

11 SEP 1975

# **MAHARASHTRA**

## **BIRTHPLACE OF INDIAN FILM INDUSTRY**

BY  
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**T**HE CULTURAL HERITAGE of our Motherland in all its diverse forms is the common property of not only the people of India but of the whole of mankind and it involves obligation on the part of all of us to enrich it in every possible way.

An attempt, however small, to bring within reach of an average Indian authentic information on the important aspects of this history and culture in order to make possible a two-way flow of information between the different States of India, could supply an essential need for securing harmony in inter-State relations and promote national integration.

The Maharashtra Information Centre has, with these humble objects in view, projected a series of booklets on Maharashtra. They are only introductory but deal with most aspects of the history and the economic and cultural life of the people of the State. The contributors are authorities in their subjects and well known for their erudition. The present book covers period from 1913 to 1963.

It is hoped that the series will help remove the lack of understanding which retards the growth of a healthy national feeling and go a long way in bringing the people of Maharashtra closer to the people of other States.



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## The origin

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**T**HE FILM INDUSTRY OF INDIA, which today ranks among the eight major industries in the country, can appropriately be said to have originated in Maharashtra, thanks to the relentless efforts of the early film makers and artistes.

### The Lumiere brothers

Two Frenchmen, Lumiere brothers, were the first to bring films to India in 1896. On July 7 that year they screened these films in Bombay's Watson Theatre. Some 200 people paid Rs. 2 each to attend the premiere. A week later, these films were released in the Novelty Theatre (now known as Excelsior Theatre) in Bombay and the ticket rates ranged from two annas (now equivalent to 12 paise) to Rs. 2. There were two shows per day. Twelve short films used to be screened daily. These films shown by the Lumiere brothers held the Bombay audiences spellbound. 'The Times of India', a Bombay daily, published a special review showering praise on these films. In the wake of this successful introduction of the cinema in India, foreign films also came to be shown in the country at slightly higher rates. In 1904, Mani D. Sethna put up a theatre specially for showing films, which was the first theatre to screen films regularly. He screened the film **THE LIFE OF CHRIST** in two parts. This was a foreign film. Among those who saw this film was Dadasaheb Phalke, who later came to be known as the pioneer film-maker in India. After seeing **THE LIFE OF CHRIST**, Dadasaheb was inspired to produce an Indian film and in 1913, he made his first film **RAJA HARISHCHANDRA**, thus laying the foundation of the Indian cinema.

### Earlier attempt

Though Dadasaheb Phalke achieved the honour of becoming the first Indian to produce a full-length feature film, attempts were made in Maharashtra before him to produce films. Within a year of the first showing of a movie by the Lumiere brothers, Harishchandra Sakharam Bhatawadekar *alias* Sawe Dada attempted to make a film. He filmed a wrestling bout between Pundalik

and Krishna Nhavi. He had the bout specially arranged at the Hanging Gardens, Bombay, where he shot the film. After the shooting, the film was sent for processing to England. Within a few weeks, the film was processed and brought back to India. Bhatawadekar gained greater confidence after seeing the results of his first attempt. The film was first shown at night on open grounds in Bombay. Initially, Bhatawadekar used to show this film to rich citizens at their residences. Later, he even released it in the Perry Theatre, charging between 8 annas to Rs. 3 per ticket. Often, he collected up to Rs. 300 per show. In 1905, Bhatawadekar also filmed **LORD CURZON'S DURBAR**. When Wrangler R. P. Paranjpye was given a grant welcome on his return from Cambridge after becoming the first Indian to become a Senior Wrangler there, Bhatawadekar filmed the event in Bombay. Four years later, Bhatawadekar had planned to produce a film on the life of Krishna. The venture, however, had to be given up due to the sudden death of Bhatawadekar's brother who was also to be his collaborator. Bhatawadekar was so completely upset by his brother's death that he even disposed of the camera at a throwaway price of Rs. 700. It was said that this camera was manufactured by Bhatawadekar himself.

Bhatawadekar's camera was purchased by three persons who attempted to produce a film in 1911. They were : Anantram Parshuram Karandikar, S. N. Patankar and V. P. Divekar. These three filmed the Imperial Durbar of 1911. In 1920, they also filmed the funeral of Lokmanya Bal Gangadhar Tilak. In 1912, they produced the film **SAVITRI**, about 1,000 ft. in length. The film was based on a story in Hindu mythology. Narmada Mande, a young woman from Ahmedabad, appeared in the title-role in this film. She was the first woman to act in an Indian film. Divekar played the role of Vyasa and K. G. Gokhale, a stage-actor, enacted Jayamuni. This film could not be released for public exhibition due to some technical flaws in the filming. Later, in 1915, the trio produced a 6,000 ft. long feature film. The cast of this film was Gopal Ranade as Narayanrao Peshwe, K. G. Gokhale as Raghunathrao Peshwe, and Damu Joshi as Anandibai. There is no record available to show whether this film was exhibited. At about the same time Narayan Govind Chitre, the manager of the Advocate of India Press, Bombay, made a film with the help of R. P. Tipnis, who was the manager of the Coronation Cinema, Bombay. Chitre was inspired to make a film based on a play called **PUNDALIK**

written by Ramrao Kirtikar and staged by the Shreepad Sangit Mandali, a professional theatre group. He took the assistance of a cameraman called Johnson who worked for the Bourne and Gayford Company. The film was shot at Mangaldas Wadi in Bombay, where today stand the Swastik and Naaz theatres. The film was also called PUNDALIK after the play. The 8,000 ft. long film was directed by Dadasaheb Torne. It was released in the Coronation Theatre, Bombay, in 1909 or thereabout.

Attempts were being made at about the same time to make the film. Heeralal Sen of Calcutta purchased a projector in 1896. In 1900, a cinematographer from the Pathe Company visited India. Sen worked with him to gain a working knowledge of cinematography. Some days later, he built a camera himself, and with it filmed some sequences from the popular Bengali ballet 'Ali Baba'. In 1911, he also filmed the Delhi Durbar. In 1905, Jyotish Sarkar shot a documentary on the demonstrations by Surendranath Sen, launched to protest against the Partition of Bengal. In 1912-13, Nataraj Mudaliar started producing films in Madras.

All these were primitive experiments in film-making. They helped to sow the seeds of the cinema in India. However, these attempts were not adequate to lay the foundation of film-making as a profession in its own right. The first full-length feature film in India was made by Dadasaheb Phalke and only after the success of his films, the cinema was established as a profession in India. This is why Dadasaheb Phalke is rightly regarded as the father of the Indian cinema.

■ ■ ■

## Dadasaheb Phalke and silent film era (1913-1931)



**Dadasaheb Phalke**

**D**HUNDIRAJ GOVIND PHALKE *alias* Dadasaheb was born in Tryambakeshwar near Nasik, on April 30, 1870, of a poor Brahmin family. Since his childhood, he was deeply interested in photography. After passing out of high school, he went abroad to study photography. On return, he took up a job in the Department of Archaeology as a photographer. He was also keenly interested in printing in which he had taken some training abroad. However, the film **THE LIFE OF CHRIST** proved a turning point in his life. Dadasaheb was

spellbound when he saw the film for the first time. He began to visualize Krishna where he saw Christ on the screen. The idea of filming **THE LIFE OF KRISHNA** obsessed him. To realize his dream, he decided to make a film himself in his own country. But that was far from easy. Nobody in India at that time had the professional know-how required to make a successful film. No technical equipment was available. Obviously, there was nobody who could handle such equipment expertly. But Dadasaheb was

• extremely ambitious and equally • tenacious. He was a type of person who would not give up an idea easily, once he got it into his head.

### **A trip to England**

Obsessed by the idea of making a film on the life of Krishna, Dadasaheb began to study whatever religious and mythological books on Krishna's life that he could lay his hands on. He read books day and night, impairing his sight at a very young age. But this did not deter him. His enthusiasm only grew further. To bring the story of Krishna on the screen, Phalke decided to acquire the necessary training in the technical aspects of film-making. A long and arduous search throughout the book-shops in Bombay ended in his finding a copy of a manual of film-making called THE ABC OF CINEMATOGRAPHY. Phalke had his first introduction to the art of cinema through this book. But such elementary and theoretical knowledge gained through a book was hardly adequate for his purpose. He was keen on acquiring a working knowledge and technical skill in the making of films. He also wanted to buy equipment. Dadasaheb decided to make a trip to England in order to achieve both these ends. He hardly had any funds to finance a trip to England. He had, therefore, to mortgage his life insurance policy to raise the required money. On February 2, 1912, he left for England and returned after two months with a Williamson Cine Camera, a printing machine and a perforator, and started preparations for producing a film. Dadasaheb knew well that nobody would finance his film until he could convince them that a film could be dependably made in India. He, therefore, decided to produce a short film. He planted beans in a pot and filmed the growth of the plant hour by hour. The result was his short film THE GROWTH OF A PLANT. He showed it to some people and succeeded in creating enough confidence in them to support him financially. With their financial aid, Phalke launched his film-project.

### **RAJA HARISHCHANDRA**

The ~~time~~ Phalke selected for his first film-venture was the mythological story of Raja Harishchandra. He faced a number of difficulties in producing this film. He could find no Indian lady to play the female role of Harishchandra's wife Taramati. Both the stage and screen were tabooed professions in high

society at that time. No educated woman from a good family dared to enter films. Dadasaheb overcame his own inhibitions and turned to the red light districts of the city of Bombay in search of his heroine. He scanned the houses of pleasure at Grant Road and Kande Wadi interviewing the prostitutes in that area. Even the prostitutes seemed to consider films a cheap profession. One of them said, "They will throw me out of the community if I worked in films!" "Ask my master", suggested another. A third one said, "Marry my daughter. Then she will act in your films!" Even these attempts failed, and Dadasaheb found no woman willing to act in a film. As a result, he was forced to ask males to act in the female roles in his film. However, even this proved quite difficult because of certain inhibitions. The first problem was of moustaches. Those who agreed to play the female roles refused to shave their moustaches—on religious grounds! After a lot of persuasion, Phalke succeeded in inducing them to shave off their moustaches. Thus, clearing away a host of exasperating obstacles, the one man who was to be the director, photographer, editor, art-director, as well as the make-up-man—Dadasaheb Phalke—launched his first film. On the road in Bombay now named after him, he set up his own studio in a building called Mathura Bhavan. The film took eight months to complete. The entire shooting was done out-doors in direct sunlight. The palaces, forests and other settings in the film were painted on backdrops as on the stage. The film was 3,700 feet in length. Actor Dabke acted Harishchandra in the film. Taramati was played by Salunke and Rohidas by Dadasaheb's own son—Bhalchandra.

### **A success—in advertising**

On May 17, 1913, Dadasaheb Phalke's first feature film, **RAJA HARISH-CHANDRA**, was premiered at the Coronation Theatre in the Parekh Hospital compound on Sandhurst Road, Bombay. That was the historical day on which the Indian film industry was born. This film ran at the Coronation Theatre for eight weeks. It is said that every showing was accompanied by a running commentary to explain the story. When this film was released it faced severe competition from the theatre—as the stage was extremely popular. Phalke needed all his ingenuity as a pioneer show man to establish films as a source of entertainment. The difficulties he faced were numerous. The film ran well in

Bombay, but outside Bombay, Dadasaheb had to make an all-out effort to make his film a commercial success. In this contest, an incident at Surat is worth mentioning. At Surat, a town in South Gujarat, Dadasaheb exhibited this film in partnership with a Bohra merchant. He set up his own projector and screen in a theatre where normally plays were staged. But the first day's box-office collection was less than three rupees. His partner's confidence was completely shaken. However, Dadasaheb did not show any sign of frustration or discouragement.

The reason why RAJA HARISHCHANDRA failed to draw the crowds in Surat was that the famous Wakaner Theatre Troupe was staging plays in Surat at that time. Phalke faced the problem of making his show a success against this competition. Seeing him engrossed in his search for a solution, the owner of the theatre where the film was shown said to him "Our town (Surat) is commercial to the bone. Everybody here means—and does business. Look at what the Wakaner Theatre people are doing! They charge two annas for six hours of entertainment showing excellent plays! Compared to that, this film of yours is too expensive to see. You charge two annas for only an hour or so of entertainment. If you want to make any money, do as I tell you. Start charging two paise per show. Or, if you insist on charging two annas, make it a longer show?" But Phalke ignored this bit of advice. Instead, he started an unusual advertising campaign for his film. He invented a slogan which was an instant hit—

**"SEE FIFTY THOUSAND PICTURES IN TWO ANNAS! DON'T MISS YOUR CHANCE TO SEE THE WONDERFUL PICTURES WHICH ARE TWO MILES BY THREE QUARTERS OF AN INCH IN SIZE!"**

It worked. In fact, it could not have worked better. RAJA HARISHCHANDRA started drawing full houses. The film that failed to collect even three rupees on the first day started netting more than Rs. 300 per show.

### **The making of documentaries**

RAJA HARISHCHANDRA was the only film Dadasaheb Phalke made in Bombay. He did not think Bombay was a suitable place for film-making thereafter. He shifted from Bombay to Nasik. The first film he made at



Nasik was another mythological BHASMASUR-MOHINI. The film was not very successful. Undaunted by this failure, Dadasaheb sold his wife's ornaments to raise funds for his third venture SATYAWAN-SAVITRI. While he was making these two films, Dadasaheb also turned his attention to the making of documentary films. He made a short documentary film on Ellora Caves. He also made short films on Nasik and Tryambak, the places of pilgrimage. In addition, he produced a documentary film on the subject of the Paisa Fund Glass Factory at Talegaon. Dadasaheb liked to show side-reels with every feature he screened. He believed that a film should be about 9,000 feet in length and accompanied by informative and educative short films. His short films—VICHITRA SHILPA, LAXMICA GALICA, AAGKADYANCHI MOUJ, PITHACHE PANJE, DHOOMRAPANACHYA LEELA, all of 10-minute duration—were very popular. He showed them with the main feature as side-attractions.

### **Earned bouquets abroad**

After producing SATYAWAN-SAVITRI, Phalke made another trip to England. He took with him all three of his full-length films and showed them there. All the three productions were praised. The British journal *Bioscope Cinematograph Weekly* was the most profuse in its praise of Phalke's imaginations, technical skill, and deft filming. A British Company offered to produce Indian films in England in partnership with him. But Dadasaheb Phalke, who wanted the Indian film-industry to develop on its own, rejected this offer. Warner Brothers made a proposal to Phalke offering to show his films in Europe and America on a large scale. They placed an order for 200 prints of his films. Phalke returned to India apparently happy over the deal. But the first World War broke out and the import of raw film was stopped. The trade between England and India was disrupted. Consequently, Phalke could not fulfil the Warner Brothers' order for 200 prints.

### **The phenomenal success of LANKA DAHAN**

After SATYAWAN-SAVITRI, Phalke made the film LANKA DAHAN. This film established a new box-office record. At the Majestic Cinema, Bombay, the film was shown to packed houses in successive shows commencing

at 7-00 a.m. and ending at 3-00 a.m. the next day! As soon as the audience of one show poured out of the exit, those for the next show rushed in through the entrance, and a huge crowd would throng at the box-office waiting for the following show. The film achieved a phenomenal popularity not only in Bombay but throughout the rest of India. The film was so popular in Madras that the daily box-office collection had to be carried in a bullock-cart escorted by armed policemen. This film will have to be distinctly remembered as a milestone in the history of the Indian film industry. For, it was the stupendous success of LANKA DAHAN that dazzled people everywhere into a knowledge of the potential of the film industry. Industrialists were now convinced that there was big money in the films. Many of them voluntarily offered to work in partnership with Dadasaheb Phalke.

### **The Hindustan Film Company**

Dadasaheb produced all the films from the earliest RAJA HARISH-CHANDRA to the big box-office hit LANKA DAHAN under the banner of his own Phalke Film Company. After the dazzling success of LANKA DAHAN, Shri Apte of the Koh-i-noor Mills, Bombay, and four other millionaires offered to become his partners. Dadasaheb welcomed this offer as he needed money for producing bigger films, which he could not yet afford to do with his own rather limited financial resources. Thus, a new company—The Hindustan Film Company—was formed. Dadasaheb controlled 40 per cent of the shares and the five other partners together held the remaining 60 per cent. The studio of the Hindustan Film Company was situated at the Old Bhagoor Darwaza in Nasik. The board on its premises read, "THE HINDUSTAN FILM COMPANY AND WORKS". Dadasaheb's own Phalke Film Company was also situated in the same premises. Today there is no sign of the Phalke Studios in this place except a pool once built by Phalke for filming.

### **~~The first~~ child star**

The first film Phalke made under the banner of the Hindustan Film Company was KRISHNA JANMA (The Birth of Lord Krishna). Thus, a dream which he had cherished since he first saw THE LIFE OF CHRIST came

true. He had not produced the film until then only because he wanted it to be a mighty spectacle and he did not have the necessary capital. He had often postponed his plans for making this film even after acquiring a thorough knowhow in the making of films. But as soon as the Hindustan Film Company was launched with substantial investment and assets, Dadasaheb set out to complete the film he had wanted to make for a long time. KRISHNA JANMA was a great popular success. Following KRISHNA JANMA, Phalke made another film, KALIYA MARDAN, based on an episode in Krishna's life. Dadasaheb's daughter Mandakini acted the young Krishna in this film. She was the first female child-star on the Indian screen. She appeared on the screen only for about 10 minutes but captured the imagination of audiences with her excellent acting. This film too was very much talked about. It ran continuously for ten months, thus setting up a new record.

### **Dadasaheb quits films**

The great success of KRISHNA JANMA and KALIYA MARDAN strengthened the financial foundation of the Hindustan Film Company but, after KALIYA MARDAN, Dadasaheb fell out with his partners over some differences. He relinquished his shares in the Company and started working at a monthly salary of Rs. 1,000 with them. But his quarrels with the owners continued. Disgusted, Dadasaheb decided to quit films. He went on a holy pilgrimage to Kashi (Benares). At this time F. J. Madon, the grand old man of the Bengal Cinema industry, tried to induce Phalke to stage a comeback. He even offered him a blank cheque. But Phalke declined the offer and mincing no words, he told Madon plainly that his decision to quit films was final.

### **A seven-act play**

During this period of a self-imposed absence from the world of films, Phalke started a new venture. He wrote a play called THE STAGE. This play was a satire on the backstage happenings while a play is in progress on the stage. A unique feature of this play was that it was in seven acts. It was too long to be shown on a single evening. Dadasaheb therefore used to stage it in two parts: the first four acts were shown one evening, and the next three

followed the next evening. The play was shown in Bombay, Poona and Nasik. That is perhaps the only play in the whole history of the Marathi theatre that had seven acts and ran for two consecutive days.

### **Phalke's come-back**

Nobody expected Phalke to return to film-making after his determined exit. However, he staged a come-back in 1923. The story of his return is extremely amusing. When Dadasaheb announced his decision to quit films, Achyut Balwant Kolhatkar, the brilliant Marathi journalist, wrote an open letter to him in his paper 'Sandesh' requesting Phalke to come-back to make more films. While he was on his pilgrimage to Kashi, Phalke happened to read this letter. He promptly wrote back to Kolhatkar that Dadasaheb Phalke, the film-maker, was dead. In a scoop in 'Sandesh', Kolhatkar headlined this letter "DADASAHEB PHALKE IS DEAD", and published it prominently. The publication of this letter caused a sensation throughout Maharashtra. Hundreds of his admirers wrote letters to Phalke requesting him to stage a come-back to films. Moved by this, Dadasaheb Phalke returned to films and produced such popular features as SATI MAHANANDA and SETU BANDHAN.

### **His final exit**

SETU BANDHAN was Dadasaheb Phalke's last silent film. It was later sound-synchronized and converted into a talkie. After this film, Dadasaheb went on to produce the talkie GANGAVATARAN for Kolhapur Cinetone. This was his first and last talkie. After producing GANGAVATARAN Dadasaheb Phalke retired from films due to old age. During his life time, Phalke made about 175 films, most of which were based on mythological stories. He also produced a few costume films like VACHANBHANGA. But these are very few in number. The largest share of films produced by Phalke were mythologicals. He made films explaining the significance of almost all Hindu religious festivals and rituals.

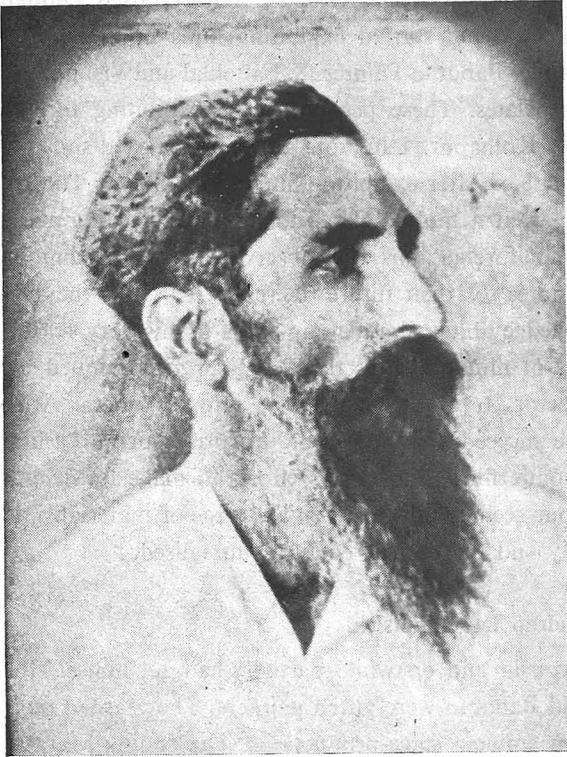
### **The last days of Phalke**

Dadasaheb Phalke earned a fabulous fortune during his life time. But due to his idealism and artistic temperament he spent it all. As a result, he spent the

last years of his life in abject poverty. During his last days, Dadasaheb was, financially helped a great deal by V. Shantaram, who is among the topmost film-makers in India today. In 1939, the Indian film industry celebrated its Silver Jubilee in Bombay. The industry donated a collection of Rs. 5,000 to Dadasaheb Phalke on the occasion. Dadasaheb Phalke died on February 16, 1944, at "THE ASHRAM OF THE FOUNDER OF THE INDIAN CINEMA", his own residence in Nasik, at the age of 74.



### Baburao Painter



**Baburao Painter**

**U**NTIL 1917, DADA-  
SAHEB PHALKE

remained the only professional film-maker in India. The success of his films inspired two cousins from Kolhapur—Baburao and Anandrao Painter—to produce films in their hometown. But it was extremely difficult for them to realise their plans. Conditions at Kolhapur were hardly suitable for making films. Dadasaheb Phalke had been to England to learn cinematography before he launched his own films. He had also brought the necessary equipment from England. The Pain-

ter cousins could not afford this. Having no resources at all, they faced a difficult problem in the way of realising their dream of producing films indigenously in a small town like Kolhapur.

#### **Anandrao makes a camera**

While he was continuously obsessed by the idea of making a film in Kolhapur, Anandrao found a second-hand projector put up for sale in the Null Bazar in Bombay. Seeing the projector, Anandrao hit upon a crazy idea. If a projector

can show a film, he thought, why not use it to shoot one—making some changes in its structure. He made up his mind to purchase the projector for exhibiting films—for a start. But where was the money to buy the projector? Finally, selling gold ornaments belonging to his family, Anandrao raised enough money to purchase the projector and started exhibiting films in the Shivaji Theatre, Kolhapur. At this time, Baburao Painter, S. Fattehlah and Vishnupant Damle were Anandrao's associates. These people started exhibiting foreign films in the Shivaji Theatre, Kolhapur. Later on, they also started showing films made by Dadasaheb Phalke. After exhibiting films at the Shivaji Theatre for some time, the group started a mobile exhibition of films visiting many villages and towns. While seeing foreign films, they observed their film technique in minute detail and made notes for their future reference. This was the only way they could gather knowledge about film-making and for this very reason they had become exhibitors of films. All this time, Anandrao continued his experiments with the projector, trying to convert it into a camera. After a number of experiments, he succeeded in converting his projector into a film camera and made a short comic film. Anandrao's efforts to make full-length professional films in Kolhapur seemed now to be on the verge of materialising. But Anandrao died suddenly and his dream remained unrealised.

### **Baburao realized what Anandrao left unfinished**

But Baburao, Anandrao's cousin and erstwhile partner, had set himself for the task. Both Anandrao and Baburao were gifted painters. They earned their living by painting the sets for eminent stage-productions. The leading Marathi stage-producers of their time—Keshavrao Bhosle, Bal Gandharva and Veerkar—had all agreed to donate them the proceeds of one performance of their plays in every town as a contribution to raise the funds necessary for establishing a film studio in Kolhapur. With the death of Anandrao, all these plans vanished into thin air. The hopes of collecting enough capital for producing films were frustrated. But Baburao did not lose heart. After the death of Anandrao, he started exhibiting films again. He established the Maharashtra Cinema with the help of Baburao Ruikar. Baburao Painter's Maharashtra Cinema was located at a place where the City Post Office in Kolhapur is situated today. Baburao used to screen foreign films and Dadasaheb Phalke's

productions in his theatre. Seeing Phalke's films, Baburao Painter became increasingly eager to launch his own productions. He started looking out for investors. Fortunately the famous Maharashtrian woman singer of the time—Tanibai Kagalkar—gave him a big hand.

### **Maharashtra Film Company is launched**

Receiving financial assistance from Tanibai Kagalkar, Baburao Painter, closed down the Maharashtra Cinema and founded the Maharashtra Film Company. Tanibai Kagalkar had given Rs. 15,000 to Baburao Painter to help him launch the Maharashtra Film Company. Baburao prepared plans to produce his first film, SEETA SWAYAMWAR. The rehearsals started at the Palace Theatre (which is known today as the Keshavrao Bhosle Natya Griha) in Kolhapur. Simultaneously, Baburao worked on perfecting the camera which Anandrao had started building. Like Anandrao, Baburao made his own camera. The wheels started moving rapidly. However, some people instigated the Kolhapur Government to disallow Baburao to continue working in the premises of the Palace Theatre. This was a sudden blow. Baburao shifted the offices and the studio of his Maharashtra Film Company from the Palace Theatre to the Shivaji Theatre in the Mangalwar Peth area of Kolhapur. He built a tin-roofed shed there and set up the studio of the Company. At the same time, Baburao abandoned his plans of producing SEETA SWAYAMWAR and decided to launch a film called SAIRANDHRI. He had good business reasons for doing so. The film was to be a version of the play KEECHAK VADH which had been banned by the British Government. The play had been immensely popular for ten years and people were extremely eager to see it. Baburao Painter decided to cash in to its popularity and therefore decided to launch SAIRANDHRI as his maiden film-venture. The film had the following actors and actresses in its cast: Sardar Balasaheb Yadav as Bheem; Zunzarrao Pawar as Keechak; Gulabbai as Sairandhri and Anasuyabai as Sudeshna. As soon as the cast was finalised, the production started in full swing, in the most enthusiastic and ambitious spirit.

### **Tilak praises the first film**

SAIRANDHRI was completed in 1919, a year after Baburao Painter founded the Maharashtra Film Company and his first film SAIRANDHRI



was released for public exhibitions in the year 1919. Lokmanya Tilak, the great nationalist leader, was the guest of honour at its premiere in the Aryan Cinema, Poona. Tilak was fascinated by the film. When he heard that Baburao had shot it on camera made by himself, he could not believe it. He expressed a desire to see the camera. The camera was brought to Poona and shown to Tilak. Tilak was very much pleased by Baburao's performance and bestowed the title 'Cinema Kesari' (Lion of the Cinema) upon him.

SAIRANDHRI was a film which had many remarkable features. It had a scene showing Bheem slaying Keechak. This scene was so effectively filmed that many women used to faint as they saw it on the screen. Later on, the Government censored this scene, thus starting film-censorship in India. This film also gave the Indian film industry its first two female stars who made films their career. In the early films of Dadasaheb Phalke, men played the female roles. In Phalke's BHASMASUR-MOHINI a woman called Durgabai played the female role. She was the first female star on the Indian scene. Later, in a short film called GOOD NIGHT, produced by Baburao Painter, a woman called Gajrabai made her appearance. But both these actresses disappeared after showing up in these films. However, Baburao Painter's SAIRANDHRI starred Gulabbai and Anasuyabai who continued to appear in films for a long time. Of these, Gulabbai is the lady who blew the trumpet in the famous symbol of the Prabhat Films Company. Later on, she married S. Fattehlah. Anasuyabai retired from films and started working as a nurse in a Municipal Maternity Hospital in Kolhapur. Gulabbai and Anasuyabai had adopted the screen-names Kamaladevi and Susheeladevi respectively. This was perhaps the first Indian instance of film stars adopting attractive screen-names as a publicity gimmick.

### The 'Maharashtra' team

In his Maharashtra Film Company, Baburao Painter was both the Manager and the Director. Tanibai Kagalkar was a partner in this venture and Vinayakrao Ghorpade (who later became known as the father of the child-star Vasanti) represented her interests in the Company. V. Shantaram, Keshavrao Dhaibar, S. Fattehlah and Vishnupant Damle were Assistant Directors working under

Baburao. Nanasaheb Sarpotdar, Narayan Hari Apte and Shivram Washikar were the script-writers. Baburao himself was an excellent scenarist. In the era of silent films, the story of the film was narrated through titles. Marathi novelist N. S. Phadke wrote the titles for the Maharashtra Film Company productions. Baburao Pendharkar, who knew English well, was made the General Manager of the Company on the basis of this qualification. He was also one of its repertoire of actors. Balasaheb Yadav, Zunzarrao Pawar, Gulabbai and Anasuyabai were the Company's leading stars. Baburao Pai and Dadasaheb Torne looked after the Company's distribution office in Bombay. The Company had a most congenial atmosphere and its members worked together in the spirit of a joint family. Nobody was big enough to be a boss, nor was anyone considered a mere servant. Everybody worked hard and was prepared to do any job. The Company's leading female star, Gulabbai, even worked on a lathe when Baburao was building his film camera. Nobody in the company worked for the sake of money. In its early stages, nobody was paid a salary. The only thing the Company could offer its workers then was two square meals a day. Each one of its members worked with fiery zeal to achieve something remarkable. When Baburao began building his tin-roofed shed of a studio, everyone including himself worked with shovels and buckets in their hands. In Baburao's Maharashtra Film Company, everyone was a kind of a student. Each artist wanted to learn something of film-making and this sincere and unrelenting spirit shared by all the members of the Company resulted in the great success of SAIRANDHRI—its very first venture.

### **Fire in the Maharashtra Film Company**

Following SAIRANDHRI, Baburao produced the films VATSALA HARAN, BHAKTA DAMAJI and MARKANDEYA under the banner of the Maharashtra Film Company. Of these, the film MARKANDEYA was unfinished. One afternoon in the year 1920, a fire broke out in the studios of the Maharashtra Film Company destroying all its films. This was a great blow to Baburao's plans of film-production just when they had begun shaping well. All his work was reduced to ashes. The films were destroyed completely. As a result, for a number of days following the fire, the

Maharashtra Film Company stopped functioning. In 1921, Baburao revived it and started work again.

### **The success of SINHAGAD**

In 1921, Baburao made the film SINHAGAD under the banner of the Maharashtra Film Company. This film achieved a record popularity. It ran continuously for 16 weeks in the Novelty Theatre, Bombay. Released during the monsoon, the film drew great crowds even when it rained heavily. The film starred Balasaheb Yadav in the role of the legendary hero from Maratha history—Tanaji, and Zunzarrao Pawar as Udaybhanu. Both these roles were acclaimed by the audience as great feats of acting. Both the stars were honoured at a special reception given at the Novelty Theatre in Bombay. They were felicitated by various local organizations and institutions.

### **The first social film**

After SINHAGAD, Baburao made 15 more films including SAVKARI PASH, GAJA-GAURI, KRISHNAVATAR, SATI PADMINI, SAVITRI, SHAHALA SHAHA, KALYAN KHAJINA, RANA HAMIR, NETAJI PALKAR, MAHARATHI KARNA, BAJIPRABHU DESHPANDE, MURALIWALA and LANKA. All of them were successful. Of these, Baburao's most significant film was SAVKARI PASH. During the era of the silent film, everybody tended to produce films based on mythological and historical stories, which could be understood without the help of the spoken word. In such a situation, Baburao broke new ground by producing SAVKARI PASH—a realistic social film depicting life in rural India. This was the first social film made in India. Its theme was the unscrupulous exploitation of the poor by money lenders. V. Shantaram played an important role in this film. Baburao himself had a go at acting too when he played the role of Shivaji in his film NETAJI PALKAR.

### **Unrest in the Maharashtra Film Company**

The ideal atmosphere of unity and co-operation in the Maharashtra Film Company did not last long. In 1928, the Company hired the services of Moti B. Gidwani (who later directed Dalsukh Pancholi's tremendously popular

film KHAJANCHI) on a very fat salary. Gidwani had received training abroad in the technique of film-making. His predecessors in the Maharashtra Film Company were still working at substantially lower salaries than the new comer. His arrival, therefore, caused unrest among them. All the earlier employees of the Company had worked for it as if it was their own establishment. At that time there were no restrictions on the time of the arrival for and departure from work. The western-oriented Gidwani was a strict disciplinarian. He insisted on everybody adhering to the set schedules. This only increased the unrest created by his arrival on a very high salary. The team began to break up. V. Shantaram, Damle, Fattehlal, Dhaibar and others left the company. In 1930, Baburao himself quit the Maharashtra Film Company.

### **Claimed no share in profits**

When Baburao left the Maharashtra Film Company, the Company owed him not less than Rs. 40,000. However, Baburao did not accept a single penny out of this large sum. On the contrary, when the Company incurred heavy losses later, Baburao, who had nothing to do with them legally, gave them Rs. 10,000 out of his own pocket to help them clear their debts. In the talkie-era, Baburao directed seven talkies. However, he could never really adjust himself to the era of the talkie. He turned his attention to painting and sculpture. Baburao died in Kolhapur on January 16, 1954, at the age of 64. His full name was Baburao Krishnarao Mestri, although he was popularly known as Baburao Painter. Baburao accomplished the gigantic task of developing the cinematic art introduced in India by Dadasaheb Phalke. People affectionately and respectfully referred to Baburao as the KALA MAHARSHI (the artist-sage). Those who have seen his films will fully agree that he fully deserved the title.

## Phalke and Painter

HAVING noted how Phalke founded the Indian cinema and Baburao helped to develop it further, it will be in the fitness of things to evaluate the artistic careers of the two.

### The 'trick' photography of Dadasaheb Phalke

Dadasaheb Phalke was an excellent photographer. He insisted on highly artistic standards in the photography of his film. In the age of the silent movie, the audience hardly paid any attention to the photographic qualities of a film. For them the miracle of moving pictures was the most exciting part of the experience. Although Dadasaheb perhaps knew that his audience was not asking for any photographic values, he never released a film until he was sure it was technically flawless. Flawless filming, and nothing less than that, was Dadasaheb's own criterion of success—whether the audience cared or not. Even when others praised a film made by him, Dadasaheb ruthlessly rejected the defectively shot portions and retook them until he was perfectly satisfied with the results. Dadasaheb continuously experimented with photography. 'Trick' photography was his forte. The audience would not believe their own eyes when in Phalke's GANGAVATARAN, they saw the head of a decapitated man singing a song. Phalke achieved his effects without any of the modern accessories and equipment that are used for filming such 'trick' scenes. It is said that his astounding trick effects have not yet been surpassed. Dadasaheb Phalke filmed his trick scenes with the help of only black and white screens. Even in his trick scenes, Dadasaheb Phalke maintained his artistic sense of photographic composition. An incident connected with the film DAMAJI illustrates this point.

In the film DAMAJI, there is a scene in which a leaf from Saint Damaji's book separates by itself from the book and falls away. Then, a letter flies in and settles on the book where the separated leaf had been. Dadasaheb shot this himself and then asked his assistant to shoot the latter part of the sequence which showed separated page flying back and falling in place on the book. The assistant shot the sequence and Dadasaheb saw it on the screen. His

comment was significant. He said to his assistant, "What you have done is technically correct but it is not artistic. In your shot the page of the book comes back straight to its original place and settles there. Now a page is made of lifeless paper. You should have thought of how a piece of paper would circle in the air before it settles down again. In fact, you could have shown its various movements in mid-air. Dadasaheb reshot the same sequence himself and showed his assistant what could be done with the idea. In SETU BANDHAN Dadasaheb showed a miracle shot in which the head of a demon is chopped off, flies up in the air and falls back in place on his shoulders.

In his short film AAGKADYANCHI MOUJ (fun with matchsticks), he showed a sealed package containing boxes of matches arriving on the screen. The package opens automatically, its boxwood panels falling away by themselves. Then, smaller cartons containing a dozen boxes of matches each come out of the package by themselves. The cartons burst open and boxes of matches slide out. These boxes are lifted up in the air and opened. Matchsticks pour out of them to form a heap. The empty boxes of matches form a toy train which runs away across the screen. Then the matchsticks arrange themselves into kaleidoscopically changing patterns on the screen. When Dadasaheb's audience used to see this delightful little visual miracle on the screen, they used to be wonder-struck. In another short film called LAXMICHHA GALICHA (the magic carpet of money), Dadasaheb showed coins of various denominations showering out of a bag. The screen is filled with a heap of coins of various denominations. Then the coins are shown to form a decorative carpet.

### **Baburao changes the concept of a film**

Dadasaheb Phalke's imagination and photographic skill were no doubt praiseworthy. But Baburao Painter's contribution is even greater. Dadasaheb studied cinematography abroad. Baburao had no formal training whatsoever. He built his own camera in his native Kolhapur. Although he was a painter he was very much interested in mechanism. That is how he succeeded in building his own camera. He took the greatest care to produce photographically flawless films. He made a study of the effects of various colours in the objects on the black and white films. He was the first to use coloured screens and clothes

with a precise knowledge of how they would look in the final print of the film. To achieve realistic effects, he started painting the sets with red and yellow earth. This practice is still followed by Indian film-makers. In those days, the night-sky in a film used to look dead white. Baburao made his night-shots more effective by his use of ordinary tinted glass as (primitive) filters. Phalke shot his films invariably in direct sunlight. Therefore, in his time, it was impossible to film anything as long as the weather was cloudy and the sky overcast. Baburao was the first in India to start indoor filming with artificial lighting. He used electric lights to shoot indoors. The first film to be shot with artificial lighting was his *SINHAGAD*. Baburao was also the first in India to use mixing and fade-out and fade-in techniques to join one sequence with another. He did this for the first time in his film *LANKA*. With relentless research and experimentation, Baburao was able to give a new angle to filming techniques. The film was duly transformed and became more popular due to the results he achieved. Baburao's films started a new public craze for films. It is said that Maharaja Sayajirao Gaekwar of Baroda specially invited Baburao to screen his films in his palace. This will help to illustrate the immense popularity Baburao's films had achieved in those days.

### **Dadasaheb's emphasis on outdoor shooting**

It was Baburao again who was the first Indian to erect sets. Dadasaheb only used painted backdrops such as those used on the stage. But Baburao brought a more convincing realism to the screen by using three dimensional sets. Later, Dadasaheb followed suit. However, Dadasaheb always preferred natural settings to artificial ones erected in the studios. He placed emphasis on outdoor shooting. Even when he used artificial settings, he used them in the open. His love of natural scenery is revealed in a very amusing incident. Dadasaheb was in Kolhapur for filming *GANGAVATARAN*. There was a scene in the film which showed the snow-clad Himalayas. How to bring the famous mountain-range into Kolhapur was Dadasaheb's problem. He would have preferred to shoot the scene on location in Himalayas if he could afford it. But that would have involved a fabulous expenditure. However, Dadasaheb could not reconcile to the idea of studio-made 'Indoor Himalayas'. He made a compromise. He decided to paint the Ramalinga Hill near Kolhapur

and turn it into the Himalayas. Everybody laughed at this crazy idea, but Dadasaheb would not give it up. Finally, the Ramalinga Hill was bathed white in mortar. It looked a rather poor Himalayan imitation. In fact it was more like a sheep showing itself out of the lion's skin. The next day, Dadasaheb's team went to the Ramalinga Hill to film the Himalayas. But a sad thing had happened overnight. It had rained all over the hill and the Himalayas were washed out and stripped off their imitation snow. The whole idea was thus completely washed out. The reluctant Dadasaheb was forced to shoot the scene indoors with artificial settings. This incident amply illustrates Dadasaheb's reliance on outdoor shooting which, at times, proved absurd. After RAJA HARISHCHANDRA Dadasaheb shifted his studio from the city of Bombay to Nasik because Nasik offered better location for outdoor shooting. His films were mainly based on mythological subjects. Since Nasik is a place of religious pilgrimage abounding in historical relics, Dadasaheb chose Nasik as his headquarters. There is not a single relic in Nasik and the nearby Tryambak, which Dadasaheb did not make use of in his films.

### **Baburao's settings**

Baburao also did a lot of outdoor shooting. However his artificial settings in their life-like excellence were the greatest attraction in his films. People crowded his studios to get a glimpse of his settings. Baburao often used painted backdrops to produce astounding life-like effects. His settings gave a sense of natural depth. The famous film-maker Devaki Bose of the New Theatres was amazed to learn that a particular shot in one of Baburao's films was actually shot indoors. Later, Devaki Bose visited Kolhapur for some outdoor shooting. He was very keen on seeing those incredible settings with his own eyes. Baburao showed him a huge screen on which the scene was painted. Bose was incredulous and he refused to believe it was the same thing as he had seen on the screen. In fact, he frankly said to Baburao that he did not believe it to be the same scene. Baburao requested Devakibabu to have a look at it through the camera. Devakibabu had a look and he saw the painted scene miraculously transformed into a natural landscape. Through the camera it seemed to have gained the life it lacked. Devakibabu was now amazed at the intelligent craftsmanship of Baburao. Baburao's experience as a painter was thus a great asset to his films.



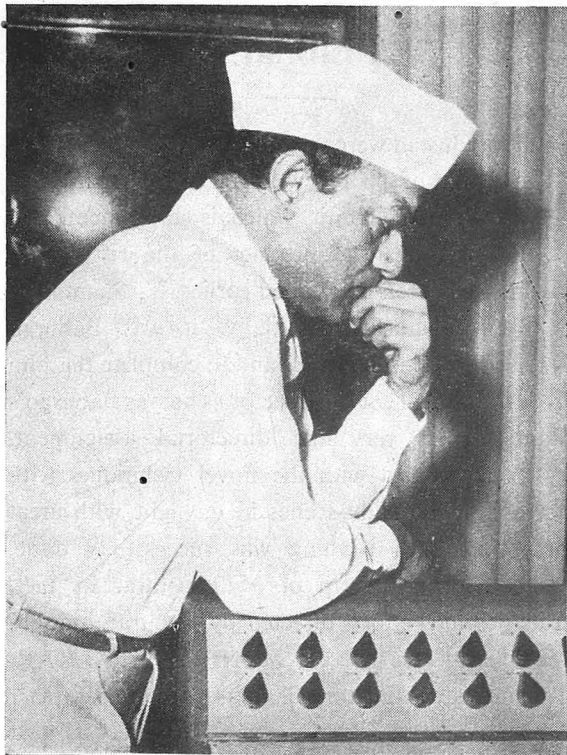
## **Much before Satyajit Ray**

The internationally famous contemporary Bengali film-director Satyajit Ray is a graphic artist by training. Before filming a scene, Satyajit Ray makes a sketch of the basic visual composition he wants to film in motion. This gives him a precise idea of the entire composition and its individual visual elements and helps him to determine the precise effect of every shot before it is made. Today, everybody praises this technique Ray uses so effectively. But few really know that this well-known 'Ray-method' was used by Baburao Painter in the days of the silent movie. People can hardly be expected to know this interesting and significant fact as publicity methods and media were hardly used in those days to inform the public of what the film-maker did behind the screen. Baburao not only sketched the visuals of each shot in his films but also sketched out visuals to determine the costumes his characters would wear. The costumes were made according to the designs specified by Baburao.

## **Baburao's posters**

Baburao was also the first to advertise his films through posters. He made his first posters for a publicity-campaign for his film VATSALA HARAN. His posters were popular attractions in his time. Many accomplished artists advised Baburao not to waste his excellent graphic art "on the dirty walls of buildings". "Exhibit them in an art gallery", they used to tell him. It was Baburao again who started issuing programme-folders in major languages to give details of his films to the audience. He used to give the gist of the plot in the booklets which contained attractive photographs. Baburao also started decorating cinema-houses to attract audiences. He used a variety of advertising and publicity methods to make his films popular.

Baburao's Maharashtra Film Company created a great tradition. One can cite several names including V. Shantaram, Vishnupant Damle, S. Fattehlah, Keshav Dhaibar and Vishnupant Oundhkar. All these were products of the Maharashtra Film Company school. Dadasaheb Phalke's Hindustan Film Company failed to create such a tradition. This does not, however, mean that Phalke did not train people who worked under him. He trained his assistants well. Some of them even became experts in their own departments of work. But due to the narrow, commercial outlook and policies of the Hindustan Film



V. Shantaram

Company, Phalke's disciples could never come into the limelight. The Maharashtra Film Company used to mention every one of its artistes in the credit-titles. Thus, they became known to the audience. The Hindustan Film Company was not so liberal in this respect. They felt, if the artistes became too well-known their prices would go up. This is the reason why most of the people who worked under Phalke's guidance remained unknown and were forgotten. Only a few like Marutao Pailwan, Bhaurao Datar and Vasant Shinde, who left

Hindustan, became famous later. Baburao's Maharashtra Film Company created a great tradition which gave us eminent artistes, producers and directors like V. Shantaram, S. Fattehlah, Vishnupant Damle, Keshavrao Dhaibar, Baburao Pendharkar, Balasaheb Yadav, Ganpat Bakre and Zunzarrao Pawar. Many of the later film companies descended from the original Maharashtra Film Company unit, and made a great contribution to the development of the cinema in Maharashtra. The Hindustan Film Company produced no such continuous tradition. The only film producing unit that claimed a direct descent from Hindustan was Godavari Cinetone which was extremely short-lived.

### ‘Prabhat’ is founded

UNTIL 1928, Maharashtra and Hindustan were the only major film producers in Maharashtra. In 1929, a group of people who left the Maharashtra Film Company established the great ‘Prabhat’ unit, which is still remembered for its glorious achievement. Prabhat was the product of the rift in the Maharashtra Film Company, which has been mentioned earlier. V. Shantaram directed NETAJI PALKER for Maharashtra. Initially, it was Baburao Painter who was directing this film. However, he fell ill and to complete the film on schedule Shantaram was assigned the role of the director as he was Baburao’s foremost disciple and assistant. In his very first directorial assignment, Shantaram showed his ability to experiment with the novel techniques with a great measure of success. He shot the night-scenes in daylight with great affectiveness. This was the first time such a thing was successfully done. NETAJI PALKAR added a feather in the cap of Maharashtra. In fact, it became more popular than its previous efforts directed by Baburao himself. Shantaram’s confidence increased with the success of NETAJI PALKAR. But even after his successful debut as a Director, Shantaram got no further directorial assignment from the Maharashtra Film Company. To direct its next film, the Maharashtra Film Company invited a Bombay director. This hurt Shantaram’s pride and he started thinking of launching out on his own. At that time, his closest friend in Maharashtra unit was Keshavrao Dhaibar. The two began to give a serious thought to the idea. Once they spoke about it to S. Fattehlal. Fattehlal and Vishnupant Damle were also fed up with the atmosphere in the Maharashtra Film Company. They had been thinking along the same lines as the other three and had, in fact, even purchased a camera out of the savings they had laid aside. When they heard what Shantaram had to say, they suggested a joint enterprise. Shantaram, Dhaibar and Damle agreed to this suggestion. The plan was created. But the capital was their chief problem. All this was decided while Baburao Painter was filming LANKA for Maharashtra.

## The arrival of talkies

WITH the release of the first talkie in India, Imperial Film Company's ALAMARA in Bombay in 1931, the Prabhat Film Company also felt that it was imperative for it to enter the race. But the main difficulty was of capital which was not easy for it to raise. The company, however, encouraged by the box office success of CHANDRASENA decided to embark upon the project of producing talkies. The news of this project spread fast and soon from all corners of the country it received requests for advance booking of the film whose title was yet to be decided upon. Such was the high prestige which Prabhat enjoyed. The response from cinema house owners boosted their confidence and the project was finalised.

### AYODHYECHA RAJA

It was decided that AYODHYECHA RAJA whose story was written by N. V. Kulkarni should be the first talkie of the Prabhat. As the company could not afford to purchase the costly R.C.A. equipment it had to buy the 'Audiochemicals' equipment. In the absence of trained technicians Vishnupant Damle took upon himself the task of operating the equipment. The name of Durga Khote was proposed for the role of Taramati. She had already starred in one of the Mohan Bhavnani's films. But for securing her services for their film Shantaram and G. Tembe had to persuade Lad, father of Durga Khote, to allow her to appear in the film AYODHYECHA RAJA. A college student Gole by name was first selected for the role of Harishchandra. But as he could not act freely when face to face with Durga Khote, Govindrao Tembe had to be coaxed to play the role of Harishchandra. They even told him a lie that it was Durga Khote who wanted him to play opposite her. Baburao Pendharkar was selected for the role of Ganganath Mahajan and Master Vinayak who left his teacher's job in Kolhapur to join films, played the role of Narad.

### Voice test

Thus the preparations for the first talkie of Prabhat started with great enthusiasm. The studio which was situated in Mangalwar Peth in Kolhapur



**Govindrao Tembe**

was shifted to Tarabai Park in the premises of Tanibai Kagalkar. The first voice test of Durga Khote and Master Vinayak taken by Vishnupant Damle who was an apprentice of the art at that time was a great success, which boosted the self-confidence of Prabhat's management. Thus the filming of **AYODHYECHA RAJA** was marked by a note of enthusiasm and hopefulness.

### **Defect in the projector**

The first scene in which Harishchandra was shown crossing the river 'Sharayu' was shot at Nrisinhawadi. But at the time of the trial of the

first prints of the shooting there was no sound at all. The film was checked again. The sound tracks were there to be seen clearly. So it was concluded that the projector was defective and only when this defect was finally removed that the film became alive. The management heaved a sigh of relief.

### **Ornaments sold**

The shooting of the film continued for the following few days and many important scenes were filmed. But at the time of editing there would be no synchronization between the movement of the lips of the actors and the

dialogues. Many efforts were made to remove this defect, but to no effect. There was no alternative but to cancel the whole shooting because the management was keen on making their new venture as perfect as possible. So the film so far shot was cancelled and in order to make up the loss all the partners of Prabhat sold the gold ornaments in their houses for raising fresh capital. After this the whole machinery was checked again and the defect was set right. The filming of the picture was continued with renewed vigour and finally the film was completed. A special show was arranged for members of the film industry and V.I.P.s in Kolhapur. But at the time of the screening the film would not talk. Consequently the show had to be stopped. Vishnupant Damle strove hard for the whole night and discovered the defect. Now the film AYODHYECHA RAJA started talking. A special show was again arranged on the following day. The spectators were astonished to see the first talkie which was directed by V. Shantaram. Its photography was by K. Dhaibar and the art director was S. Fattehlah. Vishnupant Damle was in-charge of recording. Is it not a unique coincidence that the stories of RAJA HARISHCHANDRA, the first Indian film produced in 1913 and AYODHYECHA RAJA, the first talkie produced in 1932, should be the same? AYODHYECHA RAJA, which followed ALAMARA, the first Indian talkie, outshone its predecessor by running for 14 weeks when ALAMARA had only a seven-week run at Majestic in Bombay.

In Kolhapur the film attained good popularity and people from distant villages would come down in bullock-carts to see it. 'The Krishna Film Company' of Bombay and 'Madan Theatres' of Calcutta also produced films on the same theme at that time. But they could not compete with AYODHYECHA RAJA which is an indication of its superiority.

The Marathi film industry made marked progress as a result of the production of AYODHYECHA RAJA which can rightly be said to be the first Marathi talkie though some are prone to give the credit to SANT SAKHU produced by Bharat Movietone, but no proof of its exhibition is available anywhere.

## **Marathi films (1932-1936)**

**A**YODHYECHA RAJA ushered in a new era in Marathi filmdom. It would be interesting to note here that the Marathi word बोलवट for talkie was coined and suggested by Veer Savarkar. The filming of AYODHYECHA RAJA in 1932 created a sensation. It gave an impetus to the production of talkies and there was a total of seven talkies in 1932 including AYODHYECHA RAJA. The year 1933 also saw seven Marathi talkies coming to the screen. In 1934 eleven talkies were produced and in 1935-1936, nine and six respectively.

### **The influence of the theatre on the films**

The talkies now brought the future of Marathi stage in danger. Many dramatic companies converted their institutions into film companies, for instance Master Dinanath Mangeshkar of 'Balvant Natak Company' changed his company's name into 'Balvant Pictures' and produced the film KRISHNARJUN YUDDHA which was directed by Vishram Bedekar. M. G. Rangnekar wrote the story of SUVARNA MANDIR for 'Menaka Pictures' and directed it. Dada Athavale produced JAI VITTHAL based on the popular drama SANT TUKARAM for Master and Company. He also produced one more film by name TUKARAM. Durga Kelekar (now Jyotsna Bhole) made her debut through the film SANT SAKHU of Bharat Movietone. Stage actors now appeared on the screen. But they were not so effective.

### **MAYA MACHHINDRA**

While films based on plays and produced by dramatic companies were proving failures, the 'Prabhat' produced the film MAYA MACHHINDRA which was based on the popular play SIDDHA SAUNSAR. It was a great success. The reason was that the 'Prabhat' had learnt the secret of the film technique which others had failed to do. They could not get rid of the fixed notions about producing plays which they applied to the films. Prabhat's MAYA MACHHINDRA was made in a different way and hence its popularity. Prabhat's AGNIKANKAN too won popular acclaim.

## **SHYAMSUNDER**

After AYODHYECHA RAJA, SHYAMSUNDER ran for 27 weeks at the West End Cinema. This film, produced by Dadasaheb Torne and directed by Bhalji Pendharkar, was the first to celebrate Silver Jubilee in India. This picture gave Shanta Apte and Shahu Modak to the Marathi film. Shahu Modak was a discovery of Bhalji Pendharkar. Shahu Modak's first role was that of Lord Krishna. Shyamsunder's success also gave a boost to Bhalji Pendharkar as director.

### **First double role**

The Saraswati Cinetone produced AUT GHATKECHA RAJA after SHYAMSUNDER. M. G. Rangnekar had written the scenario from Mark Twain's story 'The Prince and the Pauper' and Shahu Modak had played a double role in it which was the first in Marathi films. Master Vitthal, the popular actor of silent film, had directed this picture which was well received by the public. It was followed by BHAKTA PRAHLAD and THAKSEN RAJPUTRA. Dadasaheb Torne had himself directed the latter. Master Vitthal had played the leading role with Netra Bandekar opposite him. This picture too proved popular.

### **Balasaheb Yadav becomes Producer-Director**

In 1932 Baburao Painter presented the film MARATHYANCHI DUHI produced in the 'Chhatrapati Cinetone Studio'. Balasaheb Yadav who was a past-master in shooting war scenes in historical pictures played the leading role in this film which he himself directed. After this he produced the mythological KURUKSHETRA. In both these films amazing war scenes conceived by Balasaheb were seen. But as these scenes were not so imaginatively filmed as Baburao Painter used to do they did not prove so effective as those in Maharashtra Film Company's historicals of silent days.

### **Prabhat's SINHAGAD**

The historical SINHAGAD directed by V. Shantaram for Prabhat proved to be a far better film in those days. Shankarrao Bhosle had played the role of Tanaji in it. He also played the double role of Tanaji and Suryaji. He even



made an actual fight in it with a bear. Although he did not have any knowledge of singing, he sang a Powada in it after practising it for three months. Many still remember his Tanaji nostalgically. Baburao Pendharkar's Uday Bhanu was also unforgettable. This was the first picture whose story was based on a novel. This novel was written by Hari Narayan Apte. A topical of poetry singing by leading poets of Maharashtra was shown along with SINHAGAD. A scene in this film in which Tanaji and Shelar Mama were shown whispering with each other had to be deleted because the spectators could not appreciate the touch of direction introduced by V. Shantaram for effect and in which the faces of Tanaji and Shelar Mama were lit up in the light of torches and were in the dark when the soldiers carrying the torches passed away. The spectators shouted 'light, light' when there would be comparative dark on the screen thinking that something was wrong with the projector.

### **SAIRANDHRI in colour**

After the unprecedented success of AYODHYECHA RAJA and other films V. Shantaram produced the film SAIRANDHRI and decided to make it the first coloured film in India for which he took the prints to Germany. But the colouring was not done properly and the experiment failed. The colours were very gaudy. As a result of the failure of this experiment, the 'Prabhat' had to suffer tremendous financial loss.

### **Prabhat shifts to Poona**

Even while SAIRANDHRI was being filmed the Prabhat was thinking of shifting from Kolhapur. They had a small township in mind as a studio which was gradually expanding. Kolhapur was an inconvenient place from the point of view of availability of necessary equipment and other factors. The company was, of course, given all kind of help by the then princely State of Kolhapur. But there was no saying when there would be interference. So plans to shift to Poona were finalised and a site costing Rs. 15,000 was purchased from Sardar Natu of Poona. As a result of further expansion the company found this site too inadequate. It therefore purchased an equally big plot of land for three times the price because owing to the presence of Prabhat Studio the prices of lands had shot up. Thus Prabhat shifted from Kolhapur to Poona. At Kolhapur it had produced six silent films and five talkies.

## AMRIT MANTHAN

The 'Prabhat' now started making efforts to make good the loss suffered on account of SAIRANDHRI. Keshavrao Date and Keshavrao Bhole had by this time joined the company. All plans to film AMRIT MANTHAN in a new technique were now ready. AMRIT MANTHAN can be said to be the first film to be completely free from the influence of the stage. Zoom shots were seen in this film for the first time. There were very effective close-ups too; specially of Raj Guru's eyes. It was the story of a Raj Guru who cut off his own head to offer it as sacrifice at the altar of the Goddess. This scene was very impressive. Keshavrao Bhole who was the music director had made use of a big orchestra and had given quite imaginative background music. The picture gave a real boost to Shanta Apte and gave a new actress to the film industry in the person of Nalini Tarkhad. Chandramohan, who was later to become popular in Hindi films, made his debut in this film. Incidentally, this was the first Hindi picture which celebrated its silver jubilee and ran for 29 weeks at a stretch.

This film also introduced a new technique of advertising in film industry. There would, for instance, be a horoscope of the film in the advertisement and there would be a prediction that the film would run for so many weeks. This novel technique proved a sensation at the time.

AMRIT MANTHAN which came on the screen in 1934 was followed by CHANDRASENA and DHARMATMA in 1935. Imposing sets was the attraction of CHANDRASENA. Thousands of rupees were spent on these sets which were indeed realistic. Nalini Tarkhad played the leading female role in this film whose story was based on the well-known Ramayan story of Ahi and Mahi, the two demons who had an underwater kingdom.

### Bal Gandharva on the screen

'Prabhat' made the experiment of bringing on the screen the well-known Marathi actor Bal Gandharva who had earned popularity for his feminine roles. This was indeed a difficult task. But the 'Prabhat' decided to embark on the venture. Considering his liking for Bhajans and his facial lines, a story

based on the life of Saint Eknath was chosen. K. Narayan Kale wrote the scenario. The title of the film in the beginning was MAHATMA, but as the Censor Board objected to it, it was changed to DHARMATMA. The film was acclaimed by the public mainly because of the very brilliant portrayal of an untouchable girl by the child-actress Vasanti who was the first child-actress of the talkies. Master Krishnarao was in-charge of the music. He was assigned the job on the insistence of Bal Gandharva at that time although the Prabhat's management was already thinking of employing him. Khan Sahib Tirakhwa's tabla was another feature of this film. Besides Bal Gandharva, Ratnaprabha and Noorjahan also played important roles in it.



**Bal Gandharva**

### **Kolhapur Cinetone**

With the exit of 'Prabhat' from Kolhapur, the film industry there was virtually orphaned. So the Maharaja of Kolhapur came to the rescue and Kolhapur Cinetone was founded with the help of Baburao Pendharkar, Bhalji Pendharkar and Master Vinayak. Major Dadasaheb Nimbalkar was the Managing Director. Its first film was AKASHWANI directed by Bhalji Pendharkar and with

stellar roles of Miss Leela, Master Vinayak, Nanasaheb Phatak and Baburao Pendharkar.

### Three cartoons

The cartoon BAKAMBHAT produced by Ganpatrao Bhosle was released with AKASHWANI. It will be recalled that the cartoon JAMBUKAKA was produced by 'Prabhat' before this and was shown with the film AMRIT MANTHAN. Even before these two cartoons Messrs. Ketkar and Raosahib Oak had produced a cartoon entitled TISMARKHAN. Barring these instances there was no attempt to make cartoons in Maharashtra.

KALIYA MARDAN based on the life of Lord Krishna was the second film of Kolhapur Cinetone. It proved a box-office draw. Meanwhile Bhalji Pendharkar left Kolhapur Cinetone and started 'Shyam Cinetone' with the co-operation of Abasaheb Chavan and Chinchlikar. Finally, he left Shyam Cinetone also.

### First film with a social theme

VILASI ISHWAR produced by Kolhapur Cinetone was the first social film in Maharashtra. Even a leading film company like Prabhat had not dared to produce a social film. The story of VILASI ISHWAR was written by the well-known Marathi writer Mama Varerkar. It was not much of a success but to it goes the credit of being the first social film of Maharashtra. It gave to Maharashtra a brilliant director in the person of Master Vinayak. Shobhana Shilotri who was the leading lady of this film later became a very popular star of Hindi films. Other important roles of this film were of Baburao Pendharkar, Vinayak and Indira Wadkar. However, Baburao Pendharkar and Master Vinayak soon left Kolhapur Cinetone as they felt that they could not give free scope to their talent so long as the company was under the patronage of the princely ruler.

### SAVKARI PASH

While VILASI ISHWAR and CHHAYA introduced in Maharashtra an era of social pictures, the great veteran Baburao Painter turned his SAVKARI

PASH into a talkie, Vishnupant Aundhkar wrote the scenario and dialogues and played the role of the wicked money-lender. Zunzarrao Pawar played the same role which he had played in the silent version and Chandrakant Mandre played the role of a young peasant. It was his first role in the film. Raja Paranjape had also played a small role in it. SAVKARI PASH was indeed the first realistic social film with a rural setting. It is said that so effective a social film has yet to be produced. Even Pandit Nehru was greatly impressed after seeing this film which he praised without any reservations.

### ‘Shalini Cinetone’

Baburao Painter had produced SAVKARI PASH for ‘Shalini Cinetone’ which was started by Shrimant Abasahib Maharaj. USHA whose feature was imposing sets was the first production of ‘Shalini Cinetone’. USHA was followed by ASIRE HAVIS and RAJMUKUT, the former in Urdu and the latter in Hindi. ASIRE HAVIS was directed by Pandit Shivkumar and RAJMUKUT by Govindrao Tembe. But all these three films proved flops. Only SAVKARI PASH proved a box-office hit.

### Vishram Bedekar—the pioneer of Marathi comedies

While Vinayak, Baburao Pendharkar, Baburao Painter, etc. were busy making social films a new star rose on the horizon of Marathi film industry. His name was Vishram Bedekar. He started the new age of comedies in Maharashtra. Dadasaheb Phalke had, of course, made some shorts like the English THREE STOOGES. But no one had made a full length film of this kind. Bedekar made the two comedies SATYACHE PRAYOG and THAKICHE LAGNA. The story of the former was by C. V. Joshi and of the latter by the late Ram Ganesh Gadkari. The scenarios and dialogues were written by Acharya Atre. Incidentally THAKICHE LAGNA was the first film of Damuanna Malvankar who was later to become a popular comedian. However, both the films proved failures because technically they were pedestrians. Besides no one appreciated a comic film in those days and as such they proved flops.

Many Hindi producers like Ardesir Irani entered the field of Marathi film production. He made RUKMINI HARAN and DEVAKI in co-operation with Nanasaheb Sarpotdar of ‘Aryan Film Company’. Nanubhai Vakil made

the film **NAND KE LAL** for **Māhalaxmi Cinetone** with **Zubeda** and **Shahu Modak**. **Nagendra Muzumdar** made **SHAKAKARTA SHIVAJI** under the banner of 'Jay Devi Cinetone'. The **Omkar Film Studio** of **Sholapur** made the Hindi film **SHYAM** which was a flop. Thereafter no film was produced in **Sholapur**.

**Saraswati Cinetone** invited **Parshwanath Altekar**, associated with 'Natya Manvantar', for directing the film **CHHATRAPATI SAMBHAJI**, whose title role was played by **Master Vitthal**. **Dadasaheb Salvi** played the role of **Kabji Kalusha** but the film was not well received. However, **SAVITRI** which followed became immensely popular.

**SANT TULSIDAS** (**Digvir Cinetone**) and **NEELA** (**Veena Pictures**) were the other films that were produced during this period. But they were not acclaimed by the film fans. The total number of films during 1932-1936 was 40. 'Prabhat' produced during this period one film in **Tamil** language and two **Hindi**, viz. **RAJPUT RAMANI** and **AMAR JYOTI**; **Kolhapur Cinetone** produced the three **Hindi** pictures **BHIKARIN**, **HIND MAHILA** and **HONHAR**; **Shalini Cinetone** produced two films **ASIRE HAVIS** and **RAJMUKUT**. Mythologicals and historicals seem to dominate this period. 'Prabhat' gave a new angle to the film technique and **Baburao Painter**, **Master Vinayak**, **Baburao Pendharkar** pulled the **Marathi** films out of the morass of mythologicals and showed them a new path.

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### Marathi films (1937-1941)

THE Marathi film producers adapted themselves well to the new path shown by Master Vinayak, Vishram Bedekar, etc. During the five years between 1937 to 1941 the number of social and comic films was 24. A film company like Prabhat too turned to the creation of social films. This, however, did not mean that the film-fans had lost interest in mythologicals and historical creations.

#### **SANT TUKARAM and SANT DNYANESHWAR**

Prabhat's SANT TUKARAM and SANT DNYANESHWAR which made history were produced during this period. Of these SANT TUKARAM broke the record of popularity. Initially many were doubtful about its success because the magic name of V. Shantaram was not associated with it. It was directed by the Damle-Fattehlal pair and all the artistes were new. Thus every side of this film was handled by new-comers. But this film proved an epoch-making creation. It suddenly shot into prominence many an artiste. The photograph of Vishnupant Pagnis as Tukaram can still be seen in many homes. The reason is that he had become one with that role in the true sense. He has left such a deep impress on this role that no one who plays the role now can wipe out the Pagnis touch. The film TUKARAM immortalised Pagnis. Similarly a new actress Gauri came into prominence owing to this film. Gauri who was an obscure member of the Prabhat staff and an illiterate one at that, suddenly sky-rocketed to fame as a result of her consummate portrayal of a virago that was Tukaram's wife. Another role that became memorable was that of Salo Malo, which was played so realistically by Bhagwat.

After the unique success of TUKARAM, Prabhat came out with two other films on saints, viz. SANT DNYANESHWAR and SANT SAKHU both of which were well acclaimed by the public. The trick scene of the flying wall was the special feature of SANT DNYANESHWAR in which Sumati Gupte made her debut. Shahu Modak played the role of Dnyaneshwar so consummately that it brought about changes in him of a far-reaching nature



Gauri in SANT TUKARAM



leading to self-awakening. The popular director Datta Dharmadhikari played the role of Sopandev in this film. The title role of the film **SANT SAKHU** was played by Hansa Wadkar which was well acclaimed by the public. No one would have predicted at that time that she would later shine in Tamasha films. Such was the identification of this role with her. It is on account of this realistic portrayal of hers in **SANT SAKHU** that she was not given the flippant role of a young college girl in Prabhat's next film **DAHA VAJATA**.

### **Other films based on saints' lives**

After the success of **SANT TUKARAM** there was a wave of pictures of saints in Maharashtra. The Ranjit Film Company produced **SANT TULSIDAS** with Vishnupant Pagnis in the title role. This was the only Marathi film in which the popular Maharashtrian comedian Dixit had starred. **SANT JANABAI** (Ravindra Pictures), **BHAKTA DAMAJI** (Prince Shivaji Movietone), **CHOKHAMELA** (Mohan Pictures), **AYODHYECHI RANI** (Pragati Chitra), **DEVYANI** (Saraswati Cinetone) were the other films on saints and mythologicals that came on the screen during this period. But none of them could attain the popularity of Prabhat's films on the lives of saints.

### **Bal Gandharva on the screen again**

Producer Baburao Ruikar embarked during this period upon the adventure of bringing Bal Gandharva on the screen in a woman's role. The film was **SANT MEERABAI** based on the popular play **AMRUTSIDDH**i by Vasant Shantaram Desai; but this bold experiment failed. Baburao Painter who had directed the film had not liked the idea of making Bal Gandharva appear in a woman's role. But he had to submit to the pressure of his friend Baburao Ruikar with disastrous consequences. The popular stage actor Baburao Pendharkar also started a cinema film company and produced a film **VIJAYACHI LAGNE** directed by Mama Varerkar and with Hansa Wadkar as the leading lady.

### **Dadasaheb Phalke's first and last talkie**

**GANGAVATARAN**, the first and last talkie directed by the father of the Indian cinema, came on the screen during this period. The Kolhapur Cinetone which had produced the Hindi films, **BHIKARIN**, **HIND MAHILA** and **HONHAR**, after the Marathi film **VILASI ISHWAR** invited Dadasaheb

Phalke to direct the film GANGAVATARAN. Trick photography was Phalke's forte and GANGAVATARAN had lots of it. N. H. Apte had written the scenario and dialogues of this film.

Owing to the mismanagement of the 'Kolhapur Cinetone' which was patronised by the Kolhapur ruler the film company had to be closed. It was a pity that the State patronage was not properly utilised for the progress of the film industry in Kolhapur. 'Shalini Cinetone' too followed suit. This film company produced the two films KANHOPATRA and PRATIBHA. Londhe's songs was the special feature of the former directed by Bhalji Pendharkar. The roles of Durga Khote, Keshavrao Date, Nanasaheb Phatak was the attraction of the latter. Raja Paranjape and Jog appeared on the screen for the first time in this film. Another noteworthy aspect of PRATIBHA was the artistic sets and delightful dresses. KANHOPATRA had a good run. PRATIBHA too was appreciated but they could not save the tottering edifice of 'Shalini Cinetone' which was about to collapse owing to the mishandling of its affairs by the State. The procrastinating methods of Baburao Painter also were responsible for the doom of 'Shalini Cinetone'. A lot of money was spent on USHA and PRATIBHA in comparison with which the income from these films was unsatisfactory. The Hindi films RAJMUKUT and ASIRE HAVIS proved flops. Consequently 'Shalini Cinetone' had to be closed after the film DHRUVAKUMAR.

### **DHRUVA with an all-children cast**

DHRUVAKUMAR was Shalini Cinetone's last film. This film directed by K. P. Bhawe was released in 1938, the year in which another picture entitled DHRUVA based on the same story with an all-children cast was produced by Raja Pandit and directed by D. K. Kale. The well-known actor Suryakant appeared in this picture for the first time as a child actor; Balakram had played the role of Dhruva. This novel experiment of a film with all-children cast was indeed a success.

### **'Hauns'**

Baburao Pendharkar and Master Vinayak founded the 'Hauns Pictures' in 1936 in co-operation with Pandurang Naik. They chose the story CHHAYA, written by the celebrated Marathi writer V. S. Khandekar.

Master Vinayak considered it a privilege to direct a film based on a story of V. S. Khandekar. This film introduced tragedy for the first time in Marathi films. The experiment proved rewarding. Khandekar received the first prize for his story from the Calcutta Press Association. The film was also awarded the Gohar Gold Medal for the best story. Master Vinayak handled this story of a woman who becomes the victim of the passion of a doctor in order to save her son. This film confirmed the status of Master Vinayak as a skilful director. He now symbolised the hopes and aspirations of the whole of Maharashtra. The film also gave a good opportunity to Leela Chitnis to come forward as a popular actress. The important roles in this film were played by Ratnaprabha, Vinayak, Leela Chitnis and Baburao Pendharkar.

### **DHARMAVIR and PREMVIR**

The brothers Vinayak and Baburao Pendharkar continued to make social pictures. After CHHAYA they produced DHARMAVIR whose story was written by Acharya Atre. The story was of a man who pretended to be a humanitarian but was actually a hypocrite. This role was played very brilliantly by Baburao Pendharkar. After this film 'Hauns' shifted back to Kolhapur, where they produced PREMVIR under the banner of 'Hauns' in the Kolhapur Cinetone. The story of this film too was written by Acharya Atre. This was the first Marathi picture in which playback singing was used. This film proved very popular among the youth at that time. The two films DHARMAVIR and PREMVIR placed the 'Hauns Pictures' on a sound financial footing.

### **Failure of JWALA**

After DHARMAVIR and PREMVIR the 'Hauns' got a story written by V. S. Khandekar by keeping Chandramohan's personality before the eyes. Khandekar created for Chandramohan a character like that of Macbeth. But this character could not be brought to life on the screen owing to the changes made by Vinayak from time to time. The emphasis was placed somehow or the other on the role played by Ratnaprabha. This film on which a lot of money was spent was in Hindi and Marathi. But it proved an utter failure owing to which the financial position of 'Hauns' became precarious. The future of 'Hauns' was now in danger.

## **BRAHMACHARI and BRANDICHI BATLI**

Now the problem before 'Hauns' was how to rehabilitate itself from the debacle of JWALA. A new comedy whose story and dialogues were written by Acharya Atre in three days was filmed in three months in two languages by Vinayak. But no distributor would touch it. Finally it had to be sold to 'Royal Film Circuit' at a nominal price. But this very film broke all the previous records of popularity. While in Bombay this film ran for 25 weeks, in Poona it had a fifty-week run. The 'Royal Film Circuit' made a fortune on it. But the 'Hauns' did not profit much financially. However, the unique success of BRAHMACHARI regained for them the self-confidence lost on account of JWALA. The story of BRAHMACHARI centred around the fad of observing celibacy. It was a subtle satire. Scenes of Meenakshi in swimming trunks had created a sensation at that time. Meenakshi made her debut in the films through this picture after which began a series of films in which Vinayak and Meenakshi starred together. The success of BRAHMACHARI opened new horizons to the comedies. It was followed by another comedy entitled BRANDICHI BATLI intended to advocate the Government's prohibition policy. But this picture did not have the typical defects of a propaganda film. It was a light comedy, yet it was instructive. There has been no other film so effectively advocating prohibition since then. Damuanna Malvankar reached the peak of popularity as a result of this film. A scene in this picture created a furore at the time. The hero, who is a simpleton (Damuanna) and has fallen in love, sees a picture of Radha and Krishna. As he sees it he indulges in a day-dream in which Radha and Krishna are seen dancing. He sees his sweet-heart in the place of Radha. When the dream ends he looks disappointed at the picture of Radha and Krishna and says "Oh Lord Krishna please give me a 'chance' too".

These words created a furore among the purists like Krishnarao Marathe who opened a campaign against it, resulting in the Censor Board's deleting that particular controversial sentence. The controversy only added to the popularity of the picture. BRANDICHI BATLI was followed by another comedy ARDHANGI in which the contrast between an old fashioned house-wife and a modern one had been shown. Damuanna Malvankar played the role of a match-maker, Vinayak handled this film very imaginatively. It was the first picture of Kusum Deshpande.

### **The screen villain improves**

The Hauns also produced during this period of comedies two thought-provoking social films DEVATA and SUKHACHA SHODH which though not as popular as their comedies, were of a very high standard. Baburao Pendharkar who had so far played the roles of villain became hero in the film DEVATA which was based on a novel by V. S. Khandekar. On the other hand the latter wrote a novel based on his own picture SUKHACHA SHODH. Thus the novel 'Sukhacha Shodh' is probably the first novel written on the basis of a film story. In this film which advocated the joint family system V. S. Khandekar had depicted very effectively the character of the head of the family, which was brought to life by Baburao Pendharkar equally perfectly. DEVATA was directed by Vinayak while SUKHACHA SHODH was directed by Parshwanath Altekar.

### **Prabhat's KUNKU**

Inspired by the tradition of social films created by Hauns, Prabhat Film Company too chose a story by N. H. Apte for a new social film. Shantaram produced the film KUNKU based on this story in which the system of marriages between old men and young girls had been effectively condemned. The heroine of this film Neera who revolts against the injustice to her proved quite a sensation. Shanta Apte in this role was indeed unforgettable. So was Keshavrao Date in the role of her old husband. Praises were showered on this picture from all the corners of the country. The montage of an old wall-clock shown as symbol of the old husband proved to be very effective. Shantaram made very effective use of other symbols too. The conventional system of background music had been discarded by Shantaram in this picture. There was an English song sung by Shanta Apte too. KUNKU proved to be extremely popular and thus the very first social film of Prabhat had the good fortune of celebrating its silver jubilee.

### **Unprecedented success of MANOOS**

Encouraged by the success of KUNKU, Shantaram decided to produce another social film whose hero was a policeman and the heroine was a prostitute. The character of this prostitute had much in common with the prostitute

heroine of the English film **WATERLOO BRIDGE**. Realistic atmosphere was the special feature of **MANOOS**. In order to lend realism to various scenes rehearsals of police parades were held in the studio under the guidance of a retired policeman. Shantaram had taken great pains to make everything appear realistic including the hair style of Shahu Modak who played the leading role and the room of Maina, who was a prostitute. Thus Shantaram had spared no efforts on this film; but many who had seen the trial were not very optimistic about its success. Even Shantaram was said to have lost heart. But the film proved immensely popular and put a new feather in Shantaram's cap. Shantaram's admirers even to this date assert that he has yet to produce another picture like **MANOOS**. The multi-lingual song in it 'Kashala Udyachi Baat' proved a hit and its imitation is still a craze.

### **SHEJARI based on Hindu-Muslim unity**

After **MANOOS** Shantaram produced **SHEJARI** whose story was based on Hindu-Muslim unity. Its Hindi version was entitled **PADOSI**. In the Marathi version Date and Jagirdar played the roles of Hindu and Muslim friends respectively. But in the Hindi version Date was substituted by Mazaharkhan. Thus by making a Muslim artiste play the role of a Hindu and Hindu a Muslim, the advocacy of Hindu-Muslim unity was done in a novel manner. Jagirdar won encomiums from all sections of the people for his polished performance as a Muslim. The success of **SHEJARI** owes a great deal to the performance of Jagirdar. The Bengal Film Journalists' Association awarded him the best actor prize. The scene of the breaching of the dam was the special attraction of **SHEJARI**. It was an extraordinary example of Pralhad Datt's trick photography.

### **Seeds of disunity**

The success of the three films **KUNKU**, **MANOOS** and **SHEJARI** was a glorious chapter in the history of 'Prabhat'. But after the latter picture which sang the paeans of Hindu-Muslim unity, the unity in 'Prabhat' was seriously breached. Of the five who managed the company, Dhaibar was the first to quit. He was substituted by Baburao Pai. The departure of Dhaibar did create some sort of vacuum. But the departure of Shantaram was a real blow to the company. The vacuum created by his departure could not be filled

by any one. Simultaneously the 'Hauns' pictures too began to disintegrate. itself. After BRANDICHI BATLI the 'Hauns' was renamed, Navayug Chitrapat Ltd., one of whose founder members was Acharya Atre. But there was disunity in the Navayug too after the film LAPANDAV. Acharya Atre left the 'Navayug'. Baburao Pendharkar and Pandurang Naik had also differences with Vinayak. The separation of the trio seemed now inevitable. Navayug now shifted to Poona.

### **A progress of Navayug**

In Poona Vinayak produced LAGNA PAHAVE KARUN, a comedy based on C. V. Joshi's story. The stories of all the previous comedies of Vinayak were written by Atre. The equation "Atre-Vinayak pair means a comedy" was well-known in Maharashtra at the time. Naturally people were anxious about how Vinayak would fair without Atre. But Vinayak succeeded in his new experiment in which the writer V. S. Khandekar wrote the scenario and dialogues of LAGNA PAHAVE KARUN. This film was a satire on the evils of dowry system. Vinayak had made very imaginative use of the extraction of sugarcane juice, the montage of sugarcane wheel and its sound for effectively showing the exploitation of the bride's people. This film made C. V. Joshi's characters Chimanrao and Gundyabhau immortal. These two characters made also the pair, Damuanna-Jog popular on the screen. After LAGNA PAHAVE KARUN, 'Navayug' produced the film AMRIT. Meenakshi, Vinayak, Baburao Pendharkar, Lalita Pawar, Master Vitthal, Salvi, Damuanna Malvankar and Jog played roles in this film which was shot on location at beautiful Malvan. Baburao Pendharkar's portrayal of a shoe-maker in this picture was realistic. But Khandekar was dissatisfied with the film because Vinayak made frequent changes in his story. This proved to be the last film of the trio Vinayak, Baburao Pendharkar and Pandurang Naik. After the departure of Baburao and Pandurang Naik, Navayug produced the film SANGAM directed by R. S. Junnarkar. But it was not so well received by the public.

### **The establishment of Atre Pictures**

After leaving Navayug, Atre created sensation by starting Atre Pictures and raising a studio in Bombay. Atre chose the story of SANT SAKHU

which he had originally written for Navayug. But as the Prabhat Film Company too was producing a film with the same theme, Atre adapted the same story for a social film and produced his first picture, PAYACHI DASI. Vanamala who had earned renown in Navayug's LAPANDAV became very popular on account of this film. Durga Khote who hitherto had played the roles of leading lady played the role of a domineering mother-in-law. The well-known stage actor Avinash played opposite Vanamala and Gajanan Jagirdar directed it.

### **An outsider as director in the 'Prabhat'**

LAXMICHE KHEL (Bedekar Productions), SAUNGADI (Nataraj Films), MAZA MULGA (Prabhat), MAZI LADKI (Saraswati Cinetone), GEETA (Circo Production), GHAR JAWAI (Asha Chitra), NAVARDEV (Saraswati Cinetone) were some of the social films of this period. Y. G. Joshi had written the story of MAZA MULGA. It was his first story to be screened. K. Narayan Kale who had earlier directed Prabhat's Hindi film VAHAN had directed this film. With the exception of Baburao Pendharkar, K. Narayan Kale was the first outsider to get an opportunity of direction in the 'Prabhat'. GHAR JAWAI of Asha Pictures was a comedy directed by Kumarsen Samarth. It was his first attempt at direction. Shobhana Samarth had played the leading feminine role in it.

### **Two stories of Mama Varerkar**

The stories of SAUNGADI and GEETA were written by Mama Varerkar and Parshwanath Altekar was the director. Durgabai Khote had produced this film in co-operation with Mubarak and Altekar. Mubarak and Durga Khote played the leading roles. The latter also played the leading role in GEETA, whose special attraction was Chandramohan's double role. This film can be described as a precursor of the present day crime pictures. The 'Circo Production' had taken out a Marathi version of the picture too.

### **Bhalji Pendharkar's films**

Bhalji Pendharkar joined 'Saraswati Cinetone' at Poona after completing KANHOPATRA for 'Shalini Cinetone' at Kolhapur. He directed RAJA GOPICHAND for 'Saraswati Cinetone'. The stars were Chandrakant,



Miss Leela, Pramila, etc. Chandrakant who had starred before in SAVKARI, PASH under his real name Gopal, was renamed Chandrakant, by Bhalji Pendharkar in RAJA GOPICHAND which proved to be a box-office hit. Bhalji went back to Kolhapur after this and produced the historical NETAJI PALKAR under the banner of his own 'Arun Pictures'. He himself had played a small role in it. The stellar roles were of Master Vitthal and Lalita Pawar. He again came back to Poona and produced the mythological GORAKHNATH under the banner of 'Famous Arun'. It was well received by the public. GORAKHNATH was followed by the historical film THORATANCHI KAMALA which made Bhalji Pendharkar very popular. The roles of Sumati Gupte, Chandrakant and Nanasaheb Phatak were eulogised by the film fans. Indira Chitnis who had played a small role in Prabhat's KUNKU attained popularity as a result of a role in this film.

### **Controversy over BHAGWA ZENDA**

SWARAJYACHYA SEEMEVAR (Prince Shivaji Production), CHANDRARAO MORE (General Films), NANDAKUMAR (Jayashree Films), UMAJI NAIK (Uday Pictures), MARATHYACHI MULGI (Artists Combine), BAJI DESHPANDE (Maharashtra Pictures), BHAGWA ZENDA (Saraswati Cinetone), MAYA BAJAR (Prabha Pictures), RAJA SHRIYAL (Uday Pictures), DEVYANI (Saraswati Cinetone) were some of the better known mythological and historical films produced during this period. Over a lakh of rupees were spent on the advertisement of CHANDRARAO MORE by the producer 'Siras Ali'. There were posters on trams, buses and in every nook and corner of the city of Bombay. There was no end to advertisements in the press. In short the advertising of this film was unprecedented. Jayashree made her debut in this film. BHAGWA ZENDA became a subject of controversy because it was alleged that Shivaji Maharaj was belittled by making Ramdas his political Guru. This served as a spark that kindled the Brahmin-non-Brahmin controversy. D. D. Patil, now a well-known director and who was then a student at Kolhapur, had written a strong article against this film. The spectators went even to the extent of tearing the screen at Poona and the film was banned in the princely State of Kolhapur.

## The closure of Saraswati Cinetone

The film **SWARAJYACHYA SEEMEVAR** produced by 'Prince Shivaji Productions' was also hailed by cine-goers during this period. The direction was by Major D. Nimbalkar and it was produced in Kolhapur Cinetone. Shobhana Samarth's mother had played the role of Jijabai in this film. The Prince Shivaji Productions, however, could not make any headway after this film. Saraswati Cinetone's **NARAD-NARADI** produced during this period was also worth mentioning as a mythological comedy. The roles of Dinkar Kamanna and Kusum Deshpande were greatly appreciated by the people. The 'Saraswati Cinetone', however, was closed after producing **NAVARDEV** and **AVAS** a Hindi film.

**NAVARDEV** proved to be the last film directed by Dadasaheb Torne. The film careers of silent picture veterans like Pandurangrao Talgiri (**DEVYANI** and **MARATHYACHI MULGI**) and N. D. Sarpotdar (**BHAGWA ZENDA**) came to an end during this very period. Balasaheb Yadav (**BAJI DESHPANDE**) and Major D. Nimbalkar who had become directors at the beginning of the talkie-era also bowed out in this period. Keshavrao Dhaibar who had left Prabhat started his own Jayashree Films and produced the film **NANDAKUMAR**. But he failed to achieve success. Later he produced **AKARAVA AVATAR** for Minerva Movietone. G. P. Pawar and K. P. Bhawe who were directors in the Aryan Film Company during the silent pictures' period directed **RAJA SHRIYAL** and **DHRUVA-KUMAR** respectively. But their attempts at direction were not so noteworthy. The other names of new directors that attracted the attention of the public during this period were K. B. Athavale (**BHAKTA DAMAJI**), Baburao Apte (**NAMACHA MAHIMA**), D. K. Kale (**DHRUVA, CHOKHAMELA**), N. Devhare (**RAIGAD, SANT JANABAI**) and Kumarson Samarth (**GHAAR JAWAI**). Of these Baburao Apte died after **MUNICIPALITY** came to the screen. During the period of five years from 1937 to 1941 Shantaram, Vinayak, Damle, Fattehlal, Bhalji Pendharkar and Parshwanath Altekar made solid contributions to Marathi films to which they gave a new turn.

### Marathi films (1942-1946)

THE PERIOD from 1937 to 1941 may be described as the golden period of Marathi Film Industry. It was during this period that incomparable gems like SANT TUKARAM, DHARMAVIR, KUNKU, PREMVIR, GOPALKRISHNA, BRAHMACHARI, BRANDICHI BATLI, DEVATA, MANOOS, SUKHACHA SHODH, ARDHANGI, GEETA and LAGNA PAHAVE KARUN were produced. Comparatively the period from 1942-1946 is somewhat disappointing from the point of view of the production of the films. Only a handful of good films like BHARAT BHET, APLE GHAR, SARKARI PAHUNE, BHAKTA DAMAJI, PAHILA PALANA, PAHILI MANGALAGAUR, CHIMUKALA SAUN SAR, MAZE BAL, RAMRAJYA, SOONBAI and RAMSHASTRI were produced during this period. And when we consider that BHARAT BHET, RAMRAJYA and APLE GHAR were produced by non-Maharashtrians we cannot help drawing the conclusion that Maharashtra did not give any good fare to the film-fans. While during 1937-1941, 59 Marathi films were released, during the five years from 1942 to 1946 this number dwindled to 31.

Although the second world war started in 1939 the film industry was not actually affected till May 1942 when Government imposed restrictions on the length of the film, which were not to exceed 11,000 feet; the trailers were not to exceed 400 feet. But in spite of these restrictions 13 Marathi films were produced during 1942.

A great blow was dealt to the production of Marathi films as a result of the system of licences for raw films introduced by Government on 17th July 1943. As a result of these "sanctions" Marathi producers were faced with a dilemma. Even a financially sound company like 'Prabhat' concentrated on the production of Hindi films. During the period of five years from 1942-1946 the 'Prabhat' produced only two Marathi films. They were DAHA VAJATA and RAMSHASTRI. The number of Hindi pictures like CHAND, LAKHA RANI, AAGE BADHO, etc. was larger. Shantaram who had started his own Rajkamal after leaving Prabhat produced only one Marathi picture, viz.

BHAKTICHA MALA, while SHAKUNTALA, DOCTOR KOTNIS, PARBAT PE APNA DERA, JEEVANYATRA, etc. were all in Hindi. The 'Navayug' produced only four Marathi pictures, viz. SARKARI PAHUNE, TUZACH, PAHILI MANGALAGAU and PUNDALIK while its Hindi output like PANNA, FOOL AUR KANTE, etc. was considerably large. Bhalji Pendharkar while producing the three Marathi films, SOONBAI, BAHIRJI NAIK and SASURVAS also produced four Hindi ones, viz. MAHARATHI KARNA, VALMIKI, SUVARNABHUMI and JEENA SIKHO. Vinayak also produced three Hindi films together with the Marathi ones, SARKARI PAHUNE, CHIMUKALA SAUNSA, MAZE BAL, GAJABHAU, etc. and also directed Shantaram's Hindi film JEEVANYATRA. Acharya Atre too turned to Hindi films after producing VASANTSENA and BAYILVEDA. The result was that there was a drastic fall in the production of Marathi films. Thus the number of Marathi films which was thirteen in 1942 came down to nine in 1943, six in 1944 and in 1945 not a single Marathi film was released. In 1946 there were only two Marathi films.

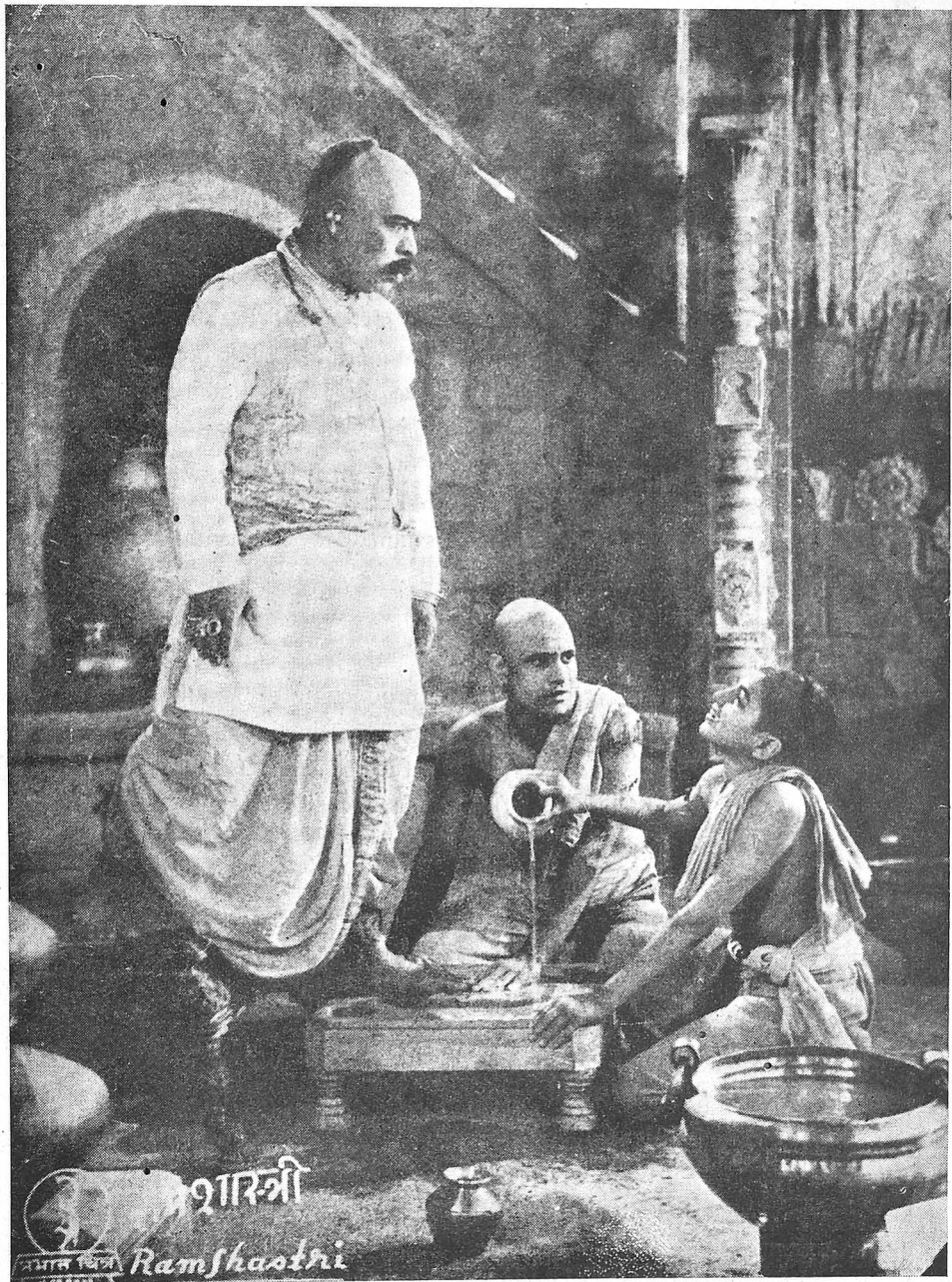
### **BHARAT BHET and RAMRAJYA**

With the imposition of controls on films there was a substantial fall in the production of Marathi films together with Hindi. However, a well-known film company like 'Prakash Pictures' ventured to produce two films, viz. BHARAT BHET and RAMRAJYA in Hindi and Marathi. These two films can be mentioned as the two most popular films of 1946. Vishnupant Aundhkar of SAVKARI PASH fame had written the scenario and dialogues of these two films. There is no doubt that the lion's share of the credit of the success of these films goes to Aundhkar. After the latter had joined the 'Prakash', the whole policy of the company underwent a change. People began to look upon it as the maker of classical mythologicals. BHARAT BHET and RAMRAJYA put the 'Prakash Pictures' on a sound financial footing. In both Chandrakant, Vinay Kale and Shobhana Samarth had played the roles of Ram, Laxman and Seeta. In BHARAT BHET, Bharat was portrayed by Shahu Modak and Kaikeyi was portrayed by Durga Khote. Both these films can be

cited as the best pictures on the Ramayan. The art direction by Kanu Desai and music by Shankarrao Vyas were the main attractions of the two films. Today's well-known Bengali play-back singer Manna Dey sang for the first time in this picture. Even though his mother-tongue was not Marathi he sang the songs in RAMRAJYA in faultless Marathi. Since then, he has been lending his voice in Marathi pictures fairly frequently. Another feature of this film was that it was the only picture that Mahatma Gandhi saw in his entire life. One Monday in Bombay Vijay Bhatt arranged a special show for Mahatma Gandhi. The Mahatma had promised to sit for forty minutes only. But ultimately he saw the film for over an hour and a half. The well-known industrialist G. D. Birla awarded a gold medal to Vijay Bhatt at a ceremony presided over by Dr. Radhakrishnan.

## RAMSHASTRI

Another film that enjoyed as much popularity as BHARAT BHET and RAMRAJYA during this period was Prabhat's RAMSHASTRI. That was the only film in tune with the old traditions of Prabhat after Shantaram had left it. No historical film of such high standard has since been produced in India. The Bengali director of international reputation Satyajit Ray was inspired to make films upon seeing RAMSHASTRI. In order to lend realism to Peshwa period atmosphere, utmost efforts were made. It is said that S. Fattehlahal insisted on cancelling several thousand feet shooting because he thought that it was not realistic. Shivram Vashikar had written the scenario and the dialogues of Ramshastri and reputed historians had been consulted in order that there should not be any historical flaw. Gajanan Jagirdar's role of Ramshastri won him immense appreciation and popularity. Lalita Pawar in the role of Anandibai displayed a new facet of her personality. The boy Ramshastri and his wife were charmingly portrayed by Anant Marathe and Baby Shakuntala. The Bengal Film Journalists' Association awarded a prize to Anant Marathe for being the best child-actor. The association also awarded prize to Gajanan Jagirdar for his role and direction. Gajanan Jagirdar's directional skill was greatly appreciated. However, the credit of direction should go to Raja Nene also who left the Prabhat after initial shooting of the film. Vishram Bedekar too had a hand in the direction. But he too quit the



A scene from RAMSHASTRI (Prabhat Chitra)

Prabhat and finally Gajanan Jagirdar finished the film. It was the last glorious chapter in the history of the Prabhat which could not produce a film of such high standard thereafter. After the death of Vishnupant Damle in 1945 the glory that was Prabhat went into decline.

### DAHA VAJATA

The film DAHA VAJATA was produced before RAMSHASTRI. This social picture, however, did not fit into the regular pattern of Prabhat's tradition of producing thought-provoking films. It fitted more into the pattern of cheap love stories that were current at that time in the Hindi film industry. The result was that the film-goers were disappointed. However this film gave to the film industry a new director in the person of Raja Nene and a photographer with imagination in the person of E. Mohamed who made use of back-production technique very effectively in this film. Baby Shakuntala made her debut as a child actress in this very film.

### Master Vinayak quits the 'Navayug'

The 'Prabhat' now concentrated on the production of Hindi films. The 'Navayug' too switched over to Hindi film production after producing the four Marathi films SARKARI PAHUNE, PAHILI MANGALAGAUR, TUZACH and PUNDALIK. SARKARI PAHUNE was the last film that Vinayak directed for the 'Navayug'. The film was made from a story by C. V. Joshi as in the case of LAGNA PAHAVE KARUN which was a stupendous success. Like LAGNA PAHAVE KARUN it was a satire on the chaotic conditions in princely states. It continued the traditions of Vinayak's comedies. Vinayak started the production of PAHILI MANGALAGAUR after the success of SARKARI PAHUNE, but he left the 'Navayug' after initial shooting. R. S. Junnarkar later directed and completed the film, which was a recipient of public acclamation. A kissing scene of Shahu Modak and Snehaprabha Pradhan was included in this film. There were other realistic love scenes hitherto not seen in any other Marathi film. These scenes created a sensation and purist Krishnarao Marathe bitterly criticised the film. Lata Mangeshkar had acted as a child actress in this film. Junnarkar followed this success with a comedy entitled

TUZACH. But it was not so well received as PAHILI MANGALAGAUR. PUNDALIK which was also directed by Junnarkar was not at all noticed by the public.

### **KITI HASAL banned**

New Maharashtra Film's KITI HASAL was the other sensational comedy of this period. It was adapted from a comedy by Madhavrao Joshi. Vasant Joglekar came before the public as director for the first time through this film. The film earned renown as a mischievous picture. While a love scene between the hero and the heroine was in progress, a board with the words "work in progress, road closed" was displayed near a place where the work of a repair of a road was going on. Many of the dialogues of this film had a double meaning, as a result of which it became a subject of severe criticism. The story goes that no less a person than the well-known Marathi writer N. C. Kelkar was present at the first show of this film and enjoyed it immensely. Kusum Deshpande, Jayshankar Danve and Baburao Gokhale played the important roles in it. 'The Brilliant Pictures' made a film whose story was based on Madhavrao Joshi's humorous play MUNICIPALITY. But it was not much of a success.

### **Prafulla and Prabhakar Pictures**

CHIMUKALA SAUNSAAR of 'Prafulla Pictures' was the second picture directed by Vasant Joglekar. 'Prafulla Pictures' was established by Master Vinayak at Kolhapur after he had left 'Navayug' and CHIMUKALA SAUNSAAR was its first film. It was followed by MAZE BAL and GAJABHAU, both directed by Vinayak. GAJABHAU was Vinayak's last Marathi film. His last three Marathi films did receive good response from the public. But they could not attain the standard of the films he produced under the banner of 'Hauns' and 'Navayug'. Dadasaheb Salvi's role of the lawyer in MAZE BAL was greatly acclaimed by the film-lovers. The subject of this film was of unmarried mothers.

Bhalji Pendharkar also returned to Kolhapur after producing SOONBAI under the banner of 'Famous Arun'. SOONBAI was greatly appreciated by the film-lovers owing to its saucy dialogues and delightful roles of



Chintamanrao Kolhatkar and Dinkar Kamanna. In Kolhapur he produced the historical film **BAHIRJI NAIK** under the banner of 'Prabhakar Pictures'. As in the case of his previous historicals this one too was well received by the public. **BAHIRJI NAIK** was followed by **SASURVAS** which was a continuation of his **SOONBAI**. But **SASURVAS** did not have the fun of **SOONBAI** though it gave to the film industry an actress of a high calibre like Sulochana. Sulochana had previously played small roles in **CHIMUKALA SAUNSAI**, **MAHARATHI KARNA**, **VALMIKI**, etc. Another actor that came into limelight as a result of this film was Vasant Shinde. Sushanta whose real name was Shanta Jog also had starred in this film. But her film career almost came to an end with that picture and she became popular as a stage actress.

### **'Nav-Hauns' Pictures**

The pair Baburao Pendharkar and Pandurang Naik after leaving 'Navayug' started the 'Nav-Hauns' at Kolhapur. Their first film **BHAKTA DAMAJI** was directed by Bhalji Pendharkar. **BHAKTA DAMAJI** received good response which was a good omen to Nav-Hauns. **PAHILA PALANA**, a social comedy followed. This film was the first one to bring professional success to Bedekar. G. D. Madgulkar wrote his first lyrics for this film. After the success of **PAHILA PALANA**, 'Nav-Hauns' shifted to Bombay. But their first film **PAISA BOLTO AHE** was an utter disappointment although it gave to the filmdom a brilliant comedian like Dhumal. After this failure, the 'Nav-Hauns' could not make much progress. Baburao Pendharkar left the company on account of differences arising out of the selection of the actress for playing the leading role in their first and last Hindi picture **DRAUPADI**. The 'Nav-Hauns' could not go further than **DRAUPADI**.

### **First woman producer**

A woman joined during this period the field of film production. Her name was Kamalabai Manglurkar. There had been some women producers in Hindi and Durgabai Khote had produced **SAUNGADI** in Marathi with the assistance of Parshwanath Altekar and Mubarak. Kamalabai Manglurkar was the first woman to try film production independently. Her first film

• was SAVLYA TANDEL under the banner of 'Pradeep Pictures'. The direction was by Madhukar Bavdekar. Later she produced RUKMINI SWAYAMWAR in co-operation with Baburao Painter. But both these films proved failures. Kamalabai was not disheartened. She continued with the production of films with doggedness and produced the magnificent Hindi film PANNA DAI.

### **Marathi films produced by Hindi producers**

APPLE GHAR, MAHATMA VIDUR (Circo Chitra), NIRDOSH (National Studios) were some of the Marathi films produced by Hindi film companies that were released during this period. The most noteworthy of these was APPLE GHAR which was directed by the famous Bengali director Devaki Bose. The main roles of Chandramohan and Shanta Apte were impeccable and they were ably assisted by Gope and David. The background of the story of this film was the 1942 movement. It was the story of a young woman who could not identify herself with a husband who was rather queer. The psychology of this young woman was very effectively shown. NIRDOSH was the first Marathi picture of Nalini Jaywant which was directed by her Gujarati husband Hitendra Desai. Another Marathi film of this period GORA KUMBHAR of 'Chhaya Films' was directed by Pandit Anand Kumar. Raja Pandit was the producer. It was also acclaimed by the public.

Acharya Atre produced VASANTSENA and BAYILVEDA during this period. The former was directed by Jagirdar and the latter by K. Narayan Kale. But compared to PAYACHI DASI both these pictures did not have a good market. VASANTSENA proved to be too costly. BHAKTICHA MALA of 'Rajkamal Kala Mandir' of Shantaram starring Master Krishnarao as Savata Mali and directed by Keshavrao Date was produced in the same period. It had a good run but it did not have the expected acclamation. PAISA (Jeevan Pictures) and CHIRANJIV (Jyoti Pictures) also proved to be disappointing.

Signs were now too evident that Marathi film industry was on the decline.

## Artistes of pre-independence days

WITH the release of the first Marathi film in 1932, the Marathi stage passed into a transitional period. On seeing that the future of Marathi stage was bleak, stage artistes changed over to films. Dinanath Mangeshkar for instance changed his dramatic company into a film company. But dramatic companies did not succeed much in the production of films.

Many stage artistes now began to try their luck in films. Master Dinanath appeared in KRISHNARJUN YUDDHA, Govindrao Tembe made his mark as actor and music director in AYODHYECHA RAJA, later he tried his hand at direction too by directing the Hindi film RAJMUKUT of 'Shalini Cinetone'. Nanasahab Phatak appeared in films like RAJPUT RAMANI, THORATANCHI KAMALA, PRATIBHA, etc. Another reputed stage actor and playwright Vishnupant Aundhkar also joined films as actor and scenario writer, Jyotsna Bhole then known as Durga Kelekar appeared in SANT SAKHU while the singing actor Londhe was seen in RAJA GOPICHAND, BHAKTA DAMAJI, etc. Even Hirabai Badodekar and Kamalabai Badodekar acted in films; Dinkar Kamanna, the well-known stage comedian, became a screen clown. Baburao Pendharkar appeared on the silver screen in VIJAYACHI LAGNE and Keshavrao Date joined the 'Prabhat'. Balgandharva appeared in the films DHARMATMA and SADHVI MEERABAI. Suresh Mane made his debut in AMRIT MANTHAN and Avinash started his screen in PAYACHI DASI.

However, all of these former stage-actors did not prove a success on the screen. Most of them failed miserably. They could not be one with the mechanical art of the celluloid. The most successful among those who changed over to screen was Dinkar Kamanna. His polished humorous acting in the films like RAJA GOPICHAND, SOONBAI, CHANDRA-RAO MORE, MAZI LADKI, NARAD-NARADI, SWARAJYACHYA SEEMEVAR and PAHILA PALANA won him a niche of his own on the silver screen. Keshavrao Date, an all-rounder of the stage, was brilliant in his roles in AMRIT MANTHAN, KUNKU and SHEJARI. But it

•must be admitted that his talent did not get much scope on the screen. Aundhkar won renown by his role of wicked money-lender in SAVKARI PASH. But later he earned reputation as scenario writer. Nanasaheb Phatak showed spark in his role of Shivaji in THORATANCHI KAMALA. Chintamanrao Kolhatkar was delightful in SOONBAI and SASURVAS. However he could not get on well with the screen. On the other hand Vishnupant Pagnis made his mark in films based on the lives of saints.

### **Durga Khote**

During the days of silent films no woman would take to films as a career. But with the coming of the talkies educated young women from good families were attracted towards this profession. Thus several young women like Durga Khote, Snehaprabha Pradhan, Nalini Tarkhad, Leela Chitnis, Vanamala and others joined the film industry. All of them with the exception of Nalini Tarkhad became popular actresses. Durga Khote was the leading lady of



**Durga Khote** •

AYODHYECHA RAJA, but before that she had acted in a Hindi film produced by Mohan Bhavani. After her success in AYODHYECHA RAJA, she proceeded to conquer peaks of popularity one after the other. She played leading roles in MAYA MACHHINDRA, AMAR JYOTI, PRITHVI-VALLABH, SEETA, SAUNGADI, RAJRANI MEERA. The second chapter of her film career began with the role of an ill-tempered mother-in-law

in PAYACHI DASI of Acharya Atre. Now she won recognition as a character actress. Hitherto she has acted in over one hundred Hindi and Marathi films. She still appears in films occasionally. While she was still at the height of her career as film actress, she stepped on the stage in 1948. She has played various roles in plays like BECHALISCHE ANDOLAN, KEECHAK VADH, BHAUBANDAKI, SHOBHECHA PANKHA, VAIJAYANTI, KHADASHTAK, PATANGACHI DORI, KAUNTEYA, ANDOLAN, SAUSHAY KALLOL, etc. Of these plays, BHAUBANDAKI, VAIJAYANTI, PATANGACHI DORI, KAUNTEYA and DRAUPADI were directed by herself. She has also acted in Paul Zillis OUR INDIA and Ismail Merchant's HOUSE-HOLDER, both English films. For her invaluable service to the screen and stage the Sangeet Natak Academy honoured her as the best actress of 1958.

### **Lalita Pawar**

The second Maharashtrian actress to get the coveted best actress award from the Sangeet Natak Academy was Lalita Pawar. She has been in the films since the silent screen days. But it cannot be said that Marathi film industry has benefited by her talent. With the exception of AMRIT, NETAJI PALKAR, RAMSHASTRI and DAMAJI she has not appeared in any Marathi film. She has shone in many Hindi films. But her performance in AMRIT, RAMSHASTRI and BHAKTA DAMAJI will be long remembered. Her role of wily and intriguing Anandibai in RAMSHASTRI and that of Vithu Mahar's wife are truly memorable. Starting her career in silent cinema days, she still enjoys the credit of being an able character actress. No other actor or actress has enjoyed popularity for so long a time.

### **Leela Chitnis**

Leela Chitnis is the third actress that has preserved her popularity even today. Graduating from the Nagpur University in 1934, she played the role of Malati in Natya Manvantar's USANA NAVARA. After two years in Natya Manvantar, she played a role in DHRUWADHAR. But this first film of hers was not well received. Her real success came after her performance in Hauns Pictures CHHAYA produced by Vinayak. However, the Marathi film



**Leela Chitnis**

industry did not get ample opportunity to utilize her talents. After appearing in only four Marathi films, viz. CHHAYA, SANT TULSIDAS, ARDHANGI and PAISA BOLTO AHE, she joined Bombay Talkies where together with Ashok Kumar she earned renown as a popular pair of Hindi films. Later she acted as mother in Filmistan's SHAHID which was the beginning of the second chapter of her silver screen career. Since then, she is known as a character actress which reputation she has preserved to this date. She was also fortunate enough to be selected

to portray a role in the first Indo-American film the GUIDE. She is also well-known as a stage actress. Anant Kanekar's two-character play PHAAS was brought on the stage by her.

#### **Maharashtrian actresses who appeared in Hindi films**

Shobhana Samarth, Vanamala and Ratnamala are the three Maharashtrian actresses who started their career in Marathi films but later became popular in Hindi films. Shobhana Samarth first appeared as Saroj Shilotri in Kolhapur Cinetone's VILASI ISHWAR in 1935. Later she played roles in only four Marathi films, viz. CHANDRARAO MORE, GHAR JAWAI, BHARAT BHET and RAMRAJYA. In post-war days, she acted in only one Marathi film KEECHAK VADH. But during her youth Marathi

film industry could not benefit by her talents. As soon as she attained popularity in Hindi films, she turned her back on Marathi films. Vanamala who was a double graduate and a teacher joined the films through the acquaintance of Acharya Atre. After acting in Navayug's LAPANDAV, she played roles in only three Marathi films, viz., PAYACHI DASI, VASANTSENA and BAYILVEDA during the pre-independence period. But the number of Hindi films in which she acted was greater. Her performance in Sohrab Mody's SIKANDAR brought her fame. Compared to these two actresses, Ratnamala appeared in more Marathi pictures during pre-independence period. BHAGWA ZENDA produced by 'Saraswati Cinetone' was her first film. They were followed by GORA KUMBHAR, THORATANCHI KAMALA, RAJA GOPICHAND, DAHA VAJATA, RUKMINI SWAYAMWAR, etc. But her performances in Hindi films during the same period seemed to be more polished. Her popularity increased owing to her role in Prakash's STATION MASTER. Just as the pair Ashok Kumar and Leela Chitnis became popular in 'Bombay Talkies' so also the pair Prem Adib and Ratnamala became popular in 'Prakash'. Haunsa Wadkar who became known to the film fans through SANT SAKHU acted in only three Marathi films during pre-independence days. They were VIJAYACHI LAGNE, SANT SAKHU and RAMSHASTRI. Her Hindi pictures were AZAD, NAVJAWAN, CRIMINAL, DHANYAWAD and a number of others. Jayashree whose first film was CHANDRARAO MORE, played roles in SWARAJYACHYA SEEMEVAR, NANDA-KUMAR, MAZI LADKI and SHEJARI. The latter picture brought her immense popularity. But she married Shantaram never to appear in Marathi films again. Snehaprabha Pradhan started her career in Hindi film. CIVIL MARRIAGE of 'Sagar Movietone' was her first Hindi film after which she appeared in Ranjit's PARDESHI and Bombay Talkies' PUNAR-MILAN, both in Hindi. Nalini Jayawant is the other Maharashtrian actress whom the Marathi film industry could never get to play roles in Marathi films. She acted in only one Marathi film NIRDOSH.

### **Shanta Apte**

Shanta Apte must have been the only Maharashtrian actress to attain immense popularity in both Hindi and Marathi films during the pre-independence



Shanta Apte

days. She was even invited by Hindi film producers in Lahore and Calcutta to play roles in Hindi pictures. Kolhapur, Bombay, Poona, Calcutta and Lahore were the main centres of film productions during those days and perhaps Shanta Apte is the only actress to play roles in films produced at these centres. The well-known south Indian film actor Shivaji Ganeshan once revealed that in his boyhood days he was an admirer of Shanta Apte. This indeed is an indication of the high

degree of success attained by Shanta Apte. There is a chain of successful roles played by her, Radha in *GOPALKRISHNA*, the rebel young woman of *AMAR JYOTI*, Neera in *KUNKU*, Bijlee in *VALMIKI*, Chandi in *SWAYAMSIDDHA* and many others can be cited as an illustration. No one else must have played such unforgettable main feminine roles like Shanta Apte. Their deep impact on the minds of the film-lovers is still felt. *SHYAMSUNDER* produced by Bhalji Pendharkar was her first film and this was the first film in India to earn the credit of celebrating silver jubilee. This film brought her into lime-light. But her talent was seen at its best—in Prabhat's *AMRIT MANTHAN*. *KUNKU* was the height of her popularity, so much so that she became the highest paid actress in 'Prabhat'. Her salary was at once raised to Rs. 1,000. She also appeared in Hindi and Tamil films. Shanta Apte died on 25th February 1964.



## Meenakshi

Meenakshi was another popular actress of the day. Shanta Apte made a name in Hindi films too which Meenakshi could not achieve. However in Marathi films she created a new era of popularity. Meenakshi can be said to be the first actress to be the darling of the hearts of the youth of the day. It is she who popularised the fashion of two braids of hair among the young women. Sarees, bangles, perfumes, surma and perfumed hair-oils were named after her. She was the only actress to attain this distinction in those days. Meenakshi's real name was Ratan Shirodkar and her first role in BRAHMACHARI sky-rocketed her to fame over-night. Her swimming scene in that film created a sensation all over. Her popular pictures are BRANDICHI BATLI, DEVATA, SUKHACHA SHODH, ARDHANGI, AMRIT, LAPANDAV, SANGAM, MAZE BAL, CHIMUKALA SAUN SAR, SUBHADRA, PANNA DAI, RAMSHASTRI, MERI AMANAT, BADI MA, etc.

The story goes that when Pandurang Naik and Baburao Pendharkar brought her in the 'Hauns Pictures' for the main role, Master Vinayak did not approve of the selection at all. He was pessimistic about her becoming a successful actress owing to her plain face and big eyes. But this very Meenakshi became a 'must' in the majority of Vinayak's films. The pair Vinayak-Meenakshi became extremely popular all over Maharashtra. This pair created the same sensation as the Rajkapur-Nargis pair was to create later in filmdom. Even today the film-lovers have not forgotten them, for another pair like that was yet to come in Marathi film industry.

## Shanta Hublikar

Shanta Hublikar was one more in the list of successful actresses of the day. One can never forget her performance in Prabhat's MANOOS. That one role is enough to make her one of the outstanding actresses of Marathi cinema. Shanta Hublikar was one of the few talented and intelligent actresses of the day. Her roles in MAZA MULGA and PAHILA PALANA are equally unforgettable. But she did not appear in many films. Only recently she tried to stage a come-back in Filmistan's SAUBHAGYAVATI BHAVA. But she did not succeed in this attempt.



**Shanta Hublikar**

Her noteworthy pictures were AKASHWANI, KANHOPATRA, SAVITRI, BHAKTA DAMAJI, GORAKHNATH, etc. Usha Mantri also became known as a remarkable actress in this period. She acted in Baburao Painter's USHA SWAPNA. Connoisseurs still say that her beauty is still unsurpassable. Her later pictures were SUKHACHA SHODH, RAJA GOPICHAND, ASIRE HAVIS. Amina was another actress who earned popularity as a result of her role in SAVKARI PASH produced by Baburao Painter. Later she played interesting roles in CHANDRARAO MORE, AKARAVA AVATAR, ASIRE HAVIS, USHA SWAPNA, etc. Other actresses of note of those days were Shakuntala Bhome and Shanta Jadhav. Another remarkable actress of the day was Sumati Gupte. She started her film career by playing a role in SANT DNYANESHWAR. Later her roles in THORATANCHI KAMALA and SOONBAI were greatly appreciated.

Of the actresses of note of pre-independence days, Meenakshi, Ratnaprabha, Shanta Apte, Shanta Hublikar, Snehaprabha Pradhan, Miss Leela, etc. earned

Ratnaprabha (VILASI ISHWAR, CHHAYA, DHARMAVIR, JWALA, SUKHACHA SHODH, DHARMA-TMA) and Indira Wadkar (CHHAYA, VILASI ISHWAR), made their mark during the pre-independence days. Prabhat's leading actress of silent cinema days, Miss Leela, appeared in SINHAGAD and SAIRANDHRI, India's first coloured film. Later she married Bhalji Pendharkar and played roles in his films only.

popularity as singing stars also. Meenakshi's song 'Yamuna Jali' in BRAHMACHARI still retains its freshness. Shanta Apte's tunes 'Sajani Ge Gaulani Ge' (GOPALKRISHNA), 'Aha Bharat Viraje' (KUNKU) also were on the lips of every film-goer of the day. 'Rusali Hi Radha' sung by Snehaprabha Pradhan in PAHILI MANGALAGAUR became equally popular. 'Hasat Vasant Ye Mani' sung by Jayashree in SHEJARI almost broke the record of popularity and the tune 'Kashala Udyachi Baat' the multilingual song rendered by Shanta Hublikar was on the lips of the young and the old alike. Vatsala Kumthekar who played supporting roles held the film-goers spellbound by her voice. Many songs sung by Miss Leela too were remembered by the film-goers for a long time and the people have not yet forgotten the voice of Ratnaprabha.

Kusum Deshpande's portrayals of shrewish women also were very popular during this period. Gauri, who played the role of Tukaram's wife also won praise from film-goers owing to such performances. The actress Sardarbai was brilliant in the role of a prostitute in SAVKARI PASH. Many other names of the stars like Noorjahan, Manjulabai, Vimala Vashistha, Pramila Dalvi, Shanta Muzumdar, Saroj Borkar who played supporting roles are still remembered. However, film stars of the silent cinema days like Gangubai, Anusayabai, Gulabbai, etc. have been forgotten.

### **Master Vinayak**

Master Vinayak is described as the most popular actor of Marathi screen in the pre-independence days. It would be only proper to call him a matinee idol. He worked the miracle of drawing the spectators to the box-office by his name. The film-lovers would go to any extent to have a glimpse of him. He played the role of Narada in his first ever film AYODHYECHA RAJA of Prabhat. He was a singing star but he did not develop that art. His second film was Prabhat's AGNIKANKAN and VILASI ISHWAR, CHHAYA, etc. that followed brought him immense popularity. But it is his role of 'Audumbar' in BRAHMACHARI that placed him on the crest of popularity. It is said that Acharya Atre had drawn the character of 'Audumbar' keeping Vinayak himself in view because he is said to have been harbouring at that time strange notions about celibacy. As a result Vinayak's performance of

'Audumbar' was extremely realistic. His roles in AMRIT, LAPANDAV, SANGAM, ARDHANGI, CHIMUKALA SAUN SAR, etc. were also acclaimed by the public. There has been no romantic hero on the Marathi screen since his death. Vinayak was the first educated man to join the film industry at the beginning of the talkie era. He was a teacher at Kolhapur.

### **Gajanan Jagirdar**

Gajanan Jagirdar too was a teacher before joining the film industry. He joined films as a writer. He taught in the beginning Urdu dialogues to Marathi artistes in the Prabhat.

During the shooting of JALTI NISHANI it was noticed that Dnyanba Mane could not manage to deliver Urdu dialogues flawlessly. Shantaram, therefore selected him for the role and Jagirdar became an actor by playing the role of a seventy-five year old man at the age of twenty-five. Thereafter his roles in various films were much appreciated. But it was his roles in SHEJARI, ASIRE HAVIS, RAMSHASTRI, PAYACHI DASI, VASANTSENA, etc. that brought him reputation. The Bengal Film Journalists' Association awarded



**Gajanan Jagirdar**

him the best acting award for his performances in SHEJARI and RAMSHASTRI. He repeated the trick by winning the best actor award also in the post-independence period. The Government of Maharashtra gave him the

best actor award for his role in SHAHIR PARSHARAM. The Rasarang weekly too gave him the Vasantrya Pehelvan Shield for being the best character actor in the same film. He was also selected as the first principal of the Film Institute of Poona, but he resigned from the post after one year.

### **Baburao Pendharkar**

Baburao Pendharkar's name must be mentioned as a versatile film star of the pre-independence days. His first role was in the silent film SAIRANDHRI



**Baburao Pendharkar**

of 'Maharashtra Film Company'. He also played some roles in Prabhat's silent pictures. But his real screen career began with his role in AYODHYECHA RAJA. He changed the traditional notions of a villain. He gave a new look to the role of villain. His portrayal of a hypocrite in the film DHARMAVIR was a unique sample of acting. Later he also played leading roles in DEVATA, SUKHA-CHA SHODH, PAHILA PALANA, etc. One very rarely comes across artistes who can play the roles of a villain and

a hero with equal polish. His roles in AMRIT, BHAKTA DAMAJI, VIKRAMADITYA, PAHILI NAJAR, VALMIKI, etc. were well received in those days. In the post-independence period he ably played roles in JAI MALHAR, MANACHE PAAN, MAHATMA PHULE and other films.

## **Shahu Modak**

Shahu Modak was the second actor after Vinayak to make his mark as a romantic hero in Marathi films during pre-independence days. His roles in MANOOS, MAZA MULGA, PAHILI MANGALAGAUR, TUZACH and other social films were greatly acclaimed. His portrayal of a policeman in MANOOS was an unforgettable experience. However, his roles in mythological films were more appreciated than his social roles. He earned popularity as screen's Lord Krishna. He started his film career also with the portrayal of Krishna in SHYAMSUNDER. He who hailed from Ahmednagar is the son of a clergyman. He was discovered by Bhalji Pendharkar who brought him for the role of Krishna in SHYAMSUNDER. His role of Sant Dnyaneshwar too brought him immense popularity. However, the Hindi screen benefited more from his talent.

## **B. Nandrekar**

Like Shahu Modak another Maharashtrian artiste, B. Nandrekar, began his career in Marathi films and earned reputation as a Hindi actor. His first role was of Krishna in the silent film MAHARATHI KARNA of Maharashtra Film Company. His first talkie was AMAR SHAHID. Later he appeared in the Marathi film GORA KUMBHAR, MARATHYANCHI DUHI, SANT TUKARAM, CHANDRARAO MORE, etc. But after attaining fame in the Hindi film AMAR JYOTI of 'Prabhat' he turned to Hindi films. His noteworthy Hindi films were BAGWAN, CHITRALEKHA, KAIDI, HAMARA HINDUSTAN, BACHPAN, LADY DOCTOR, etc. He was also fortunate enough to get a chance to tour Africa in connection with the outdoor shooting of the film AFRICA ME HIND. Nandrekar became a very popular actor in Hindi films. The chappals used by him in the film BAGWAN became fashionable by the name Nandrekar Chappal. This alone is enough to prove his popularity. His suit against the 'Prabhat' was the topic of discussion. There were differences between him and the Prabhat management in connection with his contract with that company. He filed a suit against it. His lawyers were the late Mr. Jinnah and Mr. Setalwad who won the case for him. He was the first actor to work as a free lance artiste in films.

## Chandrakant

Chandrakant Mandare who during the post-independence period was the most sought-after hero of films with rural background was the most popular hero of Marathi mythological films during the pre-independence days. He was the hero of Baburao Painter's SAVKARI PASH which was his first film. Before that he had played a small role in the Hindi picture HONHAR. His real successful screen career began with his performance in Bhalji Pendharkar's RAJA GOPICHAND. His portrayal of Ram in the films BHARAT BHET and RAMRAJYA took him to the pinnacle of glory. After this performance many people are said to have even worshipped him as Ram. His role of Sambhaji in THORATANCHI KAMALA was

**Damuanna Malvankar**



of a very high standard. He was also the hero of Prabhat's SHEJARI. He is a fine painter. He had not joined the film industry to become an actor. He was a poster painter. But Baburao Painter made him an actor. He still continues to paint; landscape painting is his forte.

### **Damuanna and Jog**

Damuanna Malvankar and Jog acquired popularity during this period as comedians. Damuanna had changed to films from the stage. He began his screen career with a small role in THAKICHE LAGNA of Bhat-Bedekar Productions. But it was



- his role in Vinayak's BRAHMACHARI that made him popular. His squint eye and his humorous disposition were made judicious use of by Vinayak in BRANDICHI BATLI, LAGNA PAHAVE KARUN and SARKARI PAHUNE. His roles in ARDHANGI, PAHILI MANGALAGAUR, SANGAM, MAZE BAL, TUZACH, CHIMUKALA SAUN SAR were well received. Jog joined the screen through Shalini Cinetone's PRATIBHA. But his talent for acting got scope in Vinayak's films. The films LAGNA PAHAVE KARUN and SARKARI PAHUNE were notable for Damuanna's Chimanrao and Jog's Gundyabhau. The two well-known humorous characters of Marathi literature were so to say immortalized on the screen by the two. Jog's highpitched voice also contributed to his popularity.

#### Salvi



#### Salvi

Dadasaheb Salvi also acquired popularity during this period as an excellent character actor. Starting with the silent films of 'Imperial Film Company' he acted in Saraswati Cinetone's BHAKTA PRAHLAD and CHHATRAPATI SAMBHAJI in the latter of which he played the role of Kalusha. Under the guidance of Master Vinayak,<sup>9</sup> his talent matured. His roles in ARDHANGI, AMRIT, MAZE BAL, etc. became very popular. After the death of Vinayak, he fell to the background. But



after his roles in KANYADAN, SANGATE AIKA of post-independence period he gained confidence again. Rasarang film magazine awarded him the Vasantryao Pehelwan Shield for his excellent acting in KANYADAN.



Master Vitthal

### Master Vitthal

The popular hero of silent film days and of the first Indian talkie ALAMARA, Master Vitthal earned the appreciation of the film-goers for his roles of hero in historical films. He did play in social films like SOONBAI, SASURVAS and AMRIT. But his roles in historical films like CHHATRAPATI SAMBHAJI, NETAJI PALKAR and BAHIRJI NAIK became immensely popular. He also successfully played the role of Prince Thak-sen. He had a role in RAMSHASTRI too

and he was the villain of the film RUKMINI SWAYAMWAR. He had directed the film AUT GHATKECHA RAJA.

Zunzarrao Pawar, who once was the villain of silent screen moved the hearts of the cine-goers by playing the delicate role of a peasant in the film SAVKARI PASH. Bhaurao Datar who was another film star of the silent screen days shone in the films NETAJI PALKAR, CHANDRARAO MORE, MAZE BAL, etc. Dnyanba Mane and Manajirao Mane played supporting

roles in the 'Prabhat'. Shankarrao Bhosle after his celebrated Tanaji in **SINHAGAD** also started playing supporting roles. Shankarrao Kulkarni who was the hero of **SANT SAKHU** and **DAHA VAJATA**, later was seen in many supporting roles in the films of Prabhat. Many other actors like Vasant Thengdi, Ganpatrao Tambat, Master Chhotu, Kaki, Bhagwat, Vinayak Kale, Buasaheb, Nandu Khote, Madhu Apte, I. T. Nimbalkar, Danve, etc. played some memorable supporting roles. Raja Paranjape came into limelight by his role of Dutonde in **SOONBAI** and **SASURVAS**. G. D. Madgulkar who was later to become a story writer had played small roles in many films produced by Vinayak. In **PAHILA PALANA** he was the father of the hero, and in Bhalji Pendharkar's **BAHIRJI NAIK** he was seen in the role of Adilshah.

### **Child actors**

Many child actors made their mark during this period. Today's well-known singing stage actor Ram Marathe won popularity by his title role in Prabhat's **GOPALKRISHNA**. His role as a hotel-boy in **MANOOS** was also greatly appreciated. Ram Marathe's younger brother Anant Marathe won encomiums by his consummate portrayal of Ramshastri, the boy. His role of boy Chandramohan in **GEETA** was also noteworthy. Parsharam's role of Pendya in **GOPALKRISHNA** was marvellous. The roles played by starlets Yeshwant, Madhukar, Govind and Sumitra in **SANT DNYANESHWAR** were the film's special attraction. Vasanti acquired great popularity during this period. Her role of an untouchable girl in **DHARMATMA** moved the hearts of many a cine-goer. Her other pictures include **AMAR JYOTI**, **KUNKU**, etc. Later when she grew up she acted in Jayant Desai's **BHAKTARAJ**. After marriage, she never appeared on the screen. Baby Shakuntala followed in the footsteps of Vasanti and attained immense popularity. She began with a small role in **DAHA VAJATA** and followed it up with the small girl wife of Ramshastri in the film **RAMSHASTRI**. Alaka Achrekar appeared in many films of Vinayak. She portrayed very tenderly the daughter of a Chambhar in **AMRIT**. Baby Vimal also starred in Vinayak's films. So did today's famous playback singer Lata Mangeshkar. It is in **PAHILI MANGALAGAUR** that Lata sang her first film song under the music direction Datta Dayekar.



A scene from SANT DNYANESHWAR

## Hindi Artistes

Many Hindi screen actors like Mubarak (SAUNGADI), Gope, David (APLE GHAR), Chandramohan (JWALA, APLE GHAR, GEETA), Naimpally (APLE GHAR), Zubeda (RADHA-MOHAN), Ashalata (PREMVIR) played roles in Marathi films in this period. But of all these artistes only Chandramohan made his mark. His screen career began in Maharashtra when he played the role of Raj Guru in the Hindi version of AMRIT MANTHAN. Later his role of a crippled in Prabhat's AMAR JYOTI was greatly appreciated. It was in the Hauns Pictures' JWALA that he first appeared as a Marathi-speaking actor. Later he also played roles in the Marathi films. APLE GHAR and GEETA, two Marathi films produced by Hindi film companies. His performances in both these pictures were memorable. His double role of father and son in GEETA must rank very high among the double roles on the Indian screen so far. Recently a film entitled USTAD was made from this Marathi film GEETA. The double role of Chandramohan was played by Ashok Kumar. However, Ashok Kumar was nowhere near Chandramohan. There has so far been no actor with such rugged personality, princely appearance and piercing eyes like Chandramohan on the Indian screen.

## Music

With the advent of talkies the class of music directors also came into existence. This class was absent in the silent screen days. The musicians could be seen in those days in the theatre in which the film was released. They would be there just as today they sit for accompaniment in front of the stage during a drama performance. In order to make the silent films alive these musicians would play appropriate music. Today's well-known music director Vasant Desai would offer his services free of charge in those days, just to enable himself to see the film gratis. With the coming of talkies the musicians moved into the studios. The musicians became the mainstay of the film behind the screen. They even appeared on the screen to give accompaniment to a singing star. For instance in AYODHYECHA RAJA they were seen playing music while Taramati sang a song in a boat. Today this idea seems queer. But it must be remembered that background music was not

in existence in those days. With the introduction of background music in the films the musicians ceased to appear on the screen.

Govindrao Tembe gave the music for AYODHYECHA RAJA, the first Marathi talkie. Being a stage music director, he introduced the tradition in the films. This tradition was carried forward by Annasahib Mainkar, Rane, Gundopant Walavalkar, etc. Later Keshavrao Bhole brought about transformation in the film music. It was he who introduced the orchestra in the films. In AMRIT MANTHAN background music could be seen in full glory for the first time in Marathi. Master Krishnarao too established a new tradition by this characteristic music. With the support and encouragement of a financially sound film company like 'Prabhat', Messrs. Bhole and Krishnarao could conduct various experiments in music. Dada Chandeekar and Datta Davjekar rendered valuable services to the screen by giving music to Vinayak's films. Dada Chandeekar introduced for the first time in Marathi films *lavni* music in BRANDICHI BATLI. Other notable persons who rendered valuable services to the Marathi screen as a music director in those days were Shankarrao Vyas, C. Balaji, Vishwanath Buwa, Jadhav, D. P. Korgaonkar, etc.



## V. Shantaram and Master Vinayak

IT WAS V. SHANTARAM AND MASTER VINAYAK who showed new horizons to the Marathi screen during the pre-independence days. The achievements of Bhalji Pendharkar, Damle, Fattehlal, Vishram Bedekar, etc. cannot also be forgotten. Bhalji Pendharkar established an independent tradition of historical films. It was he who showed the way of silver jubilees to Marathi films. The pair Damle-Fattehlal earned renown not only in India but also abroad as able creators of films based on the lives of saints. Vishram Bedekar by producing social films opened new doors to the Marathi film directors who had so far been busy searching the pages of history and mythology for their film material. But V. Shantaram and Master Vinayak are the real architects of Marathi screen in this period. They shaped the future of Marathi film industry in the pre-independence days after the advent of talkies. Therefore a comparison between these two great architects of Marathi film industry becomes inevitable.

### V. Shantaram changes the nature of films

While comparing these two architects of Marathi films, it would be interesting to know how they came into the film industry. Shantaram joined the films in his boyhood during the silent screen days. While Vinayak joined it when the first talkie had been made. This was the basic difference between the beginning of the careers of the two stalwarts. When Vinayak joined the films 'Prabhat' was embarking upon a successful career. But when Shantaram joined the 'Maharashtra Film Company' the circumstances were entirely different. Many artistes of that company at that time were working there just for a meal. Obviously Shantaram had to work harder than Vinayak in the beginning. No doubt Vinayak had to go through very difficult days later in his screen career but in the beginning it was smooth sailing for him. Vinayak came into the films as an actor; but Shantaram had to work as an apprentice in the 'Maharashtra Film Company' just for a couple of meals a day. What did he not do in those days? He mixed paints under the guidance of the make-up man. He washed the laboratory and did any odd work asked to do by the art director.

He would walk miles together with the camera on his head at the time of outdoor shooting. Thus he did all sorts of work in every department of film production.

But while doing all this work he kept on studying the functioning of every department of film industry, with the result that he acquired a full knowledge of all the aspects of a film. Later in life he benefited immensely from this knowledge and was able to change the very form of the film industry at that time. When the talkies came, the screen was heavily influenced by the theatre. Shantaram changed all this. It was he who made use of craneshots, trollyshots, zoomlense for the first time. A skilful use of these technical devices enabled him to lend a new beauty to the films. He proved thereby that films were different from dramas. It was he who made effective use of close-ups for the first time on the screen. He proved that background music could instil life in each scene of a film. He showed how with special light effect night scenes could be shot even in day time and it was he who made an attempt, though not so successful in those days, of producing a coloured picture.

### **Vinayak had no technical outlook**

Vinayak did apprenticeship in film-craft under the guidance of Shantaram himself, but could not acquire the technical outlook necessary for the production of films which Shantaram possessed in abundance. Vinayak had always to depend on others regarding the technical side of the film. R. S. Junnarkar was the technical adviser of Vinayak, according to whose advice he would arrange the scenes. Fortunately Vinayak could secure the co-operation of an ace photographer like Pandurang Naik. His eyes were so light-conscious that he did not have to make use of the meter which other skilful photographers required to ascertain whether the light arrangement on the face of an artists at the time of shooting was proper. He had an uncanny sense of determining through the naked eye whether the light was correct. There has been no other photographer in the Indian film industry who had such a perception of light arrangement. This skill of Pandurang Naik and the technical guidance of R. S. Junnarkar were of great help to Vinayak. As a result of it, his films did not have many technical defects. However, Vinayak could not do something constructive in the technical side of film-craft just as Shantaram did.

As Vinayak was Shantaram's cousin he did not have to go through hardships in the beginning of his film career as Shantaram had done by undergoing apprenticeship the hard way in every department of the film. This may be one of the reasons why Vinayak's films were not so technically flawless. But by nature Vinayak was not a technician. After R. S. Junnarkar and Pandurang Naik had left him he would be nervous about such defects. Whenever he came to know about some technical improvements in films in Bombay, he would make sincere efforts to implement it in his films back in Kolhapur. But he would never dare to make any technical innovation of his own. He would be more interested in the academic aspect of the film. He was a writer by temperament. It is because of this that although he had received training under the guidance of Shantaram his outlook towards films was quite different from that of Shantaram.

### **Contradictory outlooks**

If we study the films of Shantaram and Vinayak we will quickly realize the contradictory outlooks of both towards the films. The technical skill of Shantaram in his old and new films pleases one's eyes. But the literary element so conspicuous in Vinayak's films is absent in Shantaram's pictures. The reason is that Shantaram would look to the film from a technical angle while Vinayak would look at it through the writer's view-point. Though Shantaram's films may claim technical superiority sometimes the surfeit of technique would create artificiality which was never to be found in Vinayak's films. This is why Vinayak's films contained more dramatic element which was so effective that even today the spectators cannot wipe out their imprint on their minds.

Vinayak was a teacher before he joined the films. But his elder brother Baburao Pendharkar brought him in the films. While leaving the school he was teaching in, he had said that he would remain a teacher in film industry and he kept the promise. He produced films which taught something to the society and made it think.

While Shantaram gave concrete shape to the technical side of the films, Vinayak placed emphasis on the stories of the films. This does not mean that Shantaram never produced thought-provoking films. He raised the voice against



unequal marriages between old men and young girls in the film KUNKU. Even in the film DHARMATMA, based on the life of saint Eknath, the problem of the uplift of the untouchables has been very subtly handled. In SHEJARI the stress was on Hindu-Muslim unity. In an age in which young men placed before them the ideal of Devdas, who became a pessimist as a result of disappointment in love, Shantaram gave the message in his film MANOOS that to become pessimistic because of disappointment in love and to put an end to one's life is not the right way because life is not for dying. This is indeed a unique achievement of Shantaram. But Shantaram took to the production of such thought-provoking social films after Vinayak had trodden the path; besides such thought-provoking and social films to the credit of Shantaram are few and far between. After he had left Prabhat he has not been able to produce any film in the tradition of KUNKU, MANOOS and SHEJARI with the exception of perhaps DO ANKHE BARAH HATH of Rajkamal. No doubt his films have attained a new high in technical perfection and he has been interested more in the production of mythologicals, historicals and decorative films. The first silent picture that he directed for the 'Prabhat' was GOPALKRISHNA, a mythological. AYODHYECHA RAJA, the first talkie that he produced for the 'Prabhat', was a mythological and the first film he produced under the banner of 'Rajkamal' after quitting 'Prabhat' was SHAKUNTALA also a mythological. The majority of the films produced by him consist of mythological, historical and decorative pictures.

However Vinayak never took interest in such films. Even though he may have produced a mythological like SUBHADRA late in his life, in the prime of his life he never even thought of such films. When it was proposed to produce the film SANT SAKHU under the banner of 'Navayug', he plainly dismissed the idea by saying that he did not believe in such mythological stories. This one thing alone is enough to prove how Vinayak's outlook on films was different. Therein lies the key to his success. It was he who for the first time gave vent to problems of the interest to the society. It was he who showed on the screen for the first time how the parents of the bride were exploited on account of the dowry system. He explained the true meaning of celibacy by sarcastically criticizing the foolish notions of celibacy. It was he who put forward on the

screen the evils of alcoholism. It was also he who expounded on the screen the problem of unmarried mothers. He exposed on the screen the chaotic conditions prevailing in the princely States. Thus he handled many issues which were of interest to the society. All these issues were not just contemporary but still extant. It is because of this that years after his death his films are still popular. Even in the midst of films which have attained technical perfection the hold of Vinayak's films on the film-lovers still persists. The characteristic of his films is that he has achieved a fine combination of humour and pathos. This combination of humour and pathos could never be found in Shantaram's films. From this point of view he had created a new formula of his films. However those who came after him could not succeed with that formula. Vinayak introduced the tradition of utilizing for the film stories first rank writers. He made such well-known writers like Mama Varerkar, V. S. Khandekar, Acharya Atre and C. V. Joshi write stories for his films. Previously some directors had made use of writers who had no association with the film industry. But no one could treat the stories on the screen as beautifully as Vinayak.

The harmonious blending of the stories of Khandekar and Atre and Vinayak's direction was indeed without parallel. As he was a very sincere student of literature he could appreciate the literary merits of a story. He would at once be one with the story. Owing to his ability to identify himself with the story of the film he would give it the right treatment on the screen. The story is told about Vinayak's well-known film DHARMAVIR that Atre would write each scene of that film at night, hand it over to Vinayak in the morning and Vinayak would film it immediately. But in spite of this system of shooting of the film, there is no break in the sequence. Such was Vinayak's understanding of literary values. There had been many attempts by others to produce films based on the stories of Khandekar and Atre, but no one could do justice to Khandekar and Atre as Vinayak had done. Vinayak's talent for this was absent in other directors.

### **Blending of art and business**

Shantaram could achieve a fine blending of art and business. Baburao Painter was Shantaram's Guru. Baburao was an artist through and through. But he

could never do business. Owing to his habit of doing work only when inspired he would never be able to finish the shooting of film within the schedule. This entailed expenditure beyond the fixed budget. Shantaram picked up the virtues of his Guru and discarded his whimsicalities. Shantaram became a very practical man with a penchant for judiciousness in money matters. It is on account of these virtues that he could make such meritorious progress from a tin-shed studio in Mangalwar Peth at Kolhapur to an up-to-date modern studio in Poona on the strength of co-operation. Even after leaving 'Prabhat' he built up the 'Rajkamal' with tenacity. He is the only director who has been shining on the horizon of film industry ever since the days of silent screen. To no one else success has come so gloriously. From this point of view Shantaram's position in the Indian filmdom is unique.

### **Lack of practicalness in financial matters**

Use of montage for making every scene more eloquent is the special characteristic of Shantaram's direction. It was he who introduced the uniqueness of the use of montage to film-makers in India. Vinayak who served as an apprentice under him picked up this virtue of his Guru. He made use of montage very artistically and appropriately in many of his films. Vinayak picked up most of the good virtues of Shantaram. But he could not master his judiciousness in financial matters. That is why although the films made by him under the banner of 'Hauns Pictures' were recipient of immense popularity financially, the 'Hauns Pictures' could not make progress like 'Prabhat'. As a result of his whimsicality his estimate about the cost of the film would prove wrong. Thus JWALA financially was a flop and BRAHMACHARI which came after it and proved a box-office hit had to be sold for a song. All the profit accruing from this film was pocketed by the distributor and Vinayak had only success in his hand. Even this success could not be preserved by him owing to lack of practicalness. Consequently his financial condition deteriorated and the films produced under such stress and strain proved failures. The old spark was nowhere to be seen. It was with worries that this great artiste left the world on 19th August 1947.

The sudden and untimely death of Vinayak proved a curse to the Marathi film industry. Shantaram left 'Prabhat'. This development also proved a curse

to the Marathi film trade. As a result of Vinayak's death, the tradition of films with new ideas was broken and as a result of Shantaram's leaving the 'Prabhat' the latter which had become the pride of not only Marathi film industry but of the whole of India disintegrated itself. No one could sustain the structure of this film company which was collapsing. Later after building up a powerful film company like 'Rajkamal' he did not pay much attention to the production of Marathi films. That is why we must note with great regret that Shantaram's departure from 'Prabhat' and Vinayak's untimely death dealt a hard blow to the Marathi film industry. The damage caused by it has not yet been repaired. The tradition of the glorious films of Vinayak and 'Prabhat' which were known for their freshness has yet to be restarted. There is little likelihood of this becoming a reality. The tradition of Vinayak and 'Prabhat' has gone with them for ever. Only sweet memories of that tradition have remained.



### A review of pre-independence period

**D**URING the fourteen years from 1932-1946 in all 129 Marathi films were produced. During the silent screen days the emphasis was on mythological and historical stories. The outlook changed with the coming of talkies. Of course the predominance of mythological and historical films continued as before. More than fifty mythological films were produced during this period. Often the same subject was chosen by many producers. Thus there were three films on TUKARAM. Of these two were released in 1932 after the advent of talkies. There were eight films on the life of Lord Krishna and two each on Sant Sakhu, Sant Tulsidas, Damaji, Dhruva, Harishchandra-Taramati, etc. However only the mythological films produced by Prabhat received popularity. As regards historical films all were attracted by the period of Shivaji. Of the fourteen historical films, with the exception of RAMSHASTRI and UMAJI NAIK all others were based on stories relating to the period of Shivaji. Of all these historical films RAMSHASTRI stood itself out as a different film. It should be noted even after twenty years that no one has been able to produce a picture of such a high standard. Over forty social films were produced during this period dominated by mythologicals and historicals. During the silent screen days, SAVKARI PASH was the only social film. Comparatively, therefore, the production of social films progressed well after the advent of the talkies.

#### Prabhat's planned work

'Prabhat' produced the largest number of Marathi films during this period. It produced eighteen Marathi films within fourteen years. With the exception of SINHAGAD and TUKARAM, Hindi versions of all others were put out. CHANDRASENA was even made in Tamil language. Besides, the above eighteen films the 'Prabhat' produced Hindi films AMAR JYOTI, RAJPUT RAMANI, VAHAN, NAI KAHANI, CHAND, LAKHA RANI, etc. The 'Saraswati Cinetone' and 'Hauns Pictures' produced twelve and eight pictures each during this period, 'Navayug' seven, 'Shalini Cinetone' five, 'Kolhapur Cinetone' four, 'Nava-Hauns' three,

'Atre Pictures' three and 'Famous Arun' three. Other film companies could not make much progress beyond one or two films. 'The Imperial Film Company', 'Shree Mahalaxmi Cinetone', 'Minerva Films', 'The Circo', 'Ranjit', 'National Studios' and 'Prakash Pictures' which were Hindi film companies also produced Marathi films during this period. But only the 'Prakash Pictures' efforts were crowned with success. In order to produce 129 films, fifty-five film companies functioned for 14 years. Of these fifty-five only a handful like the 'Prabhat', 'Hauns', 'The Saraswati Cinetone' and 'The Navayug' could attain success. 'Prabhat' was the only one that was standing on a very sound financial footing. All its activities were planned. This systematic planning could not be adopted by other film companies. The result was that although their films attained popularity these film companies could not make much progress. Planned production of films was not the only characteristic of the 'Prabhat'. 'Prabhat' was so to say a synonym for team work. 'Prabhat' had established its own distribution agency also for the distribution of its own films. There were branches of these agencies in all the cities in India. This resulted in enabling Prabhat to earn hundred per cent profit. This farsightedness regarding the distribution and release of pictures was not to be found in other film companies. They had to depend on others for capital. They had to sell to the distributors their films for the sake of capital. Consequently although, the quality of their production was very high the profits were pocketed by the distributors. As the 'Prabhat' had its own distribution machinery the failure of one picture or the other could not damage its position. This was not the case of the film companies which were dependent on distributors. As a result of this many film companies could not attain financial stability although their films proved hits. It is this development that was responsible for the later downfall of Marathi film industry.

### **International recognition**

During the fourteen years from 1932 to 1946, barring the last five years of Government control, Marathi films brought fame and honour to Maharashtra. Prabhat's films attained record popularity from Kashmir to Kanyakumari. There was no film lover at that time who did not take some interest in the

films produced by Prabhat. The films produced by Hauns Pictures too became equally popular. V. S. Khandekar was awarded the first prize for the story of CHHAYA by the Calcutta Press Association. It was also awarded Gohar Medal. The Bengal Film Journalists' Association awarded the best actor prize to Gajanan Jagirdar for his roles in SHEJARI and RAMSHASTRI. The same Association awarded the first prize for the best child actor to Anant Marathe for his role as boy Ramshastri. Marathi films got international recognition during this period. Maharashtra was the first to be honoured by a Marathi film being selected for an international festival. Prabhat's AMRIT MANTHAN was shown in the Venice International Film Festival in 1934. Later in 1936 Prabhat's Hindi AMAR JYOTI was shown at Venice in the 4th Exhibition of Cinematograph festival. The credit of earning the first foreign prize goes to Maharashtra too. Prabhat's SANT TUKARAM was shown in the 5th International Exhibition of Cinematograph Festival in 1937 and was declared one of the three best films of the world. Cambridge asked for a copy of this film because the students who studied the film art in the Cambridge University were intensely interested in seeing a picture which ran for 58 weeks, continuously in one cinema house. They also sent a letter to the Prabhat expressing satisfaction about the film after they had seen it. The world renowned director Frank Capra was very much impressed on seeing the film SANT DNYANESHWAR and wrote an article on it in the periodical American Cinematographer. He had expressed astonishment in this article about how it was possible for the 'Prabhat' to produce such a beautiful film in a small town like Poona without even up-to-date machinery. RAMRAJYA was also shown in 1947 in Toronto, (Canada) during Canadian National Exhibition.

### **All-India market**

The majority of the Marathi producers were prone to produce Hindi versions of their Marathi films. As a result of this, films from Maharashtra got all-India market. Although in the Hindi versions of Marathi films there would be non-Maharashtrians playing the leading roles, Maharashtrian producers were inclined to give leading roles to Maharashtrian artistes. Consequently, Shahu Modak, Shanta Apte, Durga Khote, Shanta Hublikar, Gajanan Jagirdar,

Snehaprabha Pradhan, Master Vinayak, Baburao Pendharkar, Meenakshi, Damuanna, etc. were as popular in Hindi as in Marathi. The system of working in the films on monthly pay basis was prevalent in those days. Every artiste was known during this period as the artiste of a particular company. An actor would be paid anything between Rs. 50 to Rs. 60 and Rs. 400. Shanta Apte alone was a star that got a four-figure salary which was the highest in those days. B. Nandrekar of 'Prabhat' at the time of the production of SANT TUKARAM was paid only Rs. 60. 'Saraswati Cinetone' paid only Rs. 70 to Ratnamala. At the time of SHEJARI Gajanan Jagirdar was given a salary of Rs. 400 while Shahu Modak got Rs. 300. The conditions in the 'Hauns Pictures' were quite different. The actors got salaries which were higher than in the 'Prabhat'. Meenakshi's salary was around Rs. 2,000. Damuanna Malvankar received a salary of Rs. 1,400 in 1938. Later in the 'Prafulla' his salary had reached Rs. 1,800. During the war-time actors who played supporting roles in one film would be compelled to play only secondary roles in the following pictures. The selection of the actors for a picture would be done very rigorously after the most careful consideration of his or her suitability for the role. That actor's previous popularity was not generally taken into consideration. Every actor would have to be present in the studio whether there was shooting or not. The actors were also not allowed to act outside without the permission of the company. The actors were loyal to the company. The story goes that Vatsalabai Kumthekar who was a staff artiste of 'Hauns Pictures' asked some persons who had approached her to arrange her programme, to seek the permission of Vinayak first. In the 'Prabhat' the artistes would be made to take exercise when there would be no shooting. For this purpose there was a gymnasium. Before the shooting of any film started, the actors would be given sufficient rehearsal. They had to learn the dialogues by heart for which there was a rehearsal assistant. The Marathi and the Hindi version of the same film would cost Rs. 1,40,000 in those days.

Atre, Khandekar, Bhalji Pendharkar and other writers would write the songs of the films in addition to the story and dialogues. Govindrao Tembe, for instance, would write all the songs himself. There were no independent lyric writers. Only 'Prabhat' appointed in those days Shantaram Athavale as



lyric writer. But he had to do the duty of taking rehearsals during spare time. Keshavrao Dhaibar, V. Avadhut, Y. V. Prahlad Dutta, Sarpotdar, Saju Naik, Pandurang Naik, Ganpatrao Shinde and Vasudev Karnataki were the most well-known photographers of the time. Vishnupant Damle, Shankarrao Damle, Kaka Modak, Vishnupant Chavan and Appasaheb Jadhav were among the better-known sound recorders. A. R. Sheikh, Junnarkar, Madhav Shinde and Madhav Kamble were known as editors. S. Fattehlah and Balasaheb Thatte were art directors.

## **SOME IMPORTANT SILENT FILMS**

### **Phalke Film Company**

RAJA HARISHCHANDRA ; BHASMASUR-MOHINI, SĀTYAWAN-SAVITRI, LANKA DAHAN.

### **Hindustan Film Company**

KRISHNA JANMA ; KALIYA MARDAN ; VALI-SUGRIVA ; NALA-DAMAYANTI ; PARSHURAM ; RITU MADALASA ; ANANTVRAT ; DAKSH PRAJAPATI ; KRISHNASHISHTAI ; SATYABHAMA VIVAH ; DRAUPADI VASTRAHARAN ; MALHARI-MARTAND ; DATTA JANMA ; RAMRAJYAVIYOG ; AGRYAHUN SUTKA ; BAJAJI NIMBALKAR ; SANT DAMAJI ; JARASANDH VADH ; SHISHUPAL VADH ; VASANTSENA ; GOKARN MAHABALESHWAR ; SANT JANA-BAI ; LAV-KUSH ; SAIMANTAK RANI ; RUKHMANGAT-MOHINI ; SATI MAHANANDA ; SETU BANDHAN.

### **Maharashtra Film Company**

SAIRANDHRI ; VATSALA HARAN ; BHAKTA DAMAJI ; SINHAGAD ; SAVKARI PASH ; MAYA BAJAR ; GAJA-GAURI ; KRISHNA-VATAR ; SATI PADMINI ; SAVITRI ; SHAHALA SHAHA ; KALYAN KHAJINA ; RANA HAMIR ; NETAJI PALKAR ; BAJIPRABHU DESHPANDE ; MURALIWALA ; LANKA.

**Prabhat Film Company**

GOPALKRISHNA ; KHUNI KHANJIR ; RANISAHEBA ; CHANDRA-  
SENA ; UDAYKAL ; ZULUM.

**Aryan Film Company**

THAKSEN RAJPUTRA ; ARYA MAHILA ; SAMSER BAHADUR ;  
GOOD-BYE MARRIAGE ; MAHARACHI POR ; GANIMI KAWA ;  
BHAWANI TALWAR.



### Marathi films (1947-1952)

**F**OLLOWING the end of second world-war in 1947 the permit system for films was abolished. The advent of independence in 1947 saw the beginning of a new era in Marathi films. The untimely death of Master Vinayak also put an end to his traditions. The Prabhat Film Company took to the production of Hindi films thus discontinuing its old traditions. The old was no more; new film companies came into existence and a new era of Marathi films was ushered in.

Mangal Pictures was the first important film institution in Maharashtra in post-war days. Two old hands of Hauns Pictures of Vinayak, Wamanrao Kulkarni and Vishnupant Chavan, started this institution. They benefited by the guidance of Baburao Pendharkar. Their first picture based on a story written by D. D. Patil was named JAI MALHAR. The scenario, the dialogues and the songs were by G. D. Madgulkar and Dada Chandekar looked after music. D. S. Ambapkar directed this picture and Baburao Pendharkar, Lalita Pawar, Chandrakant, Sumati Gupte, Saroj Borkar and Jog played the leading roles. This picture which was produced under the able guidance of Baburao Pendharkar became immensely popular. All the above-mentioned stellar roles impressed the film-lovers deeply as every actor and actress did not spare any efforts to act to perfection. An incident that took place at the time of the filming of this picture is worth mentioning. On the occasion of the filming of a particular scene Lalita Pawar asked for a jug of water. No one knew what was the purpose in asking for a jug of water. However, the request was granted and to the surprise of all Lalita Pawar drank water from it without touching the jug to her mouth. This lent a liveliness to her role.

Other actors also lived their roles with the result that the spectators identified the actors with their roles. A certain lady for instance wrote a letter to Chandrakant who played the role of a debaucherous Patil in JAI MALHAR condemning him for harassing his wife. Chandrakant at last brought about a meeting between his wife and this lady so as to remove the misunderstanding in her mind.

JAI MALHAR started a wave of films with a rural background. Of course there had been SAVKARI PASH of Baburao Painter in pre-independence days. But it was of a different type. As critics have rightly said one was a realistic film while the other was a sensitive one. One was beautiful while the other was fierce. There was no imitation of the imaginativeness of SAVKARI PASH but there are still attempts of imitating JAI MALHAR.

Baburao Painter opened new horizons in Marathi film industry by producing the rural film SAVKARI PASH. But the efforts went unnoticed. However JAI MALHAR, which was produced eleven years after SAVKARI PASH, has tempted film producers to-date to produce films of that type. From this point of view JAI MALHAR occupies a unique place in the history of films. There was a beautiful blending of ruggedness of rural life and *lavni* music in this film. There had been *lavni* music in BRANDICHI BATLI, SARKARI PAHUNE and other pictures before JAI MALHAR. They had proved popular too. But they did not have that romantic element in them. This romantic element was introduced for the first time in JAI MALHAR. It went to the head of the spectators. Even before this intoxication of *lavni* music had lessened, RAM JOSHI of Rajkamal was produced. This film increased the appetite of film-lovers for *lavni* music.

This film which was directed by Shantaram for the first time since 1942 when he left 'Prabhat' at once appealed to the film-lovers immensely. There was an unusual experiment in it of bringing on the screen the life of a ballad-writer. The words of the *lavni* 'Jundara Manamadhe Bharali' acquired a unique beauty on the screen owing to its artistic picturization. The range of Jairam Shiledar's voice had a great scope. Hansa Wadkar shone with a new personality and Vasant Desai's music reached new dimensions. G. D. Madgulkar's *lavni* was conspicuous in this film with a new brilliance. RAM JOSHI became very popular. But it must not be forgotten that half the credit goes to Baburao Painter who directed the picture in the beginning. The unprecedented success of the films JAI MALHAR and RAM JOSHI gave a new impetus to the production of films with rural background and popular music. It is at this juncture that the Marathi films saw a new ray of hope in Raja



G. D. Madgulkar

Paranjape who produced a series of very interesting pictures. Shri Shah provided capital to Raja Paranjape at that time. He established the 'Shah Productions' and gave an opportunity to Raja Paranjape to become an independent director. The latter chose the story 'Jai-Jui' written by V. S. Sukthankar and produced the film BALIDAN. He introduced in this film the practice of giving opportunity and prominence to newcomers. Thus the cast of BALIDAN consisted

of new-comers like Shalini, Baby Bhate, Chandrakant Gokhale, etc. He even brought out the Hindi version of this film entitled DO KALIYAN. This first attempt of Raja Paranjape at direction was successful. Although BALIDAN did not attain great success it had long runs at Kolhapur and Poona. The 'Shah Productions' did not last long, but Raja Paranjape attracted the attention of the public owing to his skilful direction of BALIDAN. It was but natural that he should be entrusted with the direction of JIVACHA SAKHA the second film of Mangal Pictures which had shifted to Poona. Madgulkar wrote the scenario, dialogues and songs of this film and Sudhir Phadke gave the music. The trio Paranjape, Madgulkar and Phadke which became popular later came together for the first time in this picture which celebrated its Silver Jubilee.

With JIVACHA SAKHA actress Sulochana came to Poona from Kolhapur. She was the leading lady of Bhalji Pendharkar's historical JAI BHAWANI which was directed by Jaishankar Danve, an assistant of Bhalji Pendharkar. Pendharkar later produced MITH BHAKAR, a film with rural setting. However a great calamity befell the film-world of Kolhapur at this time. The arson that followed the assassination of Gandhiji destroyed the Prabhakar Studio. The film MITH BHAKAR was also burnt but Bhalji Pendharkar produced the picture again. However, the destruction of Prabhakar Studio dealt a great blow to the film industry in Kolhapur. The new MITH BHAKAR celebrated its silver jubilee. Artistes like Sulochana, Chandrakant, Master Vitthal, etc. contributed to a great extent to the success of this picture. However SHILANGANACHE SONE and MI DARU SODLI the two pictures that followed could not become so popular.

MERE LAL was another film that was destroyed in the fire together with MITH BHAKAR. Bal Gajbar who was art director of Rajkamal's SHAKUNTALA had produced this picture by forming his own company known as 'Maharashtra Chitravani'. However, undaunted by this initial ill-luck, Bal Gajbar re-filmed that picture which attained considerable success. Bal Gajbar followed this Hindi picture with two Marathi ones. P. L. Deshpande had written the stories of these two films, namely NAVARA-BAYAKO and GOKULCHA RAJA which had good runs. Bal Gajbar, however, proved a failure in the production of Hindi films.

P. L. Deshpande had acted in the films VANDE MATARAM and BHAGYA REKHA together with his wife Sunita Deshpande, before writing the stories of NAVARA-BAYAKO and GOKULCHA RAJA. The two films, however, did not prove popular. Shantaram Athavale was the director of BHAGYA REKHA and Ram Gabale directed VANDE MATARAM. Later the P. L. Deshpande-Ram Gabale pair became considerably popular. Mangal Pictures invited this pair. Ram Gabale directed DEV PAVALA whose scenario and dialogues were written by G. D. Madgulkar. DEV PAVALA can be cited as good humorous picture produced by utilising the talent of Damuanna Malvankar for the first time after the death of Master Vinayak. Damuanna had played the role of innocent Hanmanta in this picture which

was a hit and P. L. Deshpande was responsible for music which also became popular. Ram Gabale's JOHAR MAIBAAP, JASHAS TASE and MOTH MANSE followed DEV PAVALA, but of these three JASHAS TASE became popular. One sees for the first time Dombari community life depicted in this picture. Usha Kiran played a very impressive role in this picture which laid the foundations of her popularity. Sudhir Phadke's music also was immensely applauded by the public.

### **Return of Acharya Atre**

Acharya Atre returned to the film industry during this period not merely as producer and writer but director and even actor. He produced the humorous hit MORUCHI MAUSHI based on CHARLIE'S AUNT. Damuanna Malvankar's feminine role of Her Highness of Kanda was the special feature of this film. However Atre's attempt to bring on the screen his own popular play LAGNACHI BEDI did not prove a success.

### **Two films of 'Famous Pictures'**

Baburao Pai, whose Famous Pictures was busy making Hindi films also turned his attention to the Marathi films. He came out with CHUL ANI MUL his first Marathi picture in 1947. Vishram Bedekar directed this picture and C. Ramchandra gave the music. The stage actress Shanta Modak played the leading lady and Appa Pendse, the journalist, played opposite her. After this, Famous Pictures produced GALYACHI SHAPATH a humorous film directed by R. V. Rane. The two films, however, did not receive acclaim. The Famous Pictures also did not produce any Marathi film after that. PYAR KI BAAT and BADI BAHEN two of their Hindi films celebrated their Silver Jubilee. But this success did not bring stability to the 'Famous' which rose to fame so rapidly and the company went out of existence as quickly.

### **The exit of Prabhat**

The 'Prabhat Film Company' too came to bad days during this period. This company had produced two Hindi pictures SANT JANABAI and GURUDEV DATTA in the post-independence period and it was planning to produce a film on the life of Lokmanya Tilak with Gajanan Jagirdar in the leading role. Thus the hopes about Prabhat had risen and people



Shahu Modak and Raja Nene in SUBHADRA HARAN



thought that it would produce something sublime and unique. But alas! Prabhat was wound up prematurely and thus a curtain was permanently wrung on the golden chapter of Marathi film industry.

### **Raja Nene's come-back**

Raja Nene who had earned reputation by directing Prabhat's DAHA VAJATA had joined Hindi films. He staged a come-back by producing SANT RAMDAS under the banner of 'Raja Nene Productions'. He himself played the leading role in it and Ranjana for the first time appeared in Marathi films. However SANT RAMDAS proved a flop despite Raja Nene's experience with such films in the Prabhat. Several Marathi Pictures based on Saints' lives like PANDHARICHA PATIL, JOHAR MAIBAAP, SANT JANABAI, SANT NAMDEV, SANT KANHOPATRA were produced during this period, but none of them earned the approval of the people. Master Vinayak's daughter Baby Nanda appeared for the first time as a child actress in PANDHARICHA PATIL produced and directed by Raja Pandit. SANT NAMDEV was produced by Keshav Talpade, who had previously some experience of directing Hindi pictures. Malati Naphade (now Smt. Bhalchandra Pendharkar) was the leading lady of this picture. But it proved a complete flop. SANT NAMDEV and MARD MARATHA produced by 'Suramya Pictures' were not also much of a success. Talpade never returned to Marathi films after this picture. Dada Gunjal who had directed Saraswati Cinetone's SACH HAI also joined Marathi film industry. His film MAZA RAM, however, was too pedestrian.

### **Ratnaprabha and Nandrekar**

Veteran Ratnaprabha who produced SANT KANHOPATRA was a failure and her name never appeared on the screen again. Another woman producer that could not make the grade during this period was Kamalabai Manglurkar. Her first Marathi picture under the banner of 'Pradeep Pictures' after trying her hand at Hindi pictures was JANMACHI GATH. Indumati was the leading lady and Appa Pendse played opposite her. He never again appeared on the screen. The picture was an imitation of the Hindi film AARSI, but it proved to be very ordinary. Pradeep Pictures was short-lived and one never heard its name after its advertisement of the Hindi picture HALDI

GHAT. Another veteran B. Nandrekar also tried his hand at production by producing SONYACHI LANKA under the banner of 'Dost Chitra'. SONYACHI LANKA proved another flop and Nandrekar never appeared again on the screen.

Manik Pictures was the other film company worth mentioning in the post-independence period. Balasaheb Pathak, a veteran of Prabhat produced MAYA BAJAR for it. This mythological earned it a great reputation and it celebrated its silver jubilee at several places in Maharashtra. The mythological SEETA SWAYAMWAR of Vijay Chitra also proved popular. MAYA BAJAR gave Marathi films a new director in Datta Dharmadhikari, an old hand of Prabhat. SEETA SWAYAMWAR made A. R. Sheikh a director. Shakuntala and Anant Marathe who had shone as child artistes were seen in this picture as a young hero and heroine for the first time. Trick photography of E. Mohamed was the feature of MAYA BAJAR while M. N. Kulkarni employed trick photography in SEETA SWAYAMWAR with great dexterity. Unique blending of fine lyrics and melodious music marked both the pictures.

There was a surfeit of mythologicals after the unprecedented success of the above two pictures. Of the various mythologicals that were produced during this period GOKULCHA RAJA was the only one to attain popularity. Asha Bhosle gave her playback for the first time in this picture. NANDAKISHOR, another film on the life of Lord Krishna, was also acclaimed by the public. It was produced by M & T, a well-known Hindi film company. MAYA MACHHINDRA was produced by Super Pictures, another Hindi company. But it did not attain the popularity of NANDAKISHOR. MAYA MACHHINDRA, both in Hindi and Marathi, was directed by A. H. Irani, a non-Maharashtrian. However the Hindi version of NANDAKISHOR was directed by Vasantrao Joglekar who had previously produced the picture SAKHARPUDA based on a story of Vibhavari Shirurkar and under the banner of his own Mira Chitra. However it was not well received by the public and NANDAKISHOR became a hit. Nalini Jaywant acted in this, her only Marathi film in the post-independence period. PARIJATAK, a mythological directed by Raja Paranjape, is also worth

mentioning. VITTHAL-RAKHUMAI too was a box office success. This picture introduced Yeshwant Pethkar to the Marathi films. Sudhir Phadke and Y. H. Joshi of Kolhapur together produced this film under the banner of Navabharat Chitra which had previously produced VAUNSHACHA DIVA. This film can be cited as an unusual example of a film with a rural background. The life of Mang-Garudi community was depicted in this film for the first time. Another important film of this period with rural background was MANACHE PAAN. Baburao Pendharkar's role of champion wrestler was greatly acclaimed by film fans. This was the last film, directed by A. R. Sheikh, in which Lalita Pawar acted as a young woman. VAUNSHACHA DIVA brought into prominence Govind Ghanekar as a director. Its music became very popular and the *lavni* 'Rangu Bajarla Jate' was a hit.

### **PUDHCHE PAOOL and AMAR BHOOPALI**

Another important film which attained popularity owing to *lavni* music was Manik Chitra's PUDHCHE PAOOL. It outdid its previous hit KALYAN KHAJINA. G. D. Madgulkar and P. L. Deshpande wrote the scenario and dialogues from a story by Vyankatesh Madgulkar. P. L. Deshpande played the principal role and was supported by Hansa Wadkar, Vivek, Kusum Deshpande, G. D. Madgulkar and Ambapkar who all lived their roles. Raja Paranjape's Mama Chiplunkar was the special feature of this picture. The message of this picture 'Go to the village', was effectively picturised owing to the skilful direction of Raja Paranjape which captured the hearts of the film-goers. Tamasha was for the first time featured in this film realistically. All the Tamasha dances were directed by Vasant Pawar. Sudhir Phadke's music of this film had a haunting beauty. JAI MALHAR and RAM JOSHI were the pioneers of films with *lavni* music. PUDHCHE PAOOL crowned the success of these two pictures. PUDHCHE PAOOL was followed by AMAR BHOOPALI produced by Shantaram who had to his credit another hit of this kind, namely RAM JOSHI. Vishram Bedekar wrote the scenario and dialogues of the story written by C. Y. Marathe. Stage actor Panditrao Nagarkar played the role of Honaji on whose life the story was based. Sandhya played the role of Gunavanti and made her debut in the films. Bhalchandra Pendharkar, a popular stage actor, had played the role of

Bala in this film which was a stupendous box office hit. The songs in it were on the lips of everybody. Even non-Maharashtrians were enraptured by this film. It had a six-week run at Bangalore. It also obtained a prize at Venice Film Festival. Raja Nene came out with a film on PATTHE BAPURAO during the same period. But it did not attain much popularity. The voice of Chhota Gandharva, the popular singing stage actor, was heard in this picture for the first time on the screen.

### **BALA JOJO RE and STREE JANMA**

Another film with rural setting and *lavni* music that became popular during this period was BALA JOJO RE. Datta Dharmadhikari left Manik Chitra after producing MAYA BAJAR for it. He produced the film KUNKWACHA DHANI for Makarand Films. Before that he had also produced the humorous film JARA JAPOON. But it was not so well received by the public. Comparatively KUNKWACHA DHANI was greatly acclaimed by the film fans. Shanta Apte of Prabhat's KUNKU fame played a similar role in it, also supported by Keshavrao Date who played a role identical to the one he had played in KUNKU. Chittaranjan Kolhatkar played a leading role in this picture. This picture did not prove a box office hit in the traditional sense. But it became very popular and Dharmadhikari earned reputation as a director. Encouraged by this success he formed his own film company known as 'Alhad Chitra'. He chose a story by V. V. Bokil and G. D. Madgulkar wrote the scenario and songs of BALA JOJO RE from it. Vasant Pawar gave a very imaginative music to it. Suryakant secured his first leading role in this picture. Usha Kiran's popularity reached new heights owing to this picture. Although this picture thus set new standards of popularity it was not well received at Poona when it was first screened at Bhanu Vilas. For four weeks there was no response from the public at all and the producers had decided to withdraw it. However, they decided to try their luck for another week. And lo ! There were unprecedented crowds in the fifth week. Later it celebrated its Silver Jubilee. The 'Alhad Chitra' followed BALA JOJO RE with STREE JANMA HI TUZI KAHANI. Pandit Mukhram Sharma became known to the film world as a result of this picture and then he became a front-line story writer of

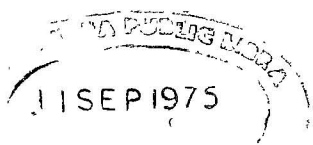
Hindi pictures. DUDH BHAAT was another picture stressing the nobility of a woman's life. Shri Ganesh Chitra produced it and the Ram Gabale-P. L. Deshpande pair again shone in it. The latter had in the intervening period become a professor. Ram Gabale brought him back to films. The story and the dialogues of this picture were written by P. L. Deshpande and he also gave music to it. As in STREE JANMA HI TUZI KAHANI this film dealt with the problem of unmarried mothers. This film too proved a huge box office hit. The success of these two pictures proved so contagious that they attracted the attention of the Hindi producers too. A. R. Kardar produced a film entitled 'JEEVAN JYOTI' which was a Hindi version of BALA JOJO RE. 'Ranjit' also came out with the Hindi version of STREE JANMA HI TUZI KAHANI under the title AURAT YE TERI KAHANI. The Censor Board had at first given 'A' certificate to STREE JANMA HI TUZI KAHANI. But later on the Board gave it 'U' certificate.

### **Film based on true story**

After the success of the above two pictures the 'Alhad Chitra' made the experiment of producing a film based on a true story. It was CHIMNI PAKHARE. Datta Dharmadhikari produced it together with its Hindi version. Baby Shakuntala played in it the role of a teen-ager. Dharmadhikari's own son Alhad played the leading role of a small boy. His acting became a topic of admiration of all.

### **Uday Kala Chitra**

Thus Alhad Chitra became the centre of hopes and aspirations of Maharashtra. But another film company which appeared to raise hopes that did not last long during this period was 'Uday Kala Chitra' founded by the late Master Vinayak. D. D. Patil had taken upon his shoulders the task of carrying on the traditions of Master Vinayak. The film JAI MALHAR based on his story had become a hit. Yet he was not getting any further chance of directing a picture. Madhav Shinde, another colleague of Master Vinayak, was also unemployed. So both of them decided to form a company. D. A. Patil of Bombay joined them and Alurkar gave them financial help. The result was the formation of Uday Kala Chitra at Kolhapur. Their first picture which



had a rural setting was RAM RAM PAHUNE. D. D. Patil wrote the story, scenario and dialogues of this picture which was also directed by him. Lata Mangeshkar gave music without taking any remuneration. She also recorded all the songs in it without any charge. The film celebrated its Silver Jubilee. Damuanna Malvankar's humorous role of a villain in it was applauded by the public. Kumud Lele came into lime-light owing to this picture and D. D. Patil earned reputation as director. Another gain to the film industry owing to this picture was P. Savlaram. There was a Hindi version of his picture too by the name GHARBAR, which was also directed by D. D. Patil. The second picture of Uday Chitra, now minus Alurkar, was another rural film PATLACHA POR which too was acclaimed by the public. Before this picture D. D. Patil had produced for Abhinav Chitra the film SHARADA based on the story of the well-known Marathi play by Deval. Baby Shakuntala played the role of Sharada and Keshavrao Date played the role of the old husband. But the picture was not much of a success. Besides, the fact that D. D. Patil directed a picture outside Uday Kala Chitra created differences of opinion between him and others of the Uday Kala Chitra. The result was that the film company was closed after its third picture MAYECHA PAZAR. Madhav Shinde directed this picture and Lalita Pawar who had once played the role of Master Vitthal's beloved in NETAJI PALKAR played the role of his mother in this picture.

### Historical pictures

No historical pictures worth the name were produced during this period. SWARAJYACHA SHILEDAR which was produced by Bhalji Pendharkar under the banner of Gauri Chitra and directed by Master Vitthal did not come up to the expectations. SHIVA RAMOSHI and MAYBAHINI were comparatively better. Chandrakant Mandare's role of Shiva Ramoshi in this picture was realistically impressive. Shankar Kulkarni of Prabhat's DAHA VAJATA appeared in this film under the name of Umesh. MAYBAHINI was directed by D. D. Patil. Spicy dialogues were the chief attraction of this picture. Other historicals that were produced in this period were NARVIR TANAJI (Kohinoor Productions), PRATAPGAD (Navayug Amrit Chitra), MARD MARATHA (Suramya Chitra), KRANTIVIR VASUDEO BALWANT (Supreme Chitra), KALYAN

**KHAJINA** (Manik Chitra). Of these only **VASUDEO BALWANT** came up to the expectations. Vishram Bedekar directed this picture with great imagination and effect. Vishwas Kunte with an athletic personality was the gift of this picture to filmdom. His role was full of vigour. However **GAOGUND**, based on a story by G. L. Thokal and with a background of 1942 movement proved too pedestrian. Vishwas Kunte's leading role in it was not so impressive as in **VASUDEO BALWANT** which had proved very popular. **NARVIR TANAJI**, **KALYAN KHAJINA** and **PRATAPGAD** were acclaimed by the public but the public did not remember them for long. Owing to **PRATAPGAD**, Balkrishna Kulkarni came to the fore as director. A Hindi song sung by popular playback singer Samshad Begum was included in this picture. In **KALYAN KHAJINA**, the role of Subhedar's daughter-in-law was played by the Hindi actress Poornima. Tanaji's role in **NARVIR TANAJI** was played by Baburao Pehelvan, the hero of Master Bhagwan's Hindi stunt pictures. But as his delivery was not so impeccable, although his personality was quite suitable for the role of Tanaji, G. D. Madgulkar had to give him a playback voice.

### **PEDGAVCHE SHAHANE**

**PEDGAVCHE SHAHANE** was a comedy that opened up new horizons to films during this period. The story of this picture was originally written by G. D. Madgulkar for Vasant Thengdi. But the latter for some reason or the other did not get an opportunity to take up that story. Others who read the story liked it but would not dare to film it for the absence in it of the conventional love's eternal triangle. Finally Raja Paranjape decided to film it. He produced this film under the banner of Makarand Films and it proved a smash hit. The story was a satire on the westernized Indian life. There was a fine blending in it of an unusual story, well proportioned scenario, imaginative direction and natural acting. The double role of Raja Paranjape in this picture became quite popular. G. D. Madgulkar in the role of head of an Americanized family who is quite fed up with the fads and fancies of the inmates was quite convincing. Dhumal attracted the attention of cine-goers by his role of a South Indian musician Sarang Mama. The influential Hindi producer A. R. Kardar, who was impressed by this film, produced a Hindi version of it directed by Raja Paranjape himself. But it

did not quite prove the hit that it was in original Marathi, except for the fact that Dhumal became popular in Hindi filmdom. The Raja Paranjape-Madgulkar pair was *feted and feasted* in the whole of Maharashtra for their unique achievement. Thus PEDGAVCHE SHAHANE deserves special mention as a picture that reminded one of Vinayak's celebrated comedy hits.

### Comedies

There were other comedies during this period like JAGA BHADYANE DENE AHE, CHALITIL SHEJARI, GURUCHI VIDYA GURULA, BAYAKO PAHIJE, TEE ANI TO, VAR PAHIJE and AKHER JAMALE. The worth-mentioning among all these was AKHER JAMALE which brought Madhusudan Kalelkar to the fore. The stellar roles in this film were played by Raja Gosavi and Sharad Talwalkar. The direction was of Datta Dharmadhikari. BAYAKO PAHIJE which had the roles of Damu-anna Malvankar and Jog proved quite pedestrian. On the other hand JAGA BHADYANE DENE AHE was acclaimed by the public. Achyut Ranade, who had earlier directed a couple of Hindi pictures, came to Marathi films through this picture. However his second picture VAR PAHIJE proved a failure. Snehaprabha Pradhan who had acted in it was never seen on the screen after that. This film was modelled on the fashion of crime pictures, a wave of which was then current in Hindi films.

M. G. Rangnekar, the celebrated Marathi playwright and stage director, produced the film KUBER during this period. Jyotsna Bhole played the leading lady in this picture. But it was not received well by the public. However, Shridhar Parsekar's music became popular.

The first six years of post-independence period proved quite beneficial to Marathi film industry, which had become moribund as a result of Government restrictions during the war-time. However, in post-independence era the hits like JAI MALHAR and RAM JOSHI gave Marathi film industry a new life. It blossomed forth rapidly. During the 14 years from 1932 to 1946, 127 films were produced in Maharashtra. Compared to this 74 pictures were produced in the first six years after the attainment of independence. However, although the annual rate of pictures in post-independence period increased everyone was convinced that the stability which the film industry enjoyed in the bygone years was no more.



### Marathi films (1953-1958)

AS has been said production of Marathi films increased by leaps and bounds in the post-independence period. During the six years' period of 1953-1958 the production of Marathi films reached 92. In 1954 production reached the highest mark for during this year 29 films were produced. However from the trade point of view many of these films did not bring expected profits thus making the condition of the Marathi film industry precarious.

#### **VAHINICHYA BANGDYA and SHEVGYACHYA SHENGA**

The most popular film of the period was Chitra Sahakar's VAHINICHYA BANGDYA. Sadashivrao J. Kavi produced this film and his maiden attempt at independent production proved to be an immensely satisfying experiment. It was a model of planned production of films. He filmed this picture in 31 days according to the schedule. Y. G. Joshi thus again made his appearance as story writer after Prabhat's MAZA MULGA and Shantaram Athavale earned renown as director. Sulochana's role of Vahini became a celluloid classic, though on her first selection for the role Y. G. Joshi was not very much satisfied. He thought that she would not be able to do justice to the role. But Sulochana belied these prognostications. Its Hindi version, however, did not prove so impressive. VAHINICHYA BANGDYA celebrated its silver jubilee and Sadashivrao Kavi followed with another Y. G. Joshi's story SHEVGYACHYA SHENGA. Though not comparable with VAHINICHYA BANGDYA it was generally well received by the public. Shantaram Athavale was the director this time also. His another film SAUNSAAR KARAYACHA AHE MALA under the banner of Chitra Ganga proved a failure. Both VAHINICHYA BANGDYA and SHEVGYACHYA SHENGA were shown in China.

#### **LAKHACHI GOSHTA and DEVBAPPA**

The popularity of VAHINICHYA BANGDYA was matched in this period by two other films LAKHACHI GOSHTA and DEVBAPPA. The Paranjape-Madgulkar pair with the financial help of Padmakar Alandkar

produced LAKHACHI GOSHTA under the banner of Gajraj. It proved a hit. Sudhir Phadke's songs were on everybody's lips. Madras producer Reddi produced the same picture in Tamil. These pictures gave Marathi films two new faces, viz. Chitra and Rekha. Raja Gosavi's popularity increased. But in spite of this Gajraj could not produce any other picture. Another picture that captured the hearts of Marathi film-lovers was DEVBAPPA produced by M. P. E. Chitra. P. L. Deshpande-Ram Gabale pair did it this time also. The child actress Medha Gupte's natural acting was the special feature of this film. P. L. Deshpande's music was enchanting. 'Nach Re Mora' is still a popular tune. Bimal Roy produced a Hindi version of it called BAP-BETI. Yet the M. P. E. Chitra did not produce another picture.

### **The exit of ' Alhad Chitra '**

Several film companies went out of existence during this period. ' Alhad Chitra ', which produced such hits as BALA JOJO RE, STREE JANMA HI TUZI KAHANI and CHIMNI PAKHARE. After CHIMNI PAKHARE, Alhad Chitra produced ABOLI, the story of a dumb girl, directed by Anant. Mane. But this picture proved a financial burden to the company. After that it produced MAHATMA in Marathi, Hindi and English. It was an ambitious project. But unfortunately it proved a failure owing to the spectators' complete indifference towards it from the very first day. Its English version was never screened. The failure of MAHATMA was a mortal blow to ' Alhad Chitra ' and this company was wound up.

### **' Prabhakar Pictures ' goes out of existence**

Bhalji Pendharkar produced an ambitious film on the life of Shivaji in Hindi and Marathi. But in spite of the lavish care and amount he spent on it, the picture proved a flop and Prabhakar Pictures had to be wound up. Besides CHHATRAPATI SHIVAJI Bhalji Pendharkar had produced MAZI JAMIN and MAHARANI YESUBAI. But they too failed to receive the acclamation of the public.

### **President's Gold Medal winner SHYAMCHI AAI**

The well-known Atre Pictures too had to be closed during this period. It had earned the rare distinction of winning President's Gold Medal



**P. K. Atre**

for its film **SHYAMCHI AAI** based on a story by Sane Guruji. However, the picture was not a financial success. Atre when he was honoured for the distinction remarked that it would have been a great help if the people who had gathered in such large numbers for the ceremony had crowded the cinema houses where **SHYAMCHI AAI** was exhibited. Vanamala never appeared on the screen after **SHYAMCHI AAI**. Meenakshi too did not appear on the screen after her picture **SONERI SAVLI**. Atre produced another picture on the life of Mahatma Phule. It won the President's Silver Medal. But Atre had to suffer financial loss this time also. With this picture Atre bade adieu to film industry. Later he

wrote the story of the Marathi picture **CHORAVAR MOR** produced by Bapurao Marathe under the banner of Arunoday Films. But it proved a failure. Since then Atre did not write any film story. He died on June 13, 1969.

### **'Mangal Pictures' in difficulties**

Even a financially sound film company like Mangal Pictures received a setback during this period. **GHARDHANI**, **AMALDAR**, **PASANT AHE MULGI** and **DHAKTI JAOO** were the four pictures produced by this company during this period. **GHARDHANI** written by Vatkar and directed by Ram Gabale was an utter failure. **AMALDAR** based on P. L. Deshpande's popular play also proved a flop. **PASANT AHE MULGI** directed by Raja Paranjape, however, received some acclamation. **DHAKTI JAOO** was also not bad. It won the President's Merit Certificate. Despite these two

latter pictures, the Mangal Pictures could not prevent its decline. Raja Nene Productions was wound up after its picture KETKICHYA VANAT and Makarand Films bowed out after its film MAISAHEB.

### **Amrut Chitra closes**

Amrut Chitra which had produced the successful picture PRATAPGAD, produced two more pictures KUBERACHE DHAN and IN MIN SADE TIN during this period. Both of them were remarkable in their own way. KUBERACHE DHAN stressed the importance of land in the life of a peasant. *The whole handling of the subject in this picture was attractive.* IN MIN SADE TIN was a satire on the demand of freedom for women. Yet these two pictures proved a financial liability. The Amrut Chitra was wound up after the death of Seetaram Kulkarni. Manik Chitra too was on the decline. Its filming of the picture KEECHAK VADH went on dragging.

### **CINCO and Sahakar Chitra**

Meanwhile many new film companies were coming up. One of these the Sahakar Chitra produced the film SAUBHAGYA based on a story by P. B. Bhawe. Although the credit board showed the name of Datta Dharmadhikari as directing actually the picture was directed by Anant Mane owing to Dharmadhikari's prolonged illness. Besides, Mane was not known to the cine fans at that time and he insisted that Dharmadhikari's name should be retained as director. This was the last picture of Baby Shakuntala after which she got married and retired from films. There is excellent acting of Baby Shakuntala, G. D. Madgulkar and Chittaranjan Kolhatkar in this picture which, however, could not become a box office hit. RESHMACHYA GATHI which, followed proved a disastrous flop, after which the Sahakar Chitra could not produce any film.

CINCO which was also a co-operative venture produced the comedy GANGET GHODE NHALE. Scenario and dialogues of which were written by veteran Madgulkar. There was a Hindi version of this picture. But it lacked the original Marathi punch. JAGAVEGALI GOSHTA and UTAVALA NARAD followed the above film. Master Bhagwan played an important role in the latter for the first time in Marathi pictures. However it was not much of a success. The CINCO also could not go any further

in the production of films. Another co-operative film company named 'Sahakar Chitra' was formed at Kolhapur. However, its very first picture DEVAGHARCHE LENE proved an utter failure.

### **The formation of Surel Chitra**

The trio, Madhav Shinde, Dinkar Patil and Lata Mangeshkar, formed at Kolhapur 'Surel Chitra' and produced two films VADAL and KANCHANGANGA both directed by Shinde. KANCHANGANGA's music was by Vasant Desai and Usha Kiran's dances were by well-known Gopi Krishna. But both these pictures failed to attain the requisite mark of popularity. Later, Lata and D. D. Patil quit 'Surel Chitra' and Madhav Shinde continued to produce films. His BAL MAZE NAVASACHE and GRIHADEVATA were not at all satisfactory. The latter, however, won a silver medal. It was shown at a film festival at Tashkent. There were plans of its Hindi version which was to be directed by Shinde only. But they did not materialise.

### **Dinkar Chitra**

D. D. Patil formed his own Dinkar Chitra and produced the satire TARAKA. It was premiered at 'Naaz' in Bombay. But it proved a flop. Sulochana who usually plays sober roles had played in this picture quite a different role which was advertised widely. She had also at the same time acted as a dancing girl in the film BHAUBEEJ produced by Vaibhav Chitra. But film-lovers did not like both these different roles of Sulochana. However the songs in BHAUBEEJ became very popular. After TARAKA, Patil produced MOOTHBHAR CHANE and KULADAIVAT under the banner of Dinkar Chitra. The popular Maharashtrian actor of Hindi films Nana Palshikar acted in Marathi film for the first time in this film. Baby Nanda became heroine for the first time in KULADAIVAT. But both of them did not evoke any response from the film-lovers. D. D. Patil, during the same period directed DISTE TASE NASTE for Jaidev Chitra, DEV JAGA AHE for Umesh Chitra and NAVARA MHANU NAYE APLA from M. G. Productions. Of these the second proved a failure and the remaining two which were comedies became quite popular. Jayashree Gadkar who did a dance number in DISTE TASE NASTE appeared on the screen for the first time.

### **Bhalji Pendharkar's pictures**

Bhalji Pendharkar now produced two pictures under the banner of Shree Laxmi Chitra at Kolhapur. YE RE MAZYA MAGLYA and GATH PADALI THAKA THAKA were these two pictures directed by himself. Shashikala appeared for the first time in Marathi films through one of these pictures. Smita, now known as Kamini Kadam, entered film through the latter picture which was directed by Raja Paranjape. Jayashree Gadkar became the leading lady for the first time in this picture. However, both of them proved disappointing. Now Pendharkar turned to the production of historicals. He produced PAVANKHIND and NAIKINICHA SAJJA under the banner of Jai Bhavani. PAVANKHIND became popular too, owing to the late Vasantrya Pehelvan's zestful performance, on the background of the Samyukta Maharashtra agitation. But NAIKINICHA SAJJA proved hopeless even with the music given by Hemant Kumar.

Bal Gajbar produced during this period a picture entitled MUKE LEKARU. But it was a failure. Bal Gajbar's activities as producer ceased with this picture.

### **Ajantha Chitra**

Vinayak Deoolgaokar who was a distributor of Alhad Chitra entered the production business at this time under the banner of Ajantha Chitra. He produced a picture called OWALANI with the help of Anant Mane, photographer E. Mohamed and Vasant Pawar. OWALANI can be described as a continuation of BALA JOJO RE. Sulochana and Vivek played the stellar roles. Anant Mane and Raja Paranjape came together in this picture. After OWALANI Ajantha Chitra produced the rural film PUNAVECHI RAAT. This picture is worth mentioning as a remarkable Tamasha film. Vasant Pawar's delightful music is a special attraction of this film. But unfortunately owing to Samyukta Maharashtra agitation there could not be records of this music. GAOGUND which followed PUNAVECHI RAAT was not so satisfactory. However its music by Vasant Pawar was remarkable. The popular Hindi actor Aga has played a small role in PUNAVECHI RAAT. He followed with a bigger role in PREETI SANGAM of the same

Ajantha Chitra. The well-known dancer Leela Gandhi's performance in this picture was her first in the film. SHUBHAMANGAL (Kamal Chitra), PAYDALI PADALELI PHULE (Chetna Chitra), ZAKLI MOOTH (P. R. Productions) and DON GHADICHA DAV (Shree Krishna Chitra) were the other four films produced by Anant Mane. Of these PAYDALI PADALELI PHULE was a financial loss owing to the censors' severe intervention. ZAKLI MOOTH and DON GHADICHA DAV which were two comedies were acclaimed by the public. SHUBHAMANGAL proved disappointing, though it introduced Shubha Khote to the screen. This actress later appeared in the Marathi picture RANPAKHARE. But it was a flop.

### **M. Sheth's Productions**

The above-named film company formed at Poona produced several Marathi pictures. But none of them was worth mentioning. The company ceased production after an attempt to produce a picture on the life of 'Birbal'. Of the Marathi pictures TEEN MULE and SHASHI were meant for children. R. S. Junnarkar who had directed the film BABY of the same company was the director of these pictures. At the same time he had directed a third picture SANT BAHINABAI for Vishwa Kala Mandir. But these pictures also proved disappointing. KON KUNACHE of the same M. Productions was supposed to have been based on a real life story. Yeshwant Pethkar had directed this picture together with ZALE GELE VISARUN JA for Azad Chitra and CHORAVAR MOR for Arunodaya Films. But none of them was received well by the film fans. VITTHALPAYI of the same company was directed by A. R. Sheikh. SANT BHANUDAS was another picture of this period which was based on the life of a saint. It was produced by G. P. Pawar. Kumarsen Samarth produced SAIBABA. The well-known artist Dalal had undertaken at this time the production of a picture based on Saibaba too. But he could not complete it. Kumarsen Samarth's SAIBABA however was screened and received reasonable response from the public. It also was the recipient of a silver medal.

### **Artistic productions of Nava Chitra**

'Nava Chitra' was the new film company started by Raja Thakur. Its aim was to produce artistic films. Its first picture BOLAVITA DHANI was directed

by Raja Thakur. Flawless performances of Raja Gosavi, Raja Paranjape, G. D. Madgulkar and Indira Chitnis was its special feature. However, financially it did not prove a sound investment. Nava Chitra followed with another artistic picture OON-PAOOS whose standard was indeed high, Raja Paranjape directed it and Sumati Gupte was the leading lady. Raja Paranjape's skilful direction of this picture made it a realistic celluloid piece. This picture will certainly rank high in a list of 10 best Marathi pictures so far produced. The performance of Raja Paranjape and Sumati Gupte in it are an unforgettable experience. The roles of an old helpless man and his wife were portrayed so effectively that it had a deep impression upon the spectators. Unfortunately this film did not prove a box office draw. Government too did not take notice of it. A Madras producer made a Kannada picture based on the story of OON-PAOOS. Surprisingly enough this Kannad picture SCHOOL MASTER was the recipient of silver medal.

After OON-PAOOS the Nava Chitra produced MI TULAS TUZYA ANGANI which was directed by Raja Thakur and had an operatic theme. The story was by Vyankatesh Madgulkar and music by Sudhir Phadke. This picture too can be described as an unusually charming film. But it too failed to draw the crowds. However it was awarded a silver medal. The Nava Chitra then produced MAZE GHAR MAZI MANSE which too had an unusual theme and was a sentimental love story. Raja Thakur's able direction was matched by equally effective performances of Sulochana and Chandrakant Gokhale. However the public could not appreciate this powerful story and the film was a financial loss. Subsequently Raja Thakur brought on the screen under the banner of 'Nava Chitra' the celebrated literary pair of Chimanrao and Goondyabhau in a comedy entitled GHARCHE ZALE THODE. But it could not compare favourably with similar pictures of yester-year, namely LAGNA PAHAVE KAROON and SARKARI PAHUNE. The stars were Dhumal and Nalini Chonkar. Still it failed to make the grade. Thus the Nava Chitra too could not make progress.

### **Film companies that produced only one picture**

Many artistic and outstanding films failed to evoke response from the public. For instance Ram Gabale's POSTATIL MULGI produced under the banner of Pratibha Chitra was really a very sensitive film. But it was a financial



failure. The same happened to Abhijat Chitra's DEVGHAR produced by Bal Chitre and directed by Raja Paranjape. A very different kind of love story had been handled in this picture. But film-goers did not patronize it. Consequently Pratibha Chitra and Abhijat Chitra could not produce more than one picture. This happened in the case of many other film companies. Roop Lekha Chitra (BHALLYACHI DUNIYA), Shanta Pictures (VARAT), R. J. Productions (JEEVACHI MUMBAI), Avinash Chitra (DAIVACHA KAUL), Chitale Pictures (KALGITURA), Kala Darpan (LAGNA AADHI GHATA-SPHOT), Swati Chitra (GULACHA GANAPATI), Abhay Chitra (ANDHALA MAGATO EK DOLA), etc. were among such numerous film companies.

### Everything P. L.

Of the above-mentioned films, GULACHA GANAPATI and ANDHALA MAGATO EK DOLA were greatly acclaimed by the public. P. L. Deshpande was the story, scenario and dialogue writer, director and hero of GULACHA GANAPATI. The combination was quite successful. Deshpande however turned his back to films after the success of this picture. He wrote a couple of stories for Hindi pictures afterwards. ANDHALA MAGATO EK DOLA was not so good a comedy as GULACHA



P. L. Deshpande

GANAPATI. But it was well received by the public. Raja Paranjape had directed it. GYANBA TUKARAM was another competent comedy of this period. But financially it proved disappointing, in spite of the very delightful performances of Dhumal and Dattopant Angre.

### **Shakuntala Jadhav's last performance**

Though the film companies which produced only one picture were not rewarded by success BHALYACHI DUNIYA and AUXAWANT HO BAL appeared to be unique in some respects. BHALYACHI DUNIYA depicted the funny experiences of a man who was considered dead. Vyankatesh Madgulkar was the author and hero of this picture. In AUXAWANT HO BAL the emphasis was on the nobility of mother. Shakuntala Jadhav played her last role in this picture in spite of her serious illness. She played the mother. She died after the completion of this film.

### **Regeneration of 'Aryan Film Company'**

Aryan Film Company which was revived by Bandopant Sarpotdar, the son of the well-known silent cinema director Sarpotdar, produced the historical film TAI TELIN. However it proved an utter flop. Shanta Apte who played the leading role in this bade farewell to films after a role in some Hindi pictures.

### **Filmistan's Marathi pictures**

With the closure of many Marathi film companies and the failure of scores of pictures the Marathi film industry was confronted with the problem: what next? In these circumstances Filmistan started production of Marathi pictures and helped the revival of the Marathi films. Many veterans of Marathi films like Datta Dharmadhikari, Raja Nene, Shantaram Athavale joined Filmistan. Story writer Madhusudan Kalelkar became the head of Marathi film division of Filmistan. Artistes like Jayashree Gadkar, Smita, Ramesh Dev, Raja Gosavi, Suryakant, Neelam, etc. also joined the Filmistan. ALIYA BHOGASI was Filmistan's first Marathi comedy. Madhusudan Kalelkar wrote the story and Datta Dharmadhikari directed it. The Jayashree Gadkar-Raja Gosavi pair became popular in this picture for the first time. Seema made her debut also in this picture. The censors had first objected to the exhibition of this film.

However the revising committee passed it without any cuts and congratulated Dharmadhikari for having produced a beautiful picture.

ALIYA BHOGASI was followed by RAHILE PREM. The story was by Kalelkar and the direction was of Raja Nene. Jayashree Gadkar, Suryakant, Smita, Rajan and Damuanna had played important roles in this film. It was well received by the public. The subsequent Marathi pictures of Filmistan AAI MALA KSHAMA KAR and SAUBHAGYAVATI BHAV were too commonplace and therefore failed to evoke response from the public. Veteran actress Shanta Hublikar starred in SAUBHAGYAVATI BHAV after a long absence from the films. She never appeared again in pictures. BOLE TAISA CHALE was another Marathi picture produced by Filmistan. But the censors did not pass it. However a Hindi picture ANKHARI DAV which was based on the same film was passed by the censors. After the failure of AAI MALA KSHAMA KAR and SAUBHAGYAVATI BHAV the enthusiasm of Filmistan for Marathi pictures was at an ebb. The subsequent production PURDHA directed by Shantaram Athavale was not even screened by Filmistan. PURDHA wrung the final curtain on Marathi film productions by Filmistan.

### **Raja Gosavi's story**

The well-known Hindi film company 'Basant Chitra' undertook the production of Marathi pictures and came out with a comedy entitled RAJA GOSAVICHI GOSHTA. The well-known Marathi comedian Raja Gosavi played treble role in this picture whose story was written by Baburao Gokhale. This film however did not prove to be paying. Before this, Baburao Gokhale had produced under the banner of Gurunath Chitra a comedy entitled EK HOTA RAJA. Gokhale had himself played a double role in it. But this picture too proved disappointing.

### **Prabhat's trumpet sounds again**

While the Marathi film industry was thus in doldrums, S. B. Kelkar who had purchased the Prabhat Studio started producing Marathi films in it. 'Shree Pictures' completed its SUKHACHA SOBATI in Prabhat. The filming of Manik Chitra's Hindi-Marathi film KEECHAK VADH was also started in

the Prabhat with the financial help of Kelkar, who himself produced a Hindi film GAJA-GAURI. Although this picture could be compared with the old hits of Prabhat, it evoked response from the public. Its trick photography was its special attraction. It was dubbed in Tamil. Kelkar did not make any pictures under the banner of Prabhat, but a film studio was now available to Marathi film-producers. However it is the Hindi film-producers that took advantage of the Prabhat Studio.

Very bad days came to Marathi film industry. Failure after failure made Marathi film-makers restive. Madgulkar joined Rajkamal Kala Mandir. Raja Paranjape went to Madras to join A. V. M. after the failure of DEVGAR. Ram Gabale accepted a job in Films Division after his failure of POSTATIL MULGI and thus turned his back on Marathi films. P. L. Deshpande too bade farewell to films. Sudhir Phadke devoted himself more to his 'Geet Ramayan' programmes. Balkrishna too joined the Films Division and the future of Marathi film industry thus became very precarious.



### Marathi films (1959-1963)

**W**HILE the Marathi film industry was thus passing through a transitional period two Marathi pictures, viz. SANGATE AIKA and SHIKLELI BAYAKO proved to be sensational hits in 1959 and gave Marathi film industry a new life. The number of Marathi films rose from 9 in 1959 to 20 in 1962.

#### Unique success of SANGATE AIKA

SANGATE AIKA which gave new life to Marathi film industry was produced by Anant Mane in Prabhat Studio with the financial support of Kelkar. G. G. Parkhi had written the story of this rural film. The story was originally rejected by many producers. Anant Mane too gambled with it, but SANGATE AIKA made history. It ran at Poona continuously for 131 weeks. This was a unique record. The success of SANGATE AIKA was truly phenomenal. In the beginning all critics had condemned it. It had a cool reception at Majestic in Bombay. Curiously enough it was premiered at Sholapur two days before being shown in Poona and Bombay because the distributors there thought that the day on which it was to be premiered in Bombay and Poona was not auspicious. Thus this film which came on the screen on an Amavasya day proved epoch-making. All the artistes playing in this film were duly honoured on its Golden Jubilee. What is more Indira Chitnis, who had not acted in it, awarded at her own cost gold medals to every artiste and technician concerned with the film.

#### SHIKLELI BAYAKO's Silver Jubilee

At about the same time SHIKLELI BAYAKO of Suresh Chitra came to the screen. The film was based on a story by a well-known Marathi novelist Nathmadhav. D. D. Patil wrote the scenario and dialogues. Usha Kiran acted in it after a long absence. It celebrated its Silver Jubilee. The success of SHIKLELI BAYAKO was unexpected.

SANGATE AIKA and SHIKLELI BAYAKO created a new enthusiasm among the Marathi film producers. They had their Hindi and Bhojpuri versions. Datta Dharmadhikari now again turned to Marathi films.

He produced PATIVRATA for Sagar Chitra. But it was not so well received. Madhusudan Kalelkar produced HYALA JEEVAN AISE NAV which was based on a story by V. V. Bokil. This comedy directed by Raja Nene was acclaimed by the public. YANDA KARTAVYA AHE and RAJMANYA RAJESHREE were two other comedies produced during this year. However they proved disappointing. SATA JANMACHA SOBATI was produced by Shree Krishna Productions from a story by P. B. Bhawe. It had a reasonable reception. Bhalji Pendharkar's AKASH-GANGA produced under the banner of Jai Bhavani Chitra was a failure. Shreekrishna Chitra's SUDAMYACHE POHE directed by Keshavrao Dhaibar was screened this very year. But it had a very poor response from the public. JANHAVI based on a novel of the same name by V. V. Shirvadkar was produced at this time. But it proved too pedestrian. Rekha who had disappeared after the film GRUHADEVATA made her appearance again in this picture.

### **Rasaranga's Phalke Prize**

As part of the enthusiasm created by the pictures SHIKLELI BAYAKO and SANGATE AIKA, film magazine Rasaranga instituted prizes for Marathi films and artistes in the name of Dadasaheb Phalke. Thus following prizes were awarded in 1959. Best film—SHIKLELI BAYAKO (Surel Chitra), best story writer—Madhusudan Kalelkar (PATIVRATA), best director—Anant Mane (SANGATE AIKA), best music director—Vasant Pawar (SANGATE AIKA), best male star—Suryakant (SHIKLELI BAYAKO), best female star—Sulochana (PATIVRATA), best supporting star—Vasant Shinde (SANGATE AIKA), best supporting woman star—Jayashree Gadkar (SANGATE AIKA), best photography—E. Mohamed (RAJMANYA RAJESHREE), best editing—Vasant Shelke (SHIKLELI BAYAKO), best art director—Shrikrishna Achrekar (JANHAVI), best music recording—Surendra Pednekar (PATIVRATA). In 1960 and 1961 two more prizes for best dialogues and best playback singer were added.

### **Three pictures that lingered on**

With the incentive of the success of SHIKLELI BAYAKO and SANGATE AIKA, the production of Marathi pictures in 1960 increased considerably.

There were in all 17 films. Of these the production of two had lingered on for several years. They were UMAJI NAIK and KEECHAK VADH. Veteran Shobhana Samarth and the popular dancing star of Hindi films Helen appeared in KEECHAK VADH. There was a Hindi version too of KEECHAK VADH. ANANT PHANDI which had also lingered on for many years was screened this year. But these three pictures were not well received by the public.

### **The trio Paranjape-Phadke-Madgulkar makes its appearance again**

The trio Paranjape-Phadke-Madgulkar staged its return to Marathi pictures this year by producing JAGACHYA PATHIVAR. Raja Paranjape who is a great admirer of Charlie Chaplin had in his mind for many years the idea of this story. Many were doubtful about the success of a story woven around a blind heroine and an old hero. However, the picture celebrated its Silver Jubilee. The film-goers were simply enraptured by Rajabhai's acting and Sudhir Phadke's music. It was awarded seven Phalke prizes in 1960.

### **Exit Prabhat : Tax on film**

After his triumph in SANGATE AIKA, Anant Mane produced the picture AVAGHACHI SAUNSAAR based on a story by Madhusudan Kalekar under the banner of his own 'Anant Chitra'. This comedy was well acclaimed by the public. Subsequently there were Tamil and Hindi versions of it. Meanwhile Kelkar sold the Prabhat Studio to Film Institute of India. This was a great blow to the production of Marathi films. Another shock to the Marathi film industry was given by the then Union Finance Minister Shri Morarji Desai by imposing excise duty of 50 paise per metre on films. Representations were made to the Union Finance Minister pointing out how it would prove oppressive to Marathi Film industry which would be deprived of even nominal profits. But it was of no avail. On the contrary after the Chinese aggression, this tax was increased by 100 per cent.

### **Comic Films**

PAISHACHA PAOOS, SANGAT JADALI TUZI AN MAZI and LAGNALA JATO MI were the other three comedies of this year. But they did not obtain the popularity of AVAGHACHI SAUNSAAR.

**PAISHACHA PAOOS** was directed by Anant Mane and the story was by Madhusudan Kalelkar who also wrote the story of **LAGNALA JATO MI** which was directed by Datta Dharmadhikari. **PAISHACHA PAOOS** and **LAGNALA JATO MI** were profitable films. But **SANGAT JADALI TUZI AN MAZI** caused loss to the producers besides being a disappointing film.

### Five new directors

**PANCHARATI**, **SALAMI**, **CHAL MAZYA PAYAT** and **SAKHYA SAVARA MALA** were four other Marathi pictures with *lavni* music that were produced during this year. These four films gave four new directors to Marathi film industry. Datta Mane, who had so far worked as assistant to Raja Nene, Datta Dharmadhikari and Anant Mane, became an independent director through **PANCHARATI** which was based on a story by D. D. Patil. **SALAMI** was directed by C. Vishvanath. This was Vasant-rao Pehelwan's last picture. Bal Saraf became director for the first time through **CHAL MAZYA PAYAT**. **SAKHYA SAVARA MALA** which was produced under the banner of Kishore Pictures was directed by Keshav Toro. Financially **PANCHARATI** and **SALAMI** proved profitable. However **CHAL MAZYA PAYAT** and **SAKHYA SAVARA MALA** proved flop. Meena Pictures produced in this very year **VANAKESARI**, a Tarzan type film, which failed to attract the attention of the public. Vishvanath Kamat directed it.

### UMAJ PADEL TAR and KANYADAN

D. D. Patil's musical **BHAIRAVI** proved utterly disappointing. However, **UMAJ PADEL TAR** which he directed for Chitra Sadhana was acclaimed by the public. It was the recipient of merit certificate. Chitra staged a comeback in this picture after a long time. Lata Mangeshkar's brother Hridaynath Mangeshkar founded his own Nirmal Chitra and produced **ANTARICHA DIVA** whose story was written by V. S. Khandekar. However, Madhav Shinde was unable to do justice which the late Vinayak could do to V. S. Khandekar. The result was that the picture proved a failure. The Government, however, awarded it merit certificate. Madhav Shinde's **KANYADAN** produced for Suresh Chitra was greatly acclaimed by public and it celebrated its silver jubilee too.



## **PRAPANCH and SHAHIR PARSHARAM**

The production of Marathi pictures in 1961 however came down to 13. Shubha Ranjan's MATEVINA BAL was one of them. But it could not be exhibited owing to Panshet disaster. However many artistic films were seen in this year, of which the most important was Indian National Picture's PRAPANCH. Ratiram Agarwal was the distributor and Govind Ghanekar was the producer. The theme was family planning which was very effectively handled by director Madhukar Pathak. Maximum outdoor shooting was the chief attraction of this film. Sulochana had played her role without make-up. Owing to its high artistic standard therefore it was awarded commendation certificate by Government. It was also awarded four Rasarang Phalke Prizes. It was shown at the Vancouver Film Festival. The Maharashtra Government exempted it from entertainment tax and purchased a few prints for propaganda. But financially the film was a disappointment.

Another artistic picture which did not prove financially successful was Mangal Pictures SHAHIR PARSHARAM. Mangal Pictures had started production owing to the enthusiasm generated by the success of SANGATE AIKA. It had planned seven films. But it received such a shock at the failure of SHAHIR PARSHARAM that it could never recover from it. G. D. Madgulkar had painstakingly written the story. Gajanan Jagirdar had played the leading role very excellently. Jayashree Gadkar's acting was beautiful and Vasant Pawar had given it very appropriate music. Anant Mane had directed it very imaginatively. But it was all to be in vain and the film did not have any long run. Comparatively Anant Mane's own RANGPANCHAMI, a conventional *lavni* picture, had a silver jubilee run.

## **VAIJAYANTA, MANINI and BOLKI BAHULI**

Gajanan Jagirdar during this period staged a come-back to the production of film after a long time. He produced the rural picture VAIJAYANTA with the co-operation of Bhaskarrao Kulkarni under the banner of Rekha Chitra. This film was the recipient of Government's merit certificate. It was also well received by the public. It was based on a novel by Anna Bhau Sathe. Another picture based on a novel was KALANKSHOBHA from the

novel of the same name by N. S. Phadke. Datta Dharmadhikari directed it and Shantibhai Patel produced it under the banner of Chitra Gunjah.

However the year 1961 can be described as the year of film MANINI whose story was by Pandit Mahadevshastri Joshi. This film set a new record of popularity. Old and young admired the performance of Jayashree Gadkar and the skilful direction of Anant Mane. Bahinabai Chaudhari's lyrics were the special attraction of this film which was awarded a silver medal. Similarly the film SUVASINI too was greatly acclaimed by the public in 1961. It was produced under the banner of 'Manisha Chitra' with the help of Poona industrialists like Shankarrao Kirloskar. Very impassioned acting by Seema and Chandrakant Gokhale, deft direction by Raja Paranjape and melodious music by Sudhir Phadke were the special features of this film. AADHI KALAS MAG PAYA directed by Raja Paranjape in the same year also proved popular. The story which was written by G. D. Madgulkar had the unforgettable Mama Chiplunkar of PUDHCHE PAOOL as its moving spirit. Raja Paranjape had portrayed Mama Chiplunkar to perfection. The film was produced by Raja Patwardhan, a stage actor and director. But it did not bring him luck. EK DHAGA SUKHACHA produced by Sagar Chitra and directed by Datta Dharmadhikari was also well received by the public this year. Honey Irani, the popular child star of Hindi pictures, was the special attraction of this film.

Meanwhile, Ram Gabale returned to the film industry and produced in 1961 the film BOLKI BAHULI for Vishal Chitra. It was supposed to be a continuation of his celebrated film DEVBAPPA. It was directed by Raja Bargir and Daptardar. The music which included a Gujarati lyric was by Shrinivas Khale, Dasharath Pujari and Avinash Vyas. However it could not attain the popularity of DEVBAPPA. Surel Chitra's MANSALA PANKH ASATAT produced by Madhav Shinde from a story by V. S. Khandekar also was a disappointment from financial point of view. It was awarded Maharashtra Government's prize of Rs. 25,000 for being the best picture on the abolition of untouchability. It also was the recipient of merit certificate from the Government. However it could not attract the attention of the film-goers. Its music was by Meena Mangeshkar. Hridaynath Mangeshkar's BHAV TETHE DEV also proved a flop this year. It was directed by Bhalji Pendharkar's son, Prabhakar.

### **Maharashtra Government's awards**

The production of Marathi films increased considerably in 1962. A total of 20 Marathi films came to the screen. Financially however, this year proved very disappointing. But an important development took place. The Maharashtra Government started Marathi Film Festival. During the first year owing to Chinese aggression this festival could not be held. But the Government awarded the following prizes by considering the films censored between 1st January 1961 and 1st August 1962 :

- (1) Best film—1st prize of Rs. 12,000—PRAPANCH.
- (2) Best film—2nd prize of Rs. 6,000—SUVASINI.
- (3) Best film—3rd prize of Rs. 4,000—SHAHIR PARSHARAM.
- (4) Best director—1st prize of Rs. 3,000—Madhukar Pathak in PRAPANCH.
- (5) Best director—2nd prize of Rs. 1,500—Raja Paranjape in SUVASINI.
- (6) Best director—3rd prize of Rs. 1,000—Anant Mane in SHAHIR PARSHARAM.
- (7) Best actor—Gajanan Jagirdar in SHAHIR PARSHARAM—Prize Rs. 500 and certificate of honour.
- (8) Best supporting actor—Chandrakant Gokhale in SUVASINI—Prize and cash award of Rs. 500.
- (9) Best actress—Sulochana in PRAPANCH—Prize and cash award of Rs. 500.
- (10) Best supporting actress—Kusum Deshpande in PRAPANCH—Prize and cash award of Rs. 500.
- (11) Best scenario—G. D. Madgulkar in SHAHIR PARSHARAM—Prize and cash award of Rs. 500.
- (12) Best lyrics—G. D. Madgulkar in PRAPANCH—Prize and cash award of Rs. 500.
- (13) Best music—Sudhir Phadke in PRAPANCH—Prize and cash award of Rs. 500.

- (14) Best editor—Bal Korde for SUVASINI—Prize and cash award of Rs. 500.
- (15) Best sound recording—B. N. Sharma for SUVASINI—Prize and cash award of Rs. 500.
- (16) Best photography—K. B. Kamat Ghanekar for PRAPANCH—Prize and cash award of Rs. 500.
- (17) Best art director—K. D. Mahajani in PUTRA WHAVA AISA—Prize and cash award of Rs. 500.
- (18) Best playback singer—Talat Mahamood in PUTRA WHAVA AISA—Prize and cash award of Rs. 500.
- (19) Best woman playback singer—Asha Bhosle in MANINI—Prize and cash award of Rs. 500.

All those artistes were given these awards by Dr. Gopal Reddy, the then Union Broadcasting Minister, on 25th April 1963 at a ceremony held in Bombay's Liberty Cinema.

### **RANGALYA RATRI ASHA**

The performance of Marathi films during 1962 and 1963 was disappointing. Of the 20 Marathi films in 1962 only RANGALYA RATRI ASHA was worth mentioning. It was produced by Maharashtra Film Industrial Co-operative Society of Poona. This society had kept before itself certain standards. Consequently the film RANGALYA RATRI ASHA proved to be impressive. It was based on a story by Ranjit Desai who had also written scenario and dialogues. He showed a surprising dash in his very first attempt at scenario-writing. The picture also gave a new hero to Marathi films in the person of Arun Sarnaik. A new experiment of combining Tamasha, Gazal, Thumri and stage music was made in this film. Tamasha music was given by Vasant Pawar; Chhota Gandharva gave the stage music and also sang the songs; veteran Datta Davjekar handled the Thumri and Gazal side of music. The Thumris and Gazals were in Hindi because one of the singers in this film was from Lucknow. This role was played by Minoo Mumtaz, a popular actress of Hindi films. RANGALYA RATRI ASHA.

was a model of team work. There were flashes in the direction of Raja Thakur. From this film onwards a stage in the Film Institute in Poona (old Prabhat Studio) was available for Marathi films. It was awarded a silver medal. In the Second Marathi Film Festival it won the first prize and it was shown at the Moscow Film Festival. The Censor Board which had first given an 'A' certificate gave it 'U' certificate later.

BAYAKOCHA BHAU which was produced in the same year and whose story was written by Bal Kolhatkar did not have anything special to mention though it was well received by the public. Madhav Bhoite directed it. JAWAI MAZA BHALA, SAPTAPADI and SOONBAI were this year's films based on stories and novels. The first was based on a story by Mahadev-shastri Joshi. It was directed by Neelkanth Magdum for Manisha Chitra. But it could not come upto the standard owing to timid handling. The whole film failed to impress. SAPTAPADI was produced by Madhusudan Kalelkar from a story by V. V. Bokil. Datta Dharmadhikari had directed it for 'Suhas Chitra'. SOONBAI was based on a novel by D. R. Kavthekar. All these three failed to evoke favourable response from the public even with Salil Chaudhari's music for SOONBAI and Mukesh's playback in SAPTAPADI. Talat Mahamood had also given playback for PUTRA WHAVA AISA.

### **Influence of Hindi**

Marathi films this year appeared to have been largely influenced by Hindi pictures. D. D. Patil's MAZI AAI based on Hindi PAIGAM was a commonplace production. Raja Paranjape's SONIYACHI PAOOLE was based on Hindi SHADI. D. D. Patil made his pedestrian BAP MAZA BRAHMACHARI influenced by KHIDKI and SHAHANAI. Anant Mane's PREETI VIVAH which was a hotch-potch of several Hindi pictures was a disappointing comedy. Datta Mane's SUKHA ALE MAZYA DARI was influenced by New Theatre's STREET SINGER. D. D. Patil made yet another Hindi type film entitled PREM ANDHALE ASATE. Kamalakar Torne's BHINTILA KAN ASATAT had a South Indian type story based on coincidence. Datta Dharmadhikari's KSHANA ALA BHAGYACHA was based on the old hit KHAJANCHI. Of all

these films only this last one had some public response. The performance of Raja Paranjape and Sumati Gupte in it are remarkable. Vandana came to Marathi films through this picture. Nalini Chonkar who had turned her back on Marathi films also staged a come-back through NANDADEEP, a pedestrian production directed by her father, with music by Avinash Vyas. Vasantrao Desai too returned to Marathi films by giving music to BAP MAZA BRAHMACHARI.

Shatrujit Films VITHU MAZA LEKURWALA directed by Dharmadhikari was the first picture after RANGALYA RATRI ASHA to have won public acclamation in 1962. Master Krishnarao's music was heard in this picture after a long time. As a matter of fact it was an average production. But the public received it well because it saw a film based on a life of a saint after a long time. VARADAKSHANA directed by D. D. Patil for Raghav Chitra though also an average one, won acclamation of the public because of its dowry theme.

Veteran actor Vinay Kale also produced this year NIRUPAMA and PARI RANI under the banner of his Vinay Productions. The film was specially meant for children. But it did not receive response either from public or Government. CHIMANYANCHI SHALA produced by Anant Mane for 'Yashodhan Chitra' was also intended for children. But it too did not have any luck. His another film BHAGYALAXMI had the theme of pre-marriage and post-marriage love. But for lack of imaginativeness this film failed to impress.

## MOLKARIN

MOLKARIN of Surangi Chitra was the most popular among the 16 Marathi films produced in 1963. It celebrated its silver jubilee in Poona; its story was by Sane Guruji; leading role of Sulochana and Vasant Desai's music combined to give this picture an unexpected and unprecedented success. Otherwise it was an average film. Director Yeshwant Pethkar's efforts were crowned with success after a long time. FAKIRA was another film based on a popular book this year. But in spite of Chandrashekar's direction and the acting of Jairaj, David and Nana Palshikar the film proved a flop.

MAZA HOSHIL KA based on P. B. Bhavé's 'Akulina' and produced by Anant Mane had the same fate. Kamini Kadam returned to films after a long time. But there was nothing remarkable in this except her role. However, it did have a better response than FAKIRA.

PAHU RE KITI VAAT and GARIBAGHARCHI LEK were the year's two films based on well-known stories. The first was produced by Industrial Co-operative Society from a story by G. G. Parkhi. But the team-work of RANGALYA RATRI ASHA was missing in it. Chhaya Chitra's GARIBAGHARCHI LEK was based on a story by Mahadevshastri Joshi. But it was not at all satisfactory. Kamalakar Torne who had directed it also directed this year two more pictures CHAR DIVAS SASUCHE CHAR DIVAS SUNECH and VAIBHAV. They failed to impress even less than GARIBAGHARCHI LEK. No one was even aware of the coming and going of GAVCHI IJJAT, DRISHTI JAGACHI AHE NIRALI and TE MAZE GHAR, this year's three other films. It was the first Marathi film to have been granted loan by Film Finance Corporation. TE MAZE GHAR was directed by Ganesh Bhat and DRISHTI JAGACHI AHE NIRALI by Baburao Athane.

### MOHITYANCHI MANJULA

MOHITYANCHI MANJULA, a historical produced by Jai Bhavani Chitra, was the second picture of this year to become reasonably popular after MOLKARIN. It was premiered at Metro in Bombay. But the flash of the old historical was lacking in it. Homi Wadia, who had by now turned again to Marathi pictures, produced the mythological SUBHADRA HARAN under the banner of Basant Pictures with the help of Datta Dharmadhikari. But it was not so well received by the public although it was dubbed in Hindi. The same thing happened to TU SUKHI RAHA of Kala Chitra, which proved to be pedestrian.

### HA MAZA MARGA EKALA

HA MAZA MARGA EKALA was the only outstanding picture of the 16 that were produced in 1963. Although its story which was influenced by Charlie Chaplin's KID was defective, musician Sudhir Phadke and director Raja Paranjape had made an honest attempt at producing an off-beat film.

The performances of Raja Paranjape and child actor Sachin had a unique tenderness. The picture was awarded silver medal and second prize in second Marathi Film Festival. But unfortunately it was not generously patronized by the public. However an average Hindi type comedy like BAYAKO MAHERI JATE of Suhas Chitra directed by Raja Paranjape was well received by the public.

Thus during the six-year period from 1959, although a few films were acclaimed by the public a large number of them proved financially and otherwise disastrous. Instability in Marathi film industry increased at the end of 1963. The same conditions still prevail. Even after 50 years of its existence the film industry has not acquired stability as a trade.





## Artistes of the post-independence period

**A**LTHOUGH many actors of the pre-independence period had faded out of the limelight during the post-independence period, veterans like Damu-anna Malvankar, Salvi and Chandrakant retained their positions. Chandrakant became a popular actor of rural films. Baburao Pendharkar, though he had played unforgettable roles in some pictures, seemed to be on the whole, indifferent to films. Durga Khote showed greater interest in the stage. Lalita Pawar and Leela Chitnis turned their back on Marathi films and won popularity as character actresses in Hindi films. Ratnamala and Sumati Gupte, the heroines of yester-years, also became chiefly character actresses. Sumati Gupte's acting in OON-PAOOS, KSHANA ALA BHAGYACHA, etc. was indeed memorable. Gajanan Jagirdar, Shahu Modak and others also appeared to be more interested in Hindi films. Meenakshi was seen only in one film SONERI SAVLI in post-independence period. Shanta Apte, Vanamala, etc. no doubt played some roles in a few pictures but the admiration in which they were held during the pre-independence period had vanished.

### Hansa Wadkar and Baby Shakuntala

Hansa Wadkar was the first actress to become popular in Marathi films during the post-independence period. She had, of course, acted in some Marathi and Hindi pictures before. But a new era was ushered in her film-life with the picture RAM JOSHI. Her memorable performance in that Tamasha film which came on the screen in 1947, made her popular heroine of Tamasha-type films. Her popularity grew with the film PUDHCHE PAOOL. Later she hit the head-lines by her remarkable performance in PATLACHA POR, VAUNSHACHA DIVA, MI TULAS TUZYA ANGANI, SANT JANABAI, SONYACHI LANKA, etc. For her role in the Hindi version of the film RAM JOSHI she was awarded a prize as the best actress in Hindi. From 1947 to 1952 she was the leading star of Marathi films. From 1959 onwards the second chapter of her film career as a character actress began. It is noteworthy that Hansa Wadkar could play all kinds of roles from frivolous ones to those of saintly women.



Hansa Wadkar

Baby Shakuntala was another popular actress of post-independence period. This one-time child actress began to play leading roles through SEETA SWAYAMWAR, MAYA BAZAR, etc. Her performances in SHREEKRISHNA DARSHAN, ABOLI, CHIMNI PAKHARE, KALGITURA, etc. were outstanding. As she had an attractive personality and good understanding of the role her acting was always remarkable. She also shone in Hindi films. But she gave up film career after marriage just when she was at the peak of popularity.

SOUBHAGYA was her last film. Ranjana who worked in Hindi films during pre-independence period switched over to Marathi films in post-independence period. JAGAVEGALI GOSHTA, PATTHE BAPURAO, SASAR-MAHER are some of her films.

### Usha Kiran and Sulochana

Usha Kiran and Sulochana rose on the horizon of Marathi films after Hansa Wadkar and Baby Shakuntala in post-independence period. They became popular in Hindi films too. Usha Kiran whose real name was Usha Marathe after playing small roles in some Hindi, Gujarati and Marathi pictures began

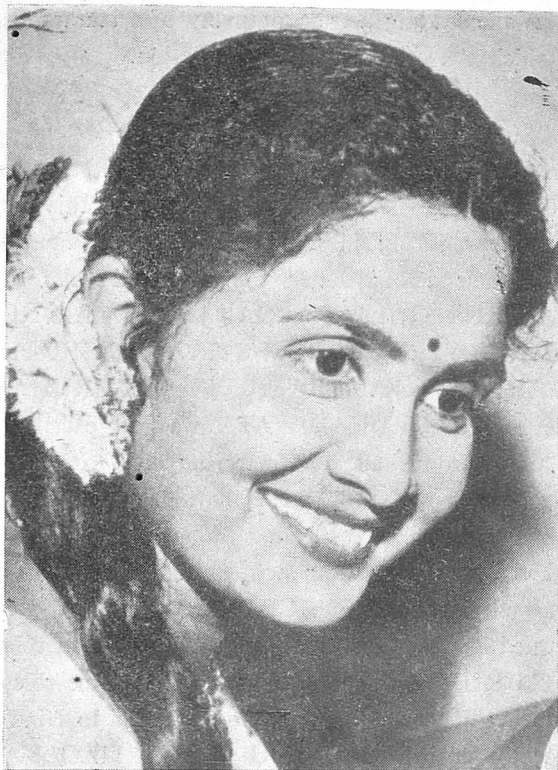
her real career with her role in the film KRANTIVIR VASU-DEO BALWANT. But after her role of a heroine in BALA JOJO RE, she became the much sought-after leading actress of Marathi films. Her role in a dozen pictures like STREE JANMA HI TUZI KAHANI, JASHAS TASE, SHIKLELI BAYAKO, KANYA-DAN, etc. brought her immense popularity. In Hindi too she became a leading actress. She is the only actress to have played opposite Ashok Kumar, Dilip Kumar, Raj Kapoor and Dev



Usha Kiran

Anand. Variety is the special feature of her acting. She was awarded the Film Fare award for best supporting actress in Hindi film BADBAN. She also got a prize from the Gujarat Government as the best screen actress for her role in the Gujarati film MEHENDI RANG LAGYO. What is remarkable is that she even bagged the best actress award for her role in GARIBAGHARCHI LEK in the Second Marathi Film Festival.

Sulochana, who shot to stardom together with Usha Kiran, is still in the forefront. No actress has won popularity for such a long time during post-independence period. Her real name is Saheb Banu Latkar. She entered films by acting as an extra in Vinayak's CHIMUKALA SAUN SAR. Later she



Sulochana

was also taken as an extra in some films of Bhalji Pendharkar. Her real chance came in Bhalji Pendharkar's SASURVAS. No one today will even believe that she had played the role of a villainous woman, for Sulochana connotes tender-heartedness. As a result of this equation film-lovers did not welcome her in the roles of an actress, a fashionable woman and a Tamasha girl in TARA KA, VADAL and BHAUBEEJ respectively. Her roles in VAHINICHYA BANGDYA, BALAJOJO RE, PATI-

VRATA, MOLKARIN, etc. are simply memorable for their tenderness. There is no actress of her stature in Marathi films today.

Many other budding actresses like Sushanta (SASURVAS), Mangala (MOTHI MANSE), Anjani (MITH BHAKAR), Shalini (BALIDAN), Shubhangi (GHARDHANI), Subodh (JIVACHA SAKHA) and Kumud Lele (RAM RAM PAHUNE) appeared on the Marathi screen during this period. Of these Kumud Lele showed some promise but did not turn to films after marrying Sachin Shankar. Nayana (PEDGAVCHE SHAHANE), Vijaya Desai (CHUL ANI MUL), Shanta Modak (CHUL ANI MUL) did not make much progress. Sandhya acted in only one Marathi picture AMAR

**BHUPALI.** However she was the leading actress of many of Shantaram's later Hindi productions in which she established her reputation.

### **Rekha and Chitra**

The sisters Rekha and Chitra were the two other actresses to shine in Marathi films after Sulochana and Usha Kiran. They first starred in Raja Paranjape's **LAKHACHI GOSTA**, after apprenticing in Hindi pictures as dancers. The Marathi film fans liked their acting. Later Chitra played roles in **DEVBAPPA**, **BOLAVITA DHANI**, **GULACHA GANAPATI**, **VAHINI-CHYA BANGDYA**, etc. Some of Rekha's pictures were **GANGET GHODE NHALE**, **BAL MAZE NAVASACHE**, **KUBERACHE DHAN**, **GRUHA-DEVATA**, etc. Her double role in **GRUHADEVATA** was an excellent piece of thespian art. They retired from films after marrying only to return to it. But they could not get the popularity which they had got once. Master Vinayak's daughter Nanda who made her debut in films as a child actress later played the role of leading actress in D. D. Patil's **KULADAIVAT** to be followed by **SHEVGYACHYA SHENGA**, **DEV JAGA AHE**, etc. But she turned her back on Marathi films after her success in the Hindi film **TUFAN AUR DIYA**. Shubha Khote played some roles in a couple of Marathi films during this period. But she too returned to Hindi films. Shashikala came to Marathi films through **YE RE MAZYA MAGLYA** during this period. She played roles in three other Marathi pictures. Nalini Borkar (**PRATAPGAD**), Sheela Naik (**KALGITURA**), Rupamati (**GURUCHI VIDYA GURULA**), Pratibha (**KAHI KHARE NAHI**) were some of the other actresses that appeared on the Marathi screen during this time.

### **Smita, Jayashree and Seema**

The trio, Smita, Jayashree Gadkar and Seema, was the most popular after Chitra and Rekha. Smita (Manik Mudaliar in real life) after starring in Bhalji's **YE RE MAZYA MAGLYA** played roles in films like **ANDHALA MAGATO EK DOLA**, **DEV JAGA AHE**, **PAHILE PREM**, **DON GHADICHA DAV**, **DHAKTI JAHO**, etc. Later she joined Hindi films under the name of Kamini Kadam and stayed there for about four years to return again to Marathi films. Jayashree Gadkar's first important role was in **GATH PADALI THAKA**

**THAKA.** From here onwards her progress was rapid. She can be described as an all-rounder of present-day Marathi screen. She has portrayed contradictory roles with the same ease. Such variety of acting has seldom been seen in Marathi films of late. The films **MANINI**, **SANGATE AIKA**, **AVAGHACHI SAUN SAR**, **SUKHA ALE MAZYA DARI** testify to this. Seema, whose real name is Nalini Saraf, first acted in Filmistan's **ALIYA BHOGASI**. For many years later she played supporting roles. But she came into limelight after her unusual role in Raja Paranjape's **JAGACHYA PATHIVAR**. Afterwards her roles in **SUVASINI** and **SONIYACHI PAOOLE** were impressive. She is an expert in playing simple, straightforward roles effortlessly. These two stars did not however get much scope and recognition in Hindi films. They are still the foremost actresses in Marathi films. Ratna, Uma, Bhavana are the other stars that are just rising on the Marathi film horizon. Nalini Chonkar has also returned to Marathi films through the picture **NANDA DEEP**.

Neelam, Jeevankala, Vimala Vashishtha, Vasundhara Paudval, Padma Chavan, Shanta Tambe and some others earned reputation during post-independence period as supporting actresses. Sudha Apte, Mai Bhide and Indira Chitnis played the roles of mothers. Of these Indira Chitnis played different kinds of roles very skilfully. She was also very good at comic roles. She has so far played a hundred roles. Another noteworthy actress of post-independence period was Leela Gandhi. She not only danced in producer-director Anant Mane's **PREETI SANGAM**, her first Marathi picture but she also directed the dances. Her sizzling dances are the special feature of that picture. Since then she has carved a niche for herself in Marathi films. It will be remembered that the dances in **SANGATE AIKA** were directed by her.

### **Leading actors**

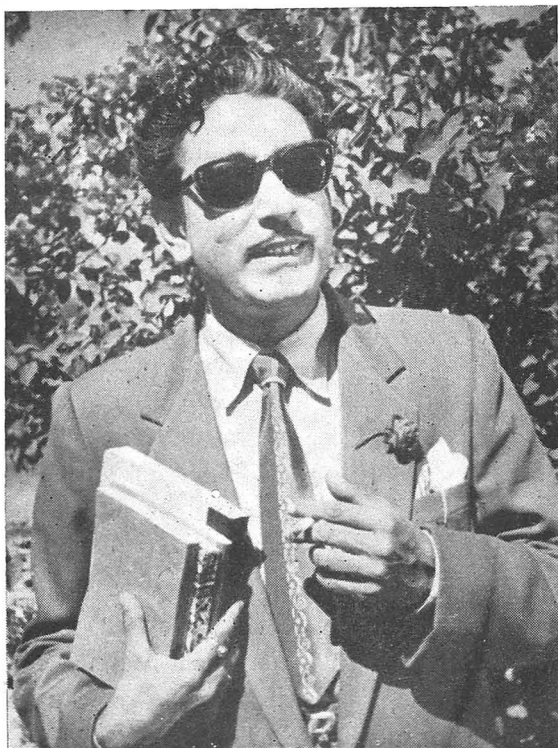
Rajan, who was born Baba Jawle, was the first prominent leading actor of post-independence Marathi films. His first film was **BALIDAN** directed by Raja Paranjape followed by many others like **JAGA BHADYANE DENE AHE**, **VAKADE PAOOL**, **MAYBAHINI** etc. Anant Marathe, the child actor in pre-independence days, also established his reputation as a leading actor especially in mythologicals like **SEETA SWAYAMWAR**,

MAYA BAZAR, etc. opposite Baby Shakuntala. Chittaranjan Kolhatkar also came into limelight as a leading actor. But later he switched over to stage with occasional roles in films. Actor Vivek too belongs to this period. After his memorable performance as Madhavrao Peshva in Rajkamal's RAM JOSHI he played a role in Raja Paranjape's PUDHCHE PAOOL to be followed by leading roles in DEVBAPPA, DUDH BHAAT, VAHINICHYA BANGDYA, etc. P. L. Deshpande too showed promise of becoming a leading actor. His roles in PUDHCHE PAOOL, AMALDAR and GULACHA GANAPATI are still remembered. But he left film industry for good.

Chandrakant's brother Suryakant also earned reputation as a leading actor. After supporting roles in Bhalji Pendharkar's BAHIRJI NAIK, JAI

Raja Gosavi

BHAVANI and SASUR-VAS, he got his first chance in KETKICHYA VANAT followed by BALA JOJO RE. Later the Suryakant-Usha Kiran pair became a popular screen couple. His rural roles earned him greater popularity.



Raja Gosavi, meanwhile, became an indispensable leading actor of comic films. His name must be mentioned as the only actor after Master Vinayak who left a special impress upon the films. He could play the magic of drawing spectators to the cinema houses by his name only.



The result was that there was a fashion so to say of writing stories to suit Raja Gosavi. It is after his important role in Raja Paranjape's LAKHACHI GOSHTA that Raja Gosavi period begins. He won immense popularity in comedies like BOLAVITA DHANI, GANGET GHODE NHALE, ZAKLI MOOTH, etc. Although he no more rules the roost, it must be admitted that there has been no other actor after him who can act with such effortlessness. Ramesh Dev also played in the beginning small bits such as in RAM RAM PAHUNE, PATLACHA POR, MAYBAHINI, etc. His first big chance came in Raja Paranjape's ANDHALA MAGATO EK DOLA in which he acted as a villain. Later he came into the limelight as the villain of Marathi films. But later he proved that he could do the leading roles also equally skilfully. The pair Seema and Ramesh Dev won popularity. Subsequently they got married. At present Arun Sarnaik, Kashinath and Shrikant Moghe are the rising stars on the horizon of Marathi films. Arun Sarnaik won award as best actor of 1963 in the Second Marathi Film Festival for his role in RANGALYA RATRI ASHA. That was his first film. Vishwas Kunte (VASUDEO BALWANT) and Prabhakar Muzumdar (JASHAS TASE) were the two athletic type actors who came into limelight in post-independence period. But their supporting roles earned them greater renown. Madan Mohan was another young actor that had shown some promise during this period but very little was heard of him.

### **Raja Paranjape**

Raja Paranjape carved a name for himself during this period. Really speaking his face with an acquiline nose was more suited for comic roles and he had earned reputation as a comic actor in pre-independence days. No one had thought that a multifaceted actor could come out of Raja Paranjape during post-independence years. But today he has dealt a blow to the conventional notions that a hero is the one who makes love to the heroine. He proved with his skill and powerful acting that there can be an unattractive hero such as in PEDGAVCHE SHAHANE. In PEDGAVCHE SHAHANE he had played the role of an old man who had been disappointed in love in his younger days. In his recent film HA MAZA MARG EKALA he has played the role of a man who has become an alcoholic as a result of disappointment in love.



From PEDGAVCHE SHAHANE to HAMAZA MARGEKALA Raja Paranjape immortalised on the Marathi screen many unusual roles. His school teacher in OON-PAOOS, his post-master in KSHANA ALA BHAGYACHA, the young man in LAKHACHI GOSHTA who does not know how to spend his fortune, the husband in IN MIN SADE TIN who brings to senses his wife who has strange ideas about the freedom of women, the blind Sakharan in JAGACHYA PATHIVAR and Mama Chip-



Raja Paranjape

lunkar in PUDHCHE PAOOL are but a few of them. All of them are different from one another. Not only this but they are of a type that is conspicuously absent on the screen. All these roles bear the stamp of Raja Paranjape's distinctive personality.

### **Chandrakant Gokhale**

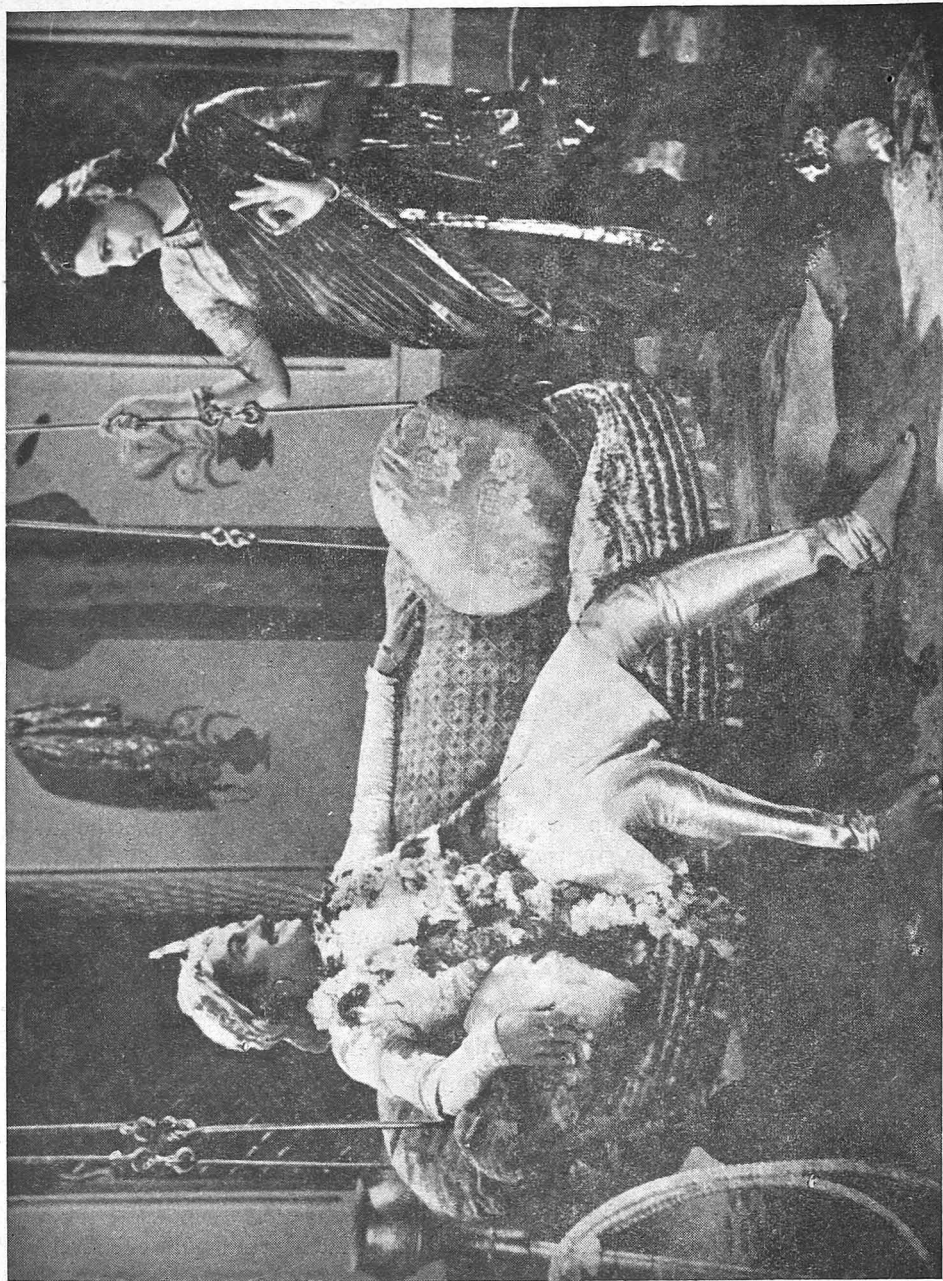
Chandrakant Gokhale is another actor of post-independence days who created a different sort of screen hero. His first important role was in Raja Paranjape's BALIDAN. Though young, his role of an old man in it is truly memorable. He repeated the performance by playing old man in SUVASINI, SONIYACHI PAOOLE, etc. MANINI, TU SUKHI RAHA, SUKHA ALE MAZYA DARI are a few more of his pictures. G. D. Madgulkar

too immortalised such an old man in the film SOUBHAGYA. Madgulkar made his mark as a character actor during the post-independence years. His roles in RAM JOSHI, PUDHCHE PAOOL, LAKHACHI GOSHTA, PEDGAVCHE SHAHANE, AMALDAR are each distinctive from the other. His role in JAGACHYA PATHIVAR was the last one.

### **Dhumal, Vasant Shinde and Sharad Talwalkar**

Dhumal, Vasant Shinde and Sharad Talwalkar established reputation as comic actors in post-independence period. After a role in Baburao Pendharkar's PAISA BOLTO AHE in pre-independence period Dhumal played roles in several pictures like VAHINICHYA BANGDYA, PASANT AHE MULGI, PEDGAVCHE SHAHANE, etc. Each of these roles brought him renown. With his role in PEDGAVCHE SHAHANE he was introduced to Hindi films. No other Marathi actor earned such popularity in Hindi pictures during post-independence period. Sharad Talwalkar is a character actor besides being a comedian. He has played different roles in different pictures such as AADHI KALAS MAG PAYA, RANGALYA RATRI ASHA, VAIJAYANTA, etc. The pair Raja Gosavi and Sharad Talwalkar became popular in post-independence period as Damuanna-Jog pair had become in pre-independence days. Talwalkar, who is an M.A., can be described as the first graduate actor of post-independence era. He was working in Poona University. But later gave up his job to join films. His real film career began with the film DON GHADICHA DAV. Vasant Shinde's film career began with SASURVAS. He was acting in films for a long time but no one had noticed him. But his performance in plays brought him into limelight and back into the films. JAI BHAVANI, JIVACHA SAKHA, MANACHE PAAN, SANGATE AIKA, RANGALYA RATRI ASHA were some of the pictures in which his roles were greatly appreciated. He is adept in playing comic roles in pictures with rural settings.

Kisanrao Agnihotri, Gramopadhye, Master Chhotu, Ganpat Patil, Madhu Apte, Vasant Latkar, Vasant Thengdi, Ghorpade, Jog, Chobe, Vaishampayan, Manjrekar, Ranjit Budhkar, Raja Pandit, Vijay Senjit, Majnalkar, Parsharam, Ram Tipnis and a host of other actors played small and big roles quite effectively during the post-independence days. The achievements of Dattopant Angre,



Jatram Shiledar and Hansa Wadkar in RAM JOSHI

Raja Nene, Jawdekar and other character actors are, indeed, noteworthy. Child actors Alhad (CHIMNI PAKHARE), Arun (DUDH BHAAT), Dwarkanath (PEDGAVCHE SHAHANE), Madhav Vaze (SHYAMCHI AAI), Sachin (HA MAZA MARGA EKALA) were among the more popular. Medha Gupte (DEVBAPPA), Baby Kala (ABOLI), Baby Shailaja (SATA JANMACHA SOBATI), Baby Anjali (BOLKI BAHULI and SAPTAPADI) also delighted the fans together with Samar Nakhete (ZALE GELE VISARUN JA) and Prabha Jog (BHAV TETHE DEV).

Jairam Shiledar (RAM JOSHI, JIVACHA SAKHA, etc.), Prasad Savkar (PEDGAVCHE SHAHANE), Panditrao Nagarkar (AMAR BHUPALI), Ramchandra Varde (SAKHARPUDA, GHARDHANI), Parsharam Samant (SAKHARPUDA, MOLKARIN), Bhalchandra Pendharkar (AMAR BHUPALI), Atmaram Bhende (UMAJ PADEL TAR, PREM ANDHALE ASATE), Baban Prabhu (UMAJ PADEL TAR) and other stage artistes were seen on the screen during this period. Of these Parsharam and Ramchandra Varde had acted in films before independence. Ram Marathe, the child actor of pre-independence days, did not impress in ANANT PHANDI. Master Bhagvan (DON GHADICHA DAV), Nana Palshikar (MOOTHBHAR CHANE, UMAJ PADEL TAR, FAKIRA), Maruti (PUNARJANMA) and other Maharashtrian actors of Hindi films appeared in Marathi films during this period. Master Bhagvan's associate, Baburao Pehelvan ably played roles in a couple of historicals. He died after his role in SALAMI. Other Hindi actors that appeared on Marathi screen are Aga (PUNAVECHI RAAT), Sham Kumar (SHIVALEELA), Poornima (KALYAN KHAJINA), Helen (KEECHAK VADH), Minu Mumtaz (RANGALYA RATRI ASHA), Ulhas (BAP MAZA BRAHMACHARI), David (MAHATMA, FAKIRA), Jairaj (FAKIRA). Similarly child actors of Hindi screen Nalini Jaywant (NANDA-KISHOR), Honey Irani (EK DHAGA SUKHACHA), Daisy Irani (BAP MAZA BRAHMACHARI), moppet Raja (JAGACHYA PATHIVAR) appeared on the Marathi screen during this period. Only David, Aga and Minu Mumtaz impressed the Marathi screen-lovers.

## Chapter XVII

### Directors, writers and musicians of post-independence period

**M**OST of the directors who had distinguished themselves during the pre-independence period disappeared from the field during the post-independence period. V. Shantaram turned his back on Marathi pictures after producing RAM JOSHI and AMAR BHUPALI. Bhalji Pendharkar, Vishram Bedekar, Gajanan Jagirdar, Kumarsen Samarth, Keshavrao Dhaibar and other old-timers did produce some films. But the old flash was gone. The achievements of Bhalji Pendharkar, Vishram Bedekar, K. P. Bhaye and Gajanan Jagirdar in post-independence period are noteworthy. But on the whole the old-timers were on the decline after independence and new directors came into limelight.

#### Raja Paranjape

Raja Paranjape is the most prominent of the new directors that made their mark during the post-independence period. His name must be mentioned as the most talented director after Master Vinayak. Raja Paranjape carried on the unique tradition of Master Vinayak of producing comedies. His PEDGAVCHE SHAHANE, LAKHACHI GOSHTA, GANGET GHODE NHALE were comedies in the best tradition of Vinayak. He always tried to give something new to the film-lovers. His OON-PAOOS, PUDHCHE PAOOL, JIVACHA SAKHA give an idea about the diversity in his pictures. As a result of this there came into being a class of lovers of Raja Paranjape's films. Like Vinayak he is also a skilled actor. So he could train novices. Raja Paranjape must be given a credit for the creation of new talent in this period. Raja Gosavi, Ramesh Dev, Kamini Kadam, Jayashree Gadkar, Seema, Chandrakant Gokhale are some of the actors that were trained by him.

#### The disciples of Master Vinayak

Many of the late Vinayak's disciples became directors in their own right. But Raja Paranjape (though not his disciple—he was Bhalji Pendharkar's disciple) was the only one who carried on the tradition of Vinayak. Of the

several disciples of Vinayak who became directors, D. D. Patil has a place of honour. But as a writer he followed his Guru Bhalji Pendharkar. As a result his films had the stamp of Bhalji Pendharkar's personality. RAM RAM PAHUNE which was Patil's first attempt at direction was, indeed, unique. It enhanced expectations about him. But later he could not give to the film-lovers a film comparable to RAM RAM PAHUNE. Perhaps his switchover to production from direction may have been the cause of the deterioration of his films. Madhav Shinde was an editor with Vinayak. This experience of editing gave him enough confidence to become a director. Naturally there was ample technical perfection in his films which, however, were devoid of any big sweep. He produced a record number of films that won Government awards. No other director has won so many awards. It must, however, be admitted that his two films GRUHADEVATA and SHIKLELI BAYAKO were indeed captivating. With the exception of these two films nowhere was his skill at direction felt so intensely. Though he belonged to the tradition of Vinayak he never followed the beaten path of Vinayak's comedies. He seemed to be more inclined to choose stories with a family setting. Madhav Kamble, who was also an editor with Vinayak, did not go beyond directing a single film. Ram Gabale produced a diversity of films during post-independence period. VANDE MATARAM which was the first film directed by him had the background of 1942 movement. DEV PAVALA, a comedy, JASHAS TASE, DUDH BHAAT, DEVBAPPA were the various types of social films which won for him renown. Balkrishna who had been trained in Prabhat produced films like KUBERACHE DHAN, IN MIN SADE TIN. But both Ram Gabale and Balkrishna left film industry to join Films Division just when their pictures had raised hopes about them.

### **Datta Dharmadhikari**

Datta Dharmadhikari created his own traditions. He was trained in the Prabhat. Raja Nene was his Guru. But he won greater success than Nene. By producing the film BALA JOJO RE, he created in Maharashtra a new tradition of films with a family background. Of course, the first film he directed was a mythological, viz. MAYA BAZAR. But later he took greater interest in social films. Although he produced some noteworthy comedies like

AKHER JAMALE and ALIYA BHOGASI his forte seemed to produce films which would draw tears from the eyes of the women. He also made the successful experiment of producing a film based on a true story like CHIMNI PAKHARE. So long as his own Alhad Chitra was in existence, the flash of his direction could be seen. But after the closure of Alhad Chitra the old spark was gone. Shantaram Athavale, the poet, became director in post-independence period by directing the film VAHINICHYA BANGDYA, which was in the tradition of the films with an accent on the nobility of woman's heart such as BALA JOJO RE. Expectations about him had heightened as a result of his success in SHEVGYACHYA SHENGA that followed, but he failed to impress as director after these two films. Acharya Atre took to direction during his period. But with the exception of SHYAMCHI AAI he could not make the grade. Yeshwant Pethkar, who had directed Prabhat's AAGE BADHO and APARADHI, produced VITTHAL-RAKHUMAI, KON KUNACHE, KEECHAK VADH, CHORAVAR MOR, MOLKARIN, etc. during the post-independence period. He too was a disciple of Vinayak. But his films did not even faintly remind one of Vinayak's films. Vasant Joglekar who belonged to the tradition of Vinayak also turned his back to Marathi films after directing the films SAKHARPUDA and NANDAKISHOR.

Bal Gajbar, who was an art director in the past, now became a director. Although he produced some good films he could not create his own tradition. A. R. Sheikh, who was trained in Prabhat, produced some good mythologicals; though he was a good editor he could not do anything substantial beyond directing SEETA SWAYAMWAR, SHREEKRISHNA DARSHAN and MANACHE PAAN. D. S. Ambapkar did not fulfil the expectations created by his film JAI MALHAR. Govind Ghanekar who also belonged to Prabhat showed some spark in VAUNSHACHA DIVA. But his achievements later were not so noteworthy. Some other directors like Achyut Ranade, Jayshankar Danve, R. V. Rane, Shrikant Sutar came into limelight during this period as directors but their careers proved short-lived. Similarly Raja Joshi, S. V. Tunge, M. G. Rangnekar, Master Vitthal, Nandu Khote, Vasant Kulkarni, C. Raghuvir, Madhukar Kulkarni, Dada Paranjape, S. Chavan, Rajan Kumar, Namdeo Vhatkar, Manohar Rele, Bhai Bhagat,



V. Avdhut, Vasant Chitalkar, Raja Bargir, Baburao Gokhale, Krishna Patil, Prem Manik, Mangesh Shirodkar, Pathare, Bal Saraf, Vishwanath Kamat and other names were not heard beyond a couple of films they directed. Some of them have even been forgotten today.

### **Anant Mane and Raja Thakur**

Anant Mane and Raja Thakur were the two names that came into prominence after Raja Paranjape, D. D. Patil, D. Dharmadhikari and Ram Gabale during the post-independence period. Both of them were skilful editors. The first showed his skill in Alhad Chitra's films and the second did a brilliant job in Raja Paranjape's films. When both of them separated from Dharmadhikari and Paranjape respectively the technical smoothness in the two directors' films was gone. Anant Mane's successful career as director of films began with Alhad Chitra's ABOLI. Later he directed comedies like DON GHADICHA DAV, AVAGHACHI SAUN SAR and family dramas like DHAKTI JAOO, MANINI, OWALANI, etc. and films with *lavni* music like PUNAVECHI RAAT, SANGATE AIKA, RANGAPANCHAMI, etc. His films with a rural background had a speciality of their own. No director in post-independence period was so practical and able. He was past-master in completing films in accordance with schedule and fixed budget. Herein lies the key to his success. His takings of *lavni* scenes had a peculiarity of their own. He made use of semi-flash back in his film PUNAVECHI RAAT. His idea of showing titles in the middle of the film was a novel one. Raja Thakur too made many such experiments in Marathi films. His inclusion of opera in the film MI TULAS TUZYA ANGANI was imaginative. After BOLAVITA DHANI his noteworthy films were MAZE GHAR MAZI MANSE, MI TULAS TUZYA ANGANI, RANGALYA RATRI ASHA. No other director in Marathi film industry was so well read as Raja Thakur. That is why he could make Ranjit Desai who had no flare for writing scenario, write the story of RANGALYA RATRI ASHA.

Kamlakar Torne, Madhukar Pathak, Kes'ay Toro, Madhav Bhoite were among the younger generation who were trained under the above directors. Of them Madhukar Pathak has shown some promise. Others have yet to show their mettle.



### The impress of G. D. Madgulkar

In post-independence period the stories of Marathi films bear the stamp of the personality of G. D. Madgulkar more than any one else's. It would not be an exaggeration to say that in this period the whole Marathi film industry bore the stamp of the personality of Madgulkar. More than half of the stories of the films produced during this period were written by him. He was the precursor of the films with emphasis on *lavni* music. He started film story writing by writing the scenario, dialogues and songs of the celebrated films RAM JOSHI and JAI MALHAR. From then onwards he wrote a series of excellent film stories. Not only did he introduce the tradition of rural films but he can also be credited with popularising comedies in Marathi. The excellent stories of PEDGAVCHE SHAHANE, LAKHACHI GOSHTA, DEV PAVALA, etc. were written by him. He also wrote stories with social themes like PRAPANCH, DEVGHAR, SUVASINI, etc. He also became popular as a story writer of Hindi films, etc. Several of his Hindi films won appreciation of the public. The film DO ANKHE BARAH HATH which was based on his story was internationally honoured. Little wonder therefore the 'Sangeet Academy' honoured him as the best film story writer in appreciation of his valuable work in films and literature.

### Students of Madgulkar School

The veteran actor Baburao Pendharkar once had said that G. D. Madgulkar can be given the credit of creating many directors of the post-independence period. The reason is obvious. Madgulkar's film stories are so easy to handle that even an inexperienced director can produce a very good film out of it. P. L. Deshpande once said that Madgulkar the Deval (supposed to be the first real Marathi playwright) of Marathi film industry. No one can deny that Madgulkar has the same important place in Marathi film industry which Deval had in Marathi theatre. Madgulkar is one of the architects of post-independence Marathi films. Several scenario writers in this period were trained by him. Vyankatesh Madgulkar, P. L. Deshpande, G. R. Kamat and Madhukar Pathak were trained in the Madgulkar school. Vyankatesh Madgulkar's first film story was SANT NAMDEV. Later he won fame as the story writer of rural films such as JASHAS TASE, PUDHCHE PAOOL, etc. As

a result of his success in these two films he took to scenario writing. The scenario and dialogues of the record-breaking film SANGATE AIKA were written by him. It is believed that his skill in writing dialogues of rural films is unmatched. P. L. Deshpande created a sort of his own tradition of comedies. NAVARA-BAYAKO, GULACHA GANAPATI will testify to this. The social films DUDH BHAAT and DEVBAPPA whose stories were written by P. L. were also acclaimed by the public. It had appeared that he would win greater laurels in film industry. However he gave up films and took to theatre. G. R. Kamat also had created high hopes about him as a result of his GRUHADEVATA, GHARCHE ZALE THODE, KANYADAN and SOONBAI but he failed to fulfil his expectations. He also wrote the scenarios of a couple of Hindi films. Madhukar Pathak has turned to scenario writing only recently. JAWAI MAZA BHALA and GARIBAGHARCHI LEK are the only two films whose stories he wrote.

#### **D. D. Patil and Kalelkar**

Another noteworthy writer of this period is D. D. Patil. The story of the film JAI MALHAR which blazed the trail of rural films in Marathi was by him. RAM RAM PAHUNE, PATLACHA POR, VADAL, DISTE TASE NASTE, SHIKLELI BAYAKO are enough to prove the contention that he is one of the foremost among the story writers of rural films. Madhusudan Kalelkar is the other writer of note of this period. Among his films light comedies number more. AKHER JAMALE was his first story, which was followed by several comedies like ALIYA BHOGASI, DON GHADICHA DAV, AVAGHACHI SAUN SAR, etc. He also gave stories to emotional dramas like PATIVRATA, PAHILE PREM, etc. No other writer's films have been turned into Hindi in such large numbers. He also won popularity as scenario writer in Hindi too.

The veterans Acharya Atre, V. S. Khandekar, Bhalji Pendharkar, etc. did not impress much during this period. However, Y. G. Joshi's VAHINICHYA BANGDYA and SHEVGYACHYA SHENGA won unprecedented acclaim. The playwrights P. B. Bhavé and V. V. Shirvadkar also became scenario writers in this period. But they did not succeed much. Baburao Gokhale and Bal Kolhatkar also failed in their efforts in this direction. The public

also did not approve of the film story writing of poet P. Savlaram and Sanjiv. The same was the case with D. K. Hasamnis.

G. D. Madgulkar however, won immense popularity as a poet during this period. P. Savlaram and Shanta Shelke were the next to impress the film-lovers. Sanjiv, Suryakant Khandekar, Madhusudan Kalelkar and P. L. Deshpande also wrote lyrics. But it is the distinctive stamp of G. D. Madgulkar's poetry that Marathi film industry bears to a large extent.

### Music Directors

Sudhir Phadke's work as music director during this period is of a high order. Many a film in this period became popular because of Madgulkar's lyrics and Sudhir Phadke's music. RUKMINI SWAYAMWAR produced by Kamalabai Manglurkar was the first film to be enriched by his music. Later he gave music to a number of films such as GOKUL, VANDE MATARAM, PUDHCHE PAOOL, LAKHACHI GOSHTA, SEETA SWAYAMWAR, MAYA BAZAR, JAGACHYA PATHIVAR, PRAPANCH, etc. He also gave music to several Hindi films such as SAJANI, APARADHI, PYAR KI JEET, AAGE BADHO, etc. The 'Sur Singar Samsad' awarded him the Swami Haridas Award for 1961 for his classical song 'Jyoti Kalash Chhalake' in BHABIKI CHUDIYA. This is a unique distinction. The presentation of GEET RAMAYAN is another of his achievements. Much of the credit for popularising GEET RAMAYAN goes to him.

Vasant Pawar was the other musician who served the Marathi films with great distinction. JAI BHIM was the first film with his music. The sizzling *lavni* music given by Vasantrao was responsible for the success of PATTHE BAPURAO, PUNAVECHI RAAT, PREETI SANGAM, SANGATE AIKA. The lullaby in the film BALA JOJO RE had his music. He also gave music to Hindi pictures like SUHAGAN, KALAKAR, SAVDHAN, etc. The dances in PUDHCHE PAOOL were directed by him.

Vasant Prabhu was another music director of this period. His music in PATLACHA POR, TARAKA, VADAL, SHIKLELI BAYAKO, GRUHA-DEVATA, PUTRA WHAVA AISA proved very popular. Like the

Mudgulkar-Phadke pair, Vasant Prabhu-P. Savlaram pair earned renown. P. L. Deshpande gave music to DEV PAVALA, DUDH BHÁAT, DEVBAPPA, GULACHA GANAPATI, etc. His music too was greatly appreciated by the public. S. Purshottam was in charge of the music of NAVARA-BAYAKO, GOKULCHA CHOR, etc. But he died a premature death. Vasant Kumar Mohite who was the author of the music for BHAUBEEJ faded into oblivion. Shankarrao Kulkarni's music in ALIYA BHOGASI, PAHILE PREM, HYALA JIVAN AISE NAV, etc. was sweet. RAM RAM PAHUNE received public acclaim on account of Lata Mangeshkar's music. But later she entirely devoted herself to playback singing. Meena Mangeshkar gave music to MANSALA PANKHA ASATAT and Shridhar Parsekar directed the music of SONYACHI LANKA and KUBER. Dashrath Pujari, Hridaynath Mangeshkar, Jitendra Abhisheki, Gajanan Dwarkanath, Prabhakar Jog were the other names that were heard during this period in connection with music.

Ram Kadam's music proved popular too. He was assistant to Phadke and P. L. Deshpande. The film GAOGUND gave him a hand. But it is as a result of his classical music in PATIVRATA that he came into limelight. His music in RANGPANCHAMI, SUKHA ALE MAZYA DARI, BHAGYALAXMI were greatly appreciated by the public.

Vasant Desai was the man who changed the whole complexion of Marathi music. But Marathi film industry it seems could not have much benefit of his talent. The sweetness of the *lavni* music which he gave to Rajkamal's RAM JOSHI and AMAR BHUPALI has yet to be surpassed. But with the exception of SHYAMCHI AAI, KANCHANGANGA, HI MAZI LAXMI, UMAJI NAIK, BAP MAZA BRAHMACHARI and MOLKARIN, etc. his music was heard in very few Marathi films. Another popular Maharashtrian music director of Hindi films C. Ramchandra gave music to only two Marathi films CHUL ANI MUL and CHHATRAPATI SHIVAJI. Hemant Kumar (NAIKINICHA SAJJA), Salil Chaudhari (SOONBAI), Avinash Vyas (BOLKI BAHULI, NANDADEEP) were the three Hindi music directors who gave music to Marathi films. However with the exception of Avinash Vyas's music in NANDADEEP, the others did not impress much.

Keshavrao Bhole, Master Krishnarao, Dada Chandekar, D. P. Korgaonkar and other old guard music directors could not impress much during this period. Datta Davjekar, however, seems to have found his form after his RANGALYA RATRI ASHA.



**Lata Mangeshkar**

### **Woman playback singers**

The lion's share of playback singing during this period goes to celebrated sisters Lata Mangeshkar and Asha Bhosle. Their sisters Usha and Meena also did some playback singing. Suman Kalyanpur and Madhubala Javeri also sang for Marathi films side by side with Hindi. Before these playback singers came on the horizon of Marathi films Manik Varma, Malati Pande, Lalita Dewoolkar and Lalita Parulkar had done fine jobs as playback singers. Usha

Atre also shared the credit with them. Among the men playback singers Sudhir Phadke was the most prominent. Bhimsen Joshi, Vasant Deshpande, Chhota Gandharva also sang for Marathi films. Among the Hindi playback singers Geeta Dutt (SHAHIR PARSHARAM), Hemant Kumar (PAHILE PREM, NAIKINICHA SAJJA), Talat (PUTRA WHAVA AISA), Mukesh (SAPTAPADI), Manna Day (DON GHADICHA DAV, VARADAKSHANA,

NANDADEEP, SOONBAI) and Mahendra Kapoor (BAP MAZA BRAHMACHARI) also sang for Marathi films.

As photographers E. Mohamed, M. N. Kulkarni, Nana Ponkshe, Bal Bapat, Anant Vadhdekar, Shankarrao Savekar, Vasanttrao Beltangdi, Salunkhe, Datta Gorle, Ganpat Shinde, Vasant Shinde, Arvind Lad, I. Bargir, V. Bargir, Vishwas Salunkhe, Mukadam and Ghanekar; as editors Vasant Ponkshe, Bal Korde, Pandurang Khochikar, Anant Dharmadhikari, Gangaram Mathphod and Nivas More; as art directors M. D. Thakur, K. D. Mahajani, B. D. Thatte, Pandurang Hawal; as sound recorders Mangesh Desai, Shankarrao Damle, Appasaheb Jadhav, Vasant Nikam, Ramnath Jathar, Surendranath Pednekar, Kishor Rane, greatly helped the Marathi film industry during these years.



## Post-independence period at a glance

A BRIEF look at the Marathi film industry in post-independence period will show that the production of Marathi films increased during this period. After the advent of talkie, during the period 1932-1946, 129 Marathi films were produced. In 1954, 23 Marathi films were produced. However, the stability factor which was a feature of the pre-independence days was lacking in post-independence days.

### **Institutional tradition is no more**

Film companies like 'Mangal Pictures', 'Manik Studios', 'Alhad Chitra', 'Amrit Chitra' had a very brief existence. The industry which was lacking in tradition could not be saved from the abyss of misfortune even by films like SANGATE AIKA, which won unprecedented popularity. Individual rather than institution became more important in post-independence days with the result that this industry was dominated by individuals. Naturally team work which was a feature of institutional tradition was conspicuously absent during the period. In the past film stories were not written by keeping the artistes before the eyes. The emphasis in those days was on selecting artistes who would fit in the role. During the post-independence period, as soon as RAM JOSHI attained popularity there was a spate of film stories in which Hansa Wadkar would fit in a role with accent on Tamasha. As soon as LAKHACHI GOSHTA, GANGET GHODE NHALE, were acclaimed by the public, Raja Gosavi-type comedies were written. Following the success of VAHINICHYA BANGDYA scores of sentimental stories were written which brought tears to the eyes of Sulochana and of spectators. Consequently the artistes became more important. The artistes who were once employed on salary now started working in films as free-lance actors and actresses. Today the leading actress in Marathi films gets Rs. 4,500 to Rs. 9,000, the leading actor gets Rs. 2,000 to Rs. 5,000 and the supporting actor gets Rs. 500 to Rs. 1,500. But in spite of this the stability of the past has vanished because there is no guarantee of the job.

At one time when the talkies were new, stage actors were attracted to the films because of its newness and the lure of money. But circumstances have changed. Today the film artistes think that it is safer to work on the stage on the night basis side by side with the job in films. In the past one could become an all-rounder in film industry because one had to do any job he was asked to do. But now in the absence of institutional tradition directors who are all-rounders are few and far between. Directors like Raja Paranjape, Datta Dharmadhikari, Anant Mane, Madhav Shinde could become successful because they did apprenticeship during the days of institutional tradition. But the answer to the question how many imaginative and promising directors were created in the tradition of the above directors will be very pessimistic.

### **Standard lowered**

During the pre-independence days many experiments were made in regard to film stories. The institution in which the film was produced possessed the capacity to bear the loss of an unsuccessful film. Today this has stopped. Films are made in accordance with the formula of a successful film. Consequently the number of flops has increased. There is a tendency now-a-days to produce films in great economy. In the past the cost of the Marathi and Hindi versions of a film was 1,40,000. Today the minimum cost of a Marathi film is Rs. 50,000. Not only this there was a very deplorable practice of producing a film at the cost of Rs. 60,000. As a result of this the technical standard of the film was lowered. Instead of giving background music suitable to the occasion the film producers now gave stock background music. They would not even pay much attention to the set for reasons of economy. In the past the director did not approve a particular scene unless it was fully acceptable. But today many directors do not even go through even rush prints. Now-a-days the director sees his film together with the spectators by doing direct negative cutting. In the past such negligence would not have been tolerated. Great attention was paid in those days to the finish in every detail. Not a single defect was tolerated. Today the retake of a scene has become an impossibility because the market for Marathi films has become limited. Naturally there are restrictions on expenditure.



### **The market becomes limited**

In the past Hindi version was made together with a Marathi film. This made all-India market available to films produced in Maharashtra. Now-a-days owing to the tendency of producing only Marathi films, Maharashtra has lost its hold on all-India market. The disappearance of institutional tradition is also one of the reasons. As there are no institutions with sound footing today production of Hindi films has become well-nigh impossible and as there are no film companies which produce Hindi films Marathi artistes with the exception of Sulochana, Usha Kiran, Dhumaal, etc. no more dominate the Hindi film industry. Those Maharashtrian artistes who became popular by originally acting in Hindi films think it below their dignity to act in Marathi films.

In the past the well-known Maharashtrian screen artistes like Shanta Apte, Durga Khote, Snehaprabha Pradhan, Shobhana Samarth, Ratnamala, Vinayak, B. Nandekar, Shahu Modak, etc. enjoyed a place of honour in Hindi films too. They had a class of admirers even outside Maharashtra. But today Maharashtrian artistes have no admirers even in Maharashtra let alone outside it. A limited number of admirers in Maharashtra are no doubt behind screen artistes like Sulochana, Jayashree Gadkar, Seema, etc. and the trio Raja Paranjape, G. D. Madgulkar and Sudhir Phadke. But no Marathi actor today has the following which Master Vinayak once enjoyed. Only Raja Gosavi could claim such a following for a brief period.

This is the present picture of the Marathi film industry. This does not mean that the Marathi film industry has nothing on the credit side. There is no doubt that some excellent pictures which preserved and bettered the unique traditions of the past were produced during this period. JAI MALHAR., RAM JOSHI, PUDHCHE PAOOL, PEDGAVCHE SHAHANE, AMAR BHUPALI, RAM RAM PAHUNE, BALAJI JOJO RE, OON-PAOOS, CHIMNI PAKHARE, LAKHACHI GOSHTA, VAHINICHYA BANGDYA and other classics were produced during this period. SHYAMCHI AAI bagged the first President's Gold Medal. But no other films could get this honour afterwards. In the past Marathi films had won international awards. But barring AMAR BHUPALI not a single Marathi film was a recipient of any international award. Although

VAHINICHYA BANGDYA, GRUHADEVATA, SHEVGYACHYA SHENGA, PRAPANCH and RANGALYA RATRI ASHA were shown abroad.

### **Economy increases**

As the producer has no control over the market there is one distributor and a host of producers. In the past film companies themselves used to distribute their films. In recent times, however, examples in which distribution rights were sold district-wise are not lacking. As the producer has to depend on others for distribution it has become very difficult for any producer to profit by a film that has a good market. There are many instances in which the producers did not get a single pie from the profit from several films which proved popular. As a result, there are producers who pocket in advance a part of the amount received from the distributor and produce a film with the remaining amount in a slipshod manner. Thus there is an increasing tendency today to produce films at minimum cost. Consequently Marathi films make a poor show in comparison to Hindi films on which lakhs of rupees are spent.

The Hindi films have made stupendous technical progress during the post-independence period. Our Hindi films today are so advanced technically that they stand fair comparison to western films. We can have an idea of this difference in technique when we see a Hindi film made twenty or twenty-two years ago and compare it with a present-day film. But we do not see much difference in technique between a 22-year old Marathi picture and a present one. Sometimes old films made by 'Prabhat' appear to be technically better. There was not much difference in technique between the films produced by 'Prabhat' and 'Hauns' on the one hand and those produced by the 'New Theatres' and 'Bombay Talkies' of those days. But today the difference in technique between Hindi and Marathi films is glaring. Marathi films cannot therefore stand competition with Hindi films. As Hindi films are not produced in Maharashtra the Marathi film industry has been deprived market outside Maharashtra.\*Not only this but even in Maharashtra itself the number of Marathi film fans has decreased. Not only in big cities like Bombay and Poona but in obscure villages people crowd cinema houses in which Hindi films are shown. These Hindi films collect 8 to 10 thousand rupees a week in small towns, while

Marathi films have to remain content with a weekly income of 4 to 6 thousand rupees.

As good story is the soul of Marathi films even today the middle class film-goer sees a Marathi film by ignoring its technical defects. Even in the days of the preponderance of Hindi films, Marathi films like MININI, SUVASINI, MOLKARIN, etc. were very generously patronised by film fans. But the Marathi film-lover is becoming a pessimist on account of the growing tendency of imitating Hindi films. As a result of this the film-goers who visit Marathi films thinking that there will be a good story are becoming indifferent about them.

### **The difficulty about studio and cinema houses**

Side by side with the lack of capital, the lack of up-to-date studios is also one of the reasons for the technical poverty of Marathi films. In the past, every film company had its own studio. Today not a single Marathi film company owns a studio. In the past there were three studios in Poona, viz. Prabhat, Navayug and Deccan. Of these the Deccan and Navayug are no more. Although the Prabhat has been transformed into Film Institute there is a stage available for Marathi there. But as this one stage is inadequate to cope with the needs of Marathi films, the producers of Marathi films have to depend on two studios at Kolhapur. However these two studios at Kolhapur are also ill-equipped. The rates of up-to-date film studios in Bombay are beyond the reach of Marathi film producers. Similarly lack of cinema houses is a stumbling block. On account of the competition among Hindi films the rates of cinema houses in big cities like Bombay and Poona are exorbitant. In the past Marathi films used to get cinema houses on percentage basis. But as the number of films increased in post-independence period the percentage system was abolished in big cities. Cinema houses were now given on rent. In the beginning the theatre protection amount was nominal. But as the shortage of cinema houses went on increasing the amount of theatre protection amount was also increased. This system proved a curse to Marathi films. A large part of the revenue went into the pocket of the owners of the cinema houses. Today the theatre protection amount of Marathi cinema houses in Bombay has shot up to Rs. 9,000; while in Poona it ranges from Rs. 3,300 to Rs. 5,000. This system has been

adopted in many parts of Maharashtra. On account of the competition of Hindi films it has become extremely difficult for Marathi films to get a cinema house for long run in large cities like Bombay and Poona.

### **Government help**

It is a matter of satisfaction that the Maharashtra Government is now aware of these difficulties of the Marathi film industry. The Government has included in the Fourth Five-Year Plan a scheme for the construction of an independent studio for Marathi films. There is also a scheme in this plan for a separate film finance corporation for the sake of capital. These things may to a large extent solve a number of problems; but it will not free the Marathi films from the pitiable condition in which they find themselves at present. If we take a survey of the Marathi film industry in the post-independence period we see that a sort of gulf has been created between the spectators and Marathi films. Unless this gulf is bridged the misery of the Marathi film industry will never end.

### **This principle is required**

The widening gulf between Marathi spectators and Marathi films has become a topic of fierce discussion. The view is being expressed in Marathi film industry that Hindi films have spoiled the taste of the film-goers. But this argument was proved false by the second film festival. In that festival seven old films were more patronized than seven new films. That the film-goer likes artistic creations of the past is certainly no indication that his taste has been spoilt. This is a proof of the fact that the new films suffer from some shortcomings which the old ones did not have. It is essential that these shortcomings should be first removed.

Judging from the present over-all condition of Marathi film industry we think that what it needs is the outlook of the pioneers like Baburao Painter and Dadasaheb Phalke towards the films. The veteran actor Baburao Pendharkar has narrated the following memoir in his autobiography. He says that with the arrival of talkies Baburao Painter one day returned home very indignant after witnessing one. He said it was all right that the talkie had come and that one must welcome every new thing. But he said that the innovation must be utilized judiciously. If because there are dialogues the faces remain

expressionless, it will be a misuse of talkie. It was a pity, he said, that the producers were overlooking this aspect and that from this point of view he considered silent pictures more artistic, for faces had to show expressions of deep emotion. Emotion is the true medium of the films. In the initial stages of the talkie everybody overlooked this aspect and was more attracted by dialogues. As a result of this films assumed the form of stage talkie. Veterans Shantaram and Vinayak changed this nature of the films. They proved that film was the medium of the director and not of the story writer. While Hindi and Marathi producers are treading this path successfully, Marathi artistes are taking to a wrong path. Hindi and Bengali artistes have recognised the fact that in a film how you say is more important than what you say. They have been making use of camera more effectively than the pen for impressing a story on the minds of the spectators. That is why expression of emotions has assumed greater importance in Hindi and Bengali films. This factor is missing in Marathi films because the pen has more importance than the camera in them. That is the reason why Marathi films appear to be writer's films than the director's films.

In 1940 Dadasaheb Phalke had said that the story of a film should be written bearing in mind that film is a photo-play. Therefore, he said, the scene should be so arranged as if it were a silent film. Dialogues should be introduced only where essential. This key-note propounded by Dadasaheb Phalke has still not been understood by Marathi film-makers.

While explaining what should be the soul of a film the veteran producer Baburao Painter had once said that two trials should be taken of a film when it is ready. The first trial should be silent and the second one should be of the sound without the picture. If small children and women understand the story both the times then you are hundred per cent successful, he had said. If we take a trial of Marathi films from this point of view, not a single Marathi film will pass the test even fifty per cent because as a result of the technique of unfolding the story through the medium of mere dialogues there is no scope for emotions in Marathi films. That is why even after fifty years, time has come for men in film industry to study the view point expressed by the two veterans Baburao Painter and Dadasaheb Phalke and follow it. Today the technique of films no doubt vastly differs from that of Baburao Painter and Dadasaheb Phalke. But the principles laid down by them remain much the same. The Marathi film industry needs those principles. ■ ■ ■

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