CHAPTER - V

WOMEN AND FILMS; AND IMPORTANT FILM PERSONALITIES

Women and Films

One of the direct impacts of film media is seen on the contemporary society. A study of films can be very innovative and authentic medium for the study of various facets of the society. Films, for instances, touched the life of women in more than one way. The review of their projection on the screen and their changing image during the period of this study is attempted briefly. Besides, some of the basic important factors such as the responses and reactions of female artists to the film media and responses and reactions they received from the co-artists, and more importantly from the society at large have also been explored.

One of the instinctive reactions of the traditional society to the new world of film was to shun it so far the female members had concerned. The idea was to discourage and to prevent the woman from seeing the movies, acting on the screen was unimaginable then. This attitude stands clearly reflected in the responses received
through questionnaires. Smt Shamala Sohani, aged 75, a housewife, mentioned that they were not allowed to see drama as well as movies.\textsuperscript{1} The society with had reservations to the films in the beginning, positively looked down upon the women appearing on the screen.

Dadasaheb Phalke, the father of Indian cinema found it impossible to get female artist for the role of Taramati in his maiden film \textit{Raja Harishchandra}, in 1913. Ultimately he had a male artist in that role. Same story was repeated in case of Baburao Painter - in his maiden venture - \textit{Sita Swayanwar} in 1919. Determined to have only female artist in the said role of the heroine, he preferred to shelve off the movie itself rather than to produce it with the male artist in the leading role of Sita. He tried hard but fear of community backlash kept women away from the film.\textsuperscript{2}

In those times, particularly in 1920s women from economically backward classes or even commercial workers or concubines would bluntly refuse to act in films or appear on stage.\textsuperscript{3}

Perhaps the sole exception was classical music. There are many instances of classical female singers giving solo performance right from the beginning of the 20\textsuperscript{th} century. Manjabai, Gulabbai and
Anusayabai were the first batch of the entrants to the Kolhapur films. But they had to pay heavy price for it. Members of their castes, including their families boycotted them. There are instances of orthodox elements, resorting to stone throwing, at the rehearsals.

Baburao Painter faced such occasions with composite calm and boldness. Subsequently Gulabbai and Anusayabai played the roles of Sairandhri and Sudeshna respectively.4

Though women started acting in the movies, yet their families did not approve of it. For instance, Prabhat Film Company found one lady artist for the role of Radha, for its first venture, Gopalkrishna. But her family forced her to withdraw.5 To act in the film or to associate with it was not considered respectable for women even in 1940s. Vanmala, a heroine of famous film, Shyamchi Aai, belonged to Sardar family of Gwalior. Shyamchi Aai today remains the most popular autobiographical work in Marathi literature. Sane Guruji, its author was one of the most respected leaders in Gandhian mould in those times. Shyamchi Aai is a tribute to the Indian motherhood and in spite of all this, Vanmala’s entry on screen was treated as a blot by the family. Her father was reported to have fainted on seeing her on the screen.6 This movie brought
recognition to Marathi film industry, as it won President Medal, but all this was meaningless to family members who preferred to sever relationship with her.

However, the female artists, quitting the movies in the middle of the production, often created serious problems for the producers. To what extent the imaginative producer had to go to avoid it is really indicative from the following incident. Baburao Pendharkar, on the set of Julum, in 1931, found the heroine missing. He learnt that she was about to quit the film under the family pressure. So he took dummy police to her house and warned her family members of the legal consequences. The trick worked.7

Thus, the entry of woman on silver screen was made. Following is a list of some of the famous names, who appeared in various roles in the films produced in Kolhapur – Anusayabai, Miss. Hansa, Tanibai, Sharada, Hirabai, Shalini, Kamladevi, Gulabbai, Sushilabai, Nalini Nagpurkar, Dwarka, Padma, Tulsa, Sarojini, Sulochana, Padmini, Durga Khote, Leela Chandragiri, Kamlabai, Miss.Padma, Shakuntala, Sudha, Prabhavati, Indubala, Azambai, Tarabai, Leelabai, Ushadevi, Ratnaprabha, Shobhnadevi Samarth, Indira Wadkar, Amina, Mahananda, Sonubai, Shantabai,
etc. had to enter the films because of pressing financial needs of their families. Their sole concern was to win bread and butter for their family. Some of them such as Usha Kiran, Jayashree Gadkar were, indeed, lucky to have the moral backing of their family members. In the beginning, many of them were illiterate, but, with the passage of time, educated women started entering the field. Durga Khote, the first graduate actress, was very comfortable with English rather than Marathi. She had to take extra coaching in Marathi.

Dwarakabai was the first Brahmin lady to act in the movie *Sinhagad* in 1925. Subsequently, many upper caste women such as Shobhana Samarth, Minakshi Shirodkar, Usha Kiran etc. joined the film world. Similarly, the members of Muslim community such as Sulochana (Rangu alias Sahebjan Latkar), Amina, Zubeda etc. were bit far behind. It is also interesting to note that most of them preferred to be known by their own names few, changed their names. For instance, Sulochana whose real name was Sahebjan Latkar.

Women, besides acting, were also associated with various branches of film making - producer, music director, lyric writer,
choreographer etc. When the production of the film was initially considered as the male domain society, Tanibai Kagalkar was the first woman to join the Maharashtra Film Company as a partner. So long she was associated with the company, it remained a leading film company. It was only after her death the said company was closed down due to mismanagement. Akkasaheb Maharaj, another prominent lady established *Shalini Cinetone.*

A most well known case of a woman who contributed to many departments of film making is that of melody queen- Lata Mangeshkar. She not only sang for twenty to twenty five Marathi films during this period, but her melodious voice was main factor for success of many films such as *Gajabhau, Maze Bal, Jay Malhar, Ram-Ram Pahune etc.*

Further, she set up her own film company, *Surel Chitra,* and produced six films. In fact all her movies not only successful but each one had social message to pass on. This made her successful film producer. She stepped in the shoes of a music director to help out a friend in need. This speaks volumes for Lata Mangeshkar as a person.
Shanta Shelke, a famous poetess, was associated with Marathi film industry. However, one doesn't come across a woman as a story or dialogue writer in this era. Shanta Shelke wrote songs seven movies. Some of the songs, *Lajari Preet Mazi, Bharjari Padar* etc. became all time hits.¹⁶

**Changing images of women on screen**

Growing western impact on Indian women is perceptible on the screen. Though most movies a woman a traditional style, yet, certain flashes of change on western line can be detected. For instance, a photograph titled ‘a woman with rackets’ shows the transition towards modernity. It shows a group of women in traditional sarees. Some of them shown holding the rackets, suggest their stepping out from traditional family restrictions to new world of freedom. In another photograph, Hansa Wadkar holding a book is symbolic of women taking higher education. She has few ornaments on her. A book in right hand and watch on the left, is again a symbol of middle class modern woman to whom the doors of education are open and for whom the education is her real ornament.
The other extreme may be seen in the photograph titled 'Towards Modernity'. The heroine is under total western influence, bobcut, no bangles and no cuncum. The researcher obtained this photographs from the collection of Vijay Gajbar, son of Bal Gajbar. While working on this aspect a reference must be made to a heroine appearing on screen in bathing suit as back as in 1939, Minakshi Shirodkar was the one to have gave that bold shot in *Brahmachari*. (The said photograph could not be produced by the researcher in spite of her efforts).

**Changing Social Attitude Towards Women**

References have been made frequently in this research work as to how images of the women in the society kept changing from time to time. Excerpts from the biographies of film personalities, various books on film history and personal interviews with the film artists have helped in understanding this phenomenon.

In order to substantiate these observations, this researcher conducted a survey through questionnaire. The sixty respondents who filled questionnaire included personalities from different walks of life. Majority of the respondents expressed the view that in early days women on screen was subjected to social abuse. According to
Dinkar Inamdar, the film actor, the attitude changed with the arrival of educated women on the screen. In view of another film personality, Bhalchandra Kulkarni, film actresses came to enjoy better status, from the 1950s onwards. Laxman Jathar, Manohar Randive, Kanchan Kapase, Padmaja Kulkarni and Mrs Shamala Sohani. Shri Vasant Mane, Shri Sambhaji Jadhav, Kiran Shantaram and Dr Sudhir Gavane express deep regards educated women for having chosen cinema as a career. However, many of the respondents do criticize this trend to show women as a sex symbol on the screen.

According to Shamim banu Kagadi, K. D. Jadhav, Madhuri Navandar, this trend was quite pronounced in the Marathi movies till 1950. The heroines seem take pride in showing themselves as a showpiece on screen. Prof. Laxman Deshpande holds the concerned artists responsible for projecting the negative image of women on the screen. N.V. Deshpande, Govind Salunkhe and Sharad Varadkar also expressed the similar views.

However, as rightly put forth by G. N. Jogalekar, the image of women on screen bears a direct relevance to the educational background and cultural taste of society at large.
The above responses do corroborate the general observations made in this work. The early days of cinema constituted a period of social abuse for women actress who dared to enter this world of elusion. According to Shobhana Samarth, for women, this profession was worse than prostitution. The entry of cultured women such as Durga Khote, Shobhana Samarth, Sulochana, Jayashree Gadkar and Baby Shakuntala helped changed this negative image and bring some respectable status to women on the screen. According to many respondents, sober image of women actress is an exception rather than a rule. Many see them as symbol of sex, glamour and a saleable commodity.

**Important film Personalities**

The foundation of and subsequent growth of Film Industry in Kolhapur was the result of hard and sincere efforts, pains and sufferings of hundreds of personalities cutting across caste, communal, professional barriers. It is impossible to put on records the volume of contribution made by each and every one of them. Therefore, a sincere effort is made in this chapter to record and evaluate the contribution of some of the important personalities who played key-role in the success of this Film Industry.
Painter Cousins

While reviewing the work of the film personalities, the name that comes to forefront is that of Painter brothers- Anandrao and Baburao. Theirs was traditional sutar (carpenter) family but because their love for and skill of the art of painting the epithet 'Painter', stuck to them and they came to be known as Painter Brothers. The cousins were born in 1890. Krishnarao, Baburao’s father had left the ancestral place of Mhagond in search of livelihood and subsequently settled in Kolhapur. Baburao inherited his love of and skill of carpentry from his father. The cousins had to discontinued the schooling after 4\textsuperscript{th} standard and had to work for earning bread. Initially they started earning money by drawing and selling the oil paintings. Slowly, they started getting the orders for painting the curtains from Keshavrao Bhosale, the proprietor of Lalit Kala Darshan, a drama company.\textsuperscript{19}

It brought them name and fame. Vishnupant Damle started taking lessons of painting from the cousin duo. Their acquaintance with Keshavrao Bhosale brought Anandrao Painter in contact with Shankarrao Vashikar of Hubli, a millionaire fan of former, and the result was the successful partnership in the establishment of a
cinema theatre *Deccan Cinema*. The partnership was successful. Inspired by the foreign films the cousins thought of launching their own film production. However, the idea of production of films didn’t fancy Shankarrao Vashikar, which he thought to be very risky for safe investment. Therefore, he refused to invest in this venture. As a result, Anandrao walked out of the partnership in 1913. Meanwhile the cousins were invited to Bombay to work on the curtains of Keshavrao Bhosale’s drama *Rakhashi Mahatvakanaksha* (Devilish ambitions). The stay in Bombay proved fruitful for the cousins as it gave them an opportunity to see a number of foreign silent films. Determined to be film producers, they established *Maharashtra Cinema*, a theatre in partnership with Baburao Ruikar, a rich landlord immediately on their return to Kolhapur. Chhatrapati Shahu Maharaj, who once happened to visit the theatre, was so much impressed by the beautiful paintings there, that he exclaimed, “Is Anandrao a painter or magician?”

It was Baburao Painter who introduced the concept of effective publicity of film through big beautiful hoardings. After producing 17 films in 1920s under the banner of *Maharashtra Film Company*, he quit the company over the differences with the
partners. That was an end of his career as a producer. But then he always remained in demand as director. In 1931, he directed *Prem sangam*. Akksaheb Maharaj entrusted him the whole responsibility of film production for her enterprise *Shalini Cinetone*. In the managers capacity, he produced and directed four films. His all experience stood well with him and proved good for *Shalini Cinetone*.²³

It is to the credit of this brainy man that he could repair a car as effortless as a camera, could use a painting brush as brilliantly as he would use camera. He excelled irrespective of where he stood, behind or in front of the camera. His mastery over paintings rendered a touch of realism to historical films. In fact, his single-minded devotion caused problems at times. Engrossed in drawing and painting, he had little time for other things. Because of this he had to bear criticism that he would keep waiting others at shooting. At times, in search of new ideas or inspiration, he would leave the shooting half way to go on hunting. This habit resulted in waste of time and money causing much inconvenience to the others. However, he couldn’t get as much success as he did the period of silent movies. This was perhaps due to the fact that in case of former
he had absolute control over all facets of film making. But when he started directing films for others, he lost that consistency and freedom.24

As a producer, he produced twenty one movies, and as a director, he directed twenty-six movies. As a technician, he would repair the equipments. He was good at editing and at processing. As a art director, he used his art to create marvelous sets on one hand and on the other he used the same art to promote the films. People would throw to see the large posters of the films painted by him. He also faced the camera in tit-bit roles.25 In the span of three decades, he was directly associated with thirty films.

Some of the great personalities such as V. Shantaram, Baburao Pendharkar, Damale, Fattelal, Dhaybar, Nanasaheb Sarpotdar, Balasaheb Yadhav etc., who left behind their immense contribution to the film world, were trained under his watchful eyes in the beginning of their careers. No wonder, the idea of building the monument of this great film personality surfaced and upheld from all quarters as back as 1958.26 In the words of Prof N.S. Phadke, "Baburao’s won heart of the Maharashtrian people as his films
depicted the simplicity of rural life, touching the traditional values of courage and honesty in refreshing manner." 27

Baburao Pendharkar

Famous as a film producer, distributor, actor and manager Baburao Pendharkar made a multi faceted personality. Born on the 29th June 1896 in a family of Doctor, he showed good progress in school. It was Balasaheb Yadav, who cultivated love for physical exercise in him and made him a good wrestler. He completed his school finals. He had mastery over English. After schooling he had an offer to teach English at private classes.28 After his marriage in 1916, he quit teaching to work as a cumpounder in a hospital at Kolhapur.29 He left that job too, with the better offer from landlord of Gajendragada to teach English to his son.30 There came a turn that changed his life for good. He became manager of Maharashtra Film Company in 1919. More important, he appeared in the role of Lord Vishnu, in Sairandhree – the first film of this company.31 As a manager, he would look after the production of the film till its completion and then as a representative, he would take care of promotion of the film. He would travel from place to place with the
box of the film. Simultaneously, he would collect information about the people, their festivals and their responses to film media.32

He left Deccan Pictures Corporation in 1924-25 to establish Vande Mataram Film Company in partnership with Bhalji Pendharkar and Parshwanath Alatekar. However, its first venture, Vande Mataram suffered due to several cuts imposed by censor board, and it failed at the box office too.33 As a result, he had to close down the film company and return to Kolhapur. When one door closed, as luck would have it, another opened unexpectedly. The boy, he had taught English at Gajendragada became a King of Sondur and invited him as his special guest. According to him that stay helped him a lot and when he returned to Kolhapur, he was a changed man.34

He was offered manager's post by Prabhat Film Company to manage its affairs in 1929. Subsequently, he established his own film company, Hans Pictures in 1936. Being an astute businessman, he also set up Pearless Pictures, a distribution company.35 As a producer, he made many successful films such as Brahmachari, Premveer, Devata. He was a successful producer and director too. More important, he made his contribution as an actor too.36
On screen, he made a very popular villain. So much so that he was the center of publicity in many films. His Hindi movies too, such as Begunah, Do Ankhe Barah Hath faired very well on the box-office. It may not be out of place to mention here that his role of jailor in V. Shantaram's Do Ankhe Barah Hath is one of the most memorable character ever projected on Hindi screen. He was a man of great physical courage and often risked his life while shooting the action sequences in films.

With success also came controversies. He had to face many allegations from time to time. As a manager of Maharashtra Film Company, he was accused of making money through exhibition of the Sinhagad at Wemble exhibition in England. To prove his innocence he had to use office of Political Agent in India. On enquiry the allegations found to be mischievous and false in 1923.37

To many, he made an ideal friend with a high sense of gratitude.

Bhalchandra Pendharkar (1898-1994)

Bhalji Pendharkar, followed the foot steps of his elder brother, Baburao to carve his own place in the history of Marathi films. He was born (2nd May 1898) and educated in Kolhapur. Being fond of
acting, sports (wrestling) and languages, he was a pet student of many teacher in the school. Rajarambapu Vankudre, his uncle, impressed by his stage acting in the role of Sawai Madhavrao, in school gathering, introduced him to several dramatists at Laxmiprasad theatre. Family poverty cut short his school life and he had to leave home in search of livelihood.

He stayed in Gymkhana (Talim Khana) for some time before he got an accommodation in the house of Alladiya Khan, the royal singer of Kolhapur. It turned out to be a great boon for him as he developed an ear for music. Careful observation at rehearsals enriched his understanding of subtle points of acting. Simultaneously, he worked in printing press and also as a drama teacher in Apsara Sangeet Mandal. When Alladiya Khan left for Mumbai, Bhalji went to stay with Balasaheb Yadav. He shifted to Pune in 1916 and worked as a news paper boy in Lokmanya Tilak’s Kesari. The job gave him opportunity to quench the thrust for reading. When Tilak left for Sinhgad, he came back to Kolhapur after a trip to Rukadi and Raibag. Interesting enough, he did a small stint in Army. On returning to Pune after death of Tilak, he wrote Swarajya Sandesh a book on Tilak’s message. He also started
contributing to various newspapers. He was offered a job of translating English titles into Marathi at Laxmi and Apolo theatres. He came in contact with great patron Rajguru. Impressed by him he realized the need to acquire the knowledge of weapons and explosives, without which 'there can not be armed revolt in Maharashtra.' The mission took him to Punjab. He met Lala Lajpatrai at a National University, Lahore. In Calcutta, he went to see great revolutionary Atul Sen. Then he proceeded to Banaras Hindu University, he interviewed Pandit Malaviya. Back to Kolhapur, he again joined work of Laxmi Theatre. The job brought him in close relations with Bal Gandharva. On coming to Kolhapur Baburao Painter employed him to write a story for film Markandeya. However, the changes suggested by Baburao Painter in the story were not acceptable to Bhalji. Search of job took him to Mumbai then to Baroda, where he taught acting to the cast of silent movie Prithivallabh. An offer of directing Bajirao-Mastani brought him back to Kolhapur in 1925. Then the Vande Mataram Film Company episode followed. Next few years he spent in revolutionary work through Tarun Hindusthan Mandal. Visited Nagpur, Amalner, Akola and Banaras in that connection.
Chandrashekhar Azad at Kashi. He performed all the bold assignments entrusted to him.45

He married in 1930. Next year, he wrote and directed Bajbahadur alias Rani Rupmati for Maharashtra Film Company.46 During shooting Rani Rupmati British Govt. hanged Bhagatsingh, Rajguru and Sukhadeo. The news disturbed Bhalji who had dedicated himself for work of Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangha and was committed to Sangh ideology. In 1932, he directed film Shyamsundar of Saraswati Cinetone for which talkie, he also wrote story, screenplay, dialogue and lyrics.47

He regularly work in those capacity with Shyam Cinetone, Kolhapur Cinetone, Saraswati Cinetone, Shalini Cinetone, Prince Shivaji Production and Arun Pictures etc. and gave hits such as Ranisahiba, Thoratanchi Kamla, Bhakta Damaji.48

Bhalji Pendharkar had partnership in Arun Chitra for which he produced Sunbāi.49 In 1943 outbreak of Malaria stalled the shooting on many occasions. Though Vishram Bedekar, the director quit the place, Bhalji persisted with the shooting. But on account of chronic deterioration of health, he was forced to hand over Company and rights of film Studio, to his partnér Seeraj Ali Hakim.

216
However, he completed this film after his return to Kolhapur. It had a drama branch. Bhalji produced five Marathi and three Hindi films for *Prabhakar Pictures* between 1941-47. Interesting enough, *Prabhakar Pictures* also produced some popular dramas during this period.

In 1945, Bhalji devoted himself to his first love and inspiration, Chh. Shivaji Maharaj. On the 14th May 1945, he had installed a beautiful statue of the Maratha King at his own cost. This statue was sculptured by Baburao Painter. Similarly, he gave financial support and collected funds to sue the author of book, *Real Shivaji* which criticized Shivaji Maharaj in derogatory manner. He roped in several historians to give evidence in the court. His efforts were successful. Court ordered United provinces Government to permanently ban the book *Real Shivaji* and also ordered the author to pay judicial costs besides compensation. This is an unique example of Bhalji’s loyalty and sense of pride regarding Shivaji Maharaj.

The Princely State of Kolhapur was in flux on issue of adoption in 1947. Bhalji, a *Hindu Mahasabha* activist, sided with
the decedents of Bhosale family, thereby opposing the adoption of the Prince of Devas, Vikramsinh Pavar who ultimately ascended the throne under the name of Chh. Shivaji.  

Bhalji suffered many ups and downs in his life. He was linked with and arrested in connection with Gandhi's assassination but once his innocence was proved he was released. His studio was set on fire on the 31st January 1948, a great material loss, and a psychological blow. But the set backs could not keep him down for long. It speaks for the man that his friends worked free for his film, *Mith Bhakar* in 1949. The noble and friendly gesture went a long way in helping him recover from losses.

He was very strict as a producer and director. He did not tolerate any kind of indiscipline on the sets. Punctuality was his hallmark. His biographers praise him for being 'fare in his dealings'. He produced movies for money but money was not the sole criteria. Like millions in those days, he literally idolized and hero worshiped Chh. Shivaji as the source of national inspiration. His movies, inspired by the legendary Shivaji, constitute his priceless legacy.
Being a very dedicated director and the one who really knew the difference between stage acting and acting on screen, taught many artists to emote naturally. Its from him that Leela Pendharkar learnt a natural way to bring the tears to the eyes without glycerin.56 Also known for his excellent diction, he was very particular about language spoken by various characters in his films. Basically very nice human being, he always shared his knowledge and skill with others. Dinkar Patil compares him with modern Dronacharyya who imparted best of training in the film making without demanding a thumb from his disciples.57

V. Shantaram (1901-90)

Shantaram Rajaram Vankudre alias V. Shantaram was born on November 18th 1901 in Kolhapur. Being interested in mimicry and acting in drama from early childhood, he entered Gandharva Natak Company in year 1914-15. He played minor roles in some plays. He also appeared in group dances.58 Simultaneously he also worked in a press to meet both ends. Meanwhile he learnt playing Tambora, as he had to accompany singing program of Govindrao Tembe. The adverse circumstances forced him to quit the school education. Search of job took him to Hubli. He worked as a fitter in
a railway workshop in day and in the evening as a doorkeeper of *Deccan Cineme*. He had quit the job of fitter owing to the small accident in railway bogie. He turned to photography. He also started painting the shop hoardings.

Baburao Pendharkar, his cousin brought him a job of helper in *Maharashtra Film Company* in 1920. He did everything from washing colored pots, cleaning company building to playing minor roles in films. In 1921, he got a major break in a role of Vishnu in film *Vatsala haran* and also an opportunity to edit the film. Next year he married. Subsequently he acted in many films such as *Sinhgad* and *Shrikrishnavtar* (1923), *Sati Padmini* (1924), *Shahla Shaha*, *Savkari Pash*, *Rana Hamir* and *Maya Bazar*. *Gajgauri*, *Bhakta Pralhad*, *Murliwala* (1926), *Sati Savitri* (1928), *Maharathi Karna* (1928), *Bajiprabhu Deshpande*, and *Nishasundari* (1929). He was a recipient of a gold medal for the direction of a film *Netaji Palkar* in 1927. Thus, he got valuable opportunities in major branches of film making- acting, direction, editing etc.

He left *Maharashtra film Company* on the 30th April, 1929. In collaboration with four others, and established, his own concern *Prabhat Film Company* on the 1st June 1929.
Gopalkrishna the first film of Prabhat was also released in the same year. In next four years two this Company produced eleven films including six silent movies. In 1932, Prabhat came up with its Ayodhyecha Raja in both Hindi and Marathi versions. The credit of producing first ever color film Sairandhri released in 1933 also goes to Prabhat Film Company. Out of 11 films V. Shantaram directed all these with an exception of Julum produced in 1931 which was directed by Keshavrao Dhiabar. Due to the irregular power supply and closer to Mumbai, Prabhat film company shifted to Pune in November 1933. However, he developed some problems with this Company and was to toeing with an idea to quit it. V. Shantaram quit Prabhat Film Company in 1942 and founded Rajkamal Kala Mandir in Mumbai. Sensing his intention Baburao Painter openly said, “if it is true that Shantaram is leaving Prabhat, then it is ill fortune of Prabhat and its owners. Owner of Prabhat Film Company should not relieve Shantaram, as he is the only one who achieves both art and business”. Shakuntala of Rajkamal Kala Mandir was the great success. Master Vinayak’s Prafulla Pictures arranged a grand felicitation of V. Shantaram with other artists and technicians of this film in Kolhapur on 21-8-1945. To him this
remained a memorable event of his life. V. Shantaram very well blended quality of film and professional achievements during his film career.

**Master Vinayak (1906-47)**

Vinayak Karnataki, who later became famous as Master Vinayak was born on December 19, 1906 in Kolhapur. Vasudeo Karnataki, the well known cameraman was one of his six brothers. Vinayak was only four years old when he lost his father. He did his schooling in Vidyapeeth High school, the institute which put equal importance on co-curricular activities.

His teachers Topkhane and Dixit, influenced him and inculcating in him a deep sense of idealism. Rajaram College moulded his personality. He won several prizes for debate competitions. He proved his acting skill through various dramas and soon he was invited by professional drama companies. He joined Vidyapeeth high school as a teacher leaving his graduate course unfinished. While teaching he didn't neglect acting. Vinayak continued with his love towards performing arts by organizing several dramas in the school.
His break came when Prabhat Film Company offered him a role in its first talkie, Ayodhyecha Raja in 1932 and he came into limelight from the very first film. He earned the prefix 'Master'. Maya Machchindra, Sinhgad and Sairandhri, the first color film, put a stamp of popularity.70

After shifting of Prabhat to Pune, Vinayak joined hands with Kolhapur Cinetone, to give popular hits like Akashwani, Kaliya Mardan and Vilasi Ishwar.71 Last turned out to be a block buster. Vinayak, the actor now wanted to become a director too. He joined as a partner in Hans Pictures and directed the first film in 1936. Incidentally this was also the year of Prabhat's Sant Tukuram which won an award as one of the three best films of the year in the Fifth International Film Festival in Venus.72

Social themes were very popular by the time Vinayak entered the films. As a teacher, he had always been charged with a reformist zeal as a film maker he found himself in a much larger classroom. He could hold the attention of his invisible pupils with humor while he taught a lesson that was intensely serious. Vinayak strengthened the tradition of social satire in cinema and enriched it in his films. His artistic understanding arisen out of his idealism and
sense of responsibility towards the society reflected through his films.\(^{73}\)

Being a keen student of literature he used his deep love for understanding of literature, his real asset. As a versatile director, he could take stories by P. K. Atre and V. S. Khandekar—both highly respected authors with completely different attitude and style. The beauty and idealism of Khandekar’s and razor-sharp wit and merciless satire of P. K. Atre, the two most popular and respected authors produced by modern Maharashtra. More important, he immortalized on the screen C. V. Joshi’s most comic pair Chimanrao and Gundyabhau. He never stereotyped his actors and actresses in their popular screen images. For instance, in his Gajabhau he presented Damuanna Malvankar then a famous comedian in a tragic lead role. Similarly, Baburao Pendharkar, a popular villain made a mark as successful character artist under the direction of Vinayak. He used his excellent craftsmanship to take his message effectively to common man through film media.

According to a critic, the two parallel schools of Barua and Shantaram mingle in harmony in Vinayak’s work. His films were a meeting ground of the sentimental of Bengali glimpsed in Barua’s
works and the Maharashtrian rationalist present in Shantaram's films. He combined both to a third school of cinema.\textsuperscript{74}

It is also noteworthy that Vinayak made beautiful use of the poems of Gadkari, Madhav Julian, Borkar, Rev. Tilak and Tambe in his work.\textsuperscript{75}

Vinayak directed his last film in Marathi, \textit{Gajabhau} in 1944.\textsuperscript{76}

The Indian film industry was changed a lot by this time. The middle class who patronized the Marathi cinema was facing financial crisis. After the end of the World war period, a new set of social values was emerging and an audience desperately went for light stories like fairy-tales for entertainment. Against this background, Vinayak made a final effort to revive Marathi cinema with film Gajabhau, in 1944. However, failure of the film at the box office marked beginning of Vinayak's decline in the cinema. \textit{Jeevan Yatra} was his last film produced in 1947. Within a very few days after release of this film Vinayak died all of a sudden on August 19, 1947.\textsuperscript{77} Forty one years is not an age to die. Besides incomplete production of Hindi film \textit{Mandir} Master Vinayak, a master craftsman, left many things unfinished.
Dinkar D. Patil

Dinkar Patil was born on the 6th November 1915 in village Benadi in Belgaum district. He was a student of Vidyapeeth High school, Kolhapur. His teacher Vinayakrao Karnataki alias Master Vinayak, found him extremely talented and took him in his Balvir Pathak (a cultural troop). Prabhat Film Company invited Master Vinayak. In a farewell function at school, this popular teacher assured his students, ‘I have been teaching you on black board but henceforth I will teach you on white screen’. Young Dinkar could never forget the incident. Dinakar acted in drama set by Vinayak for school charity. Role in, Andhalyanchi Shala (school of blinds) made him very popular. Besides he wrote songs for the said play on insistence of Master Vinayak.78

Being a Rajaramiyan, he acted in many plays staged at the college. He also produced musical drama. He turned to writing too. Worked as a editor of Rajaramiyan a college magazine. After taking his degree instead of going in for teaching, he turned to the films and joined Hans Pictures. Meanwhile he also got married.79

In the meantime Hans pictures was converted into Navyug Chitra Limited and shifted to Pune. There Dinakar Patil learnt
several subtle things in film making under guidance of Master Vinayak. Worked as Assistant Director, *Sarkari Pahune* (State guests) and *Tujhach* (only yours). Vinayak, Atre and Pendharkar left the company when *Pahili Mangalagour* was on the floor. Dinakar Patil followed the quit, despite categorical assurance of pay hike by Rajguru. Back on Kolhapur, Master Vinayak established Prafulla Pictures and in first film *Maza Bal* (my baby) tackled the problem of 'unwedded mothers'. Dinkar assisted him in direction of the social films like *Chimukala Sansar* and *Gajabhaum*. He kept himself busy with writing stories to and bagged first prize for his story in a story contest organized by *Kirloskar* magazine. In early times, he would write dialogues for folk plays in Ganapati festivals. This practice helped him develop mastery on art of dialogue writing. He wrote story, screenplay and dialogues for *Mangal Picture's Jay Malhar*. He took fifteen days off Master Vinayak's shooting of *Mandir* to write the dialogues of *Jay Malhar* of Kolhapur. According to the film critics, the dialogues were the strength of this silver jubilee movie. He also wrote story for *Mangala Picture's Kortachi Payari* (stairs of court) in Hindi.
He soon got an opportunity to independently direct a film *Mandir* for Bhom Reddy.\(^8^5\) It was a great hit.

After writer and director, next logical step was to be a producer. However, he needed a capital and partners to set up his company. He had the bitter experience of being cheated by financer Kakubhai Thakkar for rupees two thousand. However, Madhav Shinde and Dinakar Anna Patil and Dinkar Patil – the trio set up a company, *Udaykala Citra*. His first endeavor as a producer was *Ramram Pahune* (Hello guest). One of the biggest blockbusters in Marathi.\(^8^6\) Lata Mangeshkar gave playback and also directed music of this film free of cost. The next venture, *Patalacha Por* (Son of Patil) was also a money grosser.\(^8^7\) Later, Dinakar Patil came up with autobiography with same title. He also directed films, *Sharada* for *Abhinava Chitra* and film *Mayabahini* for *Shri Gauri Chitra*. He joined hands with Madhavrao Shinde and Lata Mangeshkar to set up *Surel Chitra* which produced *Vadal*, based on his own story.\(^8^8\)

He further established his own *Dinakar Chitra* and produced *Taraka* in 1954. In 1959, he wrote story of film *Shikleli Bayako* (A educated wife). In film *Kuldaivat*, he gave break to Baby Nanda, daughter of Master Vinayak. *Bhairavi*, was the last film produced in
1960 under this banner. He had persisted on the same title in spite of Lata Mangeshkar's objection to it on the grounds of it being the last raga of any classical singing program. Later he wrote and directed the films like *Prem Aandhale Asate, Umaj Padel Tar, Mazi Aai, Baap Majha Brambachari and Mantryachi Soon.*

Dinakar Patil earned substantial success as a writer and a director but not as an independent producer. He attributed his failure for not being distributor besides being producer.

Jayashree Gadkar, the famous actress, made her debut in a film *Malhari Martanda* by Vilas Chitra directed by Dinakar Patil. Many of Marathi films such as *Saniäji Dhanaji, Kortachi Payari, Mantryachi Soon, Kunkavacha Tila* and *Bhatakabhavani, Manacha Mujara, Mi Manus Aahe, Pathrakhin, Paise Zadala Lagatat, Bhingari Bhamata, Rashtrasanta Ramdas* etc. carry "Dinkar Patil touch." Having directed for about 40 films and writing story and dialogue of more than 100 films, Dinakar Patil is famous for his sharp, dashing dialogues.

All the above mentioned personalities – Baburao Painter, Bhalji Pehdharkar, Baburao Pendharkar, V.Shantaram and Master Vinayak had thorough knowledge of all aspects of film production.
As a result of this, all these stalwarts made significant contribution in film production, direction, acting, editing, story and screenplay, dialogues and lyrics etc. Most of these persons had mastered more than two-three aspects of filmmaking.

Prominent actors

Zunzarrao Pawar

Dattatray Krishnarao Pawar popularly known as Zunzarrao Pawar was one of the famous actors of Marathi Film Industry. Born in Jamindar family in 1892 at Kolhapur, he was drawn towards drawing and painting right from his childhood. The art, he developed under the guidance of Baburao Painter, however, it is mainly, his handsome appearance and eloquent acting that won him applause from the audience. Even today the old generation remembers his performance of Kichak in Sairandhri. According to some of them he initially embodied Kichak. He literally lived the characters on the screen. He was Perfectionist.

His Udaybhan in Sinhagad brought him the statewide popularity. His Roman-god like features, fair complexion and bold-rash temperament in the role of Udaybhan won him the nickname of Zunzarrao. His performance in various roles like Kansa, Narada,
Anyaba (Victim of Sawakari system) was also appreciated. He played hero, villain and double roles which made successful transition from silent movies to talkies both marinating his popularity and reputation as an actor.

He worked with same enthusiasm and zeal for fifty years. Perhaps this is the reason Zunzarrao remained Zunzarrao forever.

Sardar Balasaheb Yadav (1892-1951)

Sardar Balasaheb Yadav was born in a Jamindar family of Kolhapur Sansthan. He was one of the most popular figures in Kolhapur between 1920 - 40. His love for art, music and wrestling made him popular with Baburao Painter, Baburao Pendharkar, Bhalaji Pendharkar, Bhurjikha etc.

Though little educated he was born intelligent and versatile personality. Chh. Shahu Maharaja recognized the talents in him and encouraged him.

Balasaheb Yadav developed his love for art, music and wrestling. Learnt painting from the famous artist Abalal Rehman. Could sing Natyagite and play harmonium equally well. His love for wrestling took him to wrestling ground (Talim Khanas) everyday. It was at the Talim Khanas that Baburao Painter saw this
tall, athletic built, handsome person with daring nature, and offered him the role of Bhim in Sairandhri. His Bhim was so real that, he won the appreciation of Lokmanya Bal Gangadhar Tilak.97

His Tanaji Malusare, Rana Hamir, Karna, Baji Prabhu Deshapande, Ghatotkach helped build his image of a strong man. With his double roles of Tanaji, and his brother Suryaji, he became the first actor to play double roles in Hindi Movie.

He had a great sense of loyalty. He never left Maharashtra Film Company which gave him first break as an actor. In fact, when it was closed down he tried to revive it as Chatrapati Cinetone. Besides being a successful actor, he was also successful producer and director. He also trained many actors in Martial arts. Well read in History and Mythology, he wanted to set up Film Academy in Kolhapur. Unfortunately this dream never came true. However, the legendary Balasaheb left for heavenly abode on the 29th February, 1957, leaving behind him the image of a versatile, all-rounder and a highly intelligent character in Marathi Film Industry.98

Leela Pendharkar

Leelabai’s family had migrated from Chandragiri near Tirupati to Belgaum where she was born. Her parents were poor
and didn’t pay attention to her education. However, Leelabai completed fifth grade.

Though she had no background of the performing arts, she was fascinated by the music lessons by Ustaad Aladiyan Khan who taught music at her neighbor’s house. She would intently listen to him and his recitals late into the nights. Baburao Painter spotted her in one of his visits to Belgaum, and invited her to Kolhapur, the seat of Marathi film industry those days.

In an age when the female characters were played by male artists disguised as women, the approval of Leelabai’s mother towards her only daughter to act in films was most certainly due to her family’s poor financial state.99

Though Baburao Painter brought her to Kolhapur, it was the Prabhat Film Company which employed her. She spent her initial days in learning and watching the artists and the sets. However, she came very close to the Vankudre family and the Prabhat team in general.100

She made debut in Udaykal in a brief role as Goddess Bhavani. Though a brief role, her performance was shot in a single take which led Prabhat to make her the leading actress in the silent
Chandrasena. She confessed that her limited education and lack of exposure posed many hurdles for her. The newly emerging technique also added to her apprehensions. So much so she was thankful for being excluded from the cast of the first talkie. But soon she entered the realm of talkies with Agnikankan followed by Mayamachchindra, Sinhagad etc.\textsuperscript{101}

She came to lime light with her leading role in Sairandhri, India’s first color film, and her name was engraved in history forever. She came very close to writer and director, Bhalji Pendharkar and their friendship turned into wedlock.\textsuperscript{102} Leelabai remained by his side as his shadow till the end.

Leelabai stayed back when Prabhat Film Company moved to Pune, and continued to act in only those films directed by Bhalji.\textsuperscript{103} Some of the films in which she starred were, Akashwani and Kaliyamardan by Kolhapur Cinetone, Saraswati Cinetone’s Savitri and Raja Gopichand and Kanhopatra by Shalini Cinetone. Later she acted in Gorakhunath and Alkhniranjan produced by Arun Pictures in Pune in collaboration with Bhalaji. After Bhalji quit Arun Pictures and returned to Kolhapur, she once again acted in Bhakt Damaji produced by Nav Hans Pictures.\textsuperscript{104}
She also acted in Hindi films—Maharathi Karna, Suvarnasbhumi and Valmiki produced by Prabhakar Pictures. Here she had the privilege of acting opposite Prithviraj Kapoor. In fact Raj Kapoor had made his debut in Valmiki as Naradamuni. With the steady success of Bhalji’s films, the Pendharkar family gained wide acclaim and prospered. So much so that Bhalji took over the Kolhapur Cinetone which belonged to Chhatrapati Rajaram Maharaj, and renamed it Jayprabha Studio. Nothing could have been more favorable to the Pendharkars and their team of professionals.  

However, fate struck a ruthless blow in January 1948 when Bhalji’s Jayprabha Studio was destroyed by fire in the wave of vandalism which swept India in the aftermath of the Mahatma’s assassination. The almost concluded film Meeth Bhaakar was lost in the inferno. Having seen the destruction of his lifetime’s hard earned assets in a single cruel stroke Bhalji recovered surprisingly well. Leelabai however never completely got over the tragedy.  

In 1952 she played role of Queen Mother Jijabai in Chhatrapati Shivaji only due to the persuasion of Bhalji. She never faced camera again with exception of Ganimi kawa. Bhalji’s
companionship was all that really mattered to her thereon. In 1994 when her beloved Baba (Bhalji) passed away his memories were all that she treasured. Rest became meaningless for her.

Leelabai was blessed with a long life and good health. Her attitude towards life was remarkably philosophical. She gave the credit for her achievements to Bhalji. Till end she remained detached from vanity, which generally accompanies such personalities. In reality it remains the acknowledged fact that she was a brilliant and dedicated artist who toiled her way to the top and achieved excellence and acclaim.

Her legacy is the yardstick for the coming generation of cine-artistes.

Chandrakant Mandre (1913 - 2000)

Gopalrao alias Chandrakant Tukaram Mandre was born on the 13 August 1913 in a poor family. His love for the creative arts was obvious from the beginning. He was forced to quit formal education in the matriculation level due to poverty. However, he continued his pursuit of drawing and painting. Baburao Painter recognized his talent and employed him in Maharashtra Film Company as a cine-painter. He made debut in Savkari Pash, in 1935. His
handsome personality and talented acting soon brought him stardom. Famous director Bhalji Pendharkar gave him the screen name ‘Chandrakant.’ He was favorite of V. Shantaram and Bhaji Pendharkar. His successful film were Ramrajya, Bharat Bhet Meeth Bhakar, Pawanakath Cha Dhondi and Bangarwadi. He even acted in an English feature film ‘Lines On The Rock’ where he played the role of a European, complete with accented English dialogues. Chandrakant Mandre though at the peak of stardom remained a modest person devoted to his first love, drawing and painting. Inspired by Baburao Painter and Baba Gajbar, he left his own mark in water color landscapes. Here it must be noted that he did not undergo any formal instruction in the skills of painting but toiled on his own to perfection. He found time to paint landscapes between shooting sessions which others utilized for pursuing leisure. As a result he was able to project a wide variety of subjects in diverse locations, where his film unit would shoot in. Being entirely self taught, his work bears originality, which is rare. Following the English water color style of painting he adapted the techniques on his own to create impressionable work using the beautiful countryside which adorns Western Maharashtra. His prominent
works include the landscape of the Niagara Falls and Himalayas. Always was open to criticism, he claimed himself to be in the process of learning though he was admired as a great artist by one and all. Not to be content with his own achievement, he shared his passion and skills with fledgling artists by sharing his techniques with them. He offered his collection of paintings to the Government of Maharashtra along with the major part of his house in 1984. The result was the creation of Nisarga, the art gallery, in which his best work has been enshrined for ever to be enjoyed by locals and tourists alike. Further, more in order to encourage young emerging talent he established the Chandrakant Mandre Kala Academy which awards an amount of Rs. 11,000/- annually to the best judged budding artist in the region. Chandrakant Mandre will always be known for his dedication to the creative field both in terms of performing arts and painting. His strong will to achieve perfection has enabled him to achieve both the distinctions of being a cine star and master painter. This is a rare achievement for one who taught himself to paint and rose to stardom through his apprenticeship on cinema sets. Today all those who have seen his films and his paintings alike hold his exemplary success and merit in awe.
Besides these stalwarts, it is important to take cursory glance at other film personalities who have contributed their share in making of Kolhapur film Industry.

During the talkie era, Govindrao Tembe emerged as a prominent actor. Roles in *Ayodhyecha Raja* and *Maya Machhindra* produced by *Prabhat* gave fame to Tembe.¹¹⁵

Master Vitthal, the 'Indian Dauglaous' and the hero of *Alamara* – the first Indian talkie film acted in *Kalyancha Khajina, Sasurvas, Mithbhakr* etc.¹¹⁶ Master Vinayak was actor and director in several films like *Bramhachari, Jwala, Premveer* and talkie produced by *Hansa Pictures*. His own banner *Prafull Chitra* produced *Maza Bal, Chimukala Sansar* etc. He was also acted in *Sinhagad* and *Maya Machhindra* by *Prabhat Film Company*.

Raja Paranjape was also emerged as a famous actor. He was in *Savkari Pash, Pratibha, Dhruvkumar* and *Sasurvas*¹¹⁷ Suryakant who acted in *Dhruv, Shilanganache Sone, Sasurvas* and *Jai Bhavani* became a prominent actor in Marathi Films.¹¹⁸

Eminent literatures like P. K. Atre, V. S. Khandekar, H. N. Aapte and P.L. Deshpande, G. D. Madgulkar were part of this era. Atre's *Bramhachari, Brandichi Batali, Premveer;* Khandekar's
Devata, Sukhacha Shodh, Chaya, H. N. Aapte’s Savkari Pash and Sinhagad. P. L. Deshpande’s Navara Bayako, Gokulacha Raja are the priceless gift of this industry.  

A historical study of film industry of Kolhapur can never be completed in real sense without reference to the personalities discussed so far in the thesis. And yet there are many whose contribution to Kolhapur film industry might have gone unnoted. This is in essence, the study of the aspirations, failures, achievements of all these known and unknown personalities.

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