

My

55 years

experience

L.V. Prasad

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1985

It was the year 1930. I sneaked out of my house leaving behind my wife and little child, and got into the Bombay bound train, with just hundred rupees in the pocket. My only aim was to join the films as an actor and become a noteworthy figure in the film world.

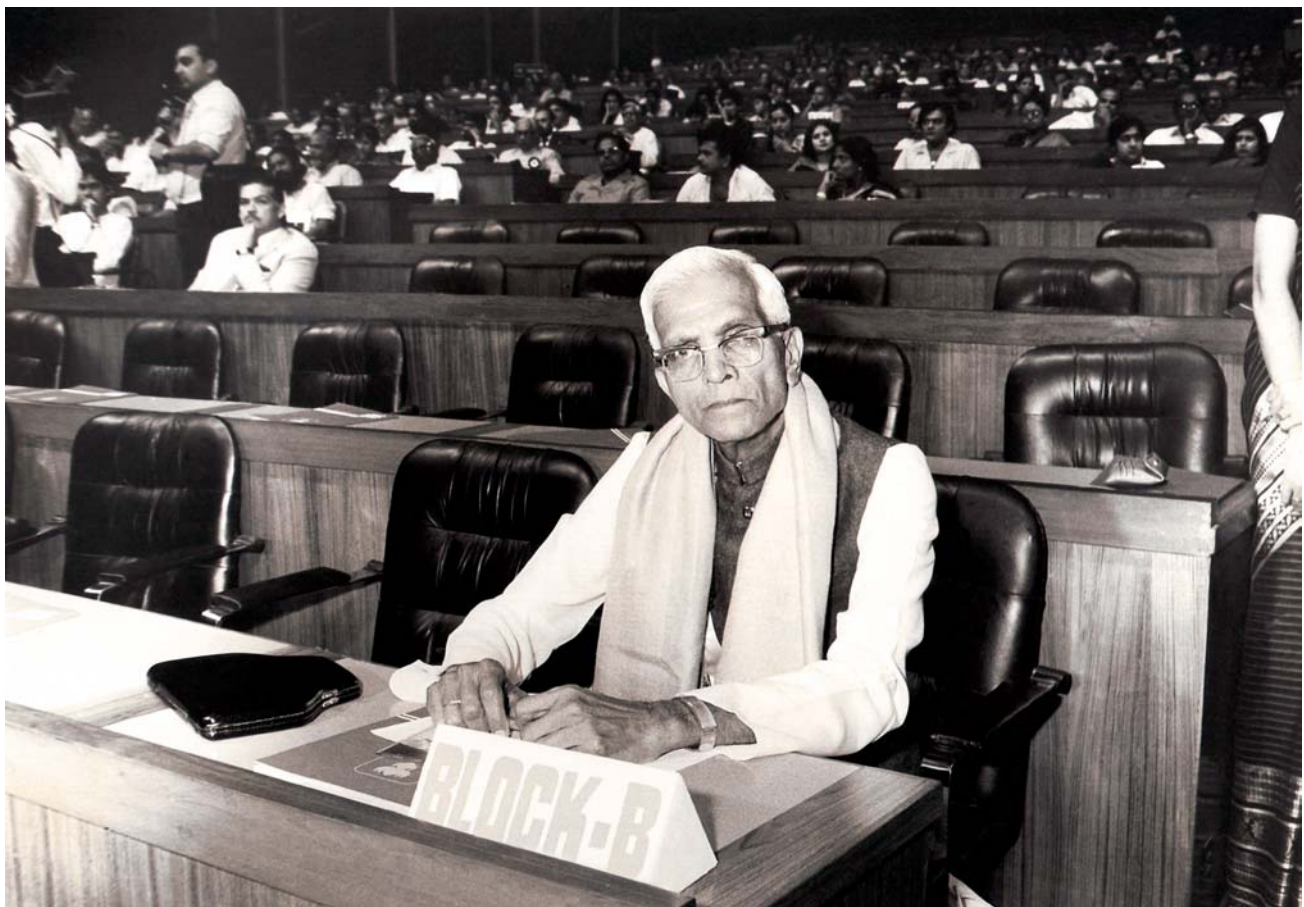
I roamed about the streets of Bombay in search of a job. I used to stand outside the gate of Kohinoor Film Company Studios for hours together with the hope of getting a job. But nothing turned up. I then diverted my attention to other studios. Sometimes I used to stand outside a studio-gate hoping against hope that I would get some job. But no..... the gates did not open for me.

A tailor-friend, on coming to know about my desire to join the film world, got me a job in Venus Pictures on a princely salary of 15 rupees a month. However, they neither made any picture nor paid me any salary.

One gentleman, Dharilal by name, who was working in Venus Pictures, got me a job in a Carnival. My salary was one Rupee and eight annas per day. After working in Venus Pictures' office throughout the day. I used to go to the carnival in the evening and work there till 2 a.m. and then walk five miles to reach the tailor's shop to spend the rest of the night. Again, getting up at 5 am, cleaning the shop, going to Venus Pictures' office and from there to the carnival - this happened to be my daily routine.

I left Venus Pictures which faced a lot of financial problems and then joined Indian Pictures. Akhtar Nawaz was the proprietor of the company. I acted in a bit role in their silent film "Star of the East". In those days, a junior artiste had to do other odd jobs also like carrying reflectors, camera-stands, etc. Otherwise he would be sacked.

Once Akhtar Nawaz took us to a far off place



L.V.Prasad in New Delhi after receiving the Dada Saheb Phalke Award



for an outdoor shooting. The entire unit stayed in a bungalow, fifteen miles away from the railway station. One night, Akthar Nawaz bolted away leaving the crew to its fate. Without money, without food, without even a cup of tea, we waited for Akthar Nawaz for two days. But there was no trace of him. We then walked all the fifteen miles back to the railway station and somehow returned to Bombay, like battered soldiers after a terrific battle.

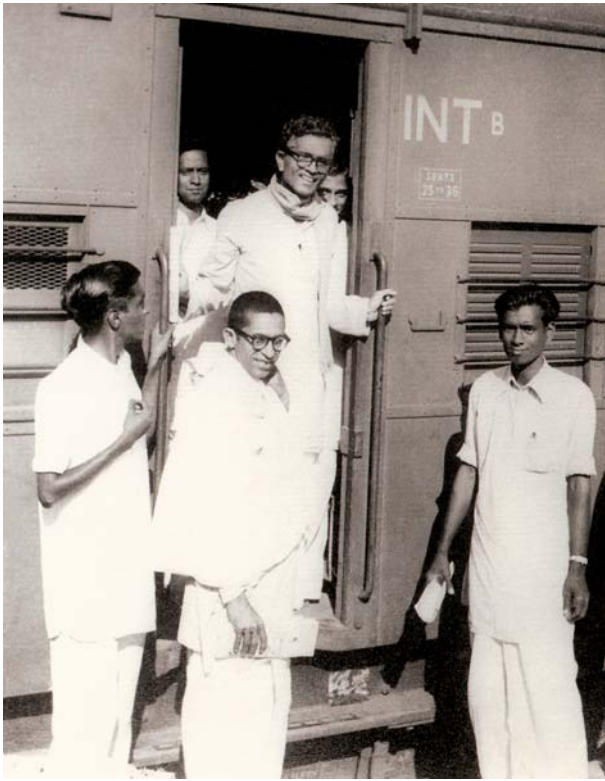
Again the struggle for a job started. After Herculean efforts, I got a job in Imperial Film Company. In those days, bit-role players were engaged on salary basis as regular staff by the Film Companies. They had to be ready at hand to put on any make-up and appear in group scenes in all the Pictures produced by the Company.

Imperial Film Company made the first talkie "ALAM ARA". The songs were recorded directly on locations as sung by the artistes. Playback system was not in vogue at that time. So the actors and actresses had to sing themselves. I remember the day when we all went to Ghodbunder to film a song-cum-dance item. Alkananda (sister of Sitara) sang the song "Balama Kahee Honga Hamaresh". Mr. W. M. Khan who played as Fakir in "ALAM ARA" and who sang the song "De De Khudake naam Pe pyare" is my neighbour. Those were days of

equality and fraternity amongst the artistes, whether big or small. Stars like Prithviraj Kapoor, Master Vithal, Billimari Jagadish Sethi, Nayampalli and Mehboob Khan' moved closely with the extra-role players without any inhibition.

During this period, I had acted in the first Tamil talkie film 'KALIDOSS' directed by Sri H. M. Reddy featuring Smt. T. P. Rajalakshmi and a Telugu actor and also in Krishna Film Company's first Telugu talkie "BHAKTHA PRAHLADA" directed by Sri H. M. Reddy, in the year 1931. At this time quite unexpectedly I got the job of an Assistant Director under Mr. Gazanfar Ali Shah, who was then directing the film 'KAMAR AL ZAMAN" for Imperial Film Company. Mr. H. R. Soni (father of Bhappie Soni) was acting as the hero in the picture as well as doing the assistant director's job. Mr. Ali Shah was very temperamental and haughty and sometimes would fly into violent fits of anger. At such times, he would shout at people, even draw out his pistol to threaten them. Mr. Soni could not adjust with him and wanted to leave the job. He took me to Mr. Ali Shah and recommended me for the job of assistant director. Thus, by chance I became an assistant director. As long as I worked with Mr. Ali Shah, I never gave him an occasion to shout at me. On the other hand, he was highly pleased with my sincere work.

After some time, there was a retrenchment in Imperial Film Company and my services were terminated. Again I stood at the cross roads of life, unemployment staring at my face without mercy. I then got a job in Krishna Cinema (Dreamland) as a door-keeper. At that time, Sri H. M. Reddy was entrusted with the direction of the Hindi picture "SITA SWAYAMVAR" and I did a role in that picture. Sri. Reddy had some misunderstanding with the producer and he left the Company when the picture was almost nearing completion. But I continued to work in the company and even worked as representative for that picture after its release. The producers were impressed by



my sincerity and hard work and made me the Manager of the company. But as ill-luck would have it, that Company was closed after a few days.

Again I found myself at the cross-roads of life. Getting a job, losing it and again facing unemployment had become a regular feature and I got accustomed to it, never feeling hopeless or discouraged to face any situation. I then worked as a Production Manager in New Era Company and afterwards as a Manager-cum Camera Assistant in Renuka Pictures. I also worked as a camera assistant for the film "STHREE".

I then played a number of bit roles in many pictures. At this time, Sri. H. M. Reddy asked me if I could come to Madras and work as his assistant. I readily agreed and went with him to Madras. I did not have many opportunities to study and learn the technical aspects of film making. Besides working as Mr. Reddy's assistant, I played the hero's role in his picture "SATYAME JAYAM" and a small role in "TENALI RAMAKRISHNA".

In 1942, one Mr. Thandra Subramanyam took me as the director for his picture "KASHTA JEEVI" to be produced in Bombay. So I went back to Bombay again. But that picture was abandoned after three reels were shot. I then worked as an assistant director for Geethanjali Pictures, "SAWAL". Then I joined Valli Saheb and worked for his picture "LADY DOCTOR". Afterwards I worked as an assistant director for the pictures "DARBAAN" and "NEK PERVIN" and also wrote the script for the film "DEVER". I then joined Prithvi Theaters and played small roles in the dramas "DEEWAR" and "SHAKUNTALA".

In 1945, I went to Madras to direct the Telugu film "GRIHA PRAVESHAM". I also played the hero's role in that picture. The picture was very well received by the public and I earned a good name as a Director. The year 1945 was a landmark in my life; and after "GRUHA PRAVESAM", a number of pictures such as PALNATI UDDHAM, DROHI, MANA DESAM, SHAVUKAR, PELLI CHESI CHOODU, PARDESI, MISSAMMA, SAMSARAM, Manohara, Mangayar Thilagam and Bhagyavathi were directed by me. THAYILLA PILLAI and IRUVAR ULLAM were produced as well as directed by me.

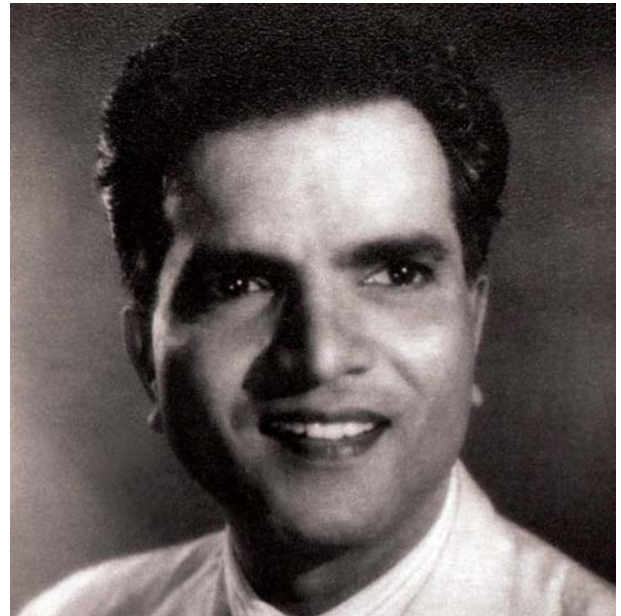
I floated Laxmi Productions in 1955 and produced "ILAVELPU" in Telugu and then started Prasad Productions Private Ltd in 1956 and produced my first Hindi film "SHARADA" and then a series of Hindi films.

I feel happy that the Industry in which I toiled and sweated has at last blessed me with success and high honours. I recollect, with nostalgic memories, the fifty five years of my bitter and sweet and looking back, I enjoyed every moment of my fight for a place in the industry to reach where God has placed me today. I remember with deep reverence those great men of the past who toiled and laboured against odds for the advancement of this industry and paved the way for making it mighty and strong as it

stands today. May the film industry grow still bigger and mightier, this is my only prayer.

Primarily I owe everything to the people who see my films. But how can anyone see a film without the most precious of God's gift to man, namely, the EYES? I am told that over 75% of the curable blind in this country belong to the younger age group and the poorer section. I thought that I should in some small measure repay back to them the affection shown to me, by establishing THE L.V. PRASAD EYE INSTITUTE, so I sponsored on 17-10-86 to this Institute Rupees one crore and sixty lakhs and the land. The foundation stone was laid by the Honourable Chief Minister of Andhra Pradesh, Sri N. T. Rama Rao at Hyderabad. With the dedicated efforts of Doctor Gullapalli Nageshwara Rao, who is internationally recognised for his research in Cornea transplants, it will be ready to serve

the public in 1988 with modern and sophisticated equipment.



L.V.Prasad Eye Institute, Hyderabad