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Interview of A Renowned Personality in Tamil Theatre and Cinema S. V. Sahasranamam by Randor Guy

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Close associate of the famous comedian and one of the legendary figures of Tamil Cinema, N S Krishnan. This interview takes place on Saturday, the 26th April, 27th April 1985 at the residence of Mr. Sahasranamam in Royapettah, Madras. Mr. Sahasranamam speaks in Tamil.

Q. Greetings. First of all, I would like to thank you for being part of this interview for National Film Archive. I thank you on my behalf and on behalf of the National Film Archive. You began with drama. How did you come to the Drama Field?

Ans : In the year 1926 in Pollachi , I was studying in a School. I was the 6th son of my parents. Since my mother passed away, my father sent me to his elder brother's place. With his support, I studied till the 3rd grade at Pollachi Municipal School.

Q. What is your native place?

Ans : Singanallur, near Coimbatore. S stands for Singanallur & V stands for Venkataramaiya. That is my father's name. I was the 6th son. I always wanted to act in dramas. At that period T.K.S. Brothers was a very famous drama company. In those days, whichever drama company it is, the name will be titled Madurai because there was a belief that Madurai stands for their respect towards Tamil

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Literature. The company could be from Trichy, Tirunelveli or Madras. The title would still be Madurai. I once happened to see their drama. I also participated in a school play “Manuneedhi chozhan”. I played the prince role and earned a lot of appreciation. I wanted to act because I enjoyed the attention I received. The applause I got for my performance inspired me to become an artist. There were a few people in my age group in T.K.S.Dramas who were acting on stage. I was also inspired by them. Later, I decided to join the dramas. I was frightened to tell this to my uncle. So I sold my Tamil and English textbooks for Six Paisa and went to Coimbatore where T.K.S. Nadaga Sabha was. There was one Kameshwara Iyer in T.K..S. Nadaga Sabha. He was the manager. The sabha was then known as Madurai Sri Bala Nadaga Sabha. In those days, Madurai will be the title name for all drama troupes. Madurai was supposed to be the land of Tamil Literature. E.g.Madurai Himanandha Nadaga sabha .

Q. Were T.K.S. brothers?

Ans: Yes, they were 3 brothers. Students of Sankaran sir after he passed away T.K.S. Brothers took over and ran the T.K.S. Nadaga **Sabha**. When I approached Kameshwaran who was the Manager of T.K.S. Nadaga **Sabha**, to admit me in his troop, he asked me for a No Objection Letter from my father. I then wrote a letter myself, saying that I allow my son to join in your troop and I signed my father’s signature with our full address.

In those days the drama advertisement will be done through distributing bit notice in the nearby villages. While distributing the bit notice one person was sent to my address and my father came to know about all my tricks. He rushed to Coimbatore with his friends. On seeing him I got frightened thinking he will beat me. I ran and hid inside a big borewell . One person saw me hiding and told my father.

Q. Where was the Nadaga Sabha located?

Ans: In those days, people won’t give space to drama artists. We will get a house away from the city that is a breeding place for diseases like plague and Malaria. Or the bhooth bungalow. That house was called a Malaria House.

Q. What did your father do?

Ans: He asked me whether I wanted to come with him or not. I said 'no, I want to act'. He agreed and bought me some new dress and gave me some amount. He also signed in the Nadaga Sabha Agreement .

In that agreement, it was mentioned they will pay me Rs.5/- per month and after two years Rs.10/- per month . Then he left which was a big surprise for me. A few months later, my brother who was from Indian Army came and tried convincing me to study to at least pass my intermediate exam. I refused saying I was very much interested in acting. He then wished me luck and left. At this point, I got to know about N.S.K. who was 17 years old and was in T.K.S. Nadaga **Sabha**. He was from Nagercoil. Son of Sudalaimuthu Pillai.

Q. N and S stands for Nagercoil Sudalamuthu Pillai?

Ans : Yes. He had a very interesting story about how he came to the industry. There was a theatre in Nagercoil where he wanted to see a stage play but could not afford the tickets. He played a trick and borrowed a few soda bottles and sold them inside the theatre. Only then he can enter in as a cooldrinks Vendor. He used to watch the drama like this and got inspired to become an actor. Nagercoil Sudalamuthu Pillai Krishnan became N.S. Krishnan . He was a person who learnt things by watching others and this was his special quality. He played Tennis, he learnt to play many musical instruments just by watching others. He liked me very much and we both become very close. Nadhaswaram and Ganjira were the musical instruments. In one drama, he played Nadhaswaram on stage. He was a very sharp minded person, learns whatever he sees, quickly. In those days, in the Drama company, we need to sleep in the afternoon. It was a compulsion by Nadaga Sabha . But myself and NSK never slept.

Q. Why they wanted the artists to sleep?

Ans: The drama timing was 9.00 pm - 2.00 am. so they wanted us to sleep in the afternoon. N.S.K. believed in 99 percent of work and 1 percent of luck. N.S.K. had the habit of reading books and followed Mahatma Gandhi's ideals. He tried

lots of magic tricks on stage. For that, every day, he practiced in his leisure time. He also assisted the Art Director of the drama. Many times, he painted the background, the backscreen, handled the drama equipment. All that kept him busy. He was also a socialist.

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Q. What was your first film? Which year?

Ans: Menaka was the first film for both of us, in the year 1935. “Somu/Moidheen’s” first film. “Menaka” was a drama by T.K.S. Brothers that was staged in various places. Later, “Somu/Moidheen” made it into a film. Tiruppur Shanmuga Films produced this film. M. Somu, S.K. Moidheen stood for Hindu-Muslim friendship. They always stayed together. They also did so many businesses which had no connection with films. For this film, there were 11 partners together. They were Keshav Rao, Kalidas, P. Somasundaram, Muthu Karuppan Chettiar, Salem Shanmugam Chettiar etc. Rs.55000/- was the investments that was equally shared by 11 of them. Shooting was planned for 30 days but they finished by 23 days.

Q. Where did the shooting happen?

Ans: It was in Bombay, Ranjit Studio, Chandulal Shah “Dadar” .

Q. Who directed this film?

Ans: Direction and Screenplay by Raja Sandow. He was from South India settled in Bombay. We thought he must have forgotten Tamil but to our surprise he was so fluent not only in Tamil but also in Tamil Literature. He was very strict when it comes to work. We were a crew of 36 people who traveled to Bombay. This story was based on Vadavur Duraisamy Iyengar’s novel .

Q. Did N.S.K. act in the film?

Ans : Yes, Shankaran Annatchi stood strong saying N.S.K. must do this role. He was called separately paying a salary because at that period he was not in T.K.S. troupe. Sathi Leelavathi was his first film he acted in but Menaka released first.

N.S.K. was paid Rs. 600 as Salary. Raja Sandow wrote the screenplay and dialogues in Tamil. The total payment for the crew was Rs. 14000. N.S.K.'s role in that film was Saama Iyer. M.S. Vijayal played the heroine role . K.T. Rukmani played the second heroine whose name in the film was "Noorjahan".

In those times, many men played female characters. 4 men played female characters. T.N. Subbiah played the role of Ramaraj's wife.

Q. Why did the men play female role, is there a specific reason?

Ans: There was a women character that demanded shaving the head for which no women came forward. It was also very comfortable to travel as a team from place to place. These were the reasons why men played the female role. T.S. Diwakaran was the music director, he was famous in Malayalam Industry. He played Ramarajan's daughter. He also sang a song in that film[Matha, Pitha, Guru, Deivam] .

Q. Did he sing in female voice?

Ans: Not really, but people accepted it as a female voice. He had a very good knowledge of music. It was well received by the audience. T.K. Muthuswamy played the sister-in-law's character, Komala . Vimala played that the Daasi character . Kanagavalli played the Deputy Collector's mother role.

Q. M.S. Vijayal was a popular actress?

Ans: Yes, she was a singer and also a good actress. She was the one who acted in Mayabazar.

Q. So they were all already popular?

Ans: Yes, it was me and a few others who were new.

Q. Was it a hit film?

Ans: Yes, Menaka was a hit film back then and it was also won a State Award.

Q. Was that award issued by the Indian Government or the State Government?

Ans: It was issued by the State Government. It was under the British rule. They gave the award appreciating Tamil Film Industry and the film.

Q. What character you played in the film?

Ans : Thasildhar Character “Thaanthonni Rao”, second Villain Saama Iyer character played by N.S.K. He was the main Villain. My role was to spoil the family of the Deputy Inspector. In the drama, I played the role of the Inspector. But Raja’s thought that my look and physique will not suit the Inspector character. So, he gave me this role and M. Somasundaram played the Inspector role. On his advice, I did this character role for the first time on screen which was later appreciated by public. And in a magazine called “Ananda Vikatan”, Kalki a famous writer wrote a review mentioning me saying “Tamil Industry got a wonderful character artist”.

Q. What was the scene?

Ans: In the scene, I will be waiting outside an office to meet an English man to complain against the Deputy Collector. In that office, the name of the office boy was Antony. He has prepared coffee for the English man adding salt instead of sugar and he serves it to him. The moment the English man sips the coffee with full of anger he calls the office boy by his name Antony. Hearing it wrong as “Thanthoni”, I rush inside his cabin. The English man pours the coffee over my face and dress. The way I reacted for this scene has been appreciated by Kalki in the review of a film magazine called “Ananda Vikatan”. Kalki wrote reviews and articles in the name of Karnatakam. In my first film, I got this very good appreciation.

Q. In this film Menaka, I heard that T.K. Shanmugam was hesitating to act in a kissing scene? Was it true?

Ans: Yes, the scene was to kiss his wife from her hand to shoulder but T.K. Shanmugam was feeling shy to act in the scene. He got scolded badly by Raja saying “this is your wife. If you hesitate and feel shy to kiss your wife then tomorrow how will you act in a rape scene where you are going to buy a girl for

Rs.5000/- pound. So, you have to act properly.” T.K.S somehow managed to fulfill Raja sir’s expectations. After 23 days, when the shooting was completed, we all reached the Railway Station where Raja Sir came to send us off. He finally said when we were all in the station “Dear all, by mistake if I had hurt you while Shooting, I am sorry, please don’t mistake me. Also forgive me and he shed tears. This showed his kindness. It was an unforgettable touching moment for all of us. There is an interesting thing about N.S.K. There was a movement called National Patriotic Movement. N.S.K. was a very patriotic person and always tries to convey news to the public. That was the period when Bhagat Singh was hanged.

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At that time we directed a drama called “Banapurathu Veeran” based on the book by Robert Bruce, even the name was the same as in that book. In Madurai, one Mr. Bhaskar wrote this drama in Tamil. The script was written in such a way that people used to feel the Patriotism. There was a court scene in which there is a charge against Bhagat Singh. The dialogues spoken by the English were very harsh against Bhagat Singh and the reply from Bhagat Singh was very impressive. It was appreciated by the audience. In that scene, they will list out their charge against me, the reply will be “if you say what I have done is a crime then I agree, yes I have done this and will continue doing this forever till my death and I will say Jai Hind”. It was full of emotion and patriotic feel, so much so the whole audience started saying “Bhagat Singh Ki Jai”, I got a very good appreciation for this character . In the first scene of “Banapurathu Veeran” I dressed like Bhagat Singh with the hat and the mustache. I started speaking the dialogues. From the moment I got on to the stage, the audience started clapping. Here N.S.K felt there is no strong character role or a comedy sequence for him. So, with his own idea he played a spy character sitting on a chair in one corner of the stage. There was a round table and throughout my dialogue he will give the reaction and he also instructed the light man to shake the light whenever I speak against the British. The audience enjoyed all these scene. Policemen came there and told to remove certain scenes from the play. There was a scene where I am called by the king like a Round Table Conference. The scene was very well

arranged. One person talking in our favor slaps by commander in chief that particular scene. One person speaks in favor of my character and when he is killed by the British, I start attacking them. Then they arrest me. Next scene in the court they ask me” What did you do?”. I reply that the person who stood by our side has been killed so I reacted to that. They ask will I repeat the same. My reply will be “yes, I will fight till we get freedom. I will continue doing this again and again.” Then they sentence me to death. R. Jeevanandham wrote the dialogue for these scenes. The backdrop is now the hanging scene. All these were set up by N.S.K. The stage has been set in such a way that all the audience believed it was a real hanging. He needed some time to do the arrangements. There was a very lengthy emotional dialogue. About 10 minutes. It was written by R. Jeevanandham. By that time the hanging set up will be done. It was a tricky technique that the safety rope behind me was colored in black so that the audience can't see. It was very smartly planned by N.S.K. That particular day I fought with him [N.S.K.] He did come to stage that day. He instructed Sivadhanu Pillai and was well prepared. That day one more important thing happened. The hanging scene was banned. Strong Instruction from the police side that we should not show the hanging scene, should not panic people. This was happened in Thirunelveli. When it was staged in Madurai earlier, the hanging scene had a very good reach. So the news spread to Thirunelveli and there the local police warned us not to show the hanging scene. They sent a summon asking for an explanation . T.K. Shankaran had signed a letter saying this hanging scene will not be shown and also the spy scene by N.S.K. will also be removed. There were a few conditions by the local police. We agreed to even those, signed by T.K. Sankaran. But still the hanging scene took place in the drama. Unfortunately, the set-up of the hanging scene and the tricky technique planned by N.S.K. was handed over to the other person that day. The rope was not tied properly to the rod. I was hanged and the rope strongly looped my neck, slowly my eyes got started swelling up. I tried to scream but could not. N.S.K. felt there is something wrong and rushed for my rescue. After that, I had a lengthy dialogue scene. Without that, the drama cannot end. But I fainted and everyone got frightened. T.K. Sankaran called a pharmacist and I was given a first-aid. I

slowly regained conscious. On that particular day, there was a small misunderstanding between me and N.S.K. After I opened my eyes he said “you fought with me so this happened”. He made fun of me. T.K. Sankaran literally shouted saying “I signed the letter that we won’t stage the hanging scene. If something had happened, I would have become answerable”. Then after a few minutes I became normal. The last scene came out so well that everybody appreciated my dialogue delivery. People start crying when I speak the patriotic dialogue on stage. This is one of my unforgettable incidents in my acting career.

Q. Then What happened?

Ans: Next we had a rehabilitation camp in a nearby slum. It was about Alcohol Exemption. N.S.K. had arranged for this. He was a socialist and showed interest in such activities. In the same drama, a scene was happening in the slum. A lady speaks about the awareness of alcohol exemption. I played the role of an aged man in the slum. When N.S.K. will say a few words about the lady who is going to speak, I change the costume and come back as a young man in the slum group and ask questions. So like this, N.S.K. will keep the artist and also audience engaged and this entertained them. The Drama called “Desa Bhakthi”. There was a Music Art form called “Villu Pattu”, N.S.K. himself wrote the lyrics and also composed tunes for the lyrics on his own. Dr. Pichakutty, a homeopathy doctor and a good friend of N.S.K, helped him with lots of tips for the public, health tips, physical fitness tips, how to lead a good systematic life and also helped him telling traditional stories. N.S.K. was the first person who introduced Villupattu on stage. Sometimes, in between the dramas Villupattu will be played by N.S.K. through which he tried to convey message.

Q. After Menaka what was the film?

Ans: P V Rao’s Direction Balamani or Pakka Thirudan. It was a flop film for all of us. The director was technically a weak person. We shot it in Bombay Dadar Ramaniklal Mohanlal Studio. It was outdoor unit like Minnal Kodi and Veeramani. Such films scenes were shot in Bombay Andheri. There was no

enough light in that studio. I played the main role in that film. Character name was Ranjit Singh. I had a fight scene where I hurt my leg and was admitted in hospital for one month. For that fight, I fell down from a tree wearing a leather boots and my ankle got dislocated. Despite all this, we could not see any success.

Q. What was the role played by NS Krishnan in this film?

Ans : He didn't have any important role in this film. Just to have him on this team, he was given a character.

Q. Did Mathuram act in that film?

Ans : No, She didn't act in that film. Even in the film Chandrakantha, she did not get any character role.

Q. Whose Production was the film Chandrakantha?

Ans: It was by M. Somu

Q. Has Jupiter started producing then ?

Ans : No, before Jupiter came a team of eleven people who later split. They had a different name. Later, they started production in the name of Jupiter but Moidheen and Somu were together. They made a film called Vasantha Sena. In that Raja has acted. He played the Villain character.

Q. What role you play in Vasantha Sena?

Ans : I did not act in that film. It was taken in Pune Prabhat Studio. Raja Sandow directed the film.

Q. Who all acted in the film VasanthaSena?

Ans : M.S. Devasena and T.A. Chellappa have played the main role. N.S.K. and T. A. Madhuram acted in this film. This is the first time they both acted together and then they continued acting in Thulasi Doss. I don't remember much about his film, this was second film they acted together. They both together acted in more than 110 films in a variety of characters. In those days, there were no real-

life couples who acted in so many films. It was a record break.

Q. Was Madhuram a Drama Artist?

Ans: She was from Trichy. She came to the Industry for first time with Vasantha Sena. At that time, N.S.K. was like a leader organizing and leading the team to Pune for this film. In Pune, NSK and T.A. Madhuram got married by Raja Sandow.

Q. Did they get married in Pune?

Ans: Yes, in front of Raja Sandow.

Q. What was the next film you did?

Ans : It was Jupiter films Kannagi. I played 2 Characters in that film. In this film, Dialogue Writer Elangovan took much of his time to write the dialogues. So I assisted him in dialogues and to teach the artists. I used to teach the dialogues to many of the artists in this film. I was also the Associate Director and the dialogue assistant for this film, Kannagi . Either Elangovan or myself must be there in the set. Rajagopal Iyer was playing the role of Lord Shiva. He felt difficult because there was a sequence of dance. Still he tried but fell down and was severely hurt. The next day he left to his native place without informing us. He wrote a letter saying that he could not dance so he could not continue in this film. He also returned the advance amount Rs.100.

The dance master was Vazhuvoor Ramaiah Pillai. I had a good relationship with dance masters and my duty is to take care of the setup. Kannamba played the heroine in it. The dance master then decided to cast me in Lord Shiva's character . Kannamba was not happy with that because she was a super star in that period.

Q. Who directed this film?

Ans : Truly speaking R.S. Mani was the Director but Somasundaram's name was credited.

Q. What did T.R. Raghunath did in this film?

Ans : He was just the dance master for this film.

There was a lengthy dialogue for Kannagi in the court scene about the verdict given by Pandiya King. Pandiyan King role was been played by D. Balasubramanian. I was teaching the dialogues for that scene . The last scene dialogues had to be delivered in one shot. Supposed to be spoken in one breath. But heroine of this film Kanamba split the sentences which I was not happy with. I was insisting her to speak continuously with full emotion. She got irritated and also got angry that she was not happy with me teaching the dialogues. But I stood strong and wanted her to deliver this as I wished and finally she did, that time I told her this scene will get her audience applause and appreciation. As I told, when the film was screened, at this particular scene she got appreciation and applause. She turned around and looked at me and gave a smile. From that moment she became very friendly.

Q. Did Kannamba know Tamil ?

Ans: She use to write the dialogues in Telugu and will speak in Tamil but she was very conscious about the pronunciation. She stayed in Thiruvallur. I use to pick up by car from her place to the set for all the patchworks for the film Kannagi. And she trusted only me for dropping her back sharp by 5 o clock at her place on time.

Q. Who was the Cameraman for the film Kannagi?

Ans : First Bomman Irani and Subba Rao were the cameramen. They were very slow in the work. Then Betley became the cameraman. R.S.Mani was the editor earlier. He then became the Director of this film. N.S.K. will see the script and then will fix his role as a comedian and do his separate track. He was given much importance by the industry. He had a set of artists as his team.

Q. Who all were there in his team?

Ans : Pullimutta Ramaswamy , Madhuran, Kozhukata Krishnamoorthy , Singam Krishnamoorthy and few others were there. They will write the dialogues for themselves with the help of Udumalai Narayana kavi for the songs. The

dialogues were written by N.S.Krishnan . In Uchandhi Udumalai Narayana Kavi was a very influential person and his songs were very popular. He was also a Harmonium Player. C.R.Subburaman, Chinnaiah, Sudharshan who was the Music Director in AVM later, they were all from HMV . Many of the Harikatha” Story with Songs and Dance” were written by them.

There is a beautiful story behind the Harikatha done by N.S.K. and his team. Once there was a House warming Ceremony by an actress called T.R.Rajakumaari . N.S.K. supported M.S. Subbulakshmi so many times she always had a respect , they were pretty close as a family friend. M.S. Subbulakshmi had a great respect for N.S.K. and T.A. Madhuran. Here N.S.K. confidently promised to bring M.S.Subbulakshmi to the House Warming Ceremony for a vocal recital thinking that she will agree . N.S.K. asked T.A.Madhuran to meet M.S. Subbulakshmi but Mr. Sadhashivam’s reply was not convincing . He hurt them saying she will not sing for film artists. By this reply N.S.K became upset and stopped T.A. Madhuran from going to her place. Then he decided to perform with his team in the function. This is how the Harikatha became famous in those days and he continued doing such Harikathas for social cause at various places. Later on in the film called Nalla Thambi one of his Harikathas performance took place.

Q. What was your role in Manamagal?

Ans : I played the main character Chandran who was the hero of the film and Padmini was the heroine. T.S. Balaiah played the Villain role. The story goes like this. T.S. Balaiah teaches a song called “ China Siru Kiliyae Kanama” sung by T.M.Sundaram written by Patriotic Tamil Poet Bharathiyar. And tries to get closer to the heroine. By seeing this, the Chandran character gets angry and hits Balaiah. It was a very good film and had strong characters portrayed by a wonderful actors.

Q. You had a duet song in this film, right?

Ans : Yes. It was shot in a Zoo, it was a beautiful song. This was a story of an immature rich girl who has been dragged towards fantasy. Well portrayed

characters. Balaiah played the tough Villain character and the heroine's father role was played by D.Balasubramaniam which was also an important character. Subbaraman was the Music Director of this film and all the songs were a great hit .

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Q. What was the role played by N.S.Krishnan in this film?

Ans: He played a character role, he was a teacher in that film Madhuram played a widow character . In this film, the Bhagavathar will try to misbehave with the widow who later supports the teacher in this film. Lalitha played the character as the wife of an accountant in this film . This was directed by N.S. Krishnan and dialogues were written by M. Karunanidhi. That was the period when N.S.K. came from jail. Immediately after that, he made 3 films in his banner "Paithiyakaaran, Nalla Thambi, Mannamagal all three was a big hit.

Q. After Manamagal, what film did he make?

Ans: I was not a part of that film because we had a misunderstanding. He started having alcohol by that time and directly or indirectly abused casteism which made me uncomfortable. So we separated. I was taking care of the administrations at that time. I handed over the keys and walked out. Jupiter films had sent a few letters to me which were hidden from me by N.S.K. I got to know about this when I happened to meet Jupiter Somu in Hotel Woodlands. Somu sarcastically asked me if I don't have the habit of replying to letters. And later I came to know that he wrote 3 letters saying that there is a character for which he wanted me to play in his film Marmayogi. I didn't elaborately explain him anything but asked "is the opportunity available?" He said yes. On the spot he made an agreement and he also fixed Rs.25000/- as my salary and gave Rs.15000/- in hand . I was surprised and I was not used to accepting cash in hand. But Jupiter Somu replied "to avoid Income Tax formalities you have to do so". In those days, Jupiter pictures were the people who raised the artists remuneration. Then I acted in Marmayogi. It was in the year 1951.

Q. What was the next film?

Ans : Panam was the film in which I acted for the first two scenes. Later they removed me from the film and replaced Sivaji Ganesan who was there in our T.K.S.Drama Troupe. Sivaji informed me about this and I said if you are getting a chance please go ahead.

Q. Was this after Parasakthi?

Ans : After the release of Parasakthi this happened . Till 1956 Sivaji Ganesan was acting in Dramas. Next was Manamagan which was in the drama form written by T.N.Samandham. This was made into a film named “Panam” by N.S.K. Then he started a next project called “Thottakaaran” written by Vishwanathan.

Q. Did you act in that film?

Ans : No, by that time I completely came out from that team. Then later on he came for a compromise but I decided to stay away. It was a mutual understanding between us. I got a good set of chances from Jupiter films.

Q. I heard the film Marmayogi created a new revolution in Indian Film Industry?

Ans : Yes, the technical aspects and new methods of shots tricky scenes were innovative .

Q. What was your role in that film?

Ans : I was one of the sons of the king in that film . It was a story of a king , step mother and two sons. Two sons will be separated. One will be with the king and the other son will be sent to forest. M.G.Ramachandran played the elder son role. That was a wonderful character. In the second part of the film “Marmayogi” the ghost character becomes a controversial thing. There were many controversies in that story. Jupiter Somu had given a few innovative ideas in the second part of the film. Since it was written by Ramnath, he refused to write further but convinced by others, completed the final part of the story. Somu is a person who is not only a producer but also takes interest in story writing and dialogue writing.

Q. How was the reception of this film Marmayogi among Public?

Ans : Yes it was a big hit and M.G.R. got good reviews after this film.

Q. Was it an A Certificate film in that period?

Ans : Yes, initially it was given an A Certificate but later they gave a U Certificate.

Q. After this, what was your film with Jupiter Film?

Ans : It was Madurai Mannan but it didn't release. It was a historical and a creative story written by Somu and A.S.A.Sami. Myself and M.N.Rajan did the character roles. A.S.A.Sami directed this film and they completed only 3 days of shooting.

Q. Why did they stop?

Ans : I don't know the exact reason .

Q. What was the next film?

Ans : Kann Thiranthathu by K.J. Sreenivasan , Dr. Gopal's Son Vyas acted as my son in this film. It was a crime subject about a murder happening in a palace. It was a pure imaginary story happening in a Zameen Background. The story is very interesting and also full of turns and twists.

Q. What was this film's connection with S.N. Ramanadhan?

Ans : The name "Kan Thiranthathu" was given by S.N. Ramanathan.

Q. What was the public response?

Ans : Public response was not so good as expected. The cameraman man was from Pune Prabhat Studio. I forgot his name. Cameraman's role was very important in this film.

Q. Was it Himayath Ghosh?

Ans : No, I know Himayath Ghosh very well.

Q. What was the next film?

Ans : It was “Kai Raasi”, Uthamaputhiran. I did so many films under different banners. One was Uthami Petha Rathinam and there was another film called “Singaari”. Chinapa Devar’s film “ Senkottai Singam”. In this film, Udhaya Kumar was the hero, he was very famous in Kannada industry. Mainaavathi , Rajagopal acted in this film . After this, Kairaasi film by Vasana directed by Shankaran . I played an Inspector in that film.

Q. You were saying about M.N.Rajam earlier. Was she in N.S.K. Troupe?

Ans : Yes, her father was Narasimha Chaari who was interested in acting. He passed away due to health issues. He acted in some special dramas , trained and invited by N.S.K. M.N.Rajam was 11 years old when she came to N.S.K.Nadaga Sabha by M.K.Radha. She acted in small roles and danced in films like “Paithiyakaaran” , “Nalla Thambi” etc., Later she acted in the film “Ratha Kanneer” and also acted in dramas of T.K.S.Nadaga Sabha .

Q. K.V.Mahadevan Music Director’s Assistant Pughzhendhi was also in N.S.K.Nadaga sabha?

Ans : Yes, he was a child artist and also played Harmonium for the playback Drama. He was interested in music and joined K.V.Mahadevan .

Q. He mentioned about an English song which he sang?

Ans : Yes, it was Sunday to Sunday song ,it was in the Ponnuswamy Pillai’s Drama. It was for a club dance , I can’t remember now.

Q. You did many films with M.G.R. , What was your experience?

Ans : Yes, I acted in many films with him “Bhagdad Thirudan” , Rani Samyuktha by A.C.Pillai. It was not received successfully by the audience. He met with an accident and hence the film was not continuously shot. It was an unforgettable film in which heroine was Vyjayanthimala. There were a few other films which

were not received well by the public. “Deiva Thai” was a film where I played the inspector role. I was Sarojini’s father.

Q. You played M.G.R.’s elder brother role in one film, what was it?

Ans : It was “Urimai Kural”. Madurai Meeta Sundara pandian was also an unforgettable film with M.G.R. I acted in more than eight films with him. And also with Sivaji Ganesan I acted “Neelavaanam” directed by P.Madhavan. Devika also acted in that film, but it was not well received by the public. Sivaji’s acting was very appreciated. I enjoyed playing the role in “Neelavaanam”. In this film I was Devika’s father and I enjoyed a lot working in this particular project. Sivaji Ganesan played his character so well with his subtle expressions and dialogue delivery.

S.K.Pictures who was Thiruchendur trustee and AVM joined together as partners who produced Kuladeivam. It was a Bengali story and I played the elder brother role. Then Gemini’s Valliyin Selvan in which Lalitha was my pair. Then Singaari, a Comedy film under T.R.Raghunathan’s Direction. It was also a nice family story. Even in this film Lalitha was my pair. Then came Laila Majnu in which T.R. Mahalingam , V.N.Janaki , M.V.Rajamma played the main role. It was Nagoor’s Production. I played the prince character in it.

Q. Tell me about AVM’s Vazhkai film?

Ans : Yes. I was the villain in that film named Moorthy. In Telugu version C.H.Narayan Rao played the villain character .

Q. So after clearing all misunderstandings, you worked again with AVM?

Ans. Yes. But again, we had a misunderstanding and they did not allow me to act in any of the productions.

Q. Oh is that so? what happened?

Ans : I had a dream to have a drama company of my own and wanted to develop it. At that time, I was about to stage V.S.Ramaiya’s story Malliya Mangalam. At the same time, AVM Chettiyar wanted a partnership with Soundaraja Iyengar to

take this story as a film but Iyengar had already planned to make it under his banner. He was also ready with the lyrics and music. In the year 1957, there was a drama school called Nadaga Kalvi Nilayam. First time in India, a school for drama artist to learn how to act. There were 26 students. Among them were Kamala Swaminathan, T.K.S.,Vasantha, Leo Prabhu, Suriya Kumar, U.M.Kannan, Gopal, all of them were the students of Nadaga Kalvi Nilayam. Director B.N.Reddy was ready to make this in Telugu under Vauhini banner . He spoke to me about this and I immediately agreed because AVM Chettiar wanted to take the same subject in Tamil and B.N. Reddy was ready to make it. But suddenly there was a turning point Soundarajan's daughter Booma wanted to do this in their banner and didn't want to have any tie up with anybody. Since it was the 25th year of their production she decided to do so. Soundarajan conveyed this to me. I was very upset because this will create misunderstanding with AVM Chettiar and also B.N. Reddy. I returned Rs 1000 Advance Cheque to B.N.Reddy explaining my situation . AVM Chettiar took it very wrong saying "you had a business deal with me but handed over the project to somebody". I still tried to explain him my situation but he refused to understand.

01:30:43

And this film Maliya Mangalam was made by Soundarajan and his daughter Bhooma . They didn't make the film in a proper studio with proper lighting facilities.

Q. Which studio was that?

Ans : It was a studio run by a bus owner. It was in Kodambakam. Name of the studio was Madras Studio. They borrowed the lights but even then the light effect was very poor. It was a total failure. But in other languages the film was a great hit. Then I planned for President Panchaksharam by Savithiri films made by Arunachala Chetiyar . It was a package contract of Rs.7000 for the total costume. I played the main role.

Q. Tell me about the Maliya Mangalam? What was the story about?

Ans : It was the story of seven women. All different characters. It was about a widow daughter in law of a rich chetiyar who never showed interest in family matters. The mother in law takes the lead and troubles the daughter in law's always. Finally, a son takes the control in his hands and streamlinea the charactera in that family. The actors were Sivadanu, Kuladeivam Rajagopal, S.N.Lakhmi, S.V.Subbaiah, and few more. In Hindi, it was a great box office hit. It was made by Vasan. Name of the film was Grahasthi. Rajkumar played the main role.

Q. Then what happened?

Ans : The next film was Kungal. it was based on Tagore's short story "Vision" . In this film Sivaji Ganesan, Pandari Bai, Mynavathi, were the actors . It was not a hit because this film came right after "Parasakthi" film in the year 1952. In this film Kungal, the dialogues were very soft and had a family based plot. Sivaji Ganesan acted so well but could not match Parasakthi dialogues. So people could not accept .

Q. What was the story?

Ans. It's a beautiful story of a blind's wife whose husband was a Medical Doctor. He treats his wife but the treatment becomes failure and wife loses her vision. The husband feels very guilty and stays with her support. A distant relative comes to help the wife with whom the husband falls in love. The wife's brother who is a lawyer sees the affair of brother-in-law and fights with him upon seeing him this the young lady. She goes back to her village. Doctor husband follows the young lady and on the way while crossing the river they meet with the storm . Before he reaches, his wife's brother reaches the place and marries the young lady which comes as a great shock to the husband. Thus, the story moves with full of emotional turning point. It was a short story by Tagore, a typical Bengali story. Murugan Talkies owner financed for this film but could not see the revenue. There was a review in this book saying the "Review was very good but no Revenue". And one more beautiful review was "a poetry in celluloid".

Q. Did u act in the film called Antha naal?

Ans. No I was not connected to that.

Q. Once I met Muktha Srinivasan. He told me that the Anthanaal was taken 3 times and the 3rd version was released, was that true?

Ans : Yes. Two times they scrapped the film after completing the full film till the end. Kolkata Srinivasan made it first and and scrapped it. Later Javar Seetharaman wrote the film . For this film, one tailor had come. He said that I have a role of an Inspector in that film and wanted to take the measurement for the costume. I came but I refused saying “I myself didn’t know anything about this why should I agree, let me confirm it with AVM Chettiar , then I agree to do it”. I think this news reached AVM Chettiar and he finally removed me from the character. Then later I met AVM Chettiar and asked about some pending payments. There was a film where I acted fully. Just because they didn’t release the film he refused to pay. I argued with his saying this is not fair, he then finally paid Rs.5000/-.

Q. Did you act in the Telugu film “Penn” film?

Ans: Yes, I did.

Q. Do you speak Telugu?

Ans : No I wrote the dialogue in Tamil and spoke in Telugu. The unit taught me Telugu. I spoke in my own voice.

Q. “Naalu Veli Nilam” film you made on your own?

Ans : Yes. Seva Screens is my own production house. I invested all my savings Rs.93000, my own money. The story was about how a son claimed his father property. A very nice story, and an emotional subject too. It was very good success drama. Vadivelu Vathiyar, Naaluveli Nilam are dramas written by Doctor Janaki Raman. K.J Mahadevan got the right to make Vadivel Vathiyar as a film but he did not make it. Later the date of the rights expired. One person called me and asked for the rights again. I went to Janaki Raman and sold it for Rs.15000 for all languages.

Q. Did B.S. Ramaiah write many Dramas?

Ans: Yes, he wrote many drama novels and also wrote Adhiroopa, Amaravathi, Mani Kodi Group. He was the person who's dialogue would be very emotional, the arguments between the two characters were very good in all his creations. He knows the true authentic way of how to write dramas. He reads a lot. He brought Janaki Raman in to the drama field.

Q. Did Janaki Raman enter the Film Industry?

Ans : Janaki Raman was not interested in films he was very much interested in Novel and Tamil Literature writing. He always wanted to write in a realistic way. Ku. Alagiri Swamy was a short story writer. Kannan Vandhan was the drama based on his story. Musical Drama, Vazhvil Vasantham was a drama, Kavi Chakravathi Kamar. He wrote many dramas based on Foreign Information Background. He connected western drama culture to Indian drama. He forced Bridge between foreign and Indian cinema.

Q. "Naalu Veli Nilam" was directed by Muktha Srinivasan?

Ans: Yes. Next to Mudhalali film.

Q. Was there any specific reason to select him as your production writer?

Ans : I met him in one film called Thamarai Kulam. I liked him very much. I played a guest and he suggested me a character in Naalu Veli Nilam. Then he immediately started film.

Q. Was the film a success?

Ans: No. It was not a successful film. It was a bad & sad experience.

Q. We were talking about N.S.K.? Had a very close association with him?

Ans: Yes .

Q. I heard that NSK had a great influence of foreign English action comedian

influence?

Ans: Yes, Harold Lloyd, he followed his style a lot more than Charlie Chaplin. He followed it in S.S.Vasan's story , Sathi Leelaavathi. He followed the style and make up of Harold Lloyd.

Q. How he followed Harold Lloyd ?

Ans : He use to see silent films in those days . It was screened in many theatres in Coimbatore tent cinemas. He watched serious stories, comedies, He also uses to read a lot of joke books. If you ask people "who is N.S.K?" they will say "he is a film repairer" .

Q. Why they call him like that?

Ans: If the film does not go well , they will add N.S.K. Track in that film and the film will become a big hit. So, they called him as a film repairer. So Harold Lloyd's influence first. Then Charlie Chaplin. He has brought many foreign comedies to Tamil. Ex : One teacher will ask "1 kg Gram flour, ½ kg of sugar, ½ kg of ghee total what will you get?". The student answers , Mysore Pak [Type of Sweet]

Q. Will he write all that beforehand ?

Ans : He will always take notes of all that beforehand. In Ananda Vikatan [Tamil Magazine] they gave importance to jokes. He has a great observative capacity, whatever he sees, he gets influenced by it and tries do on his own.

Q. Tell me about the comedians who acted with him?

Ans : T.S. Durai Raj in Delhi , retired now, M.R. Swami[late] , Pulimootai Ramaswamy, Alwar Kuppuswamy, Kuladeivam Raja Gopal everyone were from NSK Troupe.

Q. Kuladeivam Raja Gopal was in N.SK.'s Troupe?

Ans : Yes, first he was there and then later came to mine when Kuladeivam film was made. N.S.K. was very busy in Drama and did not send Rajagopal to act in

that film. He was upset by this. Then he came to me and I advised him to come from NSK saying that since I am getting opportunity in film I cannot continue with you in this Drama Troupe. Then he acted in many of my dramas, almost all the Dramas with us. Seva Stage, Malliya Manglam, Valliya Mangalam etc.

Q. How did Muthuraman met you?

Ans : I met him in Mayavaram in a drama. Sivaji left that troupe at that time. To fill his place, we were in search of person. At that time, in an exhibition, I saw this young man whose eyes were powerful and also a well-built body. I saw him acting too. He thought that I was a very influential person in film industry. When I called him he immediately responded and came to Chennai. At that time Muthuraman was acting in S.S.Rajendran's Drama Troupe and often came to Chennai to perform in Dramas. I guided him for the mutual agreement, but he did not like that place because they gave him aged man's character always.

Q. Did he play a comedian role?

Ans: No, he was serious character Artist.

Q. I heard that Muthuraman played a comedy role in his earlier days?

Ans : I am not sure about that because after joining in my troupe he played serious character role. Later in stages I saw a film called "Kaasethaan Kadavulada" which was a comedy film.

Q. From your troupe he entered cinema?

Ans : Yes. "Nenjil Oru Aalayam" we were all starting to Calcutta for a Tagore Centenary celebration . Tickets have been booked for all of us but suddenly director Sridhar called him for a film. Muthuraman felt bad and hesitated to tell that and waiting outside for a long time when the rehearsal was happened. I asked him what happened and he told that and he wanted to go for the film shooting. He played his role of Duryodhanan in Panchali film. I would say he was born to play role of Duryodhanan .I was very proud to say that his voice supported and the pronunciation was also very impressive then I allowed him

to go.

Q. Who played the Duryodhana role?

Ans : I played the role of Duryodhanan, then Muthuraman came to Calcutta the next day after the drama was over saying that the shooting cancelled. He was very affectionate with me and a well cultured man, had a great respect for elders, drama people and with everyone. He was a very simple person. His death is a great loss for the film industry and I personally miss him, he had a great respect on me. He came and met me on a Diwali Day took blessings which I could never forget.

02:01:47

Q. Parasakthi was a drama ? Later made as a film?

Ans: Yes, it was a drama, later AVM liked the script and made it as a film.

Q. I heard AVM didn't like Sivaji Ganesan's performance in that film? Was it true?

Ans : Yes , it was true. He was very thin and his facial expressions were also criticized very badly, saying his face was like a horse. Later after the hit of the film Sivaji himself sarcastically said you people earned a lot by casting this horse face man.

Q. Did you acted in the Drama Parasakthi?

Ans : No I acted in the film not in the drama.

Q. N.S.K. in his earlier period he did social satire characters? Socialists have always tried something new on stage

Ans . Yes, a very versatile actor. He was earning Rs.25/- per month. Every week he will take Rs.6/- even from that amount and he tried helping many people. 3/4th of his salary, he spent for the poor. He did not have any habits of smoking, drinking or any other habits. He had the habits of taking snuff till he was 45, only this habit . Later he started drinking. We can say he died due to alcoholism. He

was working so hard and the work pressure was there. Morning he will be in Chennai, evening in Salem, next day he will be in Coimbatore then to Salem again for the evening shoot. He worked beyond his age capacity, he showed much interest in social activity. He has supported so many people. I have seen him giving money for marriages. In those days, NSK Drama Sabha was there. Devi Mangala Gana Sabha at 1943-1944 , the partners all were workers. K.D. Santhanam, Pullayar Lakshmipathi, Gemini Madhavarao, Ethiraj, Ethartham Ponnuswamy and more people. NSK helped this Sabha, N.S.K. never had any accounts for his income or expenses. He did not add this India Income TAX notice. When I joined in 1939 I took interest and also K.S.Mani who brought the auditor Gopinath Manon. He guided us saying what all you get income or expenses write that with that date and other details so it will be easy for us to calculate the company accounts. N.S.K. paid heavy Income Tax Interest. I took interest and formed an Office Room and as per the guidance by Auditor tried to regularized his accounts. At that time they did 2-3 comedy dramas like Alibaba, Irandha Kadhal. For Chandra Hari written by Sowbandha Mudaliar, NSK paid Rs.750/- and got rights. NSK acted in that film. He was also a very good technician.

Q. Was a good technician?

Ans . Yes, he was a good technician who learnt from Raja Chandra Sekar from Calcutta. NSK and MGR both of them are a very good technicians in the industry. Camera angles, where to keep the camera for different scenes. NS.K. acted in many films. He often gave money to the Mangala Gana Sabha like Rs.5000 and so. The small amount like Rs.100, 200 will not come in to the account. He never shared to us. They came to Chennai and asked Rs.3000/- from NSK. At that time myself and K.S.Mani were discussing about Income Tax details. Saying that N.S.K. without realizing spends a lot giving money without proper papers. N.S.K. asked me “how much they have taken from me” . I told that Rs.5000 with our knowledge and how much he gave we don’t know. But to our knowledge it was Rs.5000. He called me inside the room where he was sitting and talking to them. He asked me to sit. They asked Rs.3000/- as a loan. K.S.Mani heard this and

called N.S.K. to the other room and told “see like this if you lend money this will not come to an end and there is no use of getting it back too. So let us think on the other angle. You always travel to their place now and then acting in the drama.”

Q. Has he acted in dramas after he entered in film?

Ans : Yes, he used to take the Madhuran, his wife with him and acted in dramas often. When discussing about the Mangala Natiya Sabha, NSK asked me to speak to them. I told already Rs.5000. Now they are asking Rs.3000. If we pay little more amount, we can own the entire Drama Company. So I decided to buy that company with the complete equipment but they did not have the proper equipment. Still demanded Rs.9000 altogether. But NSK agreed to pay Rs.10000/- and bought the drama company “Managala Gana Sabha”. They were very happy because the artists also came to Chennai. NSK called Ponnuswamy and settled it finally from them. They had regular income and they were happy to be under N.S.K. Shelter. We had a set of artists , Edhartha Ponnuswamy Pillai, Alwar Kuppuswamy, Pulimoota Ramaswamy, Singam Krishna Moorthy, Durai Raj and if he needed more artist there were so many who were ready to come. The troupe become big and from their dramas like Krishna Leela were played. Everyone got the monthly salary and artists felt very comfort and also performed well. Then he started NSK Nadaga Sabha, he spent Rs.84000 in 3 months for the rich set on stage for the drama Krishna Leela with Narayana Kavi’s songs . K.Madhavan wrote the screenplay. The set was very natural and trick scenes were introduced on stage. Birth of Krishna was continuously shown by changing back drops and the songs were played, In one song, the birth of Krishna was showed so naturally and beautifully. This play performed continuously for 7 months in Waltax theatre. Finally we stopped staging the play. Still the audience response was so good. All the seven months continuously it was a houseful show . Rs.1,74,000 was collected by this drama Krishna Leela every week all nights. In one song, 7 scenes were shown. That was the highlight. Without any break for 7^{1/2} months, it was continuously played. When this was happening successfully, that unfortunate incident happen.

Q. That Lakshmi Kaanthan Case?

Ans : Yes that Lakshmikanthan's murder case . In this same Waltax Theatre. He promised in front of the magistrate and he was imprisoned after that tough time. In the N.S.K. Nadaga sabha there was a confusion who will take the responsibilities of the sabha after him. K.R.Ramaswamy was called.

Q. Who called him?

Ans : N.S.K. himself called K.R. Ramaswamy. Poompaavai was his first film. He was in T.K.S. Drama Troupe before. He was a very good singer, very talented and intelligent. N.S.K. had the talent of knowing about the Artist talents , their strength was in the areas like singing, dancing, dialogue counters etc. He will make use of those artists in his dramas and he will support them. P.V.Chinappa acted in "Chandra" drama. His payment was Rs.600 for that. After that, he did not get any chance. He came like a saint wearing saffron dress completely in to the spiritual. At that time N.S.K. started Ashoka films.

Q. Oh was that his first production company?

Ans: Yes, he used to make so many short films in that banner.

Q. What was the type of the films?

Ans : Comedy, Short film 8000 feet, 7000 feet films. They will release with films like Naveena Vikramadithyan. Srirama Naidu's central studio was about to close. At that time Srirama Naidu asked N.S.K. to shoot his film in his studio. In Coimbatore, this studio again gained popularity because N.S.K. Film were being made there and he got back to his business again. In Madras, he got same business contract too. At that time Arya Madha film by S.M.S. was planned , N.S.K. wanted Chinappa to come to Puthukottai to act in that film. He took his car and brought Chinappa to Madras. He fixed salary for him as Rs.4000 and advance of Rs.1000 was paid to P.U.Chinappa. P.U.Chinappa hits are Kannagi, Maya Bazar, Uthama Puthiran . Same like him, K.R.Ramaswamy also came to this Industry because of N.S.K. for the film called Poompavai. N.S.K. told K.R.Ramaswamy that "I am buying this company only for you. K.R.Ramaswamy was in T.K.S. Troop, N.S.K. in front of all including me said "I bought this drama

company only for you and your talent” and more than that he removed his earning and gifted it to K.R.Ramaswamy. It happened on one afternoon. We were all seeing and felt little bad because all of us were working hard and did so much for him but he showed his appreciation to some one who was completely from the other troop. It was very hurting. I took the administration part of the company. At the same time N.S.K. went to jail. Then started the Brahmins and Non-Brahmins problem in the company.

Q. Who started this issue first?

Ans : It started from the drama troupe. Slowly it started but one thing I myself forgot that I was a Brahmin. I got so frustrated and this burst out on a few things, that time T. A Madhuran was there, N.S.K.’s wife. I met a lawyer and changed the Proprietorship in the name of T.A.Madhuran and properly documented in his company. There was so many misunderstandings. I told Madhuran to choose between me or Ramaswamy because it was very difficult to manage the situation at that time. I demanded for a Power of attorney Legally. I want this company to be registered properly. She asked N.S.K. who was in jail , he replied saying no because he misunderstood me that I may take full control on the company. But there is one thing. Only because of this drama company, he was comfortable in the jail. Every week he used to get the accounts properly, every Sunday I will settle the week accounts. He will ask for money to spend in jail Rs.5/- every week.’

Q. Why he asked money? What will he do with that money there?

Ans: To bribe them, the officers in the jail to take care of him in the jail. This company supported him a lot. I know better than anyone there. At that time, AVM Chettiar was about to make a film and I was about to get a chance. At that time, I wrote a notice to the company and the notice board said “if there is anybody who wanted to trouble or misguide the team they can walk out. Their payment will be settled as soon as they wish and they can leave the company”. This strongly affected many from the team. I signed as M.D. of the company. 30 people from the company walked out. I was aware of who all were going to walk

out, so I already prepared a team of 16 people who can act and can sign for the drama. I don't want any break after the people left the show. It was well planned that all the 30 people were leaving the company as a possession because they wanted to grab the public attention saying that N.S.K. drama troop has been broken. But nothing bothered me. The very same day we stayed in that drama called "Izhandha Kaalam", the collection was more than Rs.400. Till then the collection was Rs.150 to 200. It was big success for us. After they left, we staged a drama called "Rathnaveli" which was a loss. Madhuram lost more than Rs.30000 in that. I explained about the risk before but she did not listen to me. From that point, she was very upset and I wrote a letter to T.K. Shanmugam saying we need a good writer because only when we stage a new drama we can survive as a company.

Q. Where was T.K.Shanmugam ?

Ans : He was in Trichy. At that time Pa.Neelakandan was staging his drama in T.K.S. Banner. T.K.S. has sent him saying he will help to write for your company at that time he wrote a play called "Theeya Ullam". We read the story and it was okay. Still we made a few changes in the story and script. It was done by myself and my sister's son Rajamani who was with me helping in my work in dramas who had a wonderful knowledge of English Dramas. Especially Shakespeare's Drama. I got some idea about English Dramas from him and we both together wrote the final version of the story. We added few characters in the story, we also added 8 scenes. Kumari Kamala acted in the sister character which was not in the drama. "Thyaga Ullam" was the drama and we changed it was "Naamiruvar" for the film. A.V.Meyiappa Chettiar came and saw the drama which was played in Waltax Theatre. He reserved 16 seats everyday and used to come with his team to see the drama. He enjoyed the innovative techniques of the scenes in the drama and wanted this to be taken for films in his production. Badhulu ATK Muthu [Cameraman] were there along with 16 members. I created the scenes from heart. When the hero call his sister her face will be shown when he calls his lover, her face will be shown. The audience enjoyed it. We introduced play back system in dramas for both the heroines Kamala and

Kavitha. They were very good singers. so, when one of them on stage the other will be singing in the back of the stage. This was appreciated by others. T.K.S. Shanmugam also appreciated and asked me how was it possible. I explained him later and they both had a wonderful sync. So it was very natural to see them sing on stage . AVM liked the whole drama and wanted the script. In that period there was a contract between NSK Troupe and AVM's productions. In that it was mentioned that if the story was liked by anyone 75 percent will go to the author and 25 percent will go to NSK Nadaga Sabha. If AVM sold it, then 50 percent for them and 50 percent for NSK Nadaga Sabha. It was written and signed by NSK. At that time, AVM Chettiar called for his production. The project was fixed for the amount Rs.7000 and Rs.300 per month. This Rs.300 was for the Associate Director Project. This was good for me and at that point we can easily leave from that place but still I wanted to inform T.A.Madhuram since NSK was in jail. But when I informed her about this, her reply was "who will give you the opportunity for films. Are they mad or what"? By hearing this I became very upset and angry . The very moment I went AVM's office and signed the character because it was in Karaikudi. I had to travel there and stay with them. Meanwhile here, Madhuram informed this to NSK who was in prison . He wrote so many letters to me, praising me, mentioned me as good, who stood for him when he needed support and also wanted me to support and his NSK Nadaga Sabha. Through more than 15 to 20 letters. I felt bad and then thought about it. I already informed Meiyappa Chetiyar saying that the NSK drama company needs my support so he needs to consider that. At that point of time I have started my own drama called "Paithiyakaaran" story, script everything was mine. The story was based on "Ratha Sodhanai" by Pa.Neelakandan. Myself and my son-in-law worked hard for that play. I asked Meiyappa Chettiar to allow me to travel because I played an important character in that drama. I asked him for permission. I said "I'll always be there in AVM's office. In between I'll go to act there." AVM accepted but later I received the notice from AVM production saying "For 10 days you came regularly and then started to take leave often and travelled to Chennai. This is not a proper way to work with us". I had 3 scenes in that, M.G.Raman was with me on set in Kaaraikudi. He was a very good editor

and was also good at direction.

02:30:45

AVM Chettiar was a very good critic, he always came out with good ideas of scenes, dialogue etc. He showed much interest in creativity. He always wanted his ideas to be implemented, it was very difficult to convince him. Very intelligent man. In those days' producer were not so talented like him. Somasundaram also had a wonderful story knowledge. I in reply sent a notice to him saying it was not an written agreement deal so they could send him the legal notice. Then immediately he arranged for an Associate Director and fixed salary Rs.6000/- project as Rs.300/- for him . Neelakandandan went there and they informed about all this to V.K.Ramaswamy, T.K.Ramachandran, K.P.Kamakshi who was a singer we was also from NSK Troop. Karthi was also in our Nadaga Sabha. AVM Chettiar did not reply to my notice. He kept quiet and called T.K.Ramachandran to play my role in that film . He was with me in the dramas. He was trying to tell me lies. I said "I know you are playing my role in that film. AVM Chettiar has called you. Don't lie, if you want to do the character, please do. He then felt bad and acted in that film as a Villan.

Q. In the Drama what was your character?

Ans : I played the hero role. Best in the film. AVM Chettiar felt I was pretty too old to play the hero role. So he suggested me to play the villain character. T.R.Mahalingam played the hero role. I directed the scene since AVM Chettiar's daughter wedding was at the same time, he was busy in that. He was not there when the shooting took place. Later I heard that he appreciated that if I continued being there for the old film, I would have become a great director in future. He appreciated about my work to many people. Muthu was the cameraman to that film. Later he called me for compromise. When he was planning to make the film called Vazhkai . He was ready to do the contract for 3 films together. Vazhkai , Chellapillai, Penn. 1950'S Chella Pillai did not came out well. Later Javar Seetharaman acted in the second version of that film. I told AVM Chettiar that all 3 films I have finished acting already. If you want to me join again in your production then you have to sign a new agreement. But he did

not like the deal. Then in Kuladeivam, I acted because nobody was there to act in that role.

Q. Was the film Madman , Paithiyakaran gave you success?

Ans : Yes, I took it on my own. NSK was in jail so I wanted to take it NSK Productions.

Q. When did you start NSK Film?

Ans: 1946 end it was my own decision. 3 people came and met me one among them was Soundarajan, Jiten Banerji, Newton, they also invested. Artist responsibility was mine and food the rest we all equally shared among us. I made an agreement if NSK is released from jail and act in this film, 25 percent more will be given to NSK Film. Smartly I made this agreement.

Q. Did he act?

Ans : Yes , he was released from the jail and acted in the film. We got 3.75 thousand as our share. On April 26th 1947, it was released. We started the film end of 1946 till march 1947 shooting went on. And April 26th we released. At that time, we were very busy in meeting NSK in jail and there were many formalities because the release from the jail was announced at the same time we vacated waltax and shifted our company to Vani Mahal.

Q. Where did you shoot the madman?

Ans : Newtone Studio , Jiten was the cameraman. Vittal Selvakumar . I played the main role. Who all acted in the drama were the artists in the film. MGR also acted in that film. He played the villain role. But it was not villain, it was actually the second hero. First half of the film he played the anti-hero. He loves the young girl very much but get arrested by the officials in a theft case. He takes revenge on them and the young girl gets marriage to an aged man. When they get together again she says that she is still waiting for the hero to marry her even though she was married. He rescues her. In those days it was a revolutionary story. Krishnan Panju directed the film and I assisted him in dialogue and for that I

was paid Rs.3000 . I bought this house with that money. T.A.Madhuram paid me the amount . The first house I bought was this.

Q. NSK Films proprietor was T.A.Madhuram?

Ans : Yes, till he came back,. I made the clear document that she owns the company.

Q. Oh ok after NSK released from jail Madman “ Paithiyakaaran” was the first film? What was the role he played in that film?

Ans : Yes, he was the milkman. This character was created for him. T.A. Madhuram played double role. She played the young girl’s character and the old man’s wife. Everyone was having the opinion that if a real young girl would have acted in that role, it would have been even better but she wanted to act in the drama. She acted continuously for 30 days, we got a very good revenue.

Q. Tell me about the song NSK sang about his experiences when he was in the prison?

Ans : It was about socialism and mentioned about his experiences to Udumalai Narayana Kavi who wrote the song. C.R. Subburaman was the Music Director, he also composed music for Mannamagal.

Q. How was the response by the public for the film? Madman “Paithiyakaaran”

Ans : It was a hit film , I got a very good name in that film, people accepted me as a very good character artist.

Q. Did you act in Alibaba?

Ans : N.S.K. took Alibaba. I acted as a villain. I was one of the thieves in that play.

Q. In a Magazine 1940, Naradhar Diwali Malar saw you having a sword in your hand K.D. Kamakshi by the side of you? Am I correct?

Ans : Yes, it was me and K.D.Kamakshi’s name was written.

Q. Tell me about Irunda Kadhal ? Was that based on any foreign story?

Ans : No, the “City Amateur’s Club” in Trichy had this script and they were staging this play but it was not a popular drama. Ponnuswamy Pillai got the rights for casting M.R.Radha. K.B. Santhanam also acted in that drama. Later N.S.K. got the rights from them. That period I was having a misunderstanding with him. K.P.Kamakshi acted in my part. K.P.Kamakshi had the title and he was the famous artist. More than M.R.Radha , he was famous in those. K.P.Kamakshi had a title called Arjunan Kamakshi, in the social drama. He played many roles, he looked very smart in suits, hot and coolers. M.R.Radha and K.P.Kamakshi were popular in cinemas.

Q. Irunda Kadhal film was a hit?

Ans : No, because it was not taken as cinema . Just like drama , his scenes were picturized. The set was also like stage Drama. So it was a flop film.

Q. In R.R. Sabha I saw this play

Ans : Yes , we staged it first and his last scenes in that drama the set will be in the court. I will be asking the public 3 question who was responsible for the crime, the questions were written on the board and shown in the last scene.

Q. Who all acted in the drama?

Ans : K.R.Krishnan, K.D.Sanathanam and Kalyani, K.R.Ramaswamy’s wife. She was the only lady artist, rest were men and T.Jayalakshmi was also there in our group. Later she went to T.K.S. Nadaga Sabha.

Q. In Madman, N.S.K. has sung the songs? Did you create any comedy scenes for him?

Ans : Yes we did, a servant role named Satyamanagalam Nithyananda. Comically he will say “Sani” . He asked the co-artist to call him as Sani. So much timely comedy was specially done by himself.

Q. Was N.S.K. upset after he came from the jail ? was he mentally affected?

Ans : No, he was very strong and positive but Thyagaraja Bhagavathar was very

much disturbed. In fact after coming out from jail he did not get any film chance and he stopped meeting public. N.S.K. was mentally prepared.

Q. He did not take up any film? Based on his own story in jail?

Ans : No, He become busy in other new film projects. In his last stage of his life situations as changed. There was misguidance by few people around him.

Q. Is there any specific comedy where NSK was influenced by Charlie Chaplin?

Ans : Yes, he had social messages for the people in his dialogues and he was also very hilarious . In drama, he did best. In films, very less comparatively.

Q. Tell me about Chandrakantha?

Ans: N.S.K. acted in Chandrakantha. Kali N Rathnam acted in that film. The entire boys company acted in that film. Our boys company in T.K.S. , Madurai boys company, Chinappa Kali N Rathinam also acted. The story was also full of turns and twists. He played the magistrate role and also a character called Ambattan Munuswamy. And Madadhipathy, all the three roles he played. The barber role played by N.S.K. Ambattam Munuswamy. It was about the socialism. There was a scene where the barber gives an idea to the Chief General. While saying, he will sit on the chief's chair and say that "when the idea is mine obviously the seat will also be mine". Like these are N.S.K. Scenes, very meaningful. N.S.K. knows direction also. They had a van of their own. In that Pulimootai Ramaswamy, N.S.K. T.S.Durairaj, Madhuram , Singam Krishnamoorthy, all 5 would travel. While travelling by van on the way they will write or change the script, write dialogues and the rehearsal will also be done in the van. Before they reached the place, they will finish the rehearsal. He wrote many of his songs in the van while travelling. He also composed many songs on his own, Narayana Kavi was his Right Hand.

Q. In Balamani did B.V.Rao make a sarcastic comment?

Ans : Yes, K.R.Ramaswamy acted in that drama he played the same role in the film too.

Q. I heard it was a funny communications happened on stage while performing K.R.Ramaswamy did all that?

Ans : Yes, he enjoyed that all day.

Q. How was the film “ Gumaastha ? was it a hit?

Ans : It was a Bengali story.

Q. After Madman “Paithiyakaaran”? what was the next film in N.S.K. film?

Ans : Nalla Thambi, Manamagal. First came Nalla Thambi then came Mannamagal . Nallathambi was based on the story of the thief who goes to town. I wrote this by seeing the film scene by scene. At that time we did not get the Print of the English film. We got the print later and we screened the film in Newton’s studio. Rs. 100 we paid for the print. We first saw the film in casino Theatre and liked it very much. Then I wrote the story as it was being screened. We decided to name it Madman II. And also planned for advertisements. Later NSK wanted to play the main role and gave me the villain role. Then Annadurai wrote the script. C.N.Annadurai wanted to see the film, we tried best but we did not get that print, it was burnt because they don’t keep the film print more than 20 years. We tried to get it from London but we could not get. Then C.N. Annadurai somehow managed to complete the story and script by using my scene sequence script of the film.

Q. In that the Prohibition Propaganda was shown am I right?

Ans : Yes, and in the dance drama too. All that was N.S.K.’s idea.

Q. Where did the shooting took place?

Ans : “Paithiyakaaran”, “Nallathambi”, “Mannamagal” all three films were shot in Newton’s studio. Almost all N.S.K. film were taken there in Newton’s studio.

Q. Why, what was the reason?

Ans : in that studio the workers were very active and attentive, they finish the

work on time, Jiten, Dinshaw, Nagoor all of them were there.

Q. Was he connected personally to the studio?

Ans : No, he was not connected but Thyagaraja Bhagavathar had a stake there.

Q. In Nallathambi who was the heroine?

Ans : Bhanumathy was the heroine in Nallathambi.

Q. How was the public reception for the film Nalla Thambi?

Ans Yes, it was good, and was a hit.

Q. Was Manamagal a Drama?

Ans : Munshi Paramu Pillai was a Kerala writer, his famous drama was Suprabha. It was a Malayalam drama. N.S.K and I had seen the drama.

Q. Did he understand Maalayalam then?

Ans : Yes, N.S.K. knows how to read, write and speak Malayalam since he was from Nagercoil. He knows the language. Basically, he was a Tamilian. N.S.K. saw the Drama and liked it very much. He wanted to make this as a film in Tamil. After that he went to jail. Later after he was released from jail, I remembered this story and discussed with him and he agreed. At that time Lalitha, Padmini, Ragini were only dancers. We wanted them to act. Earlier for this film "Vazhkai" I suggested Padmini's name but no one responded. Then NSK agreed to caste Padmini for his film.

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Q. Who wrote Manamagal in Tamil?

Ans : M.Karunanidhi wrote the story, dialogue, screenplay. It was a great hit at that time.

Q. Tell me about Parasakthi?

Ans : Parasakthi was Devi Nadaga Sabha Drama. M.N.Pavalar wrote this play. It

was a very successful drama and a big hit . A.K.Veerawamy played the women sister character Kalyani , Saamikannu played the Gunasekaran's role. They were boys company artists. By seeing the success of the drama, AVM Chettiar and P. A .Perumal decided to make this as a film and bought the story. Then they wanted the dialogues to be written by Karunanidhi and the direction was by Krishnan-Panju. The Court scene was written 19 times again and again. After re-writing it 19 times Karunanidhi told "I don't mind if you want you to re-write it again". He always had a very sharp mind. Karunanidhi showed so much interest in his work. Sivaji Ganesan was signed to play the hero role in this film P.A.Perumal [National Pictures] fixed a salary for Sivaji and he stayed there. Sivaji was very thin, so they wanted him to build his body for that, he has to eat well. They took special care of him and served good food there. I have seen him acting in many dramas. Sivaji used to play many different characters in N.S.K.Nadaga Sabha, Devi Nadaga Sabha, Sakthi Nadaga Sabha. In all three places, I've seen him performing. He played the role of Noorjahan, a lady character. It was a very big hit. The expressions were amazing. He managed to perform a graceful women role and he also played other manly character well. His acting showed his talent, the expressions on his face.

Q. Did AVM finance this film?

Ans : It was a Joint production of AVM Chettiar and P.A.Perumal. Both of them produced this film called Parasakthi. AVM Chettiar did not like Sivaji acting in this film , he wanted to someone who is famous and well-built, mainly. He wanted K.R. Ramaswamy to act in this film. Perumal very strongly said that Sivaji Ganesan will suit the character and he believed that Sivaji will be the right choice. Krishnan Panju was the director, at that time. When N.S.K. came from the jail to meet him, Krishnan Panju said about the casting of the film "Parasakthi". I told him Sivaji can act in all roles, different characters, I have seen him in comedy roles, women main role, character role so he will be the right choice. In the "Manohara Drama" he played so many characters in the same drama. Mother character in "Manohara Drama" was a very strong role. Even that he acted so well and was well received by the audience. I stood strong

that Sivaji Ganesan should do the “Parasakthi” hero character at that period. I was not even close to Sivaji Ganesan.

Q. Do you remember the 30 people who left in NSK Troop?

Ans : Yes, Yes I remember Sivaji was one among them. He also must thought that I was angry but later he became very close to me because Krishnan Panju told everyone including Sivaji that Sahasranamam was very strong in saying only Sivaji can do this role. By hearing this he become very close to me. Then they confirmed Sivaji and took a few scenes of 6000 feet. Then again they retook the same later. Then Chettiar wanted me to act in that film as the elder brother of hero. Elder brother was a judge in that film. In the court scene, he comes to know that the victim and the prisoner was his sister. This was the first scene to be shot. In the first poster, the picture was printed. My pose was that of me crying in the court on the Judge Seat. "The poster is sad so the film will also be sad' said T.A.Madhuram as a joke. She told this in front of me and said surely this film is going to be a great hit. Till now bad comments has only ended in success so I thanked her. It was a Diwali release. It ran till the next Diwali. One complete year without a single break in Paragon Talkies. It was a super hit. Sivaji Ganesan become an overnight star of Tamil Cinema Industry. Everything changed. A.V.M. Chettiar's wife was always a good critic. After seeing the film, she was very sure that this “Sivaji will one day rule Tamil cinema”. She said in front of everyone who worked for this film. Mrs. AVM's opinion always had value. Everyone appreciated the film. Then later after Sivaji Ganesan put on weight, a few scenes were taken again. In the beginning who knows who will become popular. Everyone needs a breakthrough.

Q. Who all played the other character?

Ans : Myself and S.S.Rajendran, Junior Sridhar. The story starts from Burma. There three brothers and sister become refugees. All scene were shot in AVM's studio. AVM Chettiar was there throughout, till the end. I had a small problem while shooting.

Q. What was that?

Ans : There was a scene in which I had to kick my sister with my boots. As per story, we live apart for years and later in life when we meet we don't recognize each other. This is story but my logic was when a brother loses his sister, he always thinks about her and will never be rude to any lady who is of his sister age. A.V.M. wanted me to act as the scene planned. I refused, the scene was "In a dinner party which happens in[elder brother place], the poor sister comes and begs for food. In this situation the elder brother kicks the lady who was carrying her baby in her hand. My argument was such because the brother character was portrayed as a very calm, affectionate, composed till then. How will he hit the lady? But Chettiar stood strong that the scene should be like that. Only then people will pity the lady. The scene came out so well and people appreciated the same.

Q. What did you do?

Ans : I told them "I have sisters I cannot act like as you except. But I can pull my leg when she holds it. this much I can do". Because the shooting had stopped by then. Krishnan Panju became upset. I again tried explaining him the logic behind the scene and also told him if you want you can ask someone to do my role, I was quiet. The next day AVM Chettiar planned the scene to be taken from a different angle placing the camera behind and asked me to pull my leg , I did as he said. But on screen it came out as through I kick her. She fell down. Maruthi rao was the cameraman and the music was sudharshan.

Q. All songs were hit in that film?

Ans : A few tunes taken from Hindi. There was a Bharathiyar Song "Nenju Porukuthillaye" sung by C.S.Jayaram was a very good hit. Ka, ka,ka song was also a hit song from that film. They are the original tunes of Sudharshan.

Q. Parasakthi was a milestone film in Tamil Cinema?

Ans : Yes, for the dialogues written by M.Karunanidhi. It was a very big opening for the director Krishnan Panju. They become very famous after this film. Of course Sivaji Ganesan become an overnight star.

Q. Vyjayanthimala acted in “Vazhkai”?

Ans : That was the first film and she become the superstar and she was also a dancer then she acted in our film, she was a monthly salary at that time.

Q. Was Vazhkai based on any Novel?

Ans : No, it was purely our script. The songs were based on a Hindi film and a few scenes and setups were copied from Hindi film. She was very young and just came from convent school, she could not speak good Tamil. She learnt Tamil later. A very obedient and intelligent girl.

Q. In that you played the villain role? If I am right?

Ans : Yes, name of my character was Moorthy. First Pandari Bai was signed to act in the main role but AVM Chettiar did not like her doing the character. Later in Hindi, she acted. She also learnt Tamil later. In the beginning her Tamil was also not good. P A. Nilagandan was making a film called Muthal Thedhi. I was shooting there. Sivaji told me “see Anna this Neelakandan is the one who criticized me as a horse face. Now he cast me as a hero in his film”. We both laughed, “in the industry we need to brand ourselves. We need to brake the barriers and prove ourselves”. I myself experienced twice in my carrier in the beginning. I was branded saying I will fit only in the villain role. When days passed, I missed many dramas as I could not fit in the hero character. It was very difficult for me. Sometimes the rumors will change our career. We have to stand strong for e.g. in Shakespeare play there was a character called Leo. There is no specific role for him but he will say something and move. The whole scene will get changed. Just because of rumors many artists life has been spoiled.

Q. How many films you have acted?

Ans : 200 Films.

Q. What was the last film?

Ans : It was “Pozuthu Pokku” , but not yet released. Other film was “Pagal

Vesham”.

Q. Who was the producer?

Ans : One young man called Ganesan.

Q. Who was the director?

Ans : Menon was the director of the film , he was an editor who came to direction. It was a Black and white film. So no distributor came forward. The other film was “Padhinettu Vayadhu Paruvam”. Thilagam Narayana samy took the film, Raja Sulochana acted in that. That was also a black and white film.

Q. What was the last film released was?

Ans : “Madurai Meeta Sundara pandian “ was my last released film.

Q. M.G.R.’s film?

Ans : Yes, M.G.R’s last film. After that he became chief minister.

Q. Was it a historical story?

Ans : Yes.

Q. You have acted in so many characters. Is there any particular role which you like most?

Ans : In “Kuladeivam” I liked and enjoyed the role I played. “ Kairasi” and “Police Karan Magal” . These were some of the films which I enjoyed playing the character.

Q. Tell me about “Police Karan Magal”?

Ans : It was my Seva Stage Drama , Sridhar directed the film

Q. What character you played in the film?

Ans : I played the father role. This was a very beautiful family story about father, daughter, brother relationships. It was portrayed well , full of emotions.

Muthuraman played the brother's role. The songs were hit and story is about full of twists and turns. Very Interesting story. Vasam wanted to remake this film in Hindi. But someone from Hindi Industry got the rights. Sridhar got the Tamil rights . Nanjundan got the Telugu rights. Nanjundan Sathyam produced this film.

Q. Was the Policekaran Magal drama a hit?

Ans : Yes both the drama and the film were very big hits and gave me a very good name .

Q. Sir you have the experience acting on the stage and also before the camera? What was the difference?

Ans : In drama we need duration , Melodrama was needed. In cinema this is not needed. After the technology has improved e.g. Special lights, effective mikes on stage, changes have come. Strong expressions , loud dialogues all they have changed. Later stages in the drama I noticed such things and introduced in many of my dramas. Subtle dialogue delivery, natural ways of expression were implemented. People enjoyed and also appreciated it. In "Police Karan Magal" and "Vadivel Vathiyar" drama, I tried and succeeded. I don't do or encourage over acting. People will like this type of acting in the earlier period. Hurricane lamp and gas light was used on stage. After the electrical light facility, why should we strain ourselves? In my concept we did so many changes in stage crafting.

Q. Do you think if a serious drama is done, people will come?

Ans : Yes , why not. Definitely people will come and watch it. But the revenue part we can't say. Public support will always be there for a good traditional drama once in a year. When the music festival conducts stage plays we can see Housefull crowd.

Q. So you say when even a good drama comes, audience will come?

Ans : Yes, the art is always alive , only the artists die.

“wonderful phrase sir”

That was the interview with Mr. S V SAHASRANAMAM who now enjoys a well-earned rest and retirement from both stage and scene. His health is not too good and yet he does not miss the opportunity to come out of his shell of retirement to produce a play whenever a suitable script comes his way. He may be old in age but he is young in spirits and still lives for his art and commitment for the art both stage and scene. This interview was recorded at the residence of SV SAHASRANAMAM at Royapettah , Madras in April - May in 1985.