Girish Sakat. (Inaudible)

Mr. Mastan-(Inaudible) And he did good work.

Randor Guy : And after this Kannagi, you said about Mahamaya, what kind of film was it?

Mr. Masthan : (Inaudible)

Randor Guy : It's not historical

Mr. Masthan : It was musicians that's this

Randor Guy : I think Chakrapani, I did very well role in that. ASA Sami told me. And that was also directed by Mr. R S Mani, Mahamaya. You don't remember, you worked on that picture.

Mr. Masthan : I worked on that, and there in this picture also some scenes were shot by Mr. Raghunath.

Randor Guy : Even in Mahamaya? And this Tamizhariyum Perumal is supposed to be the tamil version of the Kalidas, that's what Raghunath told me. Now T. S. Durairaj was moralistic hero in that film. He is a comedian. When I asked him was it a comedy, a comedian being made a hero. He said no, no. This fellow is an illiterate..... and he overnight blossoms out in a poet. I said, it sounds like a Kalidas he said more or less like Kalidas legend, which was tamilised. And that was Tamizhariyum Perumal, I think MGR played a role. That's what Raghunath recalls. Do you remember M. G. Ramachandran in that picture?

Mr. Mastan-Inaudible.....

Randor Guy : That time he was only a small artist with only a very small role.

Mr. Masthan : I remember Chellappa.

Randor Guy : V. A. Chellappa.....

Mr. Masthan : Some king or

Randor Guy : (Inaudible) Chellappa?

Mr. Masthan : Yes yes, I remember he has put in one suggestion in one shot. This man is where and He didn't make the shot at all (Inaudible).....

Randor Guy : And started talking perhaps.....

Mr. Masthan : (Inaudible)

Randor Guy : Then I heard that some of the old artists, they were not very much in favour of the suggestion shots the camera hold on shoulder and they were being blocked out away importance not And how did this Mahamaya was? Did well? I think Kannamba was also there in Mahamaya, P. U. Chinnappa was there....

Mr. Masthan : Chinnappa was there.....

Randor Guy : And the ASA Sami who agreed with Jupiter at that time and did some drama which comes in that, He said he wrote a play, which was made something like a play within a play in Mahamaya and that was the..... And he was talking about the role of M. G. Chakrapani, M. G. Ramachandran's elder brother, saying that it was something very memorable, but particular role which was written in such a way and he also said that was the almost the first to role in Tamil cinema, which had political undertones that's why the whole thing more or less.....very interesting. Do you remember that?

Mr. Masthan : I don't know, when I was perhaps too young to understand this, particular all those things...

Randor Guy : I think he even said that character was called.....or something like that. is the strategist and villain in The man who does everything who manipulates the king is something like a kind of Chanakya, I don't know whether that role was transplanted into this. And that's why I wanted to ask you whether you remember that...

Mr. Masthan : No, I don't remember it clearly, but I remember some of the scenes there and also this technology used, he has a long role and a very good role he played.

Randor Guy : He made a name in that...

Mr. Masthan : And in this a drama inside the drama that I remember,

Randor Guy : Which ASA Sami wrote...

Mr. Masthan : Where our music director M. S. Viswanathan makes an appearance...

Interviewer-Singer at that time and the staff...

Mr. Masthan : Yes, singer and Jupiter staff. Where he..... (Tamil).....I remember that incident.....

Randor Guy : He told that he worked as an assistant to the UC Director Something like or odd job.....

Mr. Masthan : He still can in Raja Sandow's... a small boy building a big in Mahamaya.
16:38

Randor Guy : (Inaudible) Sung by Chinnappa, I see, that was shot here and during that time, did you do any other Telugu film of B. N. Reddy, Devata. Devata was at around this time..... was made.....

Mr. Masthan : was made..... in pictures.

Randor Guy : Not here? But why did they leave Newton? Because they were not getting facilities?

Mr. Masthan :Newton was getting busier and busier so there were sufficient of accommodation.....and all the schedules were getting completed in the time.....disciplined.....that was K V Reddy...

Randor Guy : Do you remember K V Reddy? He was a production manager.

Mr. Masthan : Yes, production manager and man who was and man who can get people to work

Randor Guy : Did you have any to work with K V Reddy?

Mr. Masthan : No.

Randor Guy : production manager. Both are on his first picture.....after Mahamaya what is the film you were involved in?

Mr. Masthan : After Mahamaya for some time you know, the whole routine was our the production itself was in trouble because the evacuation in Madras all those things.

Randor Guy : In 1942.

Mr. Masthan : Yes 1942.

Randor Guy : Was Newton closed during that period?

Mr. Masthan : Yes, It was. In most of the things all washed away from Newton.

Randor Guy : Because of the floods?

Mr. Masthan : Yes. waters flowing on the ground floor so badly... heavy rains and this Chandrababu and he said this place is right. (Inaudible) because stream lighting which carry ... this rainwater backside, couldn't push through on that because that was the water started growing inside here for...

Randor Guy : So this flood destroyed a good property of Newton studio? What about the camera and

Mr. Masthan : They were saved, recording equipment and

Randor Guy : Who was managing the studio at that time?

Mr. Masthan : Chettiar was there....

Randor Guy : He was there in active manager? Ramanathan Chettiar?

Mr. Masthan : All the people were there.... Dinshaw was there, Jitendra was there, Mr. Nagu was there.....all the people were there.

Randor Guy : Was there any General Manager or somebody like that.....?

Mr. Masthan : There was a manager.

Randor Guy : Who was he? Do you remember him?

Mr. Masthan : There was one Naidu.....he was the manager and the cashier that's all, minimum staff they have and production man was a jack of all trades..... And sometimes when there is no movement, they also hang on to the nominal boom operator. All-purpose people, but there were very very limited staff.

Randor Guy : Then what happened.....that studio was closed? Did you go back to our village? or you were in Madras?

Mr. Masthan : During that time I was in Madras, because my brother he was.....

Randor Guy : What was he there?

Mr. Masthan : He was So, I was waiting for him to get to the service, we would all really all the immediately call realised, he asked me, then there was a college, there was somebody to be in charge of the college.

Randor Guy : Which college?

21:00

Mr. Masthan :Inaudible

Randor Guy : he later on went to..... I know i met him, he was going for some shooting, we met in Calicut Station..... So you stayed in Madras?

Mr. Masthan : Yah I stayed in Madras, and soon after this flood, it was then the Gemini was found.

Randor Guy : Gemini was found in 1940.

Mr. Masthan : 1940. But I think Mr. Ramnoth said.....

Randor Guy : Yeah that was in 1947.....they left. After Bhakta Potana, I believe, Martini was also closed because of evacuation..... And they renewed their office to Tadipatri, because the native place of the other partner Moola Narayana Swamy. And much of the editing of Potana, I believe, where Mr.

..... them. He said that was the time I met the Sundaram who was a foreign lady his first wife. And that was the time, I believe Sekhar and Ramnoth were left in Madras without knowing whether they were working for Vauhini Studios or not. So while he was.....this is what is Mr. Sekhar told me. Many, many years later when I spoke to him, and because I asked him one question, why did you and Ramnoth leave B N Reddy? Because you are all living like more or like brothers and part of the family? He smiled and said, what do you want me to say? I said I don't know, tell me the truth. I'm not going to put this..... that you are very close B N Reddy. Is it any? I don't mind what the things are today. It's all past. He said, there are two reasons. One was Ramnoth always wanted to be a director. That was his ambition to direct film, and you can't think of a better than the Ramnoth for directing a picture and B N Reddy was always telling us that he was going to start a film in Tamil and which will be directed by Ramnoth. And B N Reddy also told me at one time that he wanted to make Kamala Bala Charithram a well-known novel in Tamil in as a movie Tamil and B N Reddy would ask Ramnoth to direct it. And interestingly, in one of the old issues of Narada, the magazine whichwith Shrinivas Rao, there is a full page advertisement, in which there is an announcement by Vauhini Studios. "Look out for our first Tamil film, shortly to go on of sets", but they never made it. They never made it and Ramnoth felt a little disappointed that this project did not come true. There was also another reason the Ramnoth was also very vaguely expecting or anticipating that he would be asked to do Bhakta Potana that did not happen. When K V Reddy was brought in, he was a cashier and production manager and so on. He seemed and told Sekhar, you see they are after all from the same community. And we are strangers. And they may call us brothers.....and so when it comes to the their thinking is slightly different. Afterall blood is thicker than whatever they say. And another thing he said, at that time in the Madras both Ramnoth and Shekhar they were not very wealthy people. They came from lower middle class backgrounds. They said "we could not afford to stay in Madras at that time without knowing where our next pay packet was coming from. And B N Reddy promised to do so many things and he went and sat in Salem, from Salem, he was going to Tadipatri and all and we were not even getting any communication. At that time Mr. S S Vasan came and gave a fabulous offer something like 1500 rupees per month or something that was the salary offered, which as you know, in those days is a big fortune. So Ramnoth and I without giving a second thought you say we said this is the truth. For such things, some people may speak out of context, but this is what exactly happenedo Randor Guy. That is the reason why Ramnoth and myself that is Sekhar we left B N Reddy which sounds very convincing also. And later on, I asked the B N Reddy about this, the Sekhar said all these things. I said I'm not making it out of imagination. This is what Mr. Sekhar told me Ramnoth died very young and there was no question I'm asking him, he said it is partly true. Then I asked him about this Tamil

picture and I have seen an advertisement in this Narad Deepavali in Malyam Social issue....There is an advertisement, you are announcing your first Tamil production and advertisement is something like milestone..... one milestone is Vande Mataram, another milestone is Sumangali, third milestone is Devatha. And a big milestone Blooming on the Horizon is going to be their first Tamil production that milestone never appear of course. So, he said that was the Kamalaambaal Charittiram I wanted to do and it was a costume drama. And he said, we could not think of doing that in Newton Studio because of the various difficulties. So this he was narrating as a kind of a background to why he thought of his studio. Apart from the fact he had difficulty in Newton, about getting your dates, in time and all that. He said at every stage there was delay. And that was the time I went to Mr. S. S. Vasan and Kamalaambaal Charittiram I think Vasan also had an eye on making it in Tamil or he had rights to it, something like that. So at that time when he said Mr. Vasan I want to make this Kamalaambaal Charittiram then Vasan I believed in a very joke..... but sarcastic way said that if you want to make this picture you must have your own studio otherwise do not think of all this this man because he has a studio of his own, more or less taunting me and said you can't do this, you can't do that. Then he said Mr. Vasan, I am going to have my own studio and he said I am quoting what I told Vasan. This was almost 30 years later. What you have is a well-furnished studio that is Gemini. What I am going to build is a well-equipped studio and you will see the difference and he walked out in a half a minute..... that is what B N Reddy told. And that later on led to my doing building Vauhini Studio...That was the story of this Kamalaambaal Charittiram. Did you hear about this Kamalaambaal Charittiram?

Mr. Masthan : No.....

Randor Guy : You never heard about it. Then what happened? After Mahamaya, after evacuation.....

Mr. Masthan : After this evacuation..... And I was there for some time without knowing what to do. Then in Srilanka.

Randor Guy : Your father was there?

Mr. Masthan : Yes, my father was there and my brothers were telling me....., instead of wasting time here, why don't you go and in fact, in all earnestness, I don't really know what to do. (Inaudible) At my advanced Cody, Amanda brought to the immigration officer. I agree with everything. He says I'm not going to permit you to vote. So I waited One day, the next day. And again, if you see our business there, my brother is with me, my brother who passed away three years. He lives with me. And I

went in a video and I decided we are not doing anything. Then I told him to go to my government site and on the way at Nigeria, it was just one of these papers and when he was going through this new --- Mr. Ramnoth said ---- Gemini

Randor Guy : Has it film magazine?

00:29:50

(No audio)

Tape 02 Side B

00:00:21

Randor Guy : We are telling about the advertisement or news you saw in a magazine which you bought it Madurai?

Mr. Masthan : ----- So he went back home, and then I guess what, Why not I, once again go back and analyze that data. I came back, I met all these people, but then I somehow I couldn't bring myself to tell them that they want a job.

Randor Guy : You might run up and say yes, Almost automate

Mr. Masthan : almost every week we can use to make then there was Mr. Ramnath is there ---

Randor Guy : That he married at this time

Mr. Masthan : No he' not, then where at the same time you know Mr. Krishana Aiyar our Sound Engineer ----- he used to tell me that much like -----

Randor Guy : Where was the Krishana At that time

Mr. Masthan : he was not yet (Inaudible) And we were supposed to work for ---- Krishna. And finally Krishna joined in the van. I could not joined.

Randor Guy : know Mr. Krishna was asking you asked what a doubt

Mr. Masthan : Yeah. I'm not gonna say but Maya you and Mr. Ramos knew that I'm unemployed. If there is anything vacant, then you actually are semester you come and join me here.

Randor Guy : He didn't say that

Mr. Masthan : he didn't say that was oh, I don't want I will I meet these people very often. And they ask you all these things, I shouldn't embarrass that was my friend. He was asking me about a job opportunity there really in that situation I don't want to say three ways of creating that memory, memories of

Randor Guy : the Re-opened

Mr. Masthan : Re-opened the ---- and Meera was... MS Shubhalaxmi Meera started like the infact I was in the meantime I was in touch with Mr. Deepak Banerji.

(Inaudible from 00:03:04 to 00:04:28 due to heavy voice over & noise)

Interviewer- there is one song, which is a very famous song of Ms. subbulakshmi that (Tamil) him by which he sings on a desert on a Camelback, where was that shot do you remember? That's very sweet song

Mr. Masthan : (Tamil) I think somewhere in Jaipur

Randor Guy : (Inaudible)

Mr. Masthan : ----- the day and lessons those upset the shouting those at Newton Studio's and the Meera for ---- writing ---- and those roses and these are lighting effects and always we actually didn't know that he is facing today and then from different angles we photographed probing to see the position and angle lighting also to our

Randor Guy : recently this Meera's Hindi version was telecast yeah for the many back also, as a late night show. For the second time the telecast I saw and I took a lot of notes I personally remember this point, the process are very fruitful in a good feeling holder. I even told Mr. Sadashivam when I met him when I was shooting a film on somebody cinema said he came there (Tamil) was a party and he said, because I'm also writing books not only making films so having already you asked me to have the right to be interviewed by me and all that, then it struck me when I was not my opinion alone. A few others also. In many of the close ups, I felt and many of my

friends will watch that night. But they're M S Subhalaxmi is to almost look like Dr. Raja Kumari in some sense. It's like baby step two like almost like another way it is a face. And there is almost a striking resemblance. Except for are those

Mr. Masthan : movies good enough to lots of troubles

Randor Guy : It is all Duncan's idea to make more nose and..

Mr. Masthan : No no we achieve you know

Randor Guy : Within he's idea, it he so much involved

Mr. Masthan : man it was a really use Blue Print's

Randor Guy : Did he use any defuses

Mr. Masthan : yah yes, specially -----

Randor Guy : Are you using any self talk like Hollywood when I believe when they shot? Greta Garbo and all those famous actresses were using silk stockings before the lens.

Mr. Masthan : Sylvia, were really nervous talking said he had all these bars and things as usual. You know, then this was the most experimental stage. So our, our library or the school or whatever it is, you may call it was the data. We go see an English teacher how we display the images later. And all those things come back in a minute, the whole thing here are the ability

Randor Guy : (Inaudible)

Mr. Masthan : with whatever and little equipment we have ----- that is have we learn. It's a hard way.

Randor Guy : I know it is a Hard way but and it is a best way. And another thing I want to ask you Meera did FGR act? No, because I don't remember seeing him in all the books, which are now coming after India, you know all almost everybody is bringing all the supplements and things he has depression on the situation, I suppose. I mean, the list of his films, almost everybody is mentioning Mira. I don't think he is in Mira. Not to my recollection as a very good memory as you know. So that's why I wanted to ask you.

Mr. Masthan : as far as I know,

Randor Guy : She's not there, -- Balaiyya was there ? Sarang Pani was there similar to some others were not many male roles. Though the center on ShubhaLakshmi is and they were the songs of ShubhaLakshmi recorded.

Mr. Masthan : I knew when it goes through this and here there's very little here. That one is the big the big comment is me. ----- we came to resolve some of the songs with an RC

Randor Guy : Special requirements, where was the exact time fix?

Mr. Masthan : Fix then he was but ----- the AVM --- Studio ----

Randor Guy : They recorded it, and who got in Mr. Duncan or Sadashiv?

Mr. Masthan : Not Duncan, Not Duncan And later Mr. Gino also joined

Randor Guy : as his assistant

Mr. Masthan : no no as associate, so both of them recorded and there's also Dinsha. So all these three people say to me put their heads together, Because of MS ShubhaLaksmi

Randor Guy : And I find that the Hindi version was obviously dubbed from Tamil, a few songs were written next time shot. Video goes the extra scene shot for the Hindi version.

Mr. Masthan : No, And it was entirely shot by Mr. Griffin and Silvaraj

Randor Guy : Hindi? For the additions were made

Mr. Masthan : because by the time they decided to go all these things I had worked on as a totally free pulled away from their by Duncan and put Valmiki

Randor Guy : Where was Valimki Shots do you remember any interesting incidents and entity Meera and Mr. Duncan with someone that you are associated with him because I'm planning a book on Elyssar Duncan also wonder whether you put a light on demand. Like all the technical innovation,

Mr. Masthan : You know, as a as a management as a technician is an all rounder in the nature as a director and his ---- himself and a very good responsive type.

Randor Guy : Mr. Rahman Murthy

Mr. Masthan : he never uses any harsh words as such. Soft spoken man It's not no ---

Randor Guy : Even he did not know language at all.

Mr. Masthan : And he used to all ---- sambars (Music)

Randor Guy : --- Some are associated with him as an assistant or religion.

Mr. Masthan : No, and I know silver bersama has as Krishna, he said as Krishna is in Chintamani.

Randor Guy : Chintamani? I think it was Krishna Pidal he played Krishna a very pompo Krishna

Mr. Masthan : And once when you are running that Marina, who is he needs to take a small break out of interesting this science,

Randor Guy : at Krishna

Mr. Masthan : 100%

Randor Guy : I say, especially at his own expense. Krishana Pidala I think was done by CV Raman. I think that was done by CV Raman. Now its been communicated to like me.

Mr. Masthan : Almost -----

Randor Guy : PK Sakshi and Subramanian Subramanian and after I Bhakta Meera, Bhakt Meera or Meera, as it was called in Tamil, what do you Meera I think it was in 45?

Mr. Masthan : Yes, 40 probably 45 and I was engaged in this Telugu Praoduction Walmiki. Walmiki or drama

Randor Guy : Vimal Tandal & Elyssar Duncan

Mr. Masthan : Elyssar Duncan any ways almost --- through, he did pictures in any way it has taken over. Brief some --- at Coimbatore. There have --- staff.

Randor Guy : I am talking about Walmiki, Janakibai, This was Telugu film Vimal Tandam Few character, because in the back directing in film only Tandam may be --- art director. And Duncan said not in the title, not in the title in that book.

Mr. Masthan : I'm not seeing the past they're meant to come to some sort of arrangement. I can't tell because you did most of the work you put a heavy on

Randor Guy : And I think, ----- Devi lead uh female lead what sort of an artist was still around but ---- to She's fom Srilanka do you work with her earlier than Walmiki?

Mr. Masthan : No, I think I met her first, time I met her and ---- and most ready to do the outdoors.

Randor Guy : I see, where did it is outdoor Walmiki?

Mr. Masthan : I told so this this ----

Randor Guy : Now Nagi Reddy --- what was there earlier

Mr. Masthan : It was --- uh grow ---

Randor Guy : Who want it? not a chamber garden chamber.

Mr. Masthan : Chamber Garden and originally it was the property of one now, see Abdul Hakib

Randor Guy : Who was he?

Mr. Masthan : And later lead a magnets, Nawab C Hakib. And later it was bought by some friends actively embracing

Randor Guy : Some replicate

Mr. Masthan : yes, some new emergent,

Randor Guy : What was they doing there? They skipping like...

Mr. Masthan : They calculating Paddy and hundreds of mango trees and all sorts of fruit trees are grown there, and coconut palms and all those things

Randor Guy : So although are done. They're all new to you hired it from the sippican business

Mr. Masthan : that was the time when they directed the hearts there to accommodate Burma

Randor Guy : or after one

Mr. Masthan : after one or down to four before this was in the hands of the government. And then you know, when you enter the easy the government it is easy for Duncan to go into vise and get the permission ban immediately see everywhere it happened and even in Nautica vandelay where this man used to go he just barges in something gets a permit and

Randor Guy : Because he's foreigner

Mr. Masthan : Foreigner, when he ---- says the shooting at Udaipur we wanted to take a boat from the palace corpus we went from there to the lake palace and it was very hot sun beating is a perhaps 100 degrees they just opened an umbrella of holdings in housings event Mr. Duncan was said and the guy he said the camera and said you can't hold an umbrella

Randor Guy : for what is the reason

Mr. Masthan : a local man can't hold an umbrella within that complex.

Randor Guy : Only Maharaja's can do it

Mr. Masthan : Maharaj's can do it and ---- can do it.

Randor Guy : then what happens

Mr. Masthan : Then what happen, I gave umbrella got into the boat and faster run.

Randor Guy : was very interesting,

Mr. Masthan : And I asked people (Inaudible)

Randor Guy : and is Walmiki ---- Devi did not speak Telugu.

Mr. Masthan : Voice over,

Randor Guy : And who played Walmiki

Mr. Masthan : Suri Narsimma Rao

Randor Guy : Suri Narsimma Rao,

Mr. Masthan : and in a very good artist in a very nice man.

Randor Guy : How did you find that --- Devi? There are lots of stories being circulated around her about her? What kind of a person was the Mr. AP Krishnaswami who directed her Vidya Pathi ---. He gave me one version of how many reviews then ASA Swami who directed or in Raja Kumari, she created a ---- She gave one version. And like the several people have been giving several versions about the ---- Devi. And I had an occasion to see him. What kind of a person was it?

Mr. Masthan : I know. I know her but not as our princess. She's good artist really over. (Inaudible) That's all nothing more, ---- the different manuals? And I have only language as he said only through the camera.

Randor Guy : And after this, you said you went to Jupiter, the center studio at that time who was running it when Jupiter goes to court when it was extended? Yes.

Mr. Masthan : No, because the property of the owners of Rajlakshmi studios

Randor Guy : Rajlakshmi Mills? Rajlakshmi Mills ? It's not a group of nyro Do you know who the main man was?

Mr. Masthan : I forgotten.... And first production was, first picture Murugan, Shri Murugan,...

Randor Guy : & Shri Murugan was written by A S Swami? That's what he said that was his first and the who directed seen?

Mr. Masthan : there were a number of people who were very funny but finally it was vicious almost

Randor Guy : and I believe Tommy foster is biting is putting his directorial feet in this film and he destroyed He also mentioned about you with the camera and online how he had problems of saying start and MS Krishnan had to come and ask him on the back and he also said about directing the doctor the well known of teaching to play the Surya..... even mentioning about you at that time what happened what made what broadly hearty laugh

Mr. Masthan : I still remember the dialogue, (Inaudible)...

Randor Guy : Who gets the

Mr. Masthan : No, Rajendran & P ... Narayan (Inaudible) nice didn't win is the messenger of more than

Randor Guy : He was supposed stage artist is the problem of talking...

Mr. Masthan : (Inaudible)

Randor Guy : It his opinion, & its very interesting.. and NDR did that Dance. Which is supposed to have been very impressive and that paved the way for their making him a hero in Raja Kumari This was one of the reasons he said

Mr. Masthan : and as I can camera and it has to go through so much lighter than his mirror reality fan ...

Randor Guy : because he's very fare...

Mr. Masthan : Vey fare... he all the mistakes and the color (Inaudible), then after every shot Yeah, because after dancing sent it to us to watch it because on the number one

Randor Guy : so, again I play I play video so far it was disturbing the light missing

Mr. Masthan : hree times brighter than his face

Randor Guy : made a face we need our adjusting the lighting apart from the only the only way is

Mr. Masthan : that was only, because if it's very sharp or banged on

Randor Guy : That not many have told me the body being greater than or whiter and brighter. And he's made a face and on the whole very fair man. I don't know how an Indian would be so far he was much better than many Europeans. I've seen that that's one of the attractions I suppose. And that was your first meeting with India?

Mr. Masthan : No, I will at the very beginning. My whole thing was 38 I told you that we are Seeta Ganana

Randor Guy : Seeta Ganana you did not speak about it, never talk about it. Seeta Ganana Who was whose picture was

Mr. Masthan : it was Shamrao's pictures. Infect, baumannii was there in that picture

Randor Guy : Was is her first film?

Mr. Masthan : maybe this is not

Randor Guy : What role she played at, who was seta?

Mr. Masthan : See it was Baumannii was she played Sheeta. And that Krishna Murthy Singer, M R Krishna Murthy was there..

Randor Guy : Who directed it?

Mr. Masthan : Raja Chandra Shekhar..

Randor Guy : Raja Chandrashekar Was it he's first film?

Mr. Masthan : No. is Bruce arrived from North

Randor Guy : Eastern cities isn't it?

Mr. Masthan : The reason they are doing some they're in Bombay, Bombay.

Randor Guy : We were talking about Sita Janana 1938, talking about Raja Chandra Shekar. Can you tell us something about Mr. Raja Chandra Shekhar? He was Raghunath's younger brother.

Mr. Masthan : Younger brother, And they just finished a thesis and we are in a north east Calcutta or Bombay. And Mr..... he's brother and Mr. P. S Virappa, I happen to meet them for the first time in the Seeta Janan

Randor Guy : At Newton?

Mr. Masthan : At Newton studio's..

Randor Guy : Who was the producer for Seeta Janan?

Mr. Masthan : Anamali Chettiyar, Shamrao pictures

Randor Guy : Who later on Shamala studio, he was the producer was the producer and this was the story about the birth of Seeta Janan

Mr. Masthan : Birth of Seeta Janan and also outdoor lighting is underway to for those studios get's engineering stations...

Randor Guy : (Tamil)

Mr. Masthan : There used to be a lot of stability there's

Randor Guy : a lot of snow is a manmade forest, which doesn't remember much of a forest but because they're two months ago, I saw one of the episodes of my enemy fall on the floor rocks the rocks are very nicely formed. There's some very fascinating formations now partly there aren't many trees we call it a forest but if a qualifier is very more wrong than forests but is good for photographic was in shooting and all that good very good video, but I actually asked that man who came along with us when we shot that film they're where is that forest? and he said is a manmade forest is not a natural part of life like Uty and... So this is a totally different I think they started like an experimental format to the quantities that are before us department It is called wonder no it's not a product. So you shot the outdoor

Mr. Masthan : Yes, outdoor there and this shot that Newton

Randor Guy : What role did ... plays a small group

Mr. Masthan : I remember distinctly the fighting scene so we've been seeing between verify and So exactly I do not know what role they play this way. And you know, I used to work with smile on measures running about this to being roughed in..... So everything these people said they only smiling and laughing. So they thought that believes is making funny with me. And then after a week or so any met is there in Between you see in the city to the (Inaudible)....

Randor Guy : after this when you joined Jupiter, yes, you said you made the three move and that was my first one was the first Ranger but it is success.

Mr. Masthan : uh And I'm the boxerc boxer is a failure we do not need technicians we are always

Randor Guy : Who played Murugan, the Hero, Hero of the stories..? U said Harini?

Mr. Masthan : Harini played the bal Murugan,

Randor Guy : Harini was the lady artist who later on became became Kannada, for Raj Rajashri...

Mr. Masthan : and then after the ... balu was there and then what V V Narayan Swami,

Randor Guy : the main artists. And After Shri Murugan?

Mr. Masthan : After Sri Murugan and that's what it was in almost everything that is being shot there.

00:29:51

(No Audio)

Tape 02 Side A

00:00:30

Randor Guy : Yesterday, you were talking about a film which was directed by Raja Sandow for Olympic pictures. The name id Minor Rajamani. I checked last night in the directory. I think Olympic Pictures was again another option for Jupiter Pictures

of Mr. Somasundaram and S. K. Mohideen. I don't think any other film under that banner. Now we know that production under that name. This Minor Rajamani again was something film with some social significance. Do you remember that film? Where was it made?

Mr. Masthan : It was made in National Movietone but I was not involved in that.

Randor Guy : You didn't know any.....

Mr. Masthan : I used to be a just a visitor.

Randor Guy : because I understand Raja Sandow made liked to make films with some kind of social significance or message like Anadhai penn, (inaudible).

Mr. Masthan : Yes and this untouchability was a practice in those days.

Randor Guy : I think this Minor Rajamani had some kind of (inaudible) like untouchability. by C V Ramalingam..... And we left it yesterday when we came to the making of Kannagi in 1942 by Jupiter Pictures, which is one of the big hits of Tamil cinema. And also supposed to be a classic. Where was this Kannagi made, in Newtown?

Mr. Masthan : Newtown Studios.

Randor Guy : The thing is that, at that time Jupiter was not in Coimbatore.

Mr. Masthan : No, they were not there. They found this studio much later. In fact, they established themselves in Madras with these people.

Randor Guy : And then in Coimbatore.

Mr. Masthan : And then they produce another picture also Mahamaya.

Randor Guy : That was also done in Madras?

Mr. Masthan : Yes, at Newtown Studio.

Randor Guy : Can you tell us something about this Kannagi, which was one of the landmarks of Tamil Cinema.

Mr. Masthan : The photography of Kannagi was supposed to be done by W. R. Subba Rao. But somehow (inaudible) they had some differences of opinions and Subba Rao went out of it. And finally, it was done by a Mr. Marcus Bartley.

Randor Guy : Was it one of his early films?

Mr. Masthan : Yes.

Randor Guy : But was he on the rolls of Newtown Studio or he was a freelancer cameraman (inaudible) for this film?

Mr. Masthan : I think he was not on the rolls but (inaudible) by the producer. I don't know, I am doubtful about it because later on he came on the rolls of Newtown Studio. In the next production Tamizharyum Perumal directed by Mr. T. R. Raghunath and produced by Mr. Ramanathan Chettiar.

Randor Guy : This Kannagi, was written by Elangovan, the famous dialogue writer. And he became famous with Ambikapathy based on the (Tamil). I think that was also the film (i.e. Kannagi) which shot Kannamba into limelight for her delivery of dialogue. Did she know Tamil at that time?

Mr. Masthan : (Inaudible)

Randor Guy : Because, Kannamba's step son i.e. Nagabhushanam's son by his first wife was in college with me. He was a lawyer; he died some years back in a sad accident. He used to tell me that when his step mother Kannamba made this film, she was not fully conversant with Tamil. And the entire dialogue had to be written in Telugu. And with that Telugu script she used to come up with such wonderful delivery.

Mr. Masthan : She used to mug it up (Inaudible) and she had a way of delivery. The dialogue writers those days used to sit with the artists and train them in such a way... Sometimes they used to go to the artists' houses for giving rehearsals - how to deliver dialogues and all. Even the sound recordists used to correct them for delivery of dialogues and all these things...

Randor Guy : And what about the role the director in Kannagi because there are so many artists R. S. Mani, Raghunath.

Mr. Masthan : I think it is finally Mr. Somasundaram's name that was there

Randor Guy : R. S Mani Also.

Mr. Masthan : Yes, R. S Mani.

Randor Guy : I asked Mr. S. V. Venkatraman who was the Music Director and also Mr. S. V. Sahasranamam, who not only played a role, he also told me that he was also going to be the assistant director in that film. He worked on the directorial side. They both told me that the Raghunath did mostly the music and dance numbers, because they were supposed to be good at it while Mani did all the dialogue part and the other dramatic part of the picture. Mr. Venkatraman also agreed to a very correct way of deciding to do it. Can you say something about it ?

Mr. Masthan : It is right. In that, Saroja did most of the dance.

Randor Guy : Who later on became Mrs. Raghunath.

Mr. Masthan : Yes, later on became Mrs. Raghunath, so they are right who told it, Mr. Raghunath dance numbers, I photographed some of them with him.

Randor Guy : How do you do that quick shot?

Mr. Masthan : You know if and when it is a boom sound boom, carries at all the dance across the camera they cut there and you know they reversed the camera and stagnant away from the next answer when it is run rightly...

Randor Guy : So you reversed it, so you did not do any special effects on it, though reversing the camera..... Did you have any equipment for doing special effects in those days like optical printer?

Mr. Masthan : support and special effects, you have to take over access.

Randor Guy : Did you do it like that in Kannagi?

Mr. Masthan : (Inaudible)

Randor Guy : How did you do that scene of Chiannappa.

Mr. Masthan : We had made some and then fall in cyberspace and the you know (inaudible) things put the man in Covered our face and (Inaudible) the whole

thing, but that's man you know? And Before this optical resources and although (Inaudible). It is still like

Randor Guy : Yes yes, I had some work with him much, much later.....

Randor Guy : And Kannagi was a very big success.

Mr. Masthan : Very big success, he put that exactly main Mr. Raman Bhrahma.

Randor Guy :

Mr. Masthan : No no,was after

Randor Guy : Are you sure?

Mr. Masthan : Yes, it after Kannagi, But then thereafter, I think they change something.....

Randor Guy : Did you work in also?

Mr. Masthan : Yes, I was there.

Randor Guy : Mrs. Ramabhramha, Did it shot in Newton?

Mr. Masthan : It was shot in Newton, cameraman was Mr. Girish Sakat. (Inaudible)

Randor Guy : Girish Sakat. (Inaudible)

Mr. Masthan : (Inaudible) And he did good work.

Randor Guy : And after this Kannagi, you said about Mahamaya, what kind of film was it?

Mr. Masthan : (Inaudible)

Randor Guy : It's not historical

Mr. Masthan : It was musicians that's this

Randor Guy : I think Chakrapani, I did very well role in that. ASA Sami told me. And that was also directed by Mr. R S Mani, Mahamaya. You don't remember, you worked on that picture.

Mr. Masthan : I worked on that, and there in this picture also some scenes were shot by Mr. Raghunath.

Randor Guy : Even in Mahamaya? And this Tamizhariyum Perumal is supposed to be the tamil version of the Kalidas, that's what Raghunath told me. Now T. S. Durairaj was moralistic hero in that film. He is a comedian. When I asked him was it a comedy, a comedian being made a hero. He said no, no. This fellow is an illiterate..... and he overnight blossoms out in a poet. I said, it sounds like a Kalidas he said more or less like Kalidas legend, which was tamilised. And that was Tamizhariyum Perumal, I think MGR played a role. That's what Raghunath recalls. Do you remember M. G. Ramachandran in that picture?

Mr. Mastan-Inaudible.....

Randor Guy : That time he was only a small artist with only a very small role.

Mr. Masthan : I remember Chellappa.

Randor Guy : V. A. Chellappa.....

Mr. Masthan : Some king or

Randor Guy : (Inaudible) Chellappa?

Mr. Masthan : Yes yes, I remember he has put in one suggestion in one shot. This man is where and He didn't make the shot at all (Inaudible).....

Randor Guy : And started talking perhaps.....

Mr. Masthan : (Inaudible)

Randor Guy : Then I heard that some of the old artists, they were not very much in favour of the suggestion shots the camera hold on shoulder and they were being blocked out away importance not And how did this Mahamaya was? Did well? I think Kannamba was also there in Mahamaya, P. U. Chinnappa was there....

Mr. Masthan : Chinnappa was there.....

Randor Guy : And the ASA Sami who agreed with Jupiter at that time and did some drama which comes in that, He said he wrote a play, which was made something like a play within a play in Mahamaya and that was the..... And he was talking about the role of M. G. Chakrapani, M. G. Ramachandran's elder brother, saying that it was something very memorable, but particular role which was written in such a way and he also said that was the almost the first to role in Tamil cinema, which had political undertones that's why the whole thing more or less.....very interesting. Do you remember that?

Mr. Masthan : I don't know, when I was perhaps too young to understand this, particular all those things...

Randor Guy : I think he even said that character was called.....or something like that. is the strategist and villain in The man who does everything who manipulates the king is something like a kind of Chanakkya, I don't know whether that role was transplanted into this. And that's why I wanted to ask you whether you remember that...

Mr. Masthan : No, I don't remember it clearly, but I remember some of the scenes there and also this technology used, he has a long role and a very good role he played.

Randor Guy : He made a name in that...

Mr. Masthan : And in this a drama inside the drama that I remember,

Randor Guy : Which ASA Sami wrote...

Mr. Masthan : Where our music director M. S. Viswanathan makes an appearance...

Interviewer-Singer at that time and the staff...

Mr. Masthan : Yes, singer and Jupiter staff. Where he..... (Tamil).....I remember that incident.....

Randor Guy : He told that he worked as an assistant to the UC Director Something like or odd job.....

Mr. Masthan : He still can in Raja Sandow's... a small boy building a big in Mahamaya.

16:38

Randor Guy : (Inaudible) Sung by Chinnappa, I see, that was shot here and during that time, did you do any other Telugu film of B. N. Reddy, Devata. Devata was at around this time..... was made.....

Mr. Masthan : was made..... in pictures.

Randor Guy : Not here? But why did they leave Newton? Because they were not getting facilities?

Mr. Masthan :Newton was getting busier and busier so there were sufficient of accommodation.....and all the schedules were getting completed in the time.....disciplined.....that was K V Reddy...

Randor Guy : Do you remember K V Reddy? He was a production manager.

Mr. Masthan : Yes, production manager and man who was and man who can get people to work

Randor Guy : Did you have any to work with K V Reddy?

Mr. Masthan : No.

Randor Guy : production manager. Both are on his first picture.....after Mahamaya what is the film you were involved in?

Mr. Masthan : After Mahamaya for some time you know, the whole routine was our the production itself was in trouble because the evacuation in Madras all those things.

Randor Guy : In 1942.

Mr. Masthan : Yes 1942.

Randor Guy : Was Newton closed during that period?

Mr. Masthan : Yes, It was. In most of the things all washed away from Newton.

Randor Guy : Because of the floods?

Mr. Masthan : Yes. waters flowing on the ground floor so badly... heavy rains and this Chandrababu and he said this place i right. (Inaudible) because stream lighting which cary ... this rainwater backside, couldn't push through on that because that was the water started growing inside here for...

Randor Guy : So this flood destroyed a good property of Newton studio? What about the camera and

Mr. Masthan : They were saved, recording equipment and

Randor Guy : Who was managing the studio at that time?

Mr. Masthan : Chettiar was there....

Randor Guy : He was there in active manager? Ramanathan Chettiar?

Mr. Masthan : All the people were there.... Dinshaw was there, Jitendra was there, Mr. Nagu was there.....all the people were there.

Randor Guy : Was there any General Manager or somebody like that.....?

Mr. Masthan : There was a manager.

Randor Guy : Who was he? Do you remember him?

Mr. Masthan : There was one Naidu.....he was the manager and the cashier that's all, minimum staff they have and production man was a jack of all trades..... And sometimes when there is no movement, they also hang on to the nominal boom operator. All-purpose people, but there were very very limited staff.

Randor Guy : Then what happened.....that studio was closed? Did you go back to our village? or you were in Madras?

Mr. Masthan : During that time I was in Madras, because my brother he was.....

Randor Guy : What was he there?

Mr. Masthan : He was So, I was waiting for him to get to the service, we would all really all the immediately call realised, he asked me, then there was a college, there was somebody to be in charge of the college.

Randor Guy : Which college?

21:00

Mr. Masthan :Inaudible

Randor Guy : he later on went to..... I know i met him, he was going for some shooting, we met in Calicut Station..... So you stayed in Madras?

Mr. Masthan : Yah I stayed in Madras, and soon after this flood, it was then the Gemini was found.

Randor Guy : Gemini was found in 1940.

Mr. Masthan : 1940. But I think Mr. Ramnoth said.....

Randor Guy : Yeah that was in 1947.....they left. After Bhakta Potana, I believe, Martini was also closed because of evacuation..... And they renewed their office to Tadipatri, because the native place of the other partner Moola Narayana Swamy. And much of the editing of Potana, I believe, where Mr. them. He said that was the time I met the Sundaram who was a foreign lady his first wife. And that was the time, I believe Sekhar and Ramnoth were left in Madras without knowing whether they were working for Vauhini Studios or not. So while he was.....this is what is Mr. Sekhar told me. Many, many years later when I spoke to him, and because I asked him one question, why did you and Ramnoth leave B N Reddy? Because you are all living like more or like brothers and part of the family? He smiled and said, what do you want me to say? I said I don't know, tell me the truth. I'm not going to put this..... that you are very close B N Reddy. Is it any? I don't mind what the things are today. It's all past. He said, there are two reasons. One was Ramnoth always wanted to be a director. That was his ambition to direct film, and you can't think of a better than the Ramnoth for directing a picture and B N Reddy was always telling us that he was going to start a film in Tamil and which will be directed by Ramnoth. And B N Reddy also told me at one time that he wanted to make Kamala Bala Charithram a well-known novel in Tamil in as a movie Tamil and B N Reddy would ask Ramnoth to direct it. And interestingly, in one of the old issues of Narada, the magazine whichwith Shrinivas Rao, there is a full page advertisement, in which there is an announcement by Vauhini Studios. "Look out for our first Tamil film, shortly to go on of sets", but they never made it. They never made it and Ramnoth felt a little disappointed that this project did not come true. There was also another reason the Ramnoth was also very vaguely expecting or anticipating that he would be asked to do Bhakta Potana that did not happen. When K

V Reddy was brought in, he was a cashier and production manager and so on. He seemed and told Sekhar, you see they are after all from the same community. And we are strangers. And they may call us brothers.....and so when it comes to the their thinking is slightly different. Afterall blood is thicker than whatever they say. And another thing he said, at that time in the Madras both Ramnoth and Shekhar they were not very wealthy people. They came from lower middle class backgrounds. They said “we could not afford to stay in Madras at that time without knowing where our next pay packet was coming from. And B N Reddy promised to do so many things and he went and sat in Salem, from Salem, he was going to Tadipatri and all and we were not even getting any communication. At that time Mr. S S Vasan came and gave a fabulous offer something like 1500 rupees per month or something that was the salary offered, which as you know, in those days is a big fortune. So Ramnoth and I without giving a second thought you say we said this is the truth. For such things, some people may speak out of context, but this is what exactly happenedo Randor Guy. That is the reason why Ramnoth and myself that is Sekhar we left B N Reddy which sounds very convincing also. And later on, I asked the B N Reddy about this, the Sekhar said all these things. I said I'm not making it out of imagination. This is what Mr. Sekhar told me Ramnoth died very young and there was no question I'm asking him, he said it is partly true. Then I asked him about this Tamil picture and I have seen an advertisement in this Narad Deepavali in Malyam Social issue....There is an advertisement, you are announcing your first Tamil production and advertisement is something like milestone..... one milestone is Vande Mataram, another milestone is Sumangali, third milestone is Devatha. And a big milestone Blooming on the Horizon is going to be their first Tamil production that milestone never appear of course. So, he said that was the Kamalaambaal Charittiram I wanted to do and it was a costume drama. And he said, we could not think of doing that in Newton Studio because of the various difficulties. So this he was narrating as a kind of a background to why he thought of his studio. Apart from the fact he had difficulty in Newton, about getting your dates, in time and all that. He said at every stage there was delay. And that was the time I went to Mr. S. S. Vasan and Kamalaambaal Charittiram I think Vasan also had an eye on making it in Tamil or he had rights to it, something like that. So at that time when he said Mr. Vasan I want to make this Kamalaambaal Charittiram then Vasan I believed in a very joke..... but sarcastic way said that if you want to make this picture you must have your own studio otherwise do not think of all this this man because he has a studio of his own, more or less taunting me and said you can't do this, you can't do that. Then he said Mr. Vasan, I am going to have my own studio and he said I am quoting what I told Vasan. This was almost 30 years later. What you have is a well-furnished studio that is Gemini. What I am going to build is a well-equipped studio and you will see the difference and he walked out in a half a minute..... that is what B N Reddy told. And

that later on led to my doing building Vauhini Studio...That was the story of this Kamalaambaal Charittiram. Did you hear about this Kamalaambaal Charittiram?

Mr. Masthan : No.....

Randor Guy : You never heard about it. Then what happened? After Mahamaya, after evacuation.....

Mr. Masthan : After this evacuation..... And I was there for some time without knowing what to do. Then in Srilanka.

Randor Guy : Your father was there?

Mr. Masthan : Yes, my father was there and my brothers were telling me....., instead of wasting time here, why don't you go and in fact, in all earnestness, I don't really know what to do. (Inaudible) At my advanced Cody, Amanda brought to the immigration officer. I agree with everything. He says I'm not going to permit you to vote. So I waited One day, the next day. And again, if you see our business there, my brother is with me, my brother who passed away three years. He lives with me. And I went in a video and I decided we are not doing anything. Then I told him to go to my government site and on the way at Nigeria, it was just one of these papers and when he was going through this new --- Mr. Ramnoth said ---- Gemini

Randor Guy : Has it film magazine?

00:29:50

(No audio)

Tape 02 Side B

00:00:21

Randor Guy : We are telling about the advertisement or news you saw in a magazine which you bought it Madurai?

Mr. Masthan : ----- So he went back home, and then I guess what, Why not I, once again go back and analyze that data. I came back, I met all these people, but then I somehow I couldn't bring myself to tell them that they want a job.

Randor Guy : You might run up and say yes, Almost automate

Mr. Masthan : almost every week we can use to make then there was Mr. Ramnath is there ---

Randor Guy : That he married at this time

Mr. Masthan : No he' not, then where at the same time you know Mr. Krishana Aiyar our Sound Engineer ----- he used to tell me that much like -----

Randor Guy : Where was the Krishana At that time

Mr. Masthan : he was not yet (Inaudible) And we were supposed to work for --- Krishna. And finally Krishna joined in the van. I could not joined.

Randor Guy : know Mr. Krishna was asking you asked what a doubt

Mr. Masthan : Yeah. I'm not gonna say but Maya you and Mr. Ramos knew that I'm unemployed. If there is anything vacant, then you actually are semester you come and join me here.

Randor Guy : He didn't say that

Mr. Masthan : he didn't say that was oh, I don't want I will I meet these people very often. And they ask you all these things, I shouldn't embarrass that was my friend. He was asking me about a job opportunity there really in that situation I don't want to say three ways of creating that memory, memories of

Randor Guy : the Re-opened

Mr. Masthan : Re-opened the ---- and Meera was... MS Shubhalaxmi Meera started like the infact I was in the meantime I was in touch with Mr. Deepak Banerji.

(Inaudible from 00:03:04 to 00:04:28 due to heavy voice over & noise)

Interviewer- there is one song, which is a very famous song of Ms. subbulakshmi that (Tamil) him by which he sings on a desert on a Camelback, where was that shot do you remember? That's very sweet song

Mr. Masthan : (Tamil) I think somewhere in Jaipur

Randor Guy : (Inaudible)

Mr. Masthan : ----- the day and lessons those upset the shouting those at Newton Studio's and the Meera for ---- writing ---- and those roses and these are lighting effects and always we actually didn't know that he is facing today and then from different angles we photographed probing to see the position and angle lighting also to our

Randor Guy : recently this Meera's Hindi version was telecast yeah for the many back also, as a late night show. For the second time the telecast I saw and I took a lot of notes I personally remember this point, the process are very fruitful in a good feeling holder. I even told Mr. Sadashivam when I met him when I was shooting a film on somebody cinema said he came there (Tamil) was a party and he said, because I'm also writing books not only making films so having already you asked me to have the right to be interviewed by me and all that, then it struck me when I was not my opinion alone. A few others also. In many of the close ups, I felt and many of my friends will watch that night. But they're M S Subhalaxmi is to almost look like Dr. Raja Kumari in some sense. It's like baby step two like almost like another way it is a face. And there is almost a striking resemblance. Except for are those

Mr. Masthan : movies good enough to lots of troubles

Randor Guy : It is all Duncan's idea to make more nose and..

Mr. Masthan : No no we achieve you know

Randor Guy : Within he's idea, it he so much involved

Mr. Masthan : man it was a really use Blue Print's

Randor Guy : Did he use any defuses

Mr. Masthan : yah yes, specially -----

Randor Guy : Are you using any self talk like Hollywood when I believe when they shot? Greta Garbo and all those famous actresses were using silk stockings before the lens.

Mr. Masthan : Sylvia, were really nervous talking said he had all these bars and things as usual. You know, then this was the most experimental stage. So our, our library or the school or whatever it is, you may call it was the data. We go see an English teacher how we display the images later. And all those things come back in a minute, the whole thing here are the ability

Randor Guy : (Inaudible)

Mr. Masthan : with whatever and little equipment we have ----- that is have we learn. It's a hard way.

Randor Guy : I know it is a Hard way but and it is a best way. And another thing I want to ask you Meera did FGR act? No, because I don't remember seeing him in all the books, which are now coming after India, you know all almost everybody is bringing all the supplements and things he has depression on the situation, I suppose. I mean, the list of his films, almost everybody is mentioning Mira. I don't think he is in Mira. Not to my recollection as a very good memory as you know. So that's why I wanted to ask you.

Mr. Masthan : as far as I know,

Randor Guy : She's not there, -- Balaiyya was there ? Sarang Pani was there similar to some others were not many male roles. Though the center on ShubhaLakshmi is and they were the songs of ShubhaLakshmi recorded.

Mr. Masthan : I knew when it goes through this and here there's very little here. That one is the big the big comment is me. ----- we came to resolve some of the songs with an RC

Randor Guy : Special requirements, where was the exact time fix?

Mr. Masthan : Fix then he was but ----- the AVM --- Studio ----

Randor Guy : They recorded it, and who got in Mr. Duncan or Sadashiv?

Mr. Masthan : Not Duncan, Not Duncan And later Mr. Gino also joined

Randor Guy : as his assistant

Mr. Masthan : no no as associate, so both of them recorded and there's also Dinsha. So all these three people say to me put their heads together, Because of MS ShubhaLaksmi

Randor Guy : And I find that the Hindi version was obviously dubbed from Tamil, a few songs were written next time shot. Video goes the extra scene shot for the Hindi version.

Mr. Masthan : No, And it was entirely shot by Mr. Griffin and Silvaraj

Randor Guy : Hindi? For the additions were made

Mr. Masthan : because by the time they decided to go all these things I had worked on as a totally free pulled away from their by Duncan and put Valmiki

Randor Guy : Where was Valimki Shots do you remember any interesting incidents and entity Meera and Mr. Duncan with someone that you are associated with him because I'm planning a book on Elyssar Duncan also wonder whether you put a light on demand. Like all the technical innovation,

Mr. Masthan : You know, as a as a management as a technician is an all rounder in the nature as a director and his ---- himself and a very good responsive type.

Randor Guy : Mr. Rahman Murthy

Mr. Masthan : he never uses any harsh words as such. Soft spoken man It's not no ---

Randor Guy : Even he did not know language at all.

Mr. Masthan : And he used to all ---- sambars (Music)

Randor Guy : --- Some are associated with him as an assistant or religion.

Mr. Masthan : No, and I know silver bersama has as Krishna, he said as Krishna is in Chintamani.

Randor Guy : Chintamani? I think it was Krishna Pidal he played Krishna a very pompo Krishna

Mr. Masthan : And once when you are running that Marina, who is he needs to take a small break out of interesting this science,

Randor Guy : at Krishna

Mr. Masthan : 100%

Randor Guy : I say, especially at his own expense. Krishana Pidala I think was done by CV Raman. I think that was done by CV Raman. Now its been communicated to like me.

Mr. Masthan : Almost -----

Randor Guy : PK Sakshi and Subramanian Subramanian and after I Bhakta Meera, Bhakt Meera or Meera, as it was called in Tamil, what do you Meera I think it was in 45?

Mr. Masthan : Yes, 40 probably 45 and I was engaged in this Telugu Praoduction Walmiki. Walmiki or drama

Randor Guy : Vimal Tandal & Elyssar Duncan

Mr. Masthan : Elyssar Duncan any ways almost --- through, he did pictures in any way it has taken over. Brief some --- at Coimbatore. There have --- staff.

Randor Guy : I am talking about Walmiki, Janakibai, This was Telugu film Vimal Tandam Few character, because in the back directing in film only Tandam may be --- art director. And Duncan said not in the title, not in the title in that book.

Mr. Masthan : I'm not seeing the past they're meant to come to some sort of arrangement. I can't tell because you did most of the work you put a heavy on

Randor Guy : And I think, ----- Devi lead uh female lead what sort of an artist was still around but ---- to She's fom Srilanka do you work with her earlier than Walmiki?

Mr. Masthan : No, I think I met her first, time I met her and ---- and most ready to do the outdoors.

Randor Guy : I see, where did it is outdoor Walmiki?

Mr. Masthan : I told so this this ----

Randor Guy : Now Nagi Reddy --- what was there earlier

Mr. Masthan : It was --- uh grow ---

Randor Guy : Who want it? not a chamber garden chamber.

Mr. Masthan : Chamber Garden and originally it was the property of one now, see Abdul Hakib

Randor Guy : Who was he?

Mr. Masthan : And later lead a magnets, Nawab C Hakib. And later it was bought by some friends actively embracing

Randor Guy : Some replicate

Mr. Masthan : yes, some new emergent,

Randor Guy : What was they doing there? They skipping like...

Mr. Masthan : They calculating Paddy and hundreds of mango trees and all sorts of fruit trees are grown there, and coconut palms and all those things

Randor Guy : So although are done. They're all new to you hired it from the sippican business

Mr. Masthan : that was the time when they directed the hearts there to accommodate Burma

Randor Guy : or after one

Mr. Masthan : after one or down to four before this was in the hands of the government. And then you know, when you enter the easy the government it is easy for Duncan to go into vise and get the permission ban immediately see everywhere it happened and even in Nautica vandelay where this man used to go he just barges in something gets a permit and

Randor Guy : Because he's foreigner

Mr. Masthan : Foreigner, when he ---- says the shooting at Udaipur we wanted to take a boat from the palace corpus we went from there to the lake palace and it was very hot sun beating is a perhaps 100 degrees they just opened an umbrella of holdings in housings event Mr. Duncan was said and the guy he said the camera and said you can't hold an umbrella

Randor Guy : for what is the reason

Mr. Masthan : a local man can't hold an umbrella within that complex.

Randor Guy : Only Maharaja's can do it

Mr. Masthan : Maharaj's can do it and ---- can do it.

Randor Guy : then what happens

Mr. Masthan : Then what happen, I gave umbrella got into the boat and faster run.

Randor Guy : was very interesting,

Mr. Masthan : And I asked people (Inaudible)

Randor Guy : and is Walmiki ---- Devi did not speak Telugu.

Mr. Masthan : Voice over,

Randor Guy : And who played Walmiki

Mr. Masthan : Suri Narsimma Rao

Randor Guy : Suri Narsimma Rao,

Mr. Masthan : and in a very good artist in a very nice man.

Randor Guy : How did you find that --- Devi? There are lots of stories being circulated around her about her? What kind of a person was the Mr. AP Krishnaswami who directed her Vidya Pathi ---. He gave me one version of how many reviews then ASA

Swami who directed or in Raja Kumari, she created a ---- She gave one version. And like the several people have been giving several versions about the ---- Devi. And I had an occasion to see him. What kind of a person was it?

Mr. Masthan : I know. I know her but not as our princess. She's good artist really over. (Inaudible) That's all nothing more, ---- the different manuals? And I have only language as he said only through the camera.

Randor Guy : And after this, you said you went to Jupiter, the center studio at that time who was running it when Jupiter goes to court when it was extended? Yes.

Mr. Masthan : No, because the property of the owners of Rajlakshmi studios

Randor Guy : Rajlakshmi Mills? Rajlakshmi Mills ? It's not a group of nyro Do you know who the main man was?

Mr. Masthan : I forgotten.... And first production was, first picture Murugan, Shri Murugan,...

Randor Guy : & Shri Murugan was written by A S Swami? That's what he said that was his first and the who directed seen?

Mr. Masthan : there were a number of people who were very funny but finally it was vicious almost

Randor Guy : and I believe Tommy foster is biting is putting his directorial feet in this film and he destroyed He also mentioned about you with the camera and online how he had problems of saying start and MS Krishnan had to come and ask him on the back and he also said about directing the doctor the well known of teaching to play the Surya..... even mentioning about you at that time what happened what made what broadly hearty laugh

Mr. Masthan : I still remember the dialogue, (Inaudible)...

Randor Guy : Who gets the

Mr. Masthan : No, Rajendran & P ... Narayan (Inaudible) nice didn't win is the messenger of more than

Randor Guy : He was supposed stage artist is the problem of talking...

Mr. Masthan : (Inaudible)

Randor Guy : It his opinion, & its very interesting.. and NDR did that Dance. Which is supposed to have been very impressive and that paved the way for their making him a hero in Raja Kumari This was one of the reasons he said

Mr. Masthan : and as I can camera and it has to go through so much lighter than his mirror reality fan ...

Randor Guy : because he's very fare...

Mr. Masthan : Vey fare... he all the mistakes and the color (Inaudible), then after every shot Yeah, because after dancing sent it to us to watch it because on the number one

Randor Guy : so, again I play I play video so far it was disturbing the light missing

Mr. Masthan : hree times brighter than his face

Randor Guy : made a face we need our adjusting the lighting apart from the only the only way is

Mr. Masthan : that was only, because if it's very sharp or banged on

Randor Guy : That not many have told me the body being greater than or whiter and brighter. And he's made a face and on the whole very fair man. I don't know how an Indian would be so far he was much better than many Europeans. I've seen that that's one of the attractions I suppose. And that was your first meeting with India?

Mr. Masthan : No, I will at the very beginning. My whole thing was 38 I told you that we are Seeta Ganana

Randor Guy : Seeta Ganana you did not speak about it, never talk abou it. Seeta Ganana Who was whose picture was

Mr. Masthan : it was Shamrao's pictures. Infect, baumannii was there in that picture

Randor Guy : Was is her first film?

Mr. Masthan : maybe this is not

Randor Guy : What role she played at, who was seta?

Mr. Masthan : See it was Baumann was she played Sheeta. And that Krishna Murthy Singer, M R Krishna Murthy was there..

Randor Guy : Who directed it?

Mr. Masthan : Raja Chandra Shekhar..

Randor Guy : Raja Chandrashekar Was it he's first film?

Mr. Masthan : No. is Bruce arrived from North

Randor Guy : Eastern cities isn't it?

Mr. Masthan : The reason they are doing some they're in Bombay, Bombay.

Randor Guy : We were talking about Sita Janana 1938, talking about Raja Chandra Shekar. Can you tell us something about Mr. Raja Chandra Shekhar? He was Raghunath's younger brother.

Mr. Masthan : Younger brother, And they just finished a thesis and we are in an north east Calcutta or Bombay. And Mr..... he's brother and Mr. P. S Virappa, I happen to meet them for the first time in the Seeta Janan

Randor Guy : At Newton?

Mr. Masthan : At Newton studio's..

Randor Guy : Who was the producer for Seeta Janan?

Mr. Masthan : Anamali Chettiyar, Shamrao pictures

Randor Guy : Who later on Shamala studio, he was the producer was the producer and this was the story about the birth of Seeta Janan

Mr. Masthan : Birth of Seeta Janan and also outdoor lighting is underway to for those studios get's engineering stations...

Randor Guy : (Tamil)

Mr. Masthan : There used to be a lot of stability there's

Randor Guy : a lot of snow is a manmade forest, which doesn't remember much of a forest but because they're two months ago, I saw one of the episodes of my enemy fall on the floor rocks the rocks are very nicely formed. There's some very fascinating formations now partly there aren't many trees we call it a forest but if a qualifier is very more wrong than forests but is good for photographic was in shooting and all that good very good video, but I actually asked that man who came along with us when we shot that film they're where is that forest? and he said is a manmade forest is not a natural part of life like Uty and... So this is a totally different I think they started like an experimental format to the quantities that are before us department It is called wonder no it's not a product. So you shot the outdoor

Mr. Masthan : Yes, outdoor there and this shot that Newton

Randor Guy : What role did ... plays a small group

Mr. Masthan : I remember distinctly the fighting scene so we've been seeing between verify and So exactly I do not know what role they play this way. And you know, I used to work with smile on measures running about this to being roughed in..... So everything these people said they only smiling and laughing. So they thought that believes is making funny with me. And then after a week or so any met is there in Between you see in the city to the (Inaudible).....

Randor Guy : after this when you joined Jupiter, yes, you said you made the three move and that was my first one was the first Ranger but it is success.

Mr. Masthan : uh And I'm the boxerc boxer is a failure we do not need technicians we are always

Randor Guy : Who played Murugan, the Hero, Hero of the stories..? U said Harini?

Mr. Masthan : Harini played the bal Murugan,

Randor Guy : Harini was the lady artist who later on became became Kannada, for Raj Rajashri...

Mr. Masthan : and then after the ... balu was there and then what V V Narayan Swami,

Randor Guy : the main artists. And After Shri Murugan?

Mr. Masthan : After Sri Murugan and that's what it was in almost everything that is being shot there.

00:29:51

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Tape 03 Side A

00:00:26

Randor Guy : I think yesterday we stopped near Sri Murugan. You were narrating the some of the incidents connected with that (inaudible) Baby Harini. The Baby Harini seems to have acted as Bala Murugan, Bala Krishna. She was in Haridas. Last night I was going through the song book. Baby Krishnan, it says Baby Harini. Obviously, she was doing those kinds of roles in those days. After this Sri Murugan, what was the film you did at Jupiter Pictures?

Masthan : Actually after three months, I had a number of films, Sri Murugan was 45-46 then there was a Sinhalese picture.

Randor Guy : Sinhalese films made at Jupiter Pictures. Is it?

Masthan : Made at Jupiter Pictures by Ceylon Theatres.

Randor Guy : Who were these Ceylon theatres people?

Masthan : S. Gardiner.

Randor Guy : Sir Chittampalam Gardiner. [Note- Full name - Sir Chittampalam Abraham Gardiner].

Masthan : Yes.

Randor Guy : Was he a Tamilian?

Masthan : Yes, Tamilian.

Randor Guy : The name sounds British and what was he doing there in Ceylon?

Masthan : Studio owner and producer, fully involved in theatres. They had under their control more than 100 theatres.

Randor Guy : 100 theatres in such a small place like Sri Lanka? All pakka theatres or?

Masthan : Yes, pakka theatres. Unlike our places you won't find tents like things in Sri Lanka.

Randor Guy : They don't have that at all. I see.

Masthan : Perhaps it is because of the climatic conditions there. Rains come all of a sudden.

Randor Guy : I see. The tents will wash away. This Sir Chittampalam Gardiner was also financing Jupiter Pictures. I heard that he was one of their main financiers.

Masthan : Yes, and they were the main distributors of the all their pictures in Sri Lanka.

Randor Guy : Was Ceylon at the time a big market for Tamil Films?

Masthan : Yes, it was.

Randor Guy : There was a big market and not many Sinhalese films were being made at that time?

Masthan : Right. This is supposed to this picture which I said, I planned to...

Randor Guy : What was the name of the film? Do you remember?

Masthan : Asokamala...

Randor Guy : Asokamala? Was it very historical?

Masthan : Yes. It's a historical and the director was one of our own man Gopu - an editor.

Randor Guy : Is it the man who did that Kanjan?

Masthan : Yes.

Randor Guy : The two ladies' characters for Kanjan and one of the names in the title is one Gopu. He was the editor there?

Masthan : Yes.

Randor Guy : Is he alive?

Masthan : I don't know. I have no idea.

Randor Guy : I don't think any editor called Gopu today in circulation.

Masthan : He was the same man.

Randor Guy : So, Asokamala, what happened?

Masthan : In fact, we wanted to.... You know, there was another company producing another Sinhalese picture. Mr. Abraham Gardiner wanted this to be the first ever Sinhalese picture made.

Randor Guy : Earlier than that, there was no Sinhalese picture at all?

Masthan : No, not at all and there was this auto competition.

Randor Guy : Who was the other producer tried to compete?

Masthan : Eddie Jayamanne and Group. They were stage artist.

Randor Guy : I know. I used to know them because they were in Madras. They are two brothers - B. A. W. Jayamanne and Eddie Jayamanne. They used to carry some (Inaudible)

Masthan : They were producing all the pictures with Southern Studios i.e. later turned out to be (inaudible).

Randor Guy : You said that was what was originally kubera where Telugu pictures were made. So, they were in competition with Jayamanne.

Masthan : Yes and somehow it was Jayamanne who won. He was able to release his picture a little earlier also.

Randor Guy : That Eddie's wife was Rukmani.

Masthan: Yes, Rukmani.

Randor Guy : I have seen her in that office. A very handsome woman.

Masthan : She is no more.

Randor Guy : I see.

Masthan : Eddie is also no more.

Randor Guy : Only B. A. W. Jayamanne is around us.

Masthan : Yes.

Randor Guy : And this Asokamala, who were the main artists? Did you have Sinhalese artists?

Masthan : Yes, all Sinhalese artists.....

Randor Guy : They were brought from Colombo.

Masthan : Yes, they were brought from Colombo. (inaudible)

Randor Guy : What about the language? Sinhala language, you were familiar at that time?

Masthan : No, because the co-director was hero himself.

Randor Guy : Who was that?

Masthan : Ashok Kumar [Note- It was Shanthi Kumar]

Randor Guy : This Fonseka was not around at that time.

Masthan : No.

Randor Guy : Gemini Fonseka was not in films then.

Masthan : No.

Randor Guy : And this was shot in Jupiter?

Masthan : Yea I did that..

Randor Guy : Under what banner it was made? Was it Jupiter or Ceylon Theatres?

Masthan : Ceylon Theatres.

Randor Guy : I see. That was own banner.

Masthan : Yes, and I think there was some sort of an agreement where Jupiter pictures produced the whole picture for Gardiner's Ceylon Theatres. So, they looked after the artists and (inaudible).

Randor Guy : How many floors were there in the Jupiter at that time?

Masthan : Two floors.

Randor Guy : Mr. Sami told me that they had two floors. Where were they logged in these artists and others who used to come to Coimbatore?

Masthan : They took them out in the Bungalows...

Randor Guy : Not in the premises.

Masthan : No. We were living in the premises. The technicians were living in the premises. Just outside the studio, they had their own campus, the line of houses.

Randor Guy : Recently, I had been there, a couple of months ago to shoot some film in Ooty. On the way back, I stayed to visit. (inaudible) There are some textile mills and operation there. I saw those line of forces which are now used as godowns for keeping cotton bales and (inaudible) that sort of things. That is one (inaudible).

Masthan : In fact, our Sundar Rao Nandkarni, Mr. Sami and even some of the artists who went to stay in the hotels used to remain there and Jupiter had a mess for food and all.

Randor Guy : Like Gemini had and it was most (inaudible) studios in those days. (inaudible) and all these people. Now they all miss these that they used to (Inaudible). and after Asokamala, what was the Tamil film Jupiter did? Was it Abhimanyu? Or...

Masthan : Abhimanyu was Subbarao's picture. [Note: W. R. Subbarao was the cinematographer of the film Abhimanyu. It was directed by M. Somasundaram and A. Kasilingam]. The next picture I think it was Mohini.

Randor Guy : Mohini not Velaikari.

Masthan : Velaikari came in 1946. [Note: Velaikari was released in 1949].

Randor Guy : It was released in 1949.

Masthan : Oh yes. 1946 was Asokamala.

Randor Guy : 1948 was Abhimanyu.

Masthan : Yes. Abhimanyu was shot by Subbarao.

Randor Guy : Did you have anything to do with Kanjan?

Masthan: Laughs

Randor Guy : What about the film was because everybody starts laughing and talk about Kanchana like you do now.

Masthan : No. (inaudible).

Randor Guy : (inaudible) was it based on the (inaudible)?

Masthan : The story was written by a strong Congress man.

Randor Guy : Aiyamuthu.

Masthan: Yes, Aiyamuthu. He even wrote the songs and almost all the paid artists on the roads of Jupiter were engaged on the...

Randor Guy : They had full time artists on their own. Who were the artists? Do you remember?

Masthan : M. G. R. was there.

Randor Guy : M. G. R. was there on the full-time salaried employee.

Masthan : M. G. R. and his brother M. G. Chakrapani, Mustafa and a lot of artists.

Randor Guy : Lot of Artists. That was the amount that used to be paid like Gemini and others like the Hollywood studio system.

Masthan : Yes and many of the legendary artists had a lounge where they were living and people like M. G. R., Chakrapani - they were all living with their families. gentleman

Randor Guy : Outside the studio in their own houses. I don't think that Kanjan was a success. You were telling me something about...

Masthan : When the theatre was empty, when we went to inspect the theatres (Inaudible).

Randor Guy : Who was he? One of the bosses Jupiter?

Masthan : Yah, whole the auditorium was empty. (inaudible) and the picture was running (inaudible). I have been surprised and while coming back I asked him (Tamil).

Randor Guy : It was a loss.

Masthan : Laughs.

Randor Guy : Because they were making a huge profit. That's very interesting. Why I am talking about this Kanjan because a similar incident was narrated to me by Mr. A. S. A. Sami. I believe, he preceded or some college function, where a play was put on when he was the chief guest at Coimbatore and they had a scene in that play, prepared by the college students where a man is taken to Yamaloka and produced before Yamadharma Raja and Chitrugupta says this man was the worst type of sinner. So, he has to be given the maximum punishment. Then Yamadharma Raja

asked him what are the punishments available under our laws? He says boil in some oil. He says, it is too mild. Okay, what is the next one? Roast him with hot coals. This is too mild. So, like that he goes on reading the various punishments. One by one, they are all eliminated because Yamadharma says it is no good, for all these sins this man is committed. Finally, they are stopped for an answer, then somebody there comes up and says there is a picture running in Coimbatore called as Kanjan. Yama says yes, I have heard of it. (inaudible) all the three shows in a single day. That is the best form of punishment. Recently, on a hearty laugh when we all heard that joke coming on the stage. Now, you say that even Mr. Murthy might have laughed. It was something really interesting. So, you had nothing to do with that Kanjan.

Mastha : No.

Randor Guy : I think it had people like Kamala Devi, Nambiar and Malathi, other Ravikumar.

Masthan : They were all on the roles.

Randor Guy : She told me that she did the (inaudible)

Masthan : And her sister was also there in that picture.

Randor Guy : Bharathi and Malathi. That Ravi Kumar is the son of Bharathi. There is a Malayalam hero called Ravi Kumar. He has done quite a few films. Now he is not very active. He has done one film of K. Balachander - Avargal. Now, he is doing TV serials. His mother is that Bharathi? (Inaudible) later on they made some Malayalam Film also may be a couple of years back. That is the story. And what is the next film you did? (Inaudible)

Masthan : Mohini, I guess. I did Mohini. (Inaudible)

Randor Guy : This Mohini was Arabian Nights story.

Masthan : Yes.

Randor Guy : By A. S. A. Sami. M. G. Ramachandran and V. N. Janaki T. S. Balaiah, Madhuri Devi was there.

Masthan : Yes.

Randor Guy : Was T. S. Balaiah on the roles?

Masthan : No. He was a Freelance.

Randor Guy : What about Madhuri Devi?

Masthan : Madhuri Devi was also a freelancer.

Randor Guy : So, she was not on the roles of Jupiter at that time.

Masthan : And Balasubramaniam.

Randor Guy : R. Balasubramaniam. He died a few months ago.

Masthan : He was there in a very prominent role - as the maker of that horse.

Randor Guy : I saw that film when I was in school.

Masthan : It was something, recently...

Randor Guy : A part of it was shown on TV (Inaudible). Showed some hardwork.....

Masthan : (Inaudible).

Randor Guy : Because, Janaki also had come into the news. When V. N. Janaki was the Chief Minister, she had come into the news. They showed some parts of it and some of those films are being screened now (inaudible), Naam and all those films. I think Naam was produced by Jupiter on partnership - Jupiter and Mekala Pictures. Maybe you were left by that time

Masthan : Yes. (inaudible).

Randor Guy : Was Ramnoth involved in Mohini?

Masthan : (inaudible) they're asked to do it.

Randor Guy : I am asking this specific question because Mr. A. S. A. Sami told me that some of these sequences with a flying horse were done by Ramnoth?

Masthan : Yes.

Randor Guy : Is that right?

Masthan : Yes, right.

Randor Guy : What time did Ramnoth come there? When you were there, Ramnoth came and joined? That must have been 1947. In 47, Independence Day they left Gemini both Ramnoth and Sekhar.

Masthan : In fact, they came here first with Kanniyin Kathali.

Randor Guy : That was the adaptation of the Twelfth Night. Did you work in it?

Masthan : I have worked in a couple of scenes for it but his main man was W. R. Subba Rao.

Randor Guy : That was again with Madhuri Devi and Anjali Devi, K. R. Ramsingh. I think that was the first film in which Kannadasan wrote his first song.

Masthan : And the story itself was written by Ramnoth and dialogues by S. D. Sundaram.

Randor Guy : Because I heard from B. N. Reddy that the Ramnoth being a student of English literature, like most graduates of those days were likely interested in the western literature. He used to suggest things like Twelfth Night, Romeo and Juliet, Measure for Measure, As You Like It, even King Lear. K. V. Reddy later did King Lear (inaudible) Gunasundari Katha. It was a huge adaptation of the King Lear. The king having three daughters, each rather ask (inaudible). That was Gunasundari Katha but they made it like a folklore. The gem of the idea was already given by Mr. Ramnoth. Sami told me, when Ramnoth came there and met Mr. Somasundaram, Sami and others. When he was asked to think of a subject, he said, why don't you do Twelfth Night and I believe Sami himself had that imbue..... so immediately he said that we could do that and Ramnoth supposed to have told him that I've already worked out the three pictures (inaudible). I mean, probably started and as the Sami was already.....

Masthan : And the title was very intriguing (inaudible).

Randor Guy : Was this Kanniyin Kathali a successful film?

Masthan : Average.

Randor Guy : I think, I saw it in (inaudible) or some place. I saw it in an empty hall. (inaudible). Then?

Masthan : Then gave his big masterpiece that is Velaikari (inaudible) and Marmayogi.

Randor Guy : Marmayogi, where M. G. R. (M. G. Ramachandran) made his mark.

Masthan : (Inaudible).

Randor Guy : Even that image is very interesting, very significant film also. You worked in Velaikari? Were you the main cameraman?

Masthan : Yes. From beginning to end I (Inaudible)...

Randor Guy : Do you remember any interesting facets of that particular film. It was written by C. N. Annadurai. Did you meet Annadurai at that time?

Masthan : Yea, he used to come there. Almost after every set he used to come and see the rushes. He was so much interested in it and every time that he saw the rushes and he found (inaudible) and he used to come and embraced me as much (Inaudible). And later on you know, when the picture was recognised Ellis R. Dungan wrote me a very nice letter - main focus to you Masthan. You were constantly there.

Randor Guy : So he liked that. Where was he at that time?

Masthan : He was in Madras and he also congratulated the directors for that treatment and all those things. I thought that somehow, I don't deserve all that. I don't have even photographs of people with whom I have worked. That day I felt very glad...

Randor Guy : This Velaikari was originally a play (Inaudible) and some more things are added when you made it a film. I think mostly based on Monte Cristo which A. S. A. Sami told me and K. R. Ramaswamy was the hero and T. S. Balaiah came up with their fantastic performance.

Masthan : Yes, Mani.

Randor Guy : Yes, Mani the strategist. And V. N. Janaki played the villain.

Masthan : And there was also Rajamma.

Randor Guy : M. V. Rajamma was there. She was the Velaikari. P. K. Saraswathi, M. N. Nambiar - quite a gallery of artists. How long did this Velaikari take with a lengthy production?

Masthan : It took near about Eight months.

Randor Guy : Took eight months to shoot.

Masthan : Yes. And in fact, when the picture was all ready, the producers (inaudible) anti sentimental stuff. So, they were wondering whether this is going to be flop (inaudible). And in fact, for whatever price they would get, they would have sold it

(inaudible) and when it was released, my god it was big success and then they, perhaps they help us (inaudible).

Randor Guy : Vijayakaran Distribution?

Masthan : Yes.

Randor Guy : Do you remember any interesting aspects of making of Velaikari, shooting of Velaikari, any interesting incident or any problem that you had? Actually, Sami told me one particular incident which throws some light on Ramnoth. He said, there is one dance sequence in that film, where the dance Master, I don't remember who the dance master was - somebody who was called as Chopra.

Masthan : That was not in Velaikari, that was in Marmayogi. I remember the incident very well, because we were all (inaudible) for shooting. and it was not Chopra it was another man - Hiralal. He came and We were waiting for the morning train. (inaudible) and this news is brought to us and we thought that we are going to cancel the shooting. Then Ramnoth sat there for some time. He asked the song to be played - once twice thrice and then started shooting. I think the song was (inaudible).

Randor Guy : But what Mr. Sami told me was that this particular dance sequence, he had some Thanjavur dolls made in the same kind of costume that the dancers were wearing and he took shots. You know, the Thanjavur dolls can move their heads with legs separately - they run in separate sections. Using those kinds of movements, he interconnected with the live artists and very few of the lay people could find out that they were actually dolls and not real life artists. He said when you see the film next time you watch out for the sequences. Do you remember that? And he said you were the cameraman on that.

Masthan : It must have been dolls - alignment, in suggestion...

Randor Guy : Was it in Velaikari?

Masthan : (Inaudible) There is a sequence - where there is a tea party and dance and all those things.

Randor Guy : He was very (inaudible) about it and he quickly recalled that incident. He said it as a kind of a compliment to Ramnoth. And Sekhar used to do all the sets for all these films?

Masthan : He used to just give his (inaudible).

Randor Guy : And who was the art director for all those?

Masthan : (inaudible). And then there was one Choudhary. Choudhary he was also working here (inaudible).

Randor Guy : Who was the recordist in Jupiter at that time?

Masthan : (Inaudible) he was there and Ramsamy Iyengar was there.

Randor Guy : And what was Venkataswami doing when he was a manager there?

Masthan : He was Jupiter picture's office manager.

Randor Guy : Ok. He was U. R. Jeevarathnams's husband.

Masthan : Yes. Because the studio was separate and the Jupiter organization was separate. That means - dealing with the artists, entering into the contract these were all done by Jupiter Picture's office. There was Mr. Samuel and the studio just looked after the shooting and the things likes that.

Nilofer - Aditya's file is starting from the below line. So, I made necessary changes there onwards. Hence, I am not touching the following lines.

Randor Guy : Who was running that part of the studio?

Masthan : There was a different manager altogether.

Randor Guy : These two main bosses that is Mr. Somasundaram and Mr. Moidheenwho was living in Coimbatore looking after the office.

Masthan : Both of them were living in.....

Randor Guy : Both of them were living in Coimbatore? Somebody told me that Mr. Moidheen was living in Madras.

Masthan : This later....

Randor Guy : Later...

Masthan : (Inaudible). They were all living with their families

Randor Guy : In Coimbatore?

Masthan : Yes, and one year to take, the responsibility for finance and things like that Mr. Moidheen and Mr. Somu was connected with all the productions.

Randor Guy : What is the background of Mr. Moidheen before he came to films?

Masthan : He was a businessman.

Randor Guy : What business was he doing? Do you remember? Did he come from a very wealthy family.

Masthan : Not very wealthy family..... And even before entering films you say both are Mr. Somu and S. K. Moidheen were friends.....(Inaudible)

Interviewer-(Inaudible)

Masthan : (Inaudible)

Randor Guy : At, then there are some problems, because when I was again with Mr. Gopal Ratnam Mr. Moidheen's son, I think Habibullah, was in many aspects, I think he was also a lawyer.

Masthan : No, he was not a lawyer.

Randor Guy : Habibullah used to come with a number of files and things like that, where they had disputes. At that time, I was an apprentice, I used to.....all papers. And Mr. Gopal Ratnam was to some kind of a settlement. And you may remember Mr. Somasundaram had a brother called Gopal He used to come and talk on behalf of his brother (Tamil) That's why I remember there was some disputes after Mr. Moideen passed away thats much later, I suppose.

Masthan : Now I think as a sole proprietor of that main individual. A Month or two after that I got an invitation for his son's marriage Habibullah, the proprietor of Jupiter Pictures.

Randor Guy : But he's not doing any films?

Masthan : No, I think there.....getting these copies of the old

Randor Guy : Which would be a good source..... I understand that. So after this Velaikari what did you do?

Masthan : Meanwhile I was almost working on this outside productions also apart from these studio productions.

Randor Guy : As a freelancer, you were permitted to do that.

Masthan : Yes. I mean, it was released there.

Randor Guy : What was it?

Masthan : That is (Inaudible)

Randor Guy : (Inaudible) earlier.

Masthan : Yeah. And then we'll begin with (Inaudible).

Randor Guy : (Inaudible)

Masthan : Bilhanan

Randor Guy : Bilhanan..... it was written by ASA Sami and that was made at Jupiter's..... you shot there. And who directed it?

Masthan : There was Srinivasan.

Randor Guy : Not maybe.....

Masthan : (Inaudible)

Randor Guy : He is notbrother's son..... Not that K. V. Srinivasan. Because I asked ASA Sami, it was the same K. V. Srinivasan. He was not very clear. Maybe the same man I don't know exactly.

Mr. Mastan - no experience in that I adore you. So sometimes he has this difficulty whatever right now. He went this way how did he (Inaudible).

Randor Guy : Very problems ----

Masthan : Yes and I used to run classes, take him out and enjoy him because I then look around(Inaudible)

Randor Guy : Very familiar with problems and this Kundalakesi, Honnappa Bhagavathar was the hero and K. L. V. Vasantha was the heroine.....

M. Masthan – Part 2 (145 mint onwards)

2:23:17

Randor Guy : Who was running that part of the studio?

Mr. Masthan : There was a different manager altogether.

2:23:24

Randor Guy : These two main bosses, that is Mr. Somasundaram and Mr. Mohideen, who was leading in Coimbatore looking after the affairs?

Mr. Masthan : Both of them were living in Coimbatore.

Randor Guy : Somebody told me that Mr. Mohideen used to live in Madras.

Mr. Masthan : No. When it started, they all were living there. And one used to take responsibility for finance.

Randor Guy : That was Mr. Mohideen.

Mr. Masthan : Yes and Mr. Somu was connected with all the productions.

2:23:58

Randor Guy : What was the background of Mr. Mohideen before he came to films?

Mr. Masthan : He was a businessman.

2:24:02

Randor Guy : What business was he doing? do you remember? Did he come from a very wealthy family?

Mr. Masthan : Not very wealthy, but a well classed family. And even before they entered films, you see, both of them Mr. Somu and S.K. were friends and doing business. comes from (inaudible). They knew each other. They were together, so as to say. Except perhaps (inaudible), S.K walked out and things like that.

2:24:52

Randor Guy : When I was again with Mr. V. C. Gopalaratnam, (inaudible); Mr. Mohideen's son Mr. Habibullah used to come, with a number of files and things like that, when they had disputes. At the time I was an apprentice and Mr. Gopalaratnam tried to come into some sort of settlement. And you may remember Somasundaram had a brother called Gopal. He used to come and talk on behalf of his brother. (Tamil Conversation) That is all I remember, there was some dispute, after Mr. Mohideen passed away, it was much later I suppose.

Mr. Masthan : Now, I think he was the sole proprietor of the name - Jupiter Pictures. A month or two back, I got an invitation for his son's marriage, where this (inaudible).

2:26:00

Randor Guy : But he is not doing any films?

Mr. Masthan : I think they are getting copies of these old elements and running them.

2:26:10

Randor Guy : So, after this Velaikari what did you do?

Mr. Masthan : In the meanwhile, I was working on outside productions also, apart from these studio productions. As a freelancer. I mean it was (inaudible). "Kundalkesi" was one. K Srinivasan's. And then was T. K. Brothers' Bilhanan - written by A. S. A. Sami.

2:27:08

Randor Guy : And this was made at (inaudible). And who directed it?

Mr. Masthan : There was one Srinivasan. Not K. V. Srinivasan. There was another Srinivasan from Tanjavur pr somewhere. (inaudible).

2:27:33

Randor Guy : Not that K.V Srinivasan. Because I asked (inaudible), it was the same K.V. Srinivasan. He was not very clear, “Maybe it is the same man, I don’t know”; He said.

Mr. Masthan : Different man. No experience. Sometimes he had these difficulties, what our people have these days, left or right. He went this way, how will he come? And Mr. (inaudible and Tamil words), because (inaudible), “Now you went this way, come this way.”

2:28:30

Randor Guy : And this Kundalkesi - Honnappa Bhagavathar was the hero and K. V. Vasantha was the heroine. Was also Vasantha (no sound from - 02.28.39 to 02.28.53). I remember seeing Kundalikesi as a schoolboy. I think that J. M. Bashir played the villain. It was a historical based on the story? Did R. N. Krishnaswamy had influenced the film?

Mr. Masthan : No Krishnaswamy had not influenced it. It was entirely done at Centre Studios. It was directed by that cameraman, Boman Irani. It was the same story. It comes as a thief, robber and things like that.

2:29:42

Randor Guy : And after Kundalkesi what was the other? I don’t think that this Bilhanan was very successful. Was it?

Mr. Masthan : No, it wasn’t. There were two versions of Bilhanan. One was produced by Mubarak Pictures of K. R. Ramasamy and Sakuntala, done by B. N. Rao. This picture and that picture, both of them failed. T. K. S. Brothers were perhaps able to make ends meet, because they’ve used all their own staff artists. They somehow escaped but Mubarak Pictures burned their fingers. Because I knew the people, and I met them during the time the picture was being made. And I know the man, I met him and told him, “See, you’re making this picture and we are also making the same with a stronger cast, and these artists are very popular.

[**Note:** The conversation is regarding two different films with almost same title. One is “Bilhana” and other is “Bilhanan”. The former one is directed by B. N. Rao and the later one is by K. V. Srinivasan]

2:30:46

Randor Guy : What we are to think of the same subject when somebody else, non-professional was doing. This kind of competition was there in a number of cases in Madras.

Mr. Masthan : You know, they must've told the name to somebody; Financial or someone. That man on some understanding (inaudible). So, to go back and tell him that we are not doing that, and changing the subject and that would backout. That is always there, one of the reasons. Perhaps the main reason.

2:31:25

Randor Guy : And after these films you did Mohini. Were you involved in "Vijayakumari" also?

Mr. Masthan : Yes.

Randor Guy : Mohini was another Jupiter production with so many stars which was written by A. S. A. Sami and directed by Lanka Sathiyam.

Mr. Masthan : Yes.

Randor Guy : How did this Lanka Sathiyam landed in Jupiter? Did you know him very well?

Mr. Masthan : Yes. I knew him well. Of course, Lanka Sathiyam did this Mohini. And he took a (inaudible and Tamil words) and he used to insist on Masthan work in it.

2:32:00

Randor Guy : He was essentially a comedian. Did he know Tamil? How did he manage?

Mr. Masthan : Yes. He used to manage with assistants. Perhaps he didn't want to tell the films which kicked. And Jupiter Pictures were - If anything goes anywhere, they were (inaudible). So that is how he must've come into -

2:32:26

Randor Guy : What kind of a man was Mr. Somasundaram? Tell me about him.

Mr. Masthan : He was a very nice person. He never called me Masthan. He always called me Mr. Masthan. Till the last days, when he wasn't able to see things, his eyes were dying. When I went there, I said "Good Morning, Sir."- "Ah, Mr. Masthan, come." He couldn't see! Because of my voice, (he recognized). Because he had a very great liking for me. My wife used to go and listen to his wife. They were so bad out there. And that lady, she had lost weight and she had become so different in her looks. So, one day when I took my wife; And when she went in, she started crying! And after a week or ten days, this man passed away in Madras. So, he told me, "Why don't you do a picture for me?", in Madras. In the last stages. I said, I am here to work for you. He pointedly asked me, "Would you work with Sami?" I said who didn't want to work

with Sami. Then he said, “Do you work with Sekhar?”, I said by all means. You tell me the date, I’ll be there. And after that, it didn’t come through. But Sekhar did one picture - (inaudible and Tamil words).

And another thing, I seen in his last days. Something from which I have learnt a very good lesson in life. People whom you have brought up, you have helped to reach heights, they turn their backs on you when you are in dire need. It happened with Somasundaram. I was there on a particular day. Infact, that man, he wept. I could see tears coming out his eyes. It was all about a call sheet. Somebody was going away, and he wanted to have a shoot. He gets a reply saying, “Nothing doing until my amount is paid.” And finally, having heard all these things, he said, “So Masthan, (inaudible and Tamil words).”

2:36:51

Randor Guy : And after these (inaudible) films, with Ramnath what films did you do in Coimbatore?

Mr. Masthan : I only did this Marmayogi.

2:37:01

Randor Guy : Now this Marmayogi, was again written by A. S. A. Sami. He tells me that it was based on “Vengeance” by Mary Corley and Robin Hood. These two were combined to make this film. And I believe the original title was, “Karikaal”. According to Mr. Sami, there was a writer called Karmayogi who gave inspiration to call this “Marmayogi.” That was a film, I think with M.G Ramachandran, Anjali Devi, Serukalathur Sama and Madhuri Devi.

(inaudible) That was the beginning of this (inaudible), he jumped great heights. And that was a film in which his portrayal was given political mould, the character was written in that way. Sami explained it at great length, how this film was made, and how this story was written at the request of MGR; after the success of Rajakumari. He said Rajyakumari, (inaudible) for several reasons, but nobody can say I am part of (inaudible and Tamil words).

He wrote to write something for me, and he said the dialogue. And particularly 1-2 lines of dialogue, which became very famous, which appeared on the posters of Marmayogi, (inaudible and Tamil words). It became something like MGR’s political thing. It was a picture where “Man rebelling against injustices” is shown. Marmayogi was shot in Central Studios by Ramnoth, and you were the cameraman. Do you remember anything about the making of Marmayogi?

Mr. Masthan : Yes, you know we had a lot of difficulties making this Serukalathur Sama as a ghost appearing on the set and all those things. We were experimenting on how to make the man move, and then one man suggested that ghosts don’t cast shadows. That was a strong (inaudible). When we had surpassed all of those

difficulties, one assistant says, “Sir, ghosts don’t cast shadows!” Then we began building bulbs into it. It was a small trolley-like thing with a motor. And Sama used to stand on that. And along with that we had to build the bulb’s height. To get some illumination. And, somehow, we managed to do this. We used to take tests, and something used to show somewhere, and then we had to (inaudible). And all of this took a lot of time. And that one set where we did most of the work. And then there was a battle between the ladies. They saw the rushes.

2:41:00

Randor Guy : We were talking about the packing between the two ladies - Anjalidevi and Madhuridevi, which was not in the script.

Mr. Masthan : Everytime Anjalidevi comes from Madras, she used to come and see all the rushes. The previous scheduled rushes and all those things. And some how we had shot a scene where some of the closeups Madhuri had come out very beautifully. And in the make-up room they were some exchanges of words. Anjali felt that her close-ups were secondary to Madhuri, and there was a verbal exchange which would’ve become like a scuffle but then it was prohibited by the make-up people.

2:42:00

Randor Guy : What role did Madhuri play? Did she play MGR’s sweetheart or something like that?

Mr. Masthan : She was MGR’s sister. She hides in a box. And when all of MGR’s men are brought inside this cave. (inaudible) That’s right, she plays the heroine. Anjali is the vamp.

2:43:07

Randor Guy : And Mr. Sami told me, two memorable incidents about which I would like to ask you, during the making of this Marmayogi. Number 1 was the song picturization in the boat, which he said was done in the studio itself. Even though planning was done, and everything was ready and Ramnoth was getting jittery.

Mr. Masthan : I remember we had a tank in the studio. And that was very difficult to work. Because any light you throw on the background, it used to reflect on the water surface. It took us a few days to finish that song. And it took us our life. Because it is not a static shot, it has to move. And when the camera starts moving, all of a sudden you get a bright reflecting spot. By trial and error we were able to get through the shot.

2:44:23

Randor Guy : Did you use miniatures?

Mr. Masthan : No. Nothing like that. This was planned to be taken indoors because that (Tamil name) has to go inside the water. He is thrown inside. The villain comes swimming and he rocks the boat. These things are difficult to do on location.

2:44:58

Randor Guy : Did you have any underwater sequences for all this?

Mr. Masthan : We did one or two shots as we had limited time. The glass.

2:24:13

Randor Guy : Who played the villain?

Mr. Masthan : S.A. Natarajan. He did very well. But poor man, after such memorable performances, he just dropped off.

2:45:29

Randor Guy : Is he alive? Sami also mentioned the sequence where MGR throws the knife at Anjali Devi, and how it was done by Ramnoth in a very simple manner. They were wondering how to do it. Do you remember that sequence? She is seated on the throne, MGR throws the knife. And it looks as if it is actually thrown and she escapes. It gets locked in the throne (inaudible). They were wondering how it was done, and Ramnath suggested a very simple method.

It looked very simple when he explained it. Even MGR talks about it in his autobiography (**Naan Yaen Piranthaen**); How this particular shot was done. Whether he used a black thread when Masthan was operating the camera. It impressed them so much. When it was edited, it looked as if it was actually thrown on her. He said it as an example of the enormous creativity of Ramnoth. He cited it as an example. Do you remember that sequence?

Mr. Masthan : I remember the sequence but I wonder whether we had used a very thin wire for the knife to go to that seat. A fine copper wire on one side of the frame, entering the frame from the outside. And next we cut to that shot.

2:47:32

Randor Guy : That was very ingenious. So many examples he cited when he spoke to me. Marmayogi was a big success, wasn't it?

Mr. Masthan : A big success. It was soon after Marmayogi that I resigned. It was released in two versions, including a Hindi version. Hindi version was dubbed. The negatives were shot twice, once in Tamil and once in Hindi. Because the Hindi version was written by a very famous Hindi writer, Pandit Sudarshan. And these people ripped the dialogues

2:48:15

Randor Guy : For Hindi they spoke to make dubbing better, I see. That's why they had two negatives. So MGR and others spoke in Hindi.

Mr. Masthan : And surprisingly, two shots were taken at the same time. But people who used to see the two rushes at the same time, they used to say, "Hindi looks much better." With the same cameras and lighting, except the words. But somehow they used to say, (inaudible). Illusion. Both the rushes went very well.

2:49:03

Randor Guy : What was the title of the Hindi version?

Mr. Masthan : "Ek Tha Raja". Me and Pandit Sudarshan used to work very closely. A very well-read man. Very knowledgeable and a very good man. He used to say, "Masthan come, are you free? I am free. Tell me a story." Suppose I come up with a story, then don't find faults in me.

2:49:45

Randor Guy : Was Kaithi made when you were there? Which was made by S. Balachandar.

Mr. Masthan : It began production, but I was not involved in the making. There were three shots in the Madras Race Course. I took those shots. It was during those times when I was at Mangala Vilas at Mylapore. Jupiter had it in their possession. Gradually, they shifted from (inaudible). It was a very foolish move.

2:50:28

Randor Guy : Was this Kaithi an adaptation of an English film? Recently I met S. Balachandran at an American Consulate party, when I asked him whether it was adapted from a James Cagney movie. He said it wasn't James Cagney, but from something else. He was not able to recall the name, during the party. And I hope I get to talk to him on tape like with you. He was very happy about it.

That is the only sequence, the murder takes place at the racecourse. Where he goes and bicycle (inaudible). And then Balachandran comes and gives him a tip. The horse wins and the benefactor's body is found in the car. I remember that scene very well, I saw it when I was just entering college. Do you remember all those sequences?

Mr. Masthan : I remember he had a coin a coin, (inaudible) throwing up here and there.

2:51:29

Randor Guy : This is all taken from Hollywood films. Coin, (inaudible). I think that was in Scarface. He tosses the coin and somebody gets killed. Straight lift from a Hollywood film. So Balachandran used to adapt. And I think that was the film where

Muktha Srinivasan and Sethumadhavan worked as assistants to S. Balachandar. Both of them told me this. Do you remember that?

Mr. Masthan : Sethumadhavan, I remember very well. It was during my time at the studios that he came and joined Central Studios. As assistant director to Mr. Ramnath in Marmayogi. In fact, I remember when Sethu came, he was so thin. So I asked him, “How come you are so thin, how long are you going to work in this studio?” (inaudible). I met him a long time ago.

2:52:48

Randor Guy : And he made a Hindi film which did not get released. There is a Malayalam film called (inaudible) with Satyam. It was a film about a prisoner, why he committed a murder and things like that. He remade it in Hindi. In which Marcus Botley Cangler along with somebody else.

He showed me the Malayalam version, when he was showing it to the other technicians and Hindi artists, He called me and I saw. That film has not been released. It must be 3 or 4 years now. He had some problems with his partners and so on.

Talking about Kaithi, I understand from talking to P. L. Mohanram. This film was originally called (inaudible). Later on, when they started doing publicity designs and all, there was a poster saying (inaudible). Jupiter’s blood is coming out. What nonsense. When they changed the title, then it became Kaithi. Mohanram was at the time with Jupiter.

So, after Kaithi, you left?

Mr. Masthan : Not after Kaithi. It was after Marmayogi. Roughly towards the beginning of 1950. These people had all gone to north and south. (inaudible) Then I gave in my resignation. (inaudible) he said, no Masthan you are not going.

2:54:38

Randor Guy : What made you think of leaving?

Mr. Masthan : Earlier, we had a little difference of opinion about payment and things like that. It was personal. They had started cutting everyone’s salaries. Before that, they had some difficulties. So, they started cutting down. Then I protested. I said you cut everybody’s salary I don’t mind, but you had yourself said (inaudible).

So, I had gone through so much, and now to cut my salary too. (inaudible) And with that I go out. So that is why the difference of opinion was there. I said I don’t want any money, but I’ll leave after finishing the picture. As fortune, or misfortune the director called. (inaudible) comes from the Modern Theatres. I knew none of the modern theatre group.

So, he comes with all the tickets booked. I was told that he wants to meet me. So, I went to Salem. I stayed in- then there were not many hotels, (inaudible) so I was put

up there and next morning I went. So, instead of Sundaram, somebody else was trying to interview me. That was (inaudible). He was the production manager. (Tamil Conversation) I just told him, I want to meet (Tamil Conversation), where is he. (inaudible) I said I am not prepared to talk to anyone else. Only C.R. Sundaram. One boy came and said (inaudible). So, I went in and wished him. This was the first time that I met him. He asked me to sit down and said, “Masthan, I have started a production. And I have done some work, I want you to come.” I told him I was free, but anyway I must give them one month’s notice. After that if you want me, I am here. I tried to tell them and go there as early as possible. And the man didn’t talk about my salary or anything. I was also very elated to have met this man. And he was so nice to me. Because the other people had given a different view of the man altogether - “You cant sit before him, stand before him” and all these things. He was nothing like that. So, without talking any terms, I went back to Coimbatore. On reaching home, my wife asked me if I met him and if had finalized my terms. I replied I didn’t speak anything about terms. I said I’ll write to him tomorrow. And the next day I wrote to him saying that somehow I missed talking about the terms.

2:58:56

Randor Guy : What was the reply you received from C. R. Sundaram?

Mr. Masthan : He said that we will discuss the terms when you come here. And he wanted me to com as early as possible. In the meanwhile, they were taking some shots with (inaudible).

2:59:12

Randor Guy : What film was that? And who directed it?

Mr. Masthan : Chandradhikari with M. N. Nambiar. Once again, there were MGR, Anjali Devi. We had about 21 horses and everything for the film. It was a remake of the film, “Gallant Blade,” starring Larry Parks. T. R. Sundaram directed this film. He was a good technician. He wouldn’t come and act, or anything. He called his assistant, (inaudible). Directing assistant.

And he would give you the shot and he would go away. He knew how much time I would require to line up and light up, and then he would come back. Before I asked for a rehearsal, he had rehearsal lights on. But the studios were so very well disciplined.

At 9:00 the shot used to be taken, no delay. One day, it so happened that I was brought late to the set, because the car was late. I had a free house where I used to stay. So, this conveyance came late to me and I had to come late.

K. L. V. Vasantha and T. R. S. stood at the gate to the studio. I greeted him Good Evening. He asked me about the delay. I replied and told him about the conveyance. And immediately, there was all the drama. (inaudible) give this explanation,

otherwise you get the man coming from the production office and ask him why the car was late. He was always very strict and disciplined.

And the driver was always told that if there are only two people for you to carry, you carry only those two people, not the third man. If you see a friend of yours, another technician walking on the road, you shall not stop the car. And one day I had to break this rule. Because as we were going, the car used to pick up (inaudible), the sound artist. And we were going to the shooting and on the way, I saw another brother technician, one sound recordist who had missed the bus. He was almost running.

When I saw this man, I told the driver (inaudible). I had to plead with the driver. (inaudible) Somehow I picked him up. I asked that man to join us, and we went. The first thing I went and ran to the sir and told him that the man had missed the bus and I picked him on the way. I know this is out of your rules and regulations, and that we are not supposed to do this.

But you know, he was a nice man. If you were reasonable, then there was no question (inaudible). All he wanted was discipline and work. This is what I told my friends also. Almost all my friends came to me when he was in Coimbatore. "What sir, where are you going, Modern Theatres?" This frightened me. Then I told them, if Mr. Sundaram wants only work and discipline, I can give him those. Otherwise, it is shorter by 100 or 95 minutes.

3:05:02

Randor Guy : This Sarvadhikari was a very big success, wasn't it? It brought a lot of name and fame for Nambiar.

Mr. Masthan : Big success. He established his name in his previous picture, Marmayogi.

3:05:23

Randor Guy : And in Modern Theatres, how many floors did you have? Only one or two?

Mr. Masthan : When I went there, there were only two. Later they put up one more floor. So, there were three floors, but I think one floor was covered.

3:05:41

Randor Guy : It was not working at all. After Ramapal who was R. Sundaram's son had a heart attack. And he was not well at work. Then his wife took over the running of the studio. She hired from outside, from Madras and other cities through package deals and everything like that. But even then it stopped. When I went to Salem last time for some work, I passed through Modern Theatres. At the time it was closed, so I asked somebody that (inaudible) nothing is going on, and (inaudible) is not supposed to do any work.

And they had another problem with Ramakrishnan, who was one of his classmates or something. There were some legal disputes, I think they're fighting each other in the Court. Ramakrishnan was supposed to have (inaudible); (inaudible) not there in the studio because of his illness. And because of all this, the studio is not working. A very fine, well equipped studio.

3:06:55

Randor Guy : And after Sarvadhikari, what did you do? Was Manthiri Kumari (directed by Ellis R. Dungan) after that?

Mr. Masthan : No, that was earlier to that. And after that, I did Valayapathy.

3:07:10

Randor Guy : And this Valayapathy you directed? Was that your first directorial venture? What kind of a film was this?

Mr. Masthan : Yes, Valayapathy was my first directorial venture. In fact, I told him, I don't want to direct. Then he said, "I am telling you, you are the director, go ahead".

3:07:27

Randor Guy : Valayapathy had Sowkar Janaki. It was her first ever film. It had Muthukrishnan who I don't think made any films afterwards. He is still known by that name.

Mr. Masthan : He was one of the T. K. Brothers' artists.

3:07:46

Randor Guy : What kind of story was this Valayapathy?

Mr. Masthan : It was an epic. The dialogues were written by the great path breaking Tamil writer Bharathidasan.

3:08:10

Randor Guy : It was more of a dialogue-oriented film. Was it a costume drama? What was the central point of the film?

Mr. Masthan : Yes, it was a costume drama. It is about a big merchant, who has two wives. One was (inaudible) and the other (inaudible). Sowkar Janaki was one, and the other actress was T.A. Jayalakshmi.

3:09:25

Randor Guy : She is a very good friend of mine. Was she on a permanent contract?

Mr. Masthan : No. What happened was, first our Malathi was there. And it so happened once, I had to take a few more shots to get it right, which was observed by Mr. Sundaram who had just come to the sets of Valayapathy. (inaudible) Because she

had to come to our expectations, and she couldn't deliver. She was playing the first wife. T.A. Jayalakshmi replaced her.

And after this, people (inaudible). "What Masthan, you have done a disservice. You removed her." I said, don't put this on me, I had nothing to do with this. Then there was no shooting, the third day I went; I didn't know that she had been replaced.

And I had to reshoot nearly about, (inaudible) with Jayalakshmi. Undoing what I did. And sometimes there are also people who go looking for tricks. Sometimes he is very stubborn. Sometimes he falls.

3:11:29

Randor Guy : Who were your assistant directors in Valayapathy? Was Muktha Srinivasan there at the time?

Mr. Masthan : They were working with Mr. Sundaram. Muktha Srinivasan was not working with me. Sethumadhavan did some work much later. He came to me running, (inaudible). Then I told him, he is a nice man, respected man. Because I was very northern, he can't give anybody any trouble. So only after that he (inaudible).

3:12:32

Randor Guy : And in Valayapathy, were you handling any photography also?

Mr. Masthan : It was entirely at the hands of (inaudible).

3:12:41

Randor Guy : Was he there permanently with Modern Theatres?

Mr. Masthan : Yes. Of course, I was an unwelcome visitor there. Because they asked (inaudible) to come from outside. (inaudible) Of course, they then got over it. (inaudible). Sort of a guardian, so to say.

3:13:32

Randor Guy : Balu was the editor on your film who later on came to Keral.

Mr. Masthan : I read later, and I think Balu must have come because he left Modern Theatres.

3:13:50

Randor Guy : And, who was the music director on that? And all the song recording? What about the orchestra?

Mr. Masthan : Music director was (inaudible). The song recording was all done at Salem. They used to take the orchestra from Madras. But they never came to Madras for recording?

3:14:15

Randor Guy : What were they doing in Jupiter?

Mr. Masthan : In Jupiter, they used to take the orchestra from Madras to Coimbatore. It was very expensive, since there were around 50 members.

3:14:32

Randor Guy : Some of the older studios, they had their own orchestra players; like (inaudible).

Mr. Masthan : Central also, they had their own music director, and a skeleton orchestra; so to say. And so when I was there, M. S. Vishwanathan was there, plus a couple of others.

3:14:55

Randor Guy : Who was R. Ramanathan? Because the song book of Haridas (movie) which I was going through last night. It was shot in central studios by Sundar Rao Nandkarni and in that, I read the orchestra in-charge was S. M. Subbaiah Naidu and R. Ramanathan in Central Studio. These two names were found. Do you know who the second man was?

Mr. Masthan : I don't recall anybody.

3:15:38

Randor Guy : And Modern theatres did not have their own orchestra. How were they doing the re-recording of the film?

Mr. Masthan : The artist used to be taken there. And the music director used to come along with the orchestra.

3:16:00

Randor Guy : What about the lyric writers? Were they there when you went?

Mr. Masthan : There were (inaudible) people. The writers were A. V. P. Asai Thambi. All of these people became politicians later on.

3:16:31

Randor Guy : What about Kannadasan? Was he there? And what about Karunanidhi?

Mr. Masthan : (inaudible) used to come and go. And during my time, (inaudible) was not there. He had left, but he did write for Shivaji Ganesha for Modern Theatres. (inaudible)

3:16:55

Randor Guy : And there was also the (inaudible), another writer. Who belonged to the (inaudible). Because (inaudible) talks about the (inaudible).

Mr. Masthan : R. M. Krishnaswami had spent a few years before I went. When I was there, he was not.

3:17:18

Randor Guy : And, were you there when Thigambara Samiar was made?

Mr. Masthan : That was the period of R. M. Krishna. He left during the making of Thigambara Samiar. And I went after that.

3:17:32

Randor Guy : After Sarvadhikari, what did you do?

Mr. Masthan : Valayapathy which ran averagely in the theatres. It was released there along with our Sivaji Ganeshan's first picture Parasakthi. Which was released at the same times. Our acharya was there who made Kalyani. I worked in Kalyani; halfway through he was sick. Tuberculosis or something. And I was asked to complete Kalyani.

3:18:09

Randor Guy : And whose name appeared in the credits finally? As a director.

Mr. Masthan : My name was also there, but the credits were divided.

3:18:22

Randor Guy : What kind of a film was Kalyani? Who was the hero of Kalyani?

Mr. Masthan : Kalyani was another. B. S. Saroja was there. M. N. Nambiar was the hero. Then they made another picture in which I was not involved, Devaki - made in two versions (inaudible) and Devaki. It was a big draw. A big success. And when I was just rotting in Salem without any work; Then I told them that I am a technician and I can do as much. Give me a picture to do.

(inaudible) then he said I will give picture. And time dragged on like that. And I felt that I couldn't go on like that. He said if there is work then you will be picked up, otherwise you are just a (inaudible). So finally one fine morning, I sent in my resignation. And then he called me, asking what is this.

I said, I asked you (inaudible). And as a technician if you make me rot like this. Then afterwards I couldn't go to the job. "But have you found a job in Madras?", he asked. I replied not yet. Then he said, alright go to Madras.

So I came to Madras when (inaudible) Swamy was there with (inaudible). He had written to me, saying I heard you are coming here. (inaudible). The next day I returned. How did you return so soon, he asked me. I replied, (inaudible). Alright, and yet I wish you all the best, he said. And I (inaudible) some of the things that he had given.

For my children he had given a cart. (inaudible) and all sorts of things. (inaudible). And then people told me, make use of the director. Go and ask him for something. I said package will come later on.

3:22:04

Randor Guy : Talking about Modern Theatres, there is this one aspect of production I have seen a few times. There is always a certain cheapness about their productions. Most of the films look alike, and they don't go anywhere beyond their (inaudible). Most of the work is done in the studios. What is the reason for this kind of stamp that this is a Modern Theatres Production?

Mr. Masthan : Things are being used over and over again. That is why they look alike. The same pillars, the same sofas. And they have a very big casting power. These gadgets and furnishings and all that. Sometimes with the sofas they pull out the upholstery. It is a sense of all the time. It was all done for economy.

Till such times I went there, this 10-11 o'clock tea were not given to the people. So once I asked the production manager, (inaudible). He followed it. And after that it was okay. But inside the studio they had, and never bothered to go outside on location.

So, when you asked for it, he will say yes.

3:24:12

Randor Guy : There is another aspect of Sundaram, that he was in the habit of beating people, or whipping people. Did you see anything?

Mr. Masthan : That is what these people say, but it is all just to frighten you.

3:24:25

Randor Guy : Because Gupta Srinivasan told me that he was actually whipped, and that was the reason why he left. He went to Balachandran and joined, he was Gupta's assistant or something like that. This question, about using the whip or a stick or whatever; I asked Mr. R.M Krishnaswamy also, with whom I have done a similar project as with you now, and he said that it was true.

He said that there have been certain instances where even artists were subjected to that treatment. And he said even MGR was once tied up. He said that he (Sundaram) never bothered about anybody and Jamuna in one project; when she was being haughty, she was tied up and thrown into some room. He said that was his way of instilling discipline among artists.

Mr. Masthan : I don't know, these things come to me as very new. Perhaps I had gone there at a time when the man had mellowed.

3:25:29

Randor Guy : What was his age when you met him? Was he very westernized, wearing and tie and all?

Mr. Masthan : He was in his late fifties. No, he wasn't that westernized. He used to have a (inaudible). I had never seen him with a tie or a suit. Perhaps he wore those things when he went out. But not in a dhoti. Most uncomfortable thing for him was a dhoti.

3:26:17

Randor Guy : Where was he living?

Mr. Masthan : He lived in the studio itself, in a bungalow. But I liked the place immensely. It was a good place, and a very good studio. And anything that you want, and if it would be useful to you and if it would've hastened your work, it was available. We have got to just go to him and explain how the particular thing would help us.

He immediately phoned Bombay, Delhi, Calcutta anywhere. I wanted a dimmer for certain effects. So he took me around, and he asked the storekeeper to open one big hall, where all sorts of gadgets that he had were there. He showed me that all of these things were done by my predecessors. And they are not being used, they are just lying there.

3:27:26

Randor Guy : What were the gadgets that he had there?

Mr. Masthan : All sorts of stands. And things for certain affects and all those things. Then he asked me if this thing is going to help you and If you are going to use it on the sets. And then he immediately ordered a huge dimmer. And it arrived. So, anything you want; it was to help you pick up your work. And it was more or less (inaudible).

9 o'clock meant the first shot would be taken at 9 o'clock. And the next day when you came in the early morning, you saw the rushes. The artists had to come on time, and he saw to it. (inaudible) I didn't make hot water, make all the water hot. Do it. Do anything you like. But your presence should be seen. (inaudible).

3:29:02

Randor Guy : How did the artists lodged in Modern Theatres? Separate lodgings, hotel rooms?

Mr. Masthan : There were also hotel rooms available. Those who wanted hotel rooms, they were given hotel rooms. Otherwise, in the rehearsal hall, there were separate rooms. Not the studio. The rehearsal hall was different. It was in town.

It was used for rehearsals. Song rehearsals, dance rehearsals; and all these things used to take place here. And the mess was also there. So, artists would stay more comfortably here than at home. It is a vast place. We can move freely. And every

evening, a bus used to be there. Those who want to meet it, can meet there. Even the story discussions used to take place there.

It was very well organized. And they had a big bus, a luxury bus. In one trip, it would transport all the orchestra people, the artists and so on. It was owned by the studio. And I am so sorry to hear the studio is closed now. In Salem, Ratna was closed long ago.

But this studio was so well organized, you see. Perhaps they mismanaged the whole affair.

3:30:58

Randor Guy : Yes, that is what I have heard. Because at one time, there were some negotiations on doing some crime films by me, or Mr. R. Sundaram. I wrote to him and he said that he would like to meet me and discuss. And then finally nothing happened. I tried to find out about this; Since at the time he had shown a lot of enthusiasm. He said that Ramakrishnan played him out and there was some trouble, then I heard that he was not well.

And in the wedding of (inaudible)'s daughter, he had come. But I couldn't talk to him at that time. There was a huge crowd. I was told that the studio was still closed. They had no ideas of any production immediately. So, the project was more or less given up.

But when I went for the shooting as I told you earlier, when you drove past (inaudible) on (inaudible), you found that it was closed.

Mr. Masthan : A fine lab, and also a good library. Whenever he used to see boys running all over the place, he used to call them and ask what age they were. He asked why didn't they go into the library and read something. And every alternate day, they used to have volleyball. After volleyball, they were given coffee and something to bite. It was nice.

And he used to play tennis. And if you knew how to play tennis, you could play with him. And then there was a carrom board, indoor games. So it was very well organized. Homely. They used to celebrate Saraswati pooja on a very grand scale. Do dramas, skits, lectures and all those things. Gifts were used to be given.

3:33:19

Randor Guy : Was **Veppathur Kittu** there when you were there? (inaudible) was supposed to have been written by (inaudible).

Mr. Masthan : No. Maybe he worked a little later than me. Mr. Raghunath did some picture?

3:33:42

Randor Guy : That was **Vannakili**. **Vannakili** was done by T. R. Raghunath.

Mr. Masthan : And Mr. Ramnoth did Sugam Enge. He did it halfway. Mr. Sekhar told me that.

3:34:15

Randor Guy : And *Thuli Visham* which you did at Narasu Studio. This Narasu is the old Vel Pictures Studio. At Guindy where you have a soft drink establishment. Mr. B. L. Narasu bought it or took it on lease?

Mr. Masthan : No, he bought it. And bought it very cheaply. During the evacuation time. From (inaudible) pictures, passed into the hands of somebody else. So it was during the evacuation that the man had bought the property. He tried to get into production, but that was a failure.

3:34:57

Randor Guy : What film was that?

Mr. Masthan : That was (inaudible). It was maybe something else, where my boss had some interest. He was doing (inaudible).

3:35:19

Randor Guy : This Vel Pictures Studio that is Narasu. How many floors did it have? It was a huge place, very sprawling. 3 floors. Lab, Recording and Theatre.

Mr. Masthan : It had the lab. There was a recording theatre, manned by the late Mr. Ramchandra, a very nice man.

3:35:54

Randor Guy : And Balaji was the production manager there? Who later on became a movie mogul of South India. He was also an actor. And *Thuli Visham* was that an adaptation of any play?

Mr. Masthan : I don't know, it was (inaudible) there, who was the writer. And the dialogues were written by A. S. A. Sami, who had a very jaw breaking Tamil. I think they did a very big mess-up there.

3:36:24

Randor Guy : It didn't do well. Sivaji Ganesan, K. R. Ramasamy - all of these people. It was too much of a talkie.

Mr. Masthan : It was a hundred percent talkie. There also, there was a two language affair. They had two negatives.

3:36: 58

Randor Guy : They used to move their lips for Telugu dialogue for effective dubbing. Because Swami told me, after so many years, he was able to laugh over it, which he

would not have been able to have done earlier. I believe there was one sequence, where Sivaji Ganesan and K.R. Ramasamy keep on talking.

It was only these two in the frame. Nothing else happens. Both of them talk to the top of their voices. And some newspaper critic wrote, that it was as if it were two dogs barking at each other. That scene was even more than a thousand feet.

He said these were all the minus points, which he did not realize at the time.

Mr. Masthan : It was a very big fault. You know, for whatever faults that this man used to do on the sets; Somehow I used to cover it.

3:38:21

Randor Guy : In what way could you do that?

Mr. Masthan : When the set is half done, this man used to put a call sheet. I used to with him, what the hell was he trying to do?

3:38:35

Randor Guy : He used to call you governor?

Mr. Masthan : (inaudible). So, such things, (inaudible). Old man. (inaudible). Very embarrassing for me. Somehow I used to gloss over things. (Tamil Conversation) This man wrote a letter and called me.

3:39:08

Randor Guy : And then what happened?

Mr. Masthan : I talked badly about him to (inaudible). Then it hurt me a lot. Narsu came to know about this, and (Tamil Conversation).

3:39:40

Randor Guy : After **Thuli Visham** what did you do?

Mr. Masthan : After **Thuli Visham**, I did (inaudible). Then there was Premapasam which was supposed to be Gyan Mukherjee's Kismet. And that is supposed to be the only picture in Narasu Production Studios that went well. It did very well in Telugu and Tamil. The remake of Kismet.

3:40:11

Randor Guy : And why I remember, is again going back to (inaudible) topics. They drafted the agreement with the Bombay Talkies survivors, Gyan Mukherjee was perhaps the writer for it. Taking over perhaps the script, dialogue, scenes and treatment.

The agreement between Narasu Studios and Bombay people was written by Mr. Gopalaratnam; under whom I worked as an apprentice. And that was the time that I came to know Mr. Venkatesh, Mr. Narasu's son in law; who used to handle all the files.

He used to mishandle. He used to be there at the office every morning. Who used to talk.

He was running the show, after resigning the bank where he was employed.

Mr. Masthan : (inaudible). You know he thinks he could digest (inaudible). I just told him (inaudible).

3:41:19

Randor Guy : What was he actually doing apart from being the son-in-law of Mr. Narasu?

Mr. Masthan : He used to come and talk to his Father-In-Law and talk about all the arrangements. He was like a general manager of the studio. And when Narasu became sick, he was always kept dark about all the things.

3:41:40

Randor Guy : What about Narasu's son?

Mr. Masthan : That poor child, he used to just walk along with his brother-in-law; and used to dally along with him. And whatever he said, he (inaudible). If he would've been smarter, the studio would have prospered.

3:42:01

Randor Guy : What exactly went wrong, when you say (inaudible) mishandled it?

Mr. Masthan : Businessmen must have a tact of managing things. You can't just say that you can buy everybody. There are some people that are very difficult to get along with. And this man, immediately he used to go to his Father-in-Law and suggest that they would get rid of the person.

And then the old man comes and says (inaudible).

3:42:45

Randor Guy : When you were there, who were the other technicians on the staff? Were there any other cameramen?

Mr. Masthan : When I came to Narasu Studio there was one other man called (inaudible), he was there for some time and then he left. Was T. R. Ramanna Rajakumari's brother was not working there. He directed a picture Sri Valli later in Narasu, after I left.

3:43:12

Randor Guy : Who was the Sound Recordist at Narasu?

Mr. Masthan : Our Ramsamy Iyengar was there. And then Ramachandra Iyengar was there. Poor man, he got an electric shock one time in trying to save his servant. There

was a metal line running and the servant woman began hanging some wet cloth there. And in trying to save her, he got a shock. A very nice man.

3:43:49

Randor Guy : What was S.V. Venkatraman in Narasu Studios? If there was no lab, was he there at any time? He wasn't? I remember him telling me that he had something to do with Narasu. I thought probably there was a lab.

Mr. Masthan : The lab was run by (inaudible). That was not in (inaudible). It was in (inaudible), just opposite the studio.

3:44:20

Randor Guy : So (inaudible) and his lab in (inaudible) originally? Where was it?

Mr. Masthan : Just opposite Narasu, the (inaudible) bottling company; There is a drop from the road. Just there, by the side of the day trading company in Guindy.

3:44:45

Randor Guy : That's why Venkatraman was probably working in the lab. He used to mention his connections with Narasu quite often. I presume that they probably had their own lab.

Mr. Masthan : Narasu was a very nice man, very soft spoken. And he believes people, and those people take him for a ride. People used to come and say, "Oh, It is so good sir! 100 days." And he would reply, I see.

3:45:28

Randor Guy : And, how many films did you do when you were in Narasu? Apart from ***Thuli Visham*** and Premapasam.

Mr. Masthan : The Melodrama Porter Kandan starring M. K. Radha and G. Varalakshmi.

3:45:42

Randor Guy : Who directed Porter Kandan?

Mr. Masthan : K. Vembu.

3:45:48

Randor Guy : Was that the first film that you did with K. Vembu? He was an old timer.

Mr. Masthan : Yes. But of course, I had worked with his bosses, Mr. Nottani and others. He was in Modern Theatres and later in Madras (inaudible).

3:46:04

Randor Guy : What film did you do with Mr. Nottani?

Mr. Masthan : Malayalam film - Gnanambika.

3:46:09

Randor Guy : I was about to ask you about Gnanambika because last night I saw your reference and it was made at Newtown. That was perhaps the second Malayalam film that was to be made. What kind of a movie was that?

Mr. Masthan : It was a sort of melodrama starring Alleppey Vincent, Sebastian Kunjukunju Bhagavathar and all those people.

Randor Guy : Who was this Sebastian Kunjukunju Bhagavathar?

Mr. Masthan : Alleppey Vincent was an actor at that time and his brother was Kunjukunju Bhagavathar.

3:46:38

Randor Guy : I did not know that. Alleppey Vincent was a good friend, I think he died.

Mr. Masthan : I met him about 7 or 8 years ago. There was a studio, somewhere near (inaudible); our friend Sethumadhavan took me and he was managing the whole affair.

3:47:17

Randor Guy : Was Sebastian Kunjukunju Bhagavathar a singer?

Mr. Masthan : He was a singer, and one or two of the girls also sang very well. And cooper was the cameraman.

3:47:26

Randor Guy : Who was Cooper?

Mr. Masthan : A Parsi who came from Bombay. And I assisted him in that picture. He was a man who always thought that the southerners were (inaudible). So one day, he started telling me something, and I replied alright. He said, "Oh you know so much?", I said I knew everything.

3:47:59

Randor Guy : This Gnanambika was Annamala productions. That was an advertisement I saw in an old book. They were advertising two films, one was a Tamil film Seeta Janma and the other was this Gnanambika. And the photograph was of Kunjukunju Bhagavathar in a suit. So, I thought it was probably some sort of family melodrama. Did you do well in Gnanambika? It did well maybe because it was the only Malayalam film around.

Who was Annamala Chettiyar? Apart from the fact that he -

Mr. Masthan : I think he is no more. I think his son is still alive, who owns the studio.

3:48:54

Randor Guy : Now it is leased to somebody else.

Mr. Masthan : You know, the rare thing about that studio, (inaudible).

3:49:02

Randor Guy : Most of those people are doing very well. Because the land value has skyrocketed, and they have coined huge profits, more than they could do in films. So, that was Narasu. After that what did you do?

Mr. Masthan : I took the bold step of becoming a freelance cameraman. Of course, during the time that I was doing this Porter Kandan, somehow this G. Varalakshmi appreciated my work.

3:49:35

Randor Guy : Was it a success?

Mr. Masthan : No, it was not. And she told me, that she was starting a picture; Harichandra in Tamil starring Sivaji Ganesan and herself. And asked me to work for her. And so I resigned here and took up that job.

3:50:01

Randor Guy : Where was this Harichandra made?

Mr. Masthan : In Prakash studios in Kodambakkam. Her husband K.S. Prakash Rao directed it.

3:50:11

Randor Guy : And who were the other artists?

Mr. Masthan : It shaped up very well, but towards the end of the whole shooting it came to a stop. There was some misunderstanding with the distributors. I think it was released. It was made only in Tamil. Because in Telugu, some other artist had made it and it was a big success. (inaudible).

3:51:09

Randor Guy : After this, what happened?

Mr. Masthan : After this, I was busy doing work as a freelancer. I was busy handling a couple of Sinhalese pictures. MGR contacted me. He gave me a picture to direct. The film was Swastik Pictures' Bhavani.

3:51:57

Randor Guy : Who were these Swastik Films?

Mr. Masthan : MGR, Chakrapani, Kannadasan, Cameraman Krishnan and some others who had made this company. Here, MGR called me and asked me to direct. I was (inaudible). So, he was gone through more than half the picture.

3:52:33

Randor Guy : Who were the artists in Bhavani?

Mr. Masthan : MGR was in it. B. S. Saroja was there. Anjalidevi was there. Chakrapani was there.

3:52:50

Randor Guy : What was this film about?

Mr. Masthan : It was a costume drama. The story was concocted by these people but the dialogues were written by Kannadasan who was one of the partners. And then there was some misunderstanding between Kannadasan and MGR and the picture came to a stop.

3:53:24

Randor Guy : Where was this picture shot? And when was this shot?

Mr. Masthan : At (inaudible). It must've been produced sometime around 1957.

3:53:36

Randor Guy : And was it before Nadodi Mannan?

Mr. Masthan : No, it was after Nadodi Mannan. And there were no signs of life. In the meanwhile, time was flying. Of course, I had some other assignments. There was a Telugu picture by the name of Soubhagyavathi.

3:54:10

Randor Guy : Whose film was that?

Mr. Masthan : One college professor was there, from Mysore or Andhra; a tall and fair man. He was the director. (inaudible).

3:54:35

Randor Guy : Is he still around?

Mr. Masthan : No, he isn't. He was a very nice man. He was from Andhra. The financier was Nandhi Pictures, Mysore.

3:54:50

Randor Guy : Who were the artists in that Soubhagyavathi?

Mr. Masthan : Savitri, Gemini Ganesan.

3:55:04

Randor Guy : Did he (Gemini Ganesan) speak Telugu or was it dubbed?

Mr. Masthan : I think it was dubbed. I cranked it and did not direct. The college professor was the director.

3:55:21

Randor Guy : And was it a costume drama, and was it released?

Mr. Masthan : Yes, a costume drama. It must have been released there. It was and then it did not happen. And then that period was full of confusions. People used to come, and the picture used to begin; one set was done and after that nobody was to be seen. And then there was another. Somebody would come at night and take you to set (inaudible).

And of course, all these productions were introduced by G. Varalakshmi. You went to set and shot two sets, after which nothing happened. And then afterwards I packed up and disappeared to Sri Lanka.

3:56:32

Randor Guy : You had some links there? But what took you to the films in Sri Lanka?

Mr. Masthan : Mr. **K. Gunaratnam**. Because during the time that I was in Modern Theatres, he did a picture in Sinhalesse in Modern Theatres. It was a remake of Bari Behen. I did certain portions of it. And directed some portions of it. It was a very big hit then. In Ceylon the film was called Sujatha.

3:57:20

Randor Guy : Who directed this film?

Mr. Masthan : T. **Somasekeran**. It was a very big, mammoth hit. (inaudible). And my position was becoming very shaky. So one time, Mr. Nadan came to me and said **Gunaratnam** wants to meet you. He had some plans and he wanted to meet me. He said, "Masthan, I am starting a studio in (inaudible)". I immediately grabbed this chance.

Because that was a place where I was familiar with the country, the job and politics. But when I went there I found a difference from what I had previously expected. It had changed a lot politically. And it changed mentally as well.

When people heard that I was from South India or from India, they behaved differently with me.

3:58:46

Randor Guy : So this change had started already. When was this?

Mr. Masthan : 1960.

3:59:15

Randor Guy : How long were you there in Sri Lanka?

Mr. Masthan : I was there for about six and a half years.

3:59:20

Randor Guy : That is quite a long time. What were you doing there?

Mr. Masthan : I was supposed to train people and also look to the direction of pictures. It was at Vijaya Studios in Colombo.

3:59:35

Randor Guy : Who was the owner of this studio?

Mr. Masthan : The owner was K. Gunaratnam of Cinemas Limited. He controlled more than 150 theatres. He had a very big office, and was involved in other industries as well. And there I did about seven pictures. No photography, only direction. All of them were in Sinhalese. And most of them were paid well.

4:00:09

Randor Guy : What kind of films were they?

Mr. Masthan : They were mostly remakes of Tamil films. Adutha Veettu Penn was a comedy done with Anjali Devi. And of course, we had to adapt it, to mention the social notes.

4:00:34

Randor Guy : Were they so different from conditions here?

Mr. Masthan : The conditions are there, which we accept. But they do not.

4:00:49

Randor Guy : And who were all the artists who were involved with these films?

Mr. Masthan : The main man was Gamini Fonseka. He had already come into the film. Malini Fonseka had come now, after I had left. Every time he came here, he used to give me a ring.

4:01:18

Randor Guy : And Gamini Fonseka was Senegalese. Was he from the state?

Mr. Masthan : No they had no absolute state. But one thing that I found during my six and a half years is that if you put anyone in front of the camera and instructed them on what to do, they would just simply go about it. They were born actors, so to say. Because I had to handle children. Schoolchildren, you see. You would just bring them and tell them what to do, and they would go through with it.

4:01:50

Randor Guy : Were the studios well-equipped?

Mr. Masthan : In the studio where I worked or helped to organize, was very well equipped. Much better than our own studios.

4:02:05

Randor Guy : How many floors did you have there?

Mr. Masthan : We had two floors. We had Arriflex, and we had Michel cameras. And for sound equipment, they had (inaudible). And a very fine lab, manned by Mr. S. V. Venkatraman.

4:02:35

Randor Guy : Did you take any other technicians apart from you and S. V. Venkatraman to organize the lab?

Mr. Masthan : (inaudible) was there for the sound. Because we always had trouble with the sound department in Ceylon. Then I suggested to Mr. Gunaratnam that he should get (inaudible) so that at least he could diagnose what was wrong. So he came and he was there for nearly 2 or 3 years.

4:03:05

Randor Guy : Did you take any artists from here?

Mr. Masthan : No. No artists and no technicians except myself, Venkatraman and (inaudible). In fact, by the time that we were going there, there were certain restrictions that came up. People or technicians that came from India were not encouraged.

4:03:39

Randor Guy : This was enforced by the government, maybe they wanted their local technicians to be trained and take over from people like you. And when did you come back from Sri Lanka.

Mr. Masthan : In the midst of 1968. Venkatraman came back much earlier. Perhaps I was the last to come back.

4:04:01

Randor Guy : I see. After you came back to India, what did you do?

Mr. Masthan : When I returned, my intention was not to go into films once again. I just wanted to retire and relax. But somehow, I couldn't. So, our K. S. Gopalakrishnan contacted me and he asked me to do some pictures for him. And I did two pictures for him.

4:04:35

Randor Guy : What were those films?

Mr. Masthan : One was (inaudible). And another was (inaudible).

4:04:47

Randor Guy : These were all dialogue oriented social dramas. How did they fare at the box office?

Mr. Masthan : They were so-so. (inaudible) was a remake of a big box office hit in Malayalam. And somehow that also didn't go very well. And after that Balaji wanted me to do (inaudible),

4:05:20

Randor Guy : I think you did a bunch of films with Balaji. What was the first film you did for him? You must have known him when he was a production manager at Narasu.

Mr. Masthan : Yes. Thirudan was the first one. I knew Sivaji Ganesan already. Because in Thuli Visham he was there. And during my time at Modern Theatres, he was there in Thirumbi Paar. But I did not photograph that, Subba Rao did it.

4:06:04

Randor Guy : Who directed the Thirudan?

Mr. Masthan : A. C. Tirulokchandar. And then after that he went in for color. Thirudan was in black and white. And then the first venture was Engirundho Vandhaal. That was a very big success with Jayalalitha, Sivaji Ganesan, Balaji and all. That was done by me.

And afterwards, in a roll there were a number of pictures. There were about 6 pictures, all for Balaji and mostly starring Sivaji Ganesan. In the meanwhile, when there was no work for Balaji, I had some engagements with Merryland Studio of P. Subramaniam in Trivandrum.

4:06:51

Randor Guy : What picture did you do for him?

Mr. Masthan : The first picture that I did for him was Aana Valarthiya Vanampadiyude Makan. It was in two versions, Telugu and Tamil.

4:07:03

Randor Guy : Who were the artists in this film?

Mr. Masthan : Our Gemini Ganesan was there. Rajasree was there.

4:07:13

Randor Guy : I think that is where their romance started. And where was Merryland Studio in Trivandrum?

Mr. Masthan : In Nemom. It had about 2 floors. It had the recording theatre.

4:07:33

Randor Guy : He recorded the songs in Trivandrum itself or did he come to Madras?

Mr. Masthan : Sometimes they used to record it there and sometimes they used to record it here in Madras. Perhaps it depended on the way you do the orchestra or how you manage the character. In fact, he used to ring up all these people in Madras, and tell them what kind of song he wanted.

And even to the writer he used to do this. Most of these pictures were of the devotional type. And (inaudible) was the music director. He was quite famous. He lives near (inaudible).

4:08:50

Randor Guy : I knew Mr. P. Subramaniam when I was in advertising. We used to call him, "Uncle". And by the time I came into films he had either retired or passed away. So, I did not have any way to know him as a filmmaker. But I used to see him. He used to come (inaudible) and we used to handle his advertising.

Mr. Masthan : He did that mostly as a pastime. He used to take things very easily, and not take anything with much tension. He used to encourage his people so -

Once it so happened, I wanted a high camera. So, I thought of climbing up a tree and holding the camera from up there for a high angle shot. And when he saw me, he asked me to come down. I said I was comfortable from up there, but he told me to come down.

And he asked, "Are you very young to climb trees?" And then he told me to take it easy. He did not want me to take any risks. He was a nice man.

4:10:21

Randor Guy : And what were the other films that you did for him?

Mr. Masthan : I did Swami Ayyappan for him, which was a very big success. That film also brought me the Kerala Award for Best Color Photography. He had formed a trust and stimulated on how the income from that venture should be used.

And the last picture I did for him, or rather his son Mr. Kumar, was Ramabhakt Hanuman (Wikipedia shows Bhaktha Hanuman).

4:11:07

Randor Guy : And who were the artists in that film?

Mr. Masthan : It was directed by our art director Ganga. And I think we did a very good job of it because there were a lot of trick scenes, which he was able to do without much trouble. I still remember one shot where he could shoot it straightaway.

These people were building bridges. And he had a sort of (inaudible) and fainted like (inaudible) before the camera. And down below he had laid some rocks. And then we had miniatures. He had made a (inaudible), which could be pulled at one end and it would travel.

The miniatures were of human beings. Monkeys too. The backdrop was the sea, and the place where he had placed the rocks merged with the foreground. This (inaudible) like thing, where the people were standing. So, this was gradually pulled on the glass which gave a little movement.

And with the sea movement below, it all merged with the stones and the bridges. So, it did create the illusion which we wanted. He used to dream of such things. It was a pleasure working with the man.

4:13:21

Randor Guy : And, after you left Merryland Studio, what did you do?

Mr. Masthan : There were some hodge-podge stuff done by my friends, and some of those pictures were never released. And there was one picture that my friend wanted me to do.

That film was (inaudible). It was all shot in (inaudible).

4:13:53

Randor Guy : Who was the director?

Mr. Masthan : (inaudible). A good friend of mine. He is an engineer by profession, and somehow was bitten by the cinema bug. The picture is yet to be released. The photography was good, but what is the use if it is not going to be seen by others.

4:14:19

Randor Guy : You mentioned a picture called (inaudible). Which year was this?

Mr. Masthan : It was done at Newtown Studios. It was a couple of skits. Three in one. It was directed by my guru Jiten Banerjee.

4:14:43

Randor Guy : Who were the artists involved in that? How many did you have, two or three?

Mr. Masthan : I think we had three. Three different artists, and different stories. And one was the (inaudible). The famous comedian. Another one was (inaudible). And then there were (inaudible).

4:15:21

Randor Guy : And who was it made for?

Mr. Masthan : It was distributed by Gemini Pictures. And made by Jiten Banerjee and some of his friends. That was the time when film was very cheap.

4:15:42

Randor Guy : Because, for instance, this (inaudible) was directing five in one. Which I saw as a small boy. One of them was called (inaudible). There was a big sadhu who makes passes at (inaudible) is exposed. It carried this social message that a lot of these Sadhus are fake, which is at many times true.

I remember one particular sequence in that, and I have been trying to locate a print but nobody seems to have it. And nobody even seems to know who directed that picture. I went through many issues of (inaudible), it was distributed by Gemini. I saw about 15 to 20 advertisements, but in none the director's name is mentioned.

In those days, they did not bother about mentioning the name of the director. For instance, you must have seen the film Manimekalai (1940 film) starring K. B. Sundarambal, Kothamangalam Seenu and others. I was told by Kothamangalam Seenu that it was produced by (inaudible) family. It says (inaudible) Productions or something.

I saw two or three full page advertisements, even in color, but there was no mention of the director who was (inaudible). Till then I did not know who directed it.

Mr. Masthan : Sometimes when the (inaudible) with the producers, they used to punish in this way. And by the way, those Chellaram people, they produced some pictures under the banner of (inaudible).

4:17:26

Randor Guy : That was (inaudible), in 1935. Again it was (inaudible). Then they paid 1 Lakh as remuneration to (inaudible) in 1935. Which would be worth a few crores today.

Mr. Masthan : They did a picture with V. V. Sadagopan i.e. Navayuvan and took him all the way to (inaudible). Who was the producer of that?

4:17:51

Randor Guy : This was shot in London, where Sadagopan is supposed to have sat on some London platform and talk about Hindi philosophy. I am not able to locate Sadagopan. He is still alive, and he was in Delhi but I was not able to place the man. I want to do a program like this with him.

Because he played the hero in Madhana Kamarajan and maybe some other projects. He was also there in Adirshtam done by S. D. S. Yogi. They had that famous song by

Suryakumari. (Song lines in Tamil). I am told It was sung by a very (inaudible) in South India.

I would like to ask you some general questions now that we have covered some of the directors that you have known. For instance, you have talked about Raja Sandow. Can you tell us something about Raja Chandrashekhar?

Mr. Masthan : An extremely good and hospitable man, as far as I was concerned. I met him in 1938, that was the year that I entered the filmmaking industry. It was on the set of (inaudible). There I met him, Mr. Raghunath, Veerappan, Mr. MGR and his brother Chakrapani.

4:19:28

Randor Guy : What was the background of Chandrashekhar?

Mr. Masthan : I do not know anything about his background, but he was very well read. He was very methodical in his work. He wouldn't take interference from anybody; he would throw up the whole thing and walk away. He was a very independent man.

I must tell you, there was this cook he had. His duty was to check everyone who came to see him. Very rigorous man. If you go there at 12 o'clock, he may take you for lunch.

4:20:16

Randor Guy : Where was Chandrashekar living?

Mr. Masthan : During his days in Madras, he lived in (inaudible). And I think the building in which he used to live is still there. It is at the place where the (inaudible) and the (inaudible) roads meet. In that triangle. It is an old house.

And you can't miss him if you are passing that way because he would be there on the verandah always smoking, like Raghunath who smokes to the present day despite his lung problems.

And later, when I went to Coimbatore, he was directing Sri Murugan. I was put in a hotel till I could (inaudible). Just opposite the Railway Station. And when I went to the studio, (inaudible). I said, "Sir, I came yesterday." (inaudible)

He had a bungalow there and asked me to stay with him. And I stayed with him till I could find a home for myself. And when there was no shooting, MGR, Chakrapani and myself used to sit playing carrom there. And (inaudible) was to give him soup. I can't forget that.

About the other picture, he had a difference of opinion with the producer. Because things were not going right and one day I remember, the production manager, who was formally a driver, Sundaram. He came and said something to the director. He got angry, who argued, "What are you supposed to be? (inaudible) You have no right to come here and talk to me."

And then he left the shoot and walked away, and didn't wait for anyone and left. And the man never teased people.

4:23:42

Randor Guy : What about Raghunath? He was his elder brother; did you do any films with him?

Mr. Masthan : (inaudible), that was done by Raghunath. And earlier to that in Kannagi and in Mahamaya, we came together and did a few sequences.

4:24:09

Randor Guy : (inaudible), did Marcus Bartley have anything to do with it?

Mr. Masthan : Yes, I shared credits with him. He had done Tamil earlier.

4:24:22

Randor Guy : Because I remember, once Marcus Botley told me that that was his first film.

Mr. Masthan : Earlier to that he had done Kannagi. And it was during the (inaudible) period we had the floods and evacuation. The picture was (inaudible).

4:24:52

Randor Guy : You had an editing room at (inaudible)? Who owned that?

Mr. Masthan : Kumar Pictures owned that. Newtown Studios. Everything was shifted from here, and it was (inaudible) a palatial bungalow.

4:25:14

Randor Guy : Because he had an interest in the studio. (inaudible) was (inaudible) in (inaudible). And then you were telling us about Ellis R. Dungan. I am planning for Ellis R. Dungan also. You did Meera and Sakuntalai with him. Did he do any films with your uncle, (inaudible)?

Mr. Masthan : No. Because when he rose up in the industry, got his lift in films he was in Coimbatore. So he never got an opportunity.

4:26:04

Randor Guy : And, did you work with (inaudible) or the Citadel Group? Coming back to Jupiter, Mr. Somasundaram and Mr. Mohideen. Somasundaram has taken credit for direction in one or two films, like Kannagi. Did he really direct them or just because he was the producer he put his name in the credit.

Mr. Masthan : No, as a producer the only interest they took was in fashioning the story.

4:26:39

Randor Guy : Was he an actor?

Mr. Masthan : They were all businesspeople who got into films. Mr. Mohideen had no aesthetic interest. He was purely finance. But, two good people (inaudible). The others may say things about them. When they had money, they never restricted paying their payments. They were very liberal with payments. If you did something good, even as a cameraman, like a few shots I did nicely, there would be a reward; I was sure.

One day, it was after Velaikari, Mr. Somu called me and said that he had credited two thousand rupees in my account. I asked him why. He said that the picture was doing well, and thought of giving me a bonus. That the money is there and I can draw it whenever I want.

4:28:00

Randor Guy : Now speaking of Velaikari, when you were making it; You and A. S. A. Sami were you aware that something sensational was being made?

Mr. Masthan : No, it was just another film for me. Because C. N. Annadurai was interested. He was interested because he was in and out of the studio. That was contagious. The interest was for the film passed forward. I don't know about others, but I did not feel that way.

4:28:58

Randor Guy : Mr. A. S. A. Sami told me when I met him a few years ago, that Jupiter had plans to make a film in English, Hindi and Tamil written by C. N. Annadurai, called the Scientist. Did you know anything about this? Nothing came out of it, obviously.

Mr. Masthan : I knew about this film. Because one day I did not know for certain that he lived so close to me here in (inaudible). Mr. Annadurai, he lived here in (inaudible). One day when I was walking along that way, I heard someone clapping and calling my name. I turned to find Mr. (inaudible) on the verandah of his house. (inaudible)

Then we sat down and began talking. He introduced me to his sons, and then said that he was about to do another picture called The Scientist and wanted me to play a role for the film. That is how I came to know about this film.

4:30:18

Randor Guy : And I believe Harindranath Chattopadhyay, who was supposed to play the role of the scientist in English and in Hindi was paid 50,000. He lived in Madras for some time. He also lived in (inaudible). He was paid 50,000 Rupees and he was here for almost a year. Nothing came from that project, that is what I hear from Sami.

Mr. Masthan : I had seen this man visiting the Jupiter Office. (inaudible) told me that he was being paid to do some work here. At Jupiter they waste money on all sorts of schemes.

4:31:00

Randor Guy : And, how did you know M. K. Thyagaraja Bhagavathar? Did you know anything about him?

Mr. Masthan : I know him from 1936, before Newtown. When they used to come to my uncle's place, (inaudible). And every time they came to Madras city, they used to stay with him.

4:31:28

Randor Guy : At the time, Thyagaraja was living in Trichy. He did not have a house in Madras.

Mr. Masthan : They used to come and stay with Mr. (inaudible), who was living in (inaudible) at the time. And then they were planning Sathyaseelan, their first picture. His own production.

4:31:55

Randor Guy : Do you remember anything about Sathyaseelan?

Mr. Masthan : Yes, because these fellows promised to take me, and then took it to Bombay. It was shot in Bombay, and Rahman was the cameraman [Note: Sailen Bose was the cinematographer in this film]. I was supposed to work in the directorial department.

4:32:22

Randor Guy : Who directed it?

Mr. Masthan : He was that funny man, used to crack all sorts of funny jokes. But (inaudible) anything afterwards. The films had all the things that he used to move about from Bombay. He had worked in Modern Theatres also. But I did not work with him.

So, he directed the picture, and these people promised to take me to Bombay. And then they somehow dropped me here. Because those were the days when pictures used to be produced in 40,000- 50,000 Rupees.

4:33:32

Randor Guy : Because in those days, the cost of production used to be very high. (inaudible) required a lot. Rupee really meant 100 paise. So that was his own production?

Mr. Masthan : They did only two films. This was one, and afterwards it became Trichy Thyagaraja Films.

4:33:55

Randor Guy : When he made Raja Mukthi, he changed it to Narendra Pictures. That was the film he made after he came out of prison, it was done in Prabhat at Poona. Last picture he made was (inaudible). Started by K.B Ranganathan.

Mr. Masthan : That was produced by a limited company.

4:34:24

Randor Guy : What kind of a man was Bhagavathar? Can you say something about him?

Mr. Masthan : I am not so close to him, but he was a good friend. I can't say too much because I am not close to the man, but working on the set, my impression was that they were just like any other artists.

4:35:02

Randor Guy : How well did you know N. S. Krishnan and (inaudible)?

Mr. Masthan : As much as I knew M. K. Thyagaraja Bhagavathar.

4:35:10

Randor Guy : What films did you do with N. S. Krishnan?

Mr. Masthan : With him I have done some small skits. The big bosses were engaged outside. The film was Ashok Kumar, which was a comedy. And afterwards, even (inaudible).

4:35:31

Randor Guy : Were you there in (inaudible)? I have not seen that film.

Mr. Masthan : I did something with Golden Studios for a couple of days. (inaudible) very intimately? When I heard for the first time that these people drink, It was a very big surprise to me. I heard about it but I was in Coimbatore. (Tamil Conversation)

4:36:19

Randor Guy : He was totally different behind the screen. Which most people in films are. His public image and private image were totally different. I know quite a bit about that. M. K. T. also had differing images in public and private.

Did you know P.U. Chinnapa?

Mr. Masthan : No, not at all.

4:36:47

Randor Guy : What about Honnappa Bhagavathar? Did you do Valmiki in Jupiter?

Mr. Masthan : No that was Ramasamy. But I was there at the time.

4:36:57

Randor Guy : Who directed Valmiki?

Mr. Masthan : That was Sundar Rao Nandkarni. Because he did Valmiki, he did Krishna Vijayam. Then Haridas, shot at Central Studios.

4:37:13

Randor Guy : Were you there when Haridas was shot?

Mr. Masthan : No, I was not there. Haridas came out in 1944. Much earlier to my arrival, these pictures were made.

4:37:38

Randor Guy : Have you done any film for Mr. S. M. Sriramulu Naidu of Pakshiraja Studios?

Mr. Masthan : No. He met me once, and he wanted me to go to Bangalore, and I refused. There have been some people with whom I have never worked like AVM, Gemini and as you said Sriramulu Naidu. I had nothing to do with them.

I had worked with B. N. Reddy. I also knew Mr. Naidu well. (inaudible). I don't know, his close friend. Both of them were always seen together.

4:38:41

Randor Guy : Did you do anything with Chakrapani at that time?

Mr. Masthan : No. He came afterwards.

4:38:48

Randor Guy : I think he wrote Swarga Seema. For B.N Reddy. I believe that is how they met. You have been in films of the last fifty years, and started in the 1930s almost till the 1980s. What differences have you seen - technically, quality wise, content wise and also about the people; With the technicians those days and the technicians these days.

Difference between the artists. The producers. Can you tell us something about your impressions? You can be very frank.

Mr. Masthan : Regarding technicians. Before, there were no institutions. No schools or colleges. Whatever we needed, we learned. It was from our superiors. And secondly, the most important place was cinema itself. The best place to study. Where we used to go and discuss how the shots should have been taken, and how something should have been lighted.

And we used to try to come and do over again. And my boss used to collect these - Do you remember the cigarette packs on which used to come a leading artist such as Marlon Brando. He used to collect these things. And all of a sudden, he used to produce them and say, "Masthan, come here. I want a close up like this (inaudible). So, there you are, we used to see that, place the camera and mull about it. The whole thing about shifting lights. And somehow, we tried to emulate it.

And that is how Jiten became very close for his close-ups. And I remember you were talking about M. S. Subbulakshmi's close-ups. This man took much care in photography. Ofcourse he restricts a lot of the artist's movement. He would take your place and tell you to look, and you would have to hold it. The frame is supposed to be very tight. So, we had to come up in a very hard atmosphere. There were hardly any books as well in those days. I remember once when Raja Sandow sarcastically told Mr. Jiten Banerjee; "Bhai Jiten, today I tell you, Masthan is going to beat you hollow." They did not want to tell you, or teach you. They knew how you came up and kept their secrets. And when you ask them for something, they would tell you not to be in a hurry.

They never tell you. That was the attitude, and I know several people who used to remove crucial parts from the camera, so that another man would not be able to work. That happened in sound and also in Camera. And sometimes if you, out of your curiosity if something has to be done a particular way; They would reply sarcastically, "Oh, you think you know so much?" That was the attitude then. Of course, now there is an institute, and people refer to books. But they still need the practical exposure.

And I don't think an institution can teach them everything that they need to learn. But the attitude of the boys who come from the institute think that they know everything. But my older assistants used to say that as far as indoor lighting is concerned, we are better than them.

4:43:21

Randor Guy : Yes, they are very poor in indoor lighting. That has been my experience, that you have to tell some of the institute boys, "It is not my purview as a director, but why don't you keep the light here or the key shifted?" These are all new terms. These are names that we have never heard. So they definitely need that kind of guidance.

Mr. Masthan : That is why, when I come across these (inaudible), I ask them what they are doing. And they reply with what they were doing, because they are poor in indoor lighting.

4:44:03

Randor Guy : And the other thing that I noticed that the cameraman who has just come in from the institute, his handling is very jerky. And if you tell them, they get

very annoyed. If you pan, the whole thing is a blur. There is no point in (inaudible) it all up. And they get annoyed if you tell them this.

Mr. Masthan : I myself have been very careful on the operation of the camera. And for all my pictures, whatever the others may say, I always stick to the operation of the camera. I operate it myself. You know the object and the frame, and if you have missed something, it is you who can do it. No one else can do it to your liking.

So the other day I read an article where a young man says that the DoP should not touch the camera and (inaudible).

4:45:00

Randor Guy : They read all this in their books, there is an operator who is as well qualified as he is. The kind of people who we don't have here.

Mr. Masthan : Give your ideas, sit back and relax. That is one attitude that I would not like to have. I would like to operate the camera. There was so much of friendliness between the directors, between the artists in those days. The ego that is present nowadays, was not there to this extent. Perhaps it must have existed in very weak people. But it was not obtrusive.

4:45:55

Randor Guy : More than ego, from what I have seen because I belong to the next generation of filmmakers. I find it is mostly a case of inferiority complex. Even some of the successful directors, they do not know anything. They don't want their ignorance to be exposed by someone who is aware of the subject. So, they try to avoid that person.

So, they put on an air of superiority. But it is actually inferiority. And they tell the assistant, (inaudible). So, they are afraid if you ask something and they would not know the meaning of.

Mr. Masthan : When I came back from Ceylon and decided to go back into the film industry; people were carrying news to me that (inaudible). And later I found that it was true. They were not technical geniuses, but a man with the least grey hair.

4:47:03

Randor Guy : So, they are afraid that their ignorance will be exposed. That is the reason that the ego is put on. That saves the day for them. They do not want to be exposed in the presence of the other artists, the technicians and even the producer. He himself doesn't know who a commercially viable director is because he is interested in making money and not anything else, that is how it goes on.

Would you like to add anything else?

Mr. Masthan : Nothing much, except that about the story part of it, I just see bits and pieces of it here and there. They go in newer locations. They go where money is

available. But as a story, I (inaudible) find any story at all with this. In those days, people used to spend a lot of time in scripting.

4:48:12

Randor Guy : Nobody writes the script, and if somebody like me writes the script; The producer says that they are wasting my time and intelligence, and that it is not needed. Come to the set and you will get whatever you want. The results are coming. So, they think that a lot of time is wasted.

Mr. Masthan : And of course, color has come and it has come to stay. And with the fast color (inaudible). The times are ahead, I should think.

4:48:49

Randor Guy : Thank you very much, Mr. Masthan. It was very nice of you to spend so many days for me, talking to me about your experiences and your viewpoints. I thank you not only on behalf of myself, but also on behalf of the **National Film Archive of India, and its director Mr. P.K Nair, who has been responsible for these projects that have come up.**

I wish you a very happy and content retirement and a happy life. Thank you very much, Mr. Masthan.

Mr. Masthan : Thank you very much, it has been very prescient spending so many days with you.

4:49:30

Randor Guy : That was the interview with Mr. M Masthan. A well-known Cinematographer and Filmmaker of South-India, who has not only done films in India, but also in Sri Lanka. Mr. Masthan retired from filmmaking about 7 or 8 years ago and he now lives in a very happy and secure contentment in his sprawling house in (inaudible), Madras.

He has a very large family of sons, daughters, grandchildren and even great grandchildren I see. He is very happy and occasionally when someone from films like me meets him, I suppose he thinks of the good old days that have gone over the horizon.

I am sure he derives pleasure from the recollecting of past for the benefit of the present and future generations. These interviews were recorded with Mr. Masthan over the last 4 or 5 days at his residence in (inaudible), Madras.