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## Interview of First Employee of renowned 'Prabhat Film Company' Pandurang Ganapat Bhosale by Bapu Watve

**Bapu :** When did you join the film line?

**Bhosale :** In 1924

**Bapu :** What were you doing before that?

**Bhosale :** I was in school. My father lost his job in 1924. Therefore, I had to leave my school.

**Bapu :** Ok

**Bhosale :** I had two siblings and I was the only son of my father. He explained to me that this step was needed to take care of the family. I had to accept his decision and I promised him that I will do my best to help him in whatever manner I could and he need not worry. Fortunately, we had a 5-7 acre farm near Kolhapur and we use to get some income from it. My father was working as a guard with Shahu Maharaj. My father lost his job after Shahu Maharaj's demise in 1922.

**Bapu :** Then how did you get the job?



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**Bhosale :** I am coming to it. Damalemama used to reside at about 300 yards from my home.

**Bapu :** Damalemama of Prabhat Film Company?

**Bhosale :** Yes.

**Bapu :** He must have been with 'Maharashtra' then?

**Bhosale :** Yes. I am coming to it. We knew each other. In old days there was a theatre called 'Shivaji Theatre'. In 1918, Anantrao Painter and Baburao Painter had started a cinema company called 'Maharashtra Film Company'. Damale, Fattelal and Dada Mistry were the three main people there. They used to run the company. After leaving the school I was worried about the future course of action. In those days a clerk in school used to get a salary of Rs. 7 or 8 and the main Registrar would be paid a salary of Rs.10-12. I wanted to do something else.

At that time some mechanical workshops had started in Kolhapur. In Gangavesh area of Kolhapur, few motor overhauling units had started. I had seen them while passing by and got interested. Damalemama knew one Dnyanaba Mistry who worked in a piping workshop whom also I knew. I had the inclination for the mechanical line. But whom should I approach for the job? Then I decided to take a risk. Saheb mama...

**Bapu :** You mean Fattelal?

**Bhosale :** Yes, He was in habit of chewing paan. My friend Bhagwant Anna had a paan shop and I used to help him since I had no other work. Fattelal use to travel regularly by that road and use to buy his paan there. He told me that he is in habit of chewing paan and asked me if I could help him selecting a good paan. This way I had got acquainted with him.

**Bapu :** with Fattelal?

**Bhosale :** Yes. Now, Damalemama house was so located that the door of his house faced the door of Shivaji Theater. Therefore, there was little chance of our meeting. But Saheb mama had to pass across my house on way to the studio so we used to meet often. I then decided to broach the subject of my interest in mechanical work with him and told him that although my family is not very poor, we are also not very well off. I am from the middle class. I had two siblings and a mother and a father at home and for our livelihood, I need a job and I wish, it should be in the mechanical line, so could you help me? He said he will talk to Baburao the next day.

**Bapu :** To Baburao Painter?

**Bhosale :** Yes. He said he would talk with Baburao Painter and convey his response to me. Till then, I did not know Damalemama.

**Bapu :** Then?

**Bhosale :** Next day Saheb mama took me to the company.

**Bapu :** Maharashtra Company?

**Bhosale :** Maharashtra Company. Baburao asked me if I was willing to learn engine operation.

**Bapu :** Ok

**Bhosale :** I said 'yes, I am willing to accept any work given to me. He said 'Ok son, but you will have to work as an apprentice without pay for 3 months. I accepted the terms and went home and told Aba that is, my father, (father is referred to as 'ABA' in Kolhapur area), that I will have a better prospect in future by learning engine operation, than being a clerk, earning Rs 5 or 10 a month. My father left the decision to

me. He made it clear that, for him, it was very important that his son becomes self-sufficient and is able to take care of his family.

**Bapu :** This is what your father said?

**Bhosale :** Yes. So based on that, I informed my acceptance to Sahebmama. At that time one person named Mr Shantappa Anna, a Kannada fellow was the engine driver. Sahebmama asked him to take me as his understudy and teach me engine operation. Shantappa Anna took me as his assistant and taught me. I learnt that within a month. I found it very easy. All that was needed, after starting the engine, was to adjust the governor to maintain a constant speed and ensure that fuel level is properly maintained.

**Bapu :** This is how you joined Maharashtra Company.

**Bhosale :** Yes.

**Bapu :** Which film was under production then?

**Bhosale :** Rana Amir

**Bapu :** And who was the director?

**Bhosale :** Baburao Painter.

**Bapu :** Who were the other artists in that film?

**Bhosale :** Balasaheb Yadav was doing Rana Amir's role. Then there was a Christian lady Sushilabai. Do you want to know the names of everyone?

**Bapu :** No. No. Was V. Shantaram not there as well?

**Bhosale :** Yes. He was in a side role. But why should I know? I was in a different department and was not required to visit the spot. Till the time I met Damalemama, I was not required to move out from my place and I believed in doing my work well without bothering about anything else.

**Bapu :** Did you ever observe a shooting in Maharashtra Company?

**Bhosale :** Only occasionally I saw the shooting of Rana Amir. I told you earlier.

**Bapu :** Who was the photographer then?

**Bhosale :** Keshavrao Dhaybar.

**Bapu :** Ok

**Bhosale :** And Madhavi was there. But the main photographer was Fattelal.

**Bapu :** Did Damalemama also do photography?

**Bhosale :** He did. But in support. In those days hand cranking was required. So they used to take turns and did 1 or 2 roles alternately for shooting. But main cameraman was Saheb mama.

**Bapu :** Fattelal.

**Bhosale :** Fattelal. Damalemama was an all rounder. Damalemama, Fattelal. The person whom you refer as Fattelal, I am calling Saheb mama.

**Bapu :** Ok. You can call him like that



**Bhosale :** And Dada Mistry. He was from Malwan and handled Lathe. He did all the turning work required for the set. Dada Mistry had made the first wooden camera for Baburao.

**Bapu :** Yes. Yes.

**Bhosale :** For that camera a lens costing Rs. 2500/- was brought from America. Then it was used for shooting.

**Bapu :** Which film? 'Sairandhri'?

**Bhosale :** Yes

**Bapu :** Maharashtra Film Company's.

**Bhosale :** Yes. Old one. I was just giving you an idea. Before that in Maharashtra

**Bapu :** It must be the year 1919-20

**Bhosale :** In 1919, the first 'Sairandhri' was made.

**Bapu :** In Maharashtra Film Company?

**Bhosale :** Yes. Then I think 'Markandey', then 'Damaji', then 'Sinhgad'. These pictures were made.

**Bapu :** What was your starting salary after 3 months in Maharashtra Film Company?

**Bhosale :** After 3 months, in 1924, I started getting a salary of Rs. 10. But more than my salary, I was attracted by work being carried out by Dada Mistry and Damalemama. Damalemama would take my help for the creation of a set which I did willingly.

**Bapu :** Had V. Shantaram joined Maharashtra Company by then?

**Bhosale :** Yes. He had.

**Bapu :** What work was given to him?

**Bhosale :** He was assisting Baburao in Joining.

**Bapu :** Film editing!

**Bhosale :** Yes. He worked in Editing, Keshav in Laboratory and Baburao Director. That was work distribution.

**Bapu :** Did Shantaram worked as an assistant under Fattelal in the Camera department?

**Bhosale :** No. I have never seen it. He never worked with a camera.

**Bapu :** Never!

**Bhosale :** His inclination was towards Direction. He was looking forward to be made Director by Baburao. That was his ambition. Otherwise, originally, he was a dancer in Gandharv Company.

**Bapu :** Ok

**Bhosale :** I use to start the engine and go to Dada for learning lathe. I learnt turning and then worked in Molding. I use to do miscellaneous foundry work and poring etc. I learnt all those things.

**Bapu :** What use to be shooting time?

**Bhosale :** 8 to 12 in the morning and 2 to 6 in the evening.

**Bapu :** In those days shooting must be dependent on sunlight.

**Bhosale :** Yes. The set was created using curtains but that was only for minor work. There was no provision for lighting. There were only few lamps operating on our 30 HP engine. That's all.

**Bapu :** So it was not possible to shoot in the rainy season.

**Bhosale :** Only when sunlight was available.

**Bapu :** What was the working method in Maharashtra Company?

**Bhosale :** Whatever was decided by Damale and Fattelal. Nobody would interfere in that. Baburao did not bother about it. He was only interested in directing and story writing and since he was an artist, use to look after painting work.

**Bapu :** So all other responsibilities were shouldered by Damale and Fattelal.

**Bhosale :** Yes. All.

**Bapu :** That is, work of erecting sets, arranging drapery etc, was undertaken by them

**Bhosale :** Yes. They would arrange everything and then take Baburao's approval.

**Bapu :** Did Damale, Fattelal, Shantaram worked very hard?



**Bhosale :** Yes. Each of them worked very hard. But amongst them, Shantaram did not work as hard as Damale and Fattelal.

**Bapu :** Maybe, not then.

**Bhosale :** No. I tell you, in Maharashtra Company, Damale, Fattelal and I worked even under Antu Dombari to haul material. We hauled even steel strips under Antu Dombari.

**Bapu :** Even Damale and Fattelal?

**Bhosale :** Yes. They had no inhibition.

**Bapu :** Who were the well-known artists in Maharashtra Company?

**Bhosale :** Balasaheb Yadav, Ganapatrao Gokhale, Zunzarrao Pawar, Shripatrao Ghorpade, Gulab-bai, Padmabai, Anusuyabai etc 5/6 people.

**Bapu :** I believe artists had no value then.

**Bhosale :** No. Nobody cared for them. They were people who had come to this line because they could not get any other work.

**Bapu :** It was difficult to get women artists then.

**Bhosale :** Right. I was about to tell you that.

**Bapu :** Go ahead.

**Bhosale :** They were in such a bad state that they had to wear men's old Dhotis.

**Bapu :** Even Gulab-bai, Anusuyabai?

**Bhosale :** About all of them.

**Bapu :** I have heard that because they were working in films, they were boycotted by society and they used to stay in the studio only.

**Bhosale :** Yes.

**Bapu :** You are witness to this?

**Bhosale :** Yes. I have seen it. It is a fact. These ladies were also. When Baburao Painter wanted an actress for the film 'Sairandhri', Gulabbai's house was adjoining to Baburao's house

**Bapu :** Yes

**Bhosale :** Her daughter was smart and had not yet got into the entertainment profession. So he decided to get her to film line and look after her.

**Bapu :** No. You were telling me that the heroines in those days had to wear old, used, dhotis.

**Bhosale :** Yes

**Bapu :** I have heard that they used to wear old dhotis of Baburao, Damale and Fattelal. Were they so badly off?

**Bhosale :** Yes. Financially in a very Bad state.

**Bapu :** They had neither name nor fame. They used to get only food twice a day.

**Bhosale :** That too after begging for it.

**Bapu :** What were the salaries paid to heroines then?

**Bhosale :** Less than Rs.5. Rs.3 to 5.

**Bapu :** Which artist was paid more salary then?

**Bhosale :** Special pay?

**Bapu :** Balasaheb Yadav or Zunzarrao Pawar?

**Bhosale :** They may be getting Rs 12 or 15.

**Bapu :** And what were the salaries of Damale, Fattelal and Shantaram?

**Bhosale :** About Rs. 20 each

**Bapu :** Could they manage in Rs. 20 then?

**Bhosale :** Of course. Very well.

**Bapu :** Who was looking after company administration?

**Bhosale :** These two people only

**Bapu :** Damale, Fattelal?

**Bhosale :** Damale, Fattelal and Dada Mistry. They used to consult each other and take action after discussions. In that Damalemama was an all-rounder and would do

whatever work was required and create sets. Saheb mama would work as a cameraman and then will be working on sights doing paintings and giving instructions to us about the painting of flats or creating sets.

**Bapu :** I have heard that V. Shantaram was also very hard working.

**Bhosale :** Of course. He used to manage an entire site of Baburao.

**Bapu :** Ok.

**Bhosale :** He managed sites. Did any work. He never considered any work beneath him.

**Bapu :** He was willing to put in any amount of efforts to learn.

**Bhosale :** He was possessed with the idea of becoming Director and would put in any efforts for that. Just as I would accept any work-related engine and wanted to learn everything about the engine, he would do anything to become Director.

**Bapu :** How many years did you work with Maharashtra Company?

**Bhosale :** From 1924, 4 years.

**Bapu :** 4 Years

**Bhosale :** 4 Years.

**Bapu :** During those 4 years, which film were produced by Maharashtra Film Company? Do you remember?

**Bhosale :** Let me remember.... ' Maya Bazaar'

**Bapu :** Yes. 'Maya Bazaar'. 'Gaja Gauri'?

**Bhosale :** 'Gaja Gauri'. Then 'Madhyaratrichi Sundari'

**Bapu :** Yes. 'Midnight Girl' Directed by Moti Gidvani.

**Bhosale :** Then 'Netaji Palkar'

**Bapu :** Directed by Shantaram Dhaybar. I think 'Bhakta Pralhad' was also made around the same time.

**Bhosale :** Yes. Lala had acted in it.

**Bapu :** Then 'Sati Savitri'?

**Bhosale :** It was earlier.

**Bapu :** Which films were made by Damale-Fattelal?

**Bhosale :** Let me tell you. This refers to the period after 'Netaji Palkar'. Balasaheb Yadav and Nesarikar were related. Nesarikar was major financier of Baburao. Netaji Palkar was financed by Tanhebai Kagalkar. Tanhebai was related to Keshavrao Dhaybar. Keshavrao-Shantaram had directed 'Netaji Palkar'. Balasaheb Yadav and Bapusaheb Ingale were related. In a casual talk, Damalemama said people like Keshavrao Dhaybar and Shantaram directed film and Baburao supported them. So we should also do something. Balasaheb asked what can we do? He said we can also direct a film. We can make a film. But somebody else has to look after other angles. Balasaheb said he will ask Nesarikar to finance and let us produce the film independently. This was decided and Mhaiskar wrote a story.



**Bapu :** Ravji Mhaiskar?

**Bhosale :** Yes.

**Bapu :** He was also an actor in Maharashtra Company.

**Bhosale :** He wrote the story of ...

**Bapu :** 'Karna'

**Bhosale :** Yes. 'Maharathi Karna'. It was finalized. Elephants, horses from Kolhapur state were to be used.

**Bapu :** They wanted to produce a big film like 'Ben Hur'

**Bhosale :** Yes. That was decided.

**Bapu :** What was the size of the mob planned then? In 'Karna' there were big mob scenes.

**Bhosale :** Minimum 10000.

**Bapu :** Ok

**Bhosale :** At least. For lunch more than 20 KAHILIES (Sugarcane boiling pots made of iron)

**Bapu :** How could such a big mob be collected?

**Bhosale :** Balasaheb Yadav was Noble Man in Kolhapur princely state and Ingale was Head of the Armed Forces in Kolhapur Princely State.

**Bapu :** Of Cavalry.

**Bhosale :** Whatever you call it. Orders were dispatched to all villages to send labour. Once the letter reached, a mob of 10 to 15 thousand use to assemble.

**Bapu :** Food had to be arranged for so many people?

**Bhosale :** That is what I told you. A number of KAHILIES were used to prepare food. Goats were cut. Goat meal in the evening and simple Bread/Pithale meal for the morning was arranged. This is how the film was made.

**Bapu :** It was big.

**Bhosale :** Very big and also a hit.

**Bapu :** But Netaji Palkar was also very successful.

**Bhosale :** Netaji Palkar ran well but could not be compared with this. And Balasaheb was main person in Netaji Palkar also.

**Bapu :** Oh Yes.

**Bhosale :** Balasaheb was there. Then Dhanaraj Pawar, Ganaptrao Bakare were there. These were all big shots not only in Kolhapur but in India.

**Bapu :** Who did photography for 'Karna'

**Bhosale :** Sahebmama

**Bapu :** Was he Director and Photographer both?

**Bhosale :** Photography

**Bapu :** Who was the Art Director. Both of them?

**Bhosale :** Everything was done by these two. And Balasaheb arranged mob.

**Bapu :** I have read that story of Karna was written by Damalemama.

**Bhosale :** No. It was by Mhaiskarmama. If later on any additions were made, I do not know.

**Bapu :** Ok

**Bhosale :** So after making the 'Karna' film these people got some respect.

**Bapu :** Damale Fattelal?

**Bhosale :** Yes. People started recognizing them. People would say that they have made a film. This was not liked by Baburao.

**Bapu :** Ok. Then

**Bhosale :** It was also not liked by Dhaybar and Shantaram. There was also another angle of Dhaybar and Shantaram. His cousin Madhavrao Kasar had a shop of utensils in Kolhapur. He had purchased Baburao's film 'Maya Bazar' and....

**Bapu :** Were you employed then in Maharashtra Company?

**Bhosale :** Of course. And he made a lot of money on that film. So they had money. On the other side, Damale Fattelal had directed 'Karna'. Thus both sides were powerful.

And Balasaheb was supporting Damale Fattelal. Nobody could match him. So this side was powerful. Tanhebai was helping Keshavrao. So they also had power although they could not match Balasaheb.

**Bapu :** How was outdoor shooting carried out then? Do you remember?

**Bhosale :** Yes. I remember very well.

**Bapu :** What time did you use to leave for shooting?

**Bhosale :** Nothing like that. We used to go to Panhala and stay there and return only after the completion of the shooting.

**Bapu :** Would stay there only?

**Bhosale :** Yes.

**Bapu :** All the artists.

**Bhosale :** Entire company would stay there.

**Bapu :** And nobody complained!

**Bhosale :** Nobody complained. We used to be given Onion, Bread and some spices.

**Bapu :** For breakfast?

**Bhosale :** No. It was for a full day. We had to manage with it. Then we use to have a simple meal in the evening. That was the practice then. But after the production of 'Karna', when the time for salary raise came, there were clearly two parties.

**Bapu :** Which?

**Bhosale :** On one side was Keshavrao Dhaybar, who as I told you earlier, could arrange finance and Damale Fattelal on the other side.

**Bapu :** Was Dhaybar alone?

**Bhosale :** No. Dhaybar and Shantaram were together. These people did not know it. They were simple people. Other side was shrewd.

**Bapu :** You mean Damale and Fattelal were simple people.

**Bhosale :** Yes. Simple and straight forward. The other side took actions undercover without anybody knowing. These open-minded people would take all actions in open. At that time one thing happened. Actually, I have to go back a bit in my narration for the sake of continuity. At the time of pay rise, Shantaram's relatives were given higher raise. In those days by higher means by one or two rupees more.

**Bapu :** Who were Shantaram's relatives working in Maharashtra then?

**Bhosale :** His brother.

**Bapu :** Who?

**Bhosale :** Ram Vanakudre. He worked in printing.

**Bapu :** But was Baburao Pendharkar also not there?

**Bhosale :** He was in Maharashtra as a Manager.

**Bapu :** And also acted in films.



**Bhosale :** No. Not at that time. He was earlier working with Mamledar of Gadhinglaj.

**Bapu :** Ok

**Bhosale :** As I mentioned earlier while deciding salary rise, some people were given higher increment and person thought to be closer to Damale and Saheb mama were given lower increment.

**Bapu :** Ok

**Bhosale :** I was also considered to be close to Damale and Saheb mama and was given an increment of Rs. 1/-

**Bapu :** Only Rs.1.

**Bhosale :** Yes. Raise from Rs.10 to 11. I got upset. I asked Damale and Saheb mama, about that. I was in the company for three years. One rupee in between and one rupee now means the total rise of two rupees in three years. From Rs.10 to Rs.12. How could I survive on Rs.12? Pant said he was helpless he did not think that Baburao would give me a higher increment and I could take whatever steps I wished. I then left the job.

**Bapu :** You left Maharashtra Company then?

**Bhosale :** Yes. I left in 1928.

**Bapu :** That is around the time of 'Bajiprabhu Deshpande'.

**Bhosale :** No. That was to start later on. I left in October at the time of pay rise incidence.

**Bapu :** That is in 1928

**Bhosale :** From there I went to Vijapur. There, near the theatre owned by Bhide, he had a Ginning factory. He gave me a job in a factory on a salary of Rs. 40/-.

**Bapu :** Quite a good amount.

**Bhosale :** Yes. Rs 40 & Rs.12 has a huge difference.

**Bapu :** Ok.

**Bhosale :** Then I was working there for 8 months till 1929.

**Bapu :** 1929.

**Bhosale :** Then these people came there.

**Bapu :** Which people?

**Bhosale :** Baburao Painter, Damale, Fattelal, Dhaybar, Shantaram. They had come for the shooting of 'Bajiprabhu Deshpande'.

**Bapu :** Ok

**Bhosale :** I knew them as my old employer and I looked after them for 7-8 days. After 7-8 days, on completion of shooting, while leaving, Damalemama told me that "Pandu, Situation has so developed, that I and Saheb mama do not feel like staying here".

**Bapu :** In Maharashtra Company?

**Bhosale :** Yes. He said they are feeling like leaving the company and start something on their own. He asked me if I would join them. I told him 'I am your pupil. You are my Gurus. I cannot say NO to you. Also, my parents are at Kolhapur and I am here. So I would prefer to live in Kolhapur if I can get a job there.' He said 'think it over. I said 'There is nothing to think. I have worked with you earlier. If you are starting your own company, I would definitely like to be of use to you.' He said 'Ok. He would drop me a letter and on receipt of his letter I should come to Kolhapur immediately'. Then on 22nd April, I received a letter from him.

**Bapu :** In 1929.

**Bhosale :** Yes. Immediately, on 23rd I resigned, took my payment from Laxmanrao Basrur, who was manager there and came and met Saheb mama.

In between, I had been sending some money to my parents. I asked Damale mama about the next course of action. He said our company is to be started and I have also got to be associated with it. I told him I will do whatever work he gives me. I had decided to join them wholeheartedly. I had always been very close to three of them. These two and Dada Mistry. He said they will form the company after resigning. The next day, on the 30th they resigned from the company.

**Bapu :** Who? Damale and Fattalal?

**Bhosale :** Yes. In fact, all four of them had decided to resign.

**Bapu :** Then

**Bhosale :** But the other two were scheming. I told you earlier. They had some other plans.

**Bapu :** You mean Shantaram and Keshavrao Dhaybar?

**Bhosale :** They were holding discussions with Madhavrao Kasar, of which these people are not aware. On 30th April at 4 pm they gave their resignation to Manager Deshpande and came out of the company. Then we were waiting for Shantaram and Keshavrao. We waited till 6 pm when the company got closed but these people did not resign. We were disturbed. We came home. Damale and Fattelal's houses were facing each other. I was staying at about 1 furlong from them. After coming home Rohit asked Saheb mama what happened. He replied that we have resigned but Shantaram Bapu has not. We were waiting for two days and discussing amongst us. At Damale mama's home, a bench was placed near the roadside. We used to sit there talking. One day their friend Murlidhar Chikaskar came.

**Bapu :** Murlidhar Ganesh Chikaskar

**Bhosale :** Bapu

**Bapu :** Jeweler from Kolhapur

**Bhosale :** Jeweler. We used to call him Sitaram Bapu.

**Bapu :** Yes. Their partner.

**Bhosale :** That was later. They were friends.

**Bapu :** Sitaram Bapu Kulkarni.

**Bhosale :** Kulkarni.

**Bapu :** He was a partner in Chikaskar firm

**Bhosale :** He and Damale mama and Saheb mama and Anna Dharmadhikari were close friends. So one day when we were chitchatting after meals in the evening, Bapu came.

**Bapu :** Sitaram Bapu came

**Bhosale :** He had closed his jeweller's shop. Had his meals and came. Damalemama was very thoughtful then. Sitaram Bapu enquired why was he so quiet? What was bothering him? Damalemama replied that initially all four were supposed to resign and start their own company. After finalizing everything while resigning, only two of them resigned. So they are wondering how to go ahead. How to manage? Bapu asked 'so what is the problem?' Damale said 'the problem is about finances. What else there could be?' Bapu said 'Do not worry. He will provide funds.' Then he left. On the third day, he came with Rs. 10000/-. Of 1929.

**Bapu :** Sitaram Bapu Kulkarni.

**Bhosale :** Kulkarni gave Rs. 10000/- in May-June. Fattelal's brother Miyalal Mistry was overseer in Kolhapur State. He knew all supplier of the state. All of them used to supply material to the state through him. So he told Saheb mama to give him a list of material required and he will put in the word. Then we all sat together. Bapu said Rs 10000/- cash can be used for picture production expenses and material can be brought on credit.

**Bapu :** from Miyalal's friends.

**Bhosale :** Yes. From the next day the material started arriving in trucks. Meanwhile, we had taken a vacant place on rent of Rs. 75/- from Satarkar.

**Bapu :** In which area?

**Bhosale :** In Mangalwar Peth near Madhavwada.

**Bapu :** Ok



**Bhosale :** This place was very close to our residences. About two days before we arranged for the place, talks between Madhavrao Kasar and Shantaram and Keshavrao Dhaybar had collapsed. Madhavrao Kasar had agreed to finance on the condition that he will have a 50% share in the company and the other two should manage within the remaining 50%. He would provide finance only on that condition. These two wanted each one of them to have 1/3rd share. On this issue, the talks failed. Then Shantaram Bapu and Keshavrao Dhaybar came here and met Damalemama and finalized. And “Prabhat’ was formed with 5 owners. These four and Sitaram Bapu. Then within the next 2 or 4 days, we dug up the land to install a girder which was already brought as told by me earlier.

**Bapu :** When was “MUHURAT” (Pooja at the auspicious time) done?

**Bhosale :** Muhurt of Prabhat is 1st June. Bapu said to Damale, the material has come and when do we start? Have you seen an auspicious time?

Damale said to Bapu “why wait? Earlier the better. It is Monday tomorrow. We will perform Pooja at sunrise.” Immediately, in the evening, he called me and told me “ Pandu, make all preparations for tomorrow morning’s MUHURAT.” I knew one trader Bhagwan. I approached him. He asked me to collect whatever I needed. So I collected Coconut, Cloth piece, etc; all Pooja material. I had equipment like Spade, Shovel, Pans etc at my residence, owned by my father, which I brought. Thus by 7 am, before sunrise, I had compiled all the material and brought it to my home. By sunrise, Damalemama had taken bath and came to my house. Saheb mama also followed. I told him to follow with Saheb mama and I will proceed ahead with all the Pooja material. I took all the material to site. At sunrise, we began. There was a water stream. Near that, there was a tree of Shindi. Damalemama felt it was the right place to perform Muhurat. So I got a stone. Kept there. Cleaned it. Collected all flowers and leaves and put them on the stone. Lit camphor and asked them to break the coconut. He asked me to do it. I said, “No. You are the owner and you have to do it”. He said No and asked me to break the coconut which I did.

Bapu:: So, this is how you started your association with 'Prabhat', as its first employee.

**Bhosale :** Yes.

**Bapu :** On 1st June 1929

**Bhosale :** Yes. Then the work started in full swing. About 25 people had come. To seek employment as actors. Not many for an actress.

**Bapu :** But you must have constructed shed first.

**Bhosale :** No. We started with erecting girders. And wooden supports for the shed were being made by carpenters. There was a house nearby where the office was set up. It was decided to build the main studio first. For that cloth studio, girders were being erected. While digging for the girder we stuck to water. Then pumps were brought to remove the water. Thus girders were set up. The stage was set up and washed and cleaned. Wires were laid on girders for fitting curtains. Carpenter shed was set up. Theatre was set up. And Washikar

**Bapu :** Shivram Washikar

**Bhosale :** Washikar wrote the script of 'Gopalkrishna'

**Bapu :** First silent film by Prabhat.

**Bhosale :** Started making 'Gopalkrishna'.

**Bapu :** Did you face difficulty in getting heroin?

**Bhosale :** Was about to tell. Wrestler Mane was with us

**Bapu :** Gyanba Mane.

**Bhosale :** Yes. And there was one Patwegar. And the heroine was the goat-keeper's daughter Sakhribai.

After we had made all preparations, the question arose where to shoot till the sets were ready. At that time Baburao Pendharkar was the main person in the office of Mamaledar at Gadhinglaj. He suggested to arrange for shooting on a hill near village Bhadgaon. There was a water stream and a river nearby. So everything was available. About expenses, Baburao said he will talk to Mamaledar and try to arrange for some labour and we need not worry. After making all these arrangements, the heroine started feeling somehow awkward.

**Bapu :** Was she good looking?

**Bhosale :** She was ok. Had good features. Was well fed. Not exactly dark looking but on the darker side. But the person with whom she was living was unwilling to permit her.

**Bapu :** The person who had kept her.

**Bhosale :** When Baburao Pendharkar learnt this, he decided to play a trick. He got hold of two medium built wrestlers and took them to Kolhapur police department and got 2 dresses and dressed them as policemen and told them to get him. Baburao Pendharkar knew the people and had phoned the concerned person in the police dept, who had agreed to keep him in custody.

**Bapu :** So the false policemen sent by Baburao Pendharkar brought the person holding Sakharibai to the police station and kept him in custody.

**Bhosale :** Yes. After spending a day or two in custody, he realized that he will be released from custody only when he permits her to act in film.

**Bapu :** So he permitted her.

**Bhosale :** Yes. He gave her permission.

**Bapu :** So that is how Prabhat got their first heroine.

**Bhosale :** Then with her, our Suresh babu

**Bapu :** Mane?

**Bhosale :** No. Suresh Babu.

**Bapu :** Was not his real name, Shabuddin?

**Bhosale :** Yes. But he was called Suresh babu. He acted in Krishna's role. The girl was Radha. He was Krishna. Then Mane was Kans. Then there were Patvekari, Gundoba, Jadhav Bahinabai.

**Bapu :** Ok. Pandoba, about Prabhat's trademark, Bugle (Tutari). Whose idea was it?

**Bhosale :** Damalemama's

**Bapu :** Ok

**Bhosale :** Bugle was by Damalemama. The name 'Prabhat' was also thought of by Damalemama. Nobody else was interested in these things.

**Bapu :** And designed it?

**Bhosale :** Designed by Saheb mama. The Bugle is blown by Gulabbai, Saheb mama's woman.

**Bapu :** After she had left Maharashtra to join Prabhat.

**Bhosale :** Yes. Then the drapery was designed by Saheb mama and Damale mama. The entire picture 'Gopalkrishna' was shot in six or seven months on a single set. No, two sets. The other showed Nanda with buffalos.

**Bapu :** What work was assigned to you?

**Bhosale :** I was all rounder. I was doing everything told to me by Damale mama.

**Bapu :** Any specific responsibility given to you?

**Bhosale :** I had to make arrangement for food for everybody. And also manage people's requirement.

**Bapu :** Who use to construct set and get actors.

**Bhosale :** Me only. Constructing set. Its wiring. Fixing curtains. Fixing pulleys. Starting and stopping engine. Look after painting machine. I had to ensure that everything runs smoothly.

**Bapu :** Did owners also did all the work.

**Bhosale :** Yes. All owners.

**Bapu :** Everybody worked. Nobody considered any work beneath him.



**Bhosale :** Never. When our first shooting of 'Gopalkrishna' was carried out at Bhadgaon, as advised by Baburao, the meal consisted of Jowar Bhakri, an onion and the spice.

**Bapu :** For everyone including owners.

**Bhosale :** Yes. There was an incidence of carpenter Baji Mistry.

**Bapu :** Baji Mistry.

**Bhosale :** He had some airs and was religious. For two days, Baji Mistry did not eat anything because he would have had to eat with Sahebmama who was Muslim. One day Damalemama asked me why Baji was not eating and what arrangements are being made for him. I told him that Baji was shy of eating with you and he had a problem of eating with Muslim. So I used to give him some bhakri and milk and curds etc. He said at the time of the next meal ask him to come to me. The next day when they were all sitting in line for meals, he made Baji sit with him. He asked Baji to sit in between with Damale on one side and Sahebmama, Keshavrao Dhaybar, Shantaram Bapu and other workers on other side. Baji ate then. From then onwards he had normal meals every day.

**Bapu :** Did Damale cared for every worker like this?

**Bhosale :** Of course. He would care for a worker even for a small discomfort. He cared for everybody.

**Bapu :** All of them worked together.

**Bhosale :** Yes. The owner would mix with everybody. Next film 'Khuni Khanjir'

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**SECOND TAPE OF INTERVIEW BY BAPU WATVE OF MR. PANDURANG  
GANAPAT BHOSALE**

**Bhosale :** I was having good relations with owners and they use to enquire about my well-being. Amongst the owners, Damale and Fattelal always use to take my side. Other than these two, nobody bothered about me. Keshavrao also had mixing nature. But Shantaram would always be haughty and with his behavior would show that he is the boss. As I told you earlier, after 'Khuni Khanjeer' and 'Gopalkrishna' our third film 'Swarajyacha Toran'

**Bapu :** 'Udaykal'

**Bhosale :** 'Udaykal'. This film was being shot at Panhala. Shantaram had the role of Shivaji. For one shot Shantaram was to come up from Teen Darwaza climbing over a small hillock. It was 4 o'clock in the evening. It is embarrassing to boast about it but cannot help. He told me " Pandu, those two cannons are to be fired. Shot will be from the side. When I pass them on the horse, you strike the fire to the wick so that the reflection will come on that and the shot will be clear". I said Ok. First I filled gun powder in cannons and then put a match to them. Cameras were mounted at 15 to 20 feet in height. To get out of camera range, I came to a side where a sack of gun powder was kept. Unfortunately, suddenly, a breeze came and a spark flew and landed on the sack of gun powder and it got burst and burning powder fell all over me.

**Bapu :** On your body?

**Bhosale :** Yes. On my body. My coat caught fire, my dhoti, my hair everything caught fire. Damalemama saw from a distance, and he jumped 15/16 feet shouting 'Kid is dead'.

**Bapu :** What was Damalemama doing then?

**Bhosale :** He was assisting Saheb mama with the camera.

**Bapu :** Did both of them did photography in Prabhat?

**Bhosale :** Yes. So he jumped, came to me and tried to douse the fire with his hands.

**Bapu :** Could he.

**Bhosale :** Yes. But his hands suffered from burns. By then Dnyanaba came. He checked my head. He also suffered burns. I was unwell for 3 months. It took me 3 months to get well and join work. Then the picture was completed. The film was a hit. In fact all films hereafter were hits. Earned well. Did very well financially. Then What next? Then they got the story of 'Chandrasena' written.

**Bapu :** When was 'Bajarbattu' made?

**Bhosale :** That was later. After 'Chandrasena'. For the shooting of 'Chandrasena' we had gone to Humpy. There we shot the film. That film earned very good money. Then 'Bajarbattu' was made. Then it was decided to shift the studio.

**Bapu :** Why?

**Bhosale :** Shortage of space. The place was inadequate.

**Bapu :** The present place was found inadequate?

**Bhosale :** Yes. Then we built a new studio in Tanhibai's bungalow. Around the end of 1930.

**Bapu :** It was on Shahupuri side?

**Bhosale :** Yes. The new studio was built up in Tanhibai Daphale's bungalow. And the film shooting started there.

**Bapu :** Which was the first talkie film made by Prabhat?

**Bhosale :** First talkie film?

**Bapu :** 'Ayodhyecha Raja'

**Bhosale :** Right. But till the new studio was being built, shooting had continued at old place. After shifting to new place, it was decided to make 'Ayodhyecha Raja'. In 'Ayodhyecha Raja', Govindrao Tembe was hero and Durgabai Khote was heroine. Remaining cast was our regular artists. It was decided to make first talkie film. Same time Imperial made 'Alam Ara' at Mumbai.

**Bapu :** Yes

**Bhosale :** And we made 'Ayodhyecha Raja'. Damale handled all recording.

**Bapu :** Where did he learn recording.

**Bhosale :** He was gifted with great intelligence. An intelligent person can learn practical things by reading books. That time the mike was of small size, of a size of a bomb. Damalemama carried out the recording. The recording equipments, camera etc were from Baburao Pai of Famous. These people were also clever but they did not come to this side. Shantaram...

**Bapu :** and Dhaybar?

**Bhosale :** Yes. They did not bother about technical side. Then...

**Bapu :** 'Agni Kankan'?

**Bhosale :** No. Later. 'Ayodhyecha Raja' was a hit film. For six months, truckload of people used to come to watch the film.

**Bapu :** To see 'Ayodhyecha Raja'?

**Bhosale :** Yes. To see 'Ayodhyecha Raja'. Then that was followed by 3 or 4 films Viz; 'Maya Machhindra', 'Sinhgad', 'Agni Kankan'.

**Bapu :** Then color film 'Sairandhri'

**Bhosale :** After 'Agni Kankan', 'Sairandhri' in color was taken up in 1931

**Bapu :** In 1933.

**Bhosale :** Ok. Then Shantaram Bapu was sent to Germany with 'Sairandhri'.

**Bapu :** For processing.

**Bhosale :** Yes. Processing. Then Damale thought, Shantaram Bapu is sent there. Here afterwards, how can we arrange for lighting and filming at Kolhapur? There were no adequate facilities at Kolhapur. He thought, in Pune construction facilities were available and battery arrangement was possible. So we would shift to Pune and make all arrangements there. Once the decision was taken, we got into Saheb mama's car started for

**Bapu :** Pune.



**Bhosale :** In Pune, on Karve Road, there was no proper road then. Just a marking was made with stones. This place

**Bapu :** You mean present Film Institute....

**Bhosale :** Yes. We came to see this place. Around the place where we are sitting now, near telegraph office, beyond that, 9 acre of land was available which we selected and decided to buy. Then we went to owner Shankarrao near Lakadi Bridge and did all the paperwork. It was decided to build the studio here. There was one Pawar engineer. Damalemama told me “Pandu, now we have to wire fence the area. To carry out that work and start studio construction, I will have to stay here. So you people go back to Kolhapur. I will stay back here and get work done from Pawar. There will not be any new films at Kolhapur. We will start filming of the new film here only after Shantaram Bapu returns from Germany. By that time, I will get studio constructed”. He got the fencing done. With the help of Pawar engineer, started the work of construction of Studio No. 1 and Studio No. 2. And immediately nearby, at the place where the gymnasium is now situated, construction of a theatre was started.

**Bapu :** Who had planned and designed the studio?

**Bhosale :** Entirely by Damalemama. Pawar engineer was a qualified B.E.(Civil) engineer. He drew the plans on the basis of requirements and suggestions given by Damale. Actual construction work started within 6/7 months and the studio was ready within a year. It was well planned with all the facilities, departments and laboratory. By then, Shantaram Bapu came back from Germany and the work on the first film ‘Amrutmanthan’ was taken up.

**Bapu :** In 1934...

**Bhosale :** ‘Amrutmanthan’ in 1934. Then ‘Chandrasena’, then ‘Dharmatma’. They were followed by 3 or 4 more films. Then ‘Rajput Ramani’ was made.

**Bapu :** By Dhaybar.

**Bhosale :** Yes. By Dhaybar. Then Damale said let us now make a film in the same genre as we used to make at Kolhapur. So he made 'Sant Tukaram'. Tukaram turned out to be a hit all over India. Which was followed by 'Gopalkrishna'. During this period these people made 'Kunku'.

**Bapu :** Shantaram Bapu?

**Bhosale :** Yes, Shantaram Bapu . After that these people made 'Sant Dnyaneshwar'.

**Bapu :** Damale made 'Sant Dnyaneshwar'

**Bhosale :** 'Sant Dnyaneshwar', 'Gopalkrishna'; these were 3 or 4 film made by these people. That time those people made 'Kunku' and...

**Bapu :** 'Manus'.

**Bhosale :** Yes 'Manus'. And 'Shejari'.

**Bapu :** Shantarambapu's 'Shejari'.

**Bhosale :** At the time of deciding upon the casting of 'Shejari' there were arguments over Jayashri Kamurkar. Damalemama did not agree with casting her as heroin in every film. Shantaram was insisting on her. Damale felt that if the owner's wives are seen dancing on stage, people will lose respect for their wives. He said, "You can accept your wife dancing on screen but they cannot". That is how the clashes between them started. One day the differences really flared over creating a set of 100 feet long dam.

**Bapu :** For ‘Shejari’?

**Bhosale :** Yes. It was 20 feet tall and 15 feet wide wall with a crane fitted at the top. I was with Damale mama along with the Shripatrao Mistry and a carpenter. Damalemama told me to fit a cloth over the structure and mark outlines of tiles on it, which he felt would serve the purpose. He asked to fit wooden boards on other sides. This was not acceptable to Shantaram Bapu. He insisted on the fitting of shahbad stone tiles. Damalemama tried to convince him that it would be unnecessary wastage of funds and his suggestion would produce the same effect. This was not acceptable to Shantaram. He said I do not agree but do “As you wish”.

**Bapu :** Ok

**Bhosale :** Damalemama got very angry and went to his office. He called for Saheb mama. He told Sahebji that Shantaram is not agreeing and is insisting on tile fitting. According to him, such a heavy structure was not needed since it was a matter of only one shot of the dam getting burst and why should there be so much wastage. He said till then Shantaram had built and burst 20 dams for releasing water just for the sake of reality in a shot. That was accepted by him. Why such a waste of money? Why can Shantaram not accept his say one time?

He asked Saheb mama his view. Saheb mama said he will not comment and Damalemama could do whatever he thinks is the best.

Damalemama called Shantaram and said you will not get what you want. He would stop further filming of the film and ask to pack the reels. He said if you want to complete the film, do it my way or pack up.

In past also, for the film ‘ Totayacha band’, when the director tried to dictate, he had stopped filming. He had paid Rs. 3000/- to Nayampalli just to compensate for removing his hair from his head.

**Bapu :** For him....

**Bhosale :** Damalemama was that strict.

**Bapu :** No. What happened to 'Shejari' then?

**Bhosale :** About 'Shejari'. Somehow, with all the clashes, the film was completed. And that was the end. After completion of the film, two of them decided to leave the company. The matter went to court. The court ruled for giving Rs. 3 Lakhs to them. Damalemama tried to persuade them not to break the company formed by five of them. But Shantaram said that the two of them cannot work together. Either he leaves with money or Damale should take Rs. 9 Lakh and leave. Damale then asked Baburao for his advice.

**Bapu :** Pai?

**Bhosale :** Yes, Pai. He telephoned from here only and told him what Shantaram was saying and asked for his advice. Baburao said "No problem. Ask him to come tomorrow morning and collect his share". Accordingly, the next day they went to Bombay to collect money and broke the partnership. Too bad.

**Bapu :** True.

**Bhosale :** It was so bad that from that day the company started going down. Damalemama got psychologically upset and developed heart trouble. Being strong-willed, he produced films like 'Ramshastri' and 'Sant Sakhu'. But the organization had started disintegrating. Raja Nene left. So many people left the company. He believed that he can still produce films and did make 'Ramshastri' which was hailed everywhere. But after that, he died. And then what?

Allow me to speak for 10/15 minutes now.



After him, Fattelal took over. But he could not manage and he felt the time had come to close the company. That time we had a Manager called Nemade. He tried to run the company by renting out premises so that employees could get their salaries. And then finally....

**Bapu :** In 1953

**Bhosale :** Yes company went into liquidation.

**Bapu :** When the company was doing well and all the persons, including Shantaram, were there, who used to manage the company?

**Bhosale :** Damale-Fattelal. Others did not have any part in management. Even the financier Bapu did not ask for any accounts. Damale-Fattelal used to look after everything. Fattelal was also a mere painter. His contribution was not much. Damale was the pillar of strength of the company.

**Bapu :** Do you think Damale was responsible for the collapse of the company?

**Bhosale :** No. I think the clashes that took place after Damale. I really feel that had Fattelal not taken the action, the company could have run till today just by renting. All the facilities were available here. But Fattelal was surrounded by selfish people and he did not have capacity to manage the company. Damale was managing the company single-handedly. Baburao Pai also did not have much interest in the company. He was a businessman and dealt only in finances. Damale really loved this company. Even in his last days, till he was alive, he used to sit in his house, at those round windows, looking at the company.

In the end, we were 750 employees of the company. During Damalemama's regime, he used to arrange feasts for all employees at least 10 times a year, on occasions of Ganesh



Chaturthi, Padwa, or Dasera. After him, neither Shantaram nor Fattelal cared for workers. I was a witness to all that happened from the inception of the company till the end. It was my misfortune that Damale mama had a short life. Company then went into liquidation and then was bought by Kelkar.

**Bapu :** Were you then with the company?

**Bhosale :** I was there with Kelkar from 1956 to 1960. I was getting a salary of Rs. 400/- per month. This salary continued even after the company was taken over by the institute. After working for 4 or 5 years with the institute, I was told that I have reached my age of retirement and that was the end of my career.

I came out empty-handed wondering what is the end result of slogging for my entire life. But I had a strong mind, although I was not educated. Fortunately, my children studied and are well settled. My elder son works with R.T.O., the Second son is a supervisor with P.M.T. and the youngest son is the contractor. All children are married. I am very satisfied and happy with my life.

**Bapu :** You must be blessed. By whom do you think?

**Bhosale :** Well. Damale was my teacher. He must have blessed me. And my children are lucky. We are all made by God. I do not like to talk about myself much.

**Bapu :** Anything more you wish to add about 'Prabhat'?

**Bhosale :** I tell you one incidence. When 'Kunku' and 'Shejari' were made, the company was at the top. At the same time 'Sant Tukaram', 'Dyaneshwar', were all also doing very well. Dnyaneshwar had run in America for six months. A great record. During one of the arguments, Damalemama had said to Shantaram, "What are you talking about? See the accounts books and compare."

Their four films 'Tukaram', 'Dnyaneshwar', 'Gopalkrishna', and 'Sakhu' had done very well and had earned a good income.

Damalemama said, "Look at the money earned by my films. You make one film at a very high expense. When we make a film with a simple backdrop, you are spending Rs. 7 to 10 Lakhs for each film. Compare the income earned by your films." This had hurt Shantaram.

Such clashes were taking place often and led to the company going down. These clashes should not have taken place. They could never have found such a nice person like Damalemama. But that person was small-minded.

**Bapu :** But the company was doing very well till 'Shejari'.

**Bhosale :** Yes. Very well. As mentioned by me, that woman was responsible. This person was responsible.

**Bapu :** You were in Prabhat from its first day till the last day.

**Bhosale :** Yes.

**Bapu :** What did you gain by spending a lifetime with 'Prabhat'?

**Bhosale :** I tell you nobody ever got what I did. At the time of Golden Jubilee of 'Prabhat', I got a message from Delhi...

**Bapu :** It was the Golden Jubilee of talking films.

**Bhosale :** Anantrao Damale was going to France with 'Sant Tukaram' for an exhibition. His flight was from Delhi. At Delhi, he was told that they were arranging the "Golden Jubilee" function of talkies and they would like to felicitate somebody from 'Prabhat'.

Anantrao informed them that his father and Fattelal were not alive. He was asked if anybody from Prabhat is alive. He informed that one worker 'Pandba Bhosale' is alive. Then they said they would like to felicitate him. Anantrao supported me that since I was one of the founders of Prabhat, I was to be felicitated at a function to be held in Bombay. The function took place on 4th December with Indira Gandhi as Chief Guest. I was given a Gold Medal and a Certificate at her hands. This is how I was felicitated. What else can I desire now?

**Bapu :** So you are the only one person from Prabhat company who was felicitated?

**Bhosale :** Yes. Only one. Now tell me. What more can I wish for.

**Bapu :** That too at the hands of Indira Gandhi.

**Bhosale :** At the hands of Indira Gandhi. That is my good luck. That is more valuable than any amount in cash. Anybody can earn money. But getting felicitated is rare. Later on, Anantrao took me to one or two institutes where I was felicitated. A simple man like me getting felicitated is a matter of sheer luck. What more can I expect in my life? I have been bestowed by so much by the almighty that I am now praying for his call.