

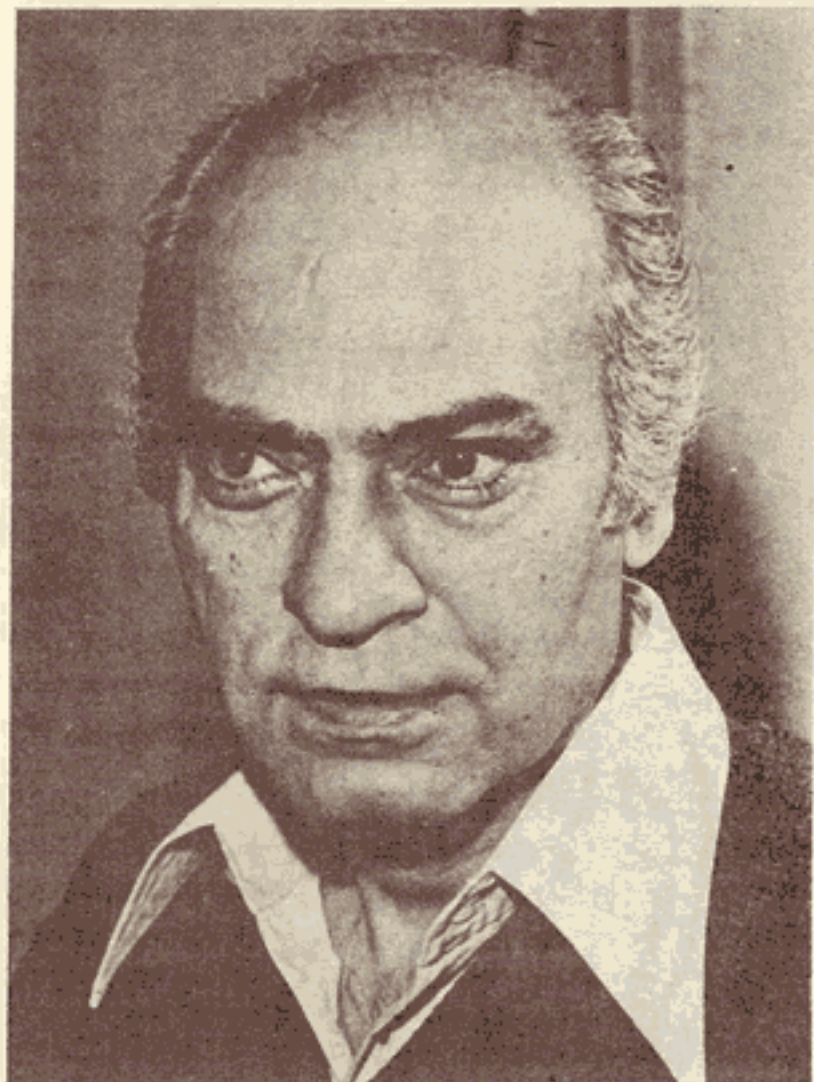
A. K. Hangal

COMPUTER CARD

NAME & BIODATA	A. K. HANGAL
PHOTOGRAPHS	67
ARTICLES/CLIPPINGS/BROCHURES	8 + 26 + 0
BOOKS ON	NIL
AUDIO MATERIAL	NIL
VIDIO MATERIAL	4 RECORDINGS

Excerpts from the video interview taken by Farookh Shaikh

We are Kashmiris, but I was born in Punjab in Sialkot . . . We used to live in Peshawar. My father was an officer under the British. My grandfather too was an officer, he too was serving the British . . . The atmosphere was such that after the Jalianwala Baug massacre, everyone was talking about it. Well, my uncle from Sialkot was in the movement. People used to visit my uncle's house and discuss in conspiratorial tones. We used to overhear. Many brought home dust from the Jalianwala Baug.



The entire air was charged. The movement against the British was strong. There was another movement, that of the red-shirts . . . led by Khan Abdul Gaffar Khan's anti-imperialist activities. We saw that too and we were influenced. I was studying then. I also developed a taste for music . . .

My father had a liking for theatre. He used to take us to see theatre. We listened to the songs, and came back at 2 or 3 in the morning! It was then that I developed a taste for theatre-music . . . He did not leave us any money when he died, only this inheritance of music . . . He did well. I am thankful to him. In Peshawar, we were with our mother. I learnt music from an Ustad . . . I started taking part in theatre. There was a small drama group called Shri Sangeet Priya Mandal. They were rehearsing *Mahabharat* and I played Krishna. My director was Ustad Khudabaksh . . .

It is interesting that the play was Mahabharat and the director was Khudabaksh.

It was so in those days. There was no trouble, there was no Hindu-Muslim strife . . .

I did theatre and also sang on the radio. I did plays on radio too. The acting style in those days was very loud. Hands were thrown up and the concluding word was shouted at the audience. I began with that style of acting. Not very much, but I did make a beginning. We did *Mahab-*

A K Hangal in his younger days



harata, Ramlila. We also did a social play on women's education. We used to call it *Talime Nuswar* in Urdu. We did a radio play on this as well . . . I did my matriculation also . . .

One day a big procession was brought out. This was before my matriculation. I was very small then, in the 6th or 7th standard. The British brought in the army to stop this big procession. Khan Abdul Gaffar Khan was arrested, and Mahatma Gandhi had also been arrested. People demanded their release. The government refused. The whole of Peshawar rose and some Pathans came from the villages. The army was called. This was the Gadhwal Regiment and they were asked to open fire. They alighted from trucks and aimed at the gathering. They realised that the people carried no weapons! They lowered their rifles and refused to fire! They said that firing on unarmed people was not an act of valour! They were immediately asked to return and were court-martialed to be convicted for 14 years. Then the British opened fire themselves. About three to four hundred people died . . . A lot of blood was shed. This incident is famous as Khani Bazar, just as well-known as the Jalianwala Bagh. This was in Peshawar. I also joined the gathering . . .

When I came back from the procession my clothes were smeared with blood. I was asked to explain. I said I had gone with the procession. I was told this would not do. 'I said I will see.' I would keep quiet only for a few days. Later when I was asked to accept a job with the British government, I refused. I was forcibly brought before a British officer. His name was probably Caraw. He immediately recommended my application. When I saw this, I ran away from home. The question was what to do?

There was no anti-British atmosphere in your house. Then how did this anti-British feeling arise?

Because the total atmosphere was charged. On top of all this was the execution of Bhagat Singh, Rajguru and Sukhdev. This was the atmosphere in the whole of India. Every youth carried with him a portrait of Bhagat Singh. Naturally I was influenced. The home atmosphere was a contrast to this. Conflicts arise out of such contradictions and new things are born. My father asked me to serve the British. I said no. Again and again he asked what I would do then. I said I will let you know . . .

I ran away from home. I said I am going. Then I got married. But what would I do then? . . . I would have to do some work. I had to earn my livelihood. So I learnt tailoring-cutting . . . But that too required money. I got it from my father. I said send money or I will not return. I was the only son! He had to send it! Then I learnt tailoring.

Why tailoring? You could have become a professional singer, you had some training.

It was my weakness. I liked to wear good clothes! It still is my weakness! I used to wear khadi, but I wanted the khadi to be good. Everyone has a weakness. I had this . . .

I had a longing for India's freedom, for singing and also for clothes! I then said I will make a profession of this longing for good clothes. This would earn me my livelihood, and my leisure I would devote to music and theatre. My thoughts were anti-imperialist and I would continue on that front as well. My father then retired. He said, 'Leave Peshawar and come to Karachi.' I agreed. My children were young. We then migrated. This was the second migration. The first migration was 300 years ago when our family migrated from Kashmir.

That is why your surname is Kashmiri?

Yes. Hangal.

Has it any special meaning in Kashmir?

Yes. Hangal is a stag with 12 horns. It is a large deer. In Kashmiri it is Hanglu. Hanglu changed to Hangal...

We came to Karachi and I started tailoring. The music and drama club activities were on. I will tell you something, now that I mentioned music. I am going back to Peshawar, the land of the Pathans. There we had a club and we used to have a concert. People had gathered, singing and playing was in progress. A Pathan stood in the doorway and made a request. He said he would like to present a song. He was tall, turbaned, with a patka hanging behind. We said 'Yes please come in.' His clothes were tattered. He came in and sat. He pulled the harmonium towards him and before singing he said he would start by uttering the name of Bhaskarrao... We were surprised. What connection could a Pathan have with Bhaskarrao? I did not know Bhaskarbuwa. I asked my *ustad*. He said Bhaskarbuwa is a very famous Indian classical singer, and it is possible that this Pathan may have heard Bhaskarbuwa sing. People don't know, but a Pathan is a fabulous person. He is multi-faceted. He has a special aptitude for singing. A court

singer of Afghanistan, he died... was famous in India. I had met him in Afghanistan. In Peshawar also they used to sing classical music a lot. Especially the Pathans. Then he sang and played... When I came to Karachi I started a music club. In Peshawar it was Shree Sangeet Priya Mandal, in Karachi it was Harmonica Club...

I was one of the highest paid cutters in India, because I had studied scientific cutting. There were very few scientific cutters in India. I continued to do this and also music and theatre. The third was the political background I had acquired in Peshawar, in the times of Khan Abdul Gaffar Khan. This then evolved. I did a job as a cutter. I met some people who told me a few things about the world. I had left the small town and had come to a large city. Some people spoke to me about Marxism, communism, socialism, and my outlook changed. And as my outlook changed I started taking a more active interest in the anti-British movement. I even joined a union, we founded unions. The INA movement was also in force then, the Azad Hind Fauj (Indian National Army). Then I came into the communist movement in a big way. The plays I did in Karachi in those days... I wanted to do something. I wanted to go deeper, but I had no ideology which would lend depth to my work.

By depth you mean depth in theatre or depth in political activity?

In every sense! The depth of characterisation in theatre. The depth of philosophy in political activity. All things I did in Peshawar were backward. It was all superfluous. But I now feel that when I got a chance to read Marxist literature and when I joined the communist movement, I started thinking seriously about all this and I saw a purpose to my life. I realised that this exploitation of man by man is not correct. It is unnatural. I saw class struggle from very close. I was involved with the movement and the mutiny, the uprising



A K Hangal as Narda in a Shri Sangeet Priya Mandal production, Peshawar, 1938

of the seamen against the British. I faced the lathi charges and jail terms etc.

My theory and practice helped each other. I did not leave theatre, music. I got a chance to meet great musicians like Bade Gulam Ali Khan, Chhote Gulam Ali Khan, Khasaheb Ashk Ali Khan, Mubarak Ali Khan. I got very close to these people. I have accompanied these masters on the harmonium . . .

Political front, trade union front, communist front, theatre front! And the front of my livelihood--cutting. As I was doing all this I was victimised. There were constant conflicts with my employers . . . They sacked me. When they sacked me I became a full-timer in this entire political movement.

Then how did you and your family survive?

We were starving. We had no money left. We were facing lot of hardships.

Please excuse me Hangalsahab, but I have a question. Did your wife back in your activities willingly or was it forced on her?

You have asked a correct question. She did approve.

Was this approval a considered one or was it that she had faith in what her husband would do?

No, I think it was a considered approval.

She was not from that background . . .

What was my background? Circumstances change a man's thoughts. As I was telling you, all this happened, I did plays. I even wrote for theatre, but that was superfluous. I had realised it. I wrote a play on the untouchables, *Prayaschitta*. Even staged it. A rich boy marries an untouchable. This does not happen in life. Had it happened so, then the problem of the untouchables would have been solved! The problem will resolve when everyone comes to the same level. If the Dalits get land, so that they can do their own work, they can live respectfully. Then this problem of untouchability will be resolved to some extent. . . I changed accordingly.

As my thinking changed I developed a natural style of acting. But the natural style also is not correct. The correct style is realistic. But I was natural. What happens in natural is that it becomes dull. I say I am not a natural actor. I am realistic. But there was a time when I became a natural actor, . . . We are now speaking with each other, that becomes dull! There was no depth! But this Marxism, dialectic-materialism, my experience with people, in the movement, with different classes . . . my acting developed with this.



A K Hangal at work in his tailoring shop

You must have developed your theatre style and technique independently. It could not have had any connection with your leftist and communist ideology, directly.

I was working with different people and for them I was taking part in their struggles, I came to know their psychology. This made a difference to my characterisation. Because in their lives they came in contact with their exploiters... I learnt from their lives... Plus technique, because there can be no acting without technique...

About 35 years ago I got a book. It was written by Stainslavski who is today considered greatest teacher of acting. I was very enthusiastic about it. I started studying all his theories. I applied them in my acting. His is basically a psycho-technique. It also means more than this. It means reading between the lines. What the author has thought while writing, if we can catch that we can project the dialogue well... Three styles of acting I saw: loud acting, theatrical or old and naturalistic... then the realistic...

(In the old style) the volume was loud, the phrases were powerful. There was no difference in outward and inward speech... what I call natural... seems dull. When we are talking to each other it is natural. That is natural acting. We are not sitting here as actors... But if this continues for

With Sulbha Arya in Gudiya Ghar



longer time it will become dull, because we are not using the acting technique. When technique is used in acting it seems interesting and it moves the story forward. That is realistic...

I changed because the audience changed. The awareness of the audience changed... See how two expressions are different. I will give you two examples. The first character is of a revolutionary. Imagine he is running away in the night disguised as someone else. The police are waiting for him. He has changed his guise. He is from U.P. He speaks a local dialect. The policeman catches him with suspicion. He says he is a villager. He actually is a major revolutionary. His comrades are waiting for him below in the boat, on the river bank. The police catch him. I am telling you all this to make a point: how the scientific method helps the actor. The policeman comes, catches and starts beating. This fellow says *'Bhaya kahe marat ho, hum to seedha Ratanpurse yaha awat hai. U mela raha na, tum dus gaouwaloko ppochh lo. Aur kal Bahadurpurse wo mela hai na bhayya, to wohi khatir humko nadiya par karke hame waha pahuchana hai, sabera hou ke pahale paar. Ee dekho, hum pas kul. kul nou ana teen paisa ee. Lo tanik. Ham garib, kuchh daya karo. Ya woo!'* Now what is this 'woo'? It means 'the inspector doesn't believe me! When I try to run away by giving him nine annas and three paise, his suspicion changes and he tries to catch me as the cat pounces on the pigeon and the pigeon cannot run or fly. Cannot open its eyes, nor close them. I took this from there. It is a very scientific thing. He moves forward. *'Haap'*. And I can run. If I run I am an ordinary man. But I am a revolutionary. I want to influence him and want to convince him that I am an ordinary man. So these nuances, scientific subtleties.

I developed Stanislavski's psycho-technique after I came to Bombay. This example I give you is influenced by Stanislavski. It is necessary to understand the natural laws of development, the theory of revolution... All sorts of things keep on happening in man, but he does not realise how these happen. Those who research, they find out the things. It is like that. This happened after I came to Bombay, this scientific...

What was the main reason for you to migrate?

My friends decided that I could do work here...

By friends you mean party workers?

Yes, party workers. That I could do more work here... And what is the sense in passing the entire life in jail? We must do something...

Does this mean that had you remained in what is now Pakistan, you would have had to spend the entire time in jail?

Yes, somewhat. That was not difficult for me. But they were more practical. I do not know. I came here and started work. Those were the days of the Samyukta Maharashtra Andolan. I joined that. Then I joined the Goa freedom struggle. I received the lathi blows. I was admitted to St

George for a bullet wound. This is not a very great thing. People sacrificed their lives. I also contributed in a small way. Not a very great thing. So I continued my work here. I was younger then. . . .

I continued theatre, acting and tailoring. I did many plays with R. M. Singh. He was a name, he is no more. He used to direct and I used to act.

You said you wrote a couple of plays. Why did you not direct plays?

I did direct a couple of plays. I directed *Damru* in which film actor Sanjeev Kumar had acted. . . I also directed Tagore's *Malini*. But I concentrated on acting. I was more interested in acting. . . When I arrived I joined IPTA. IPTA was inactive. R. M. Singh and I revived it. . . The first play we did was *Babu*, the second was *Inamdar*. We kept on doing plays. . . did *Africa*, *Jawan Pareshan* on the Kenyan freedom struggle. . . and *Gudiyaghar*. . . *Aakhri Shama*. . . *Satranj Ke Mohre*. . . *Azar Ke Khwab*. . . *Tanhai*. . . *Hori*. . . Then the film people caught hold of me. I went into films. What I was doing as an amateur, I started doing professionally. . . I did about 200 films. I did about 40-50 plays.

Are you satisfied with the kind of acting/work you are doing in films?

No, I am not satisfied. Some roles are satisfying, you meet good directors. I recently did *Tamas*, Govind Nihalani's serial, and it gave me satisfaction. Some roles in commercial films. . . like those in *Sholay*, *Kora Kagaj*, *Bawarchi* do give satisfaction.

What is the main reason behind your being so active in films now?

It is my livelihood. But let me tell you that I accept very few films and keep myself free for half a month for theatre. I don't want to end my theatre career. Films are my profession.

What are the main differences between the two, film and theatre acting?

Acting is acting, whether it is stage acting or film acting. I try to do it realistically without any mannerisms. I try to bring in the spirit. I would like to give you an example. I recently did the role of Sardar Patel in an English film, *Mountbatten: The Last Viceroy*. It is a six-hour film. We were in London for 2-3 months. The first day the director asked me to bring in some mannerisms in this role. I was startled, I said I am not a 'mannerism' actor. He asked me what I would do. (I said). . . I saw this: I read the scene. I try to understand its soul. If I could recreate that spirit my movements and gestures. . . I don't decide in advance. . . what I would be doing. I said I am not a 'mannered' actor. . .

You may not do it consciously. But is it not possible that you have worked out certain mannerisms and have created a role?

Yes. But if I am doing a historical role one cannot change it. Now when I raised my hand thus. . . I had not planned this movement at home. I felt the necessity and I did it. An hour ago it was not there. On the 'spot' . . . That is all. This. . . and these two hands mean only that. This is a gesture, not a mannerism. That is the freedom of the actor. That is what I feel, I do not go beyond it. . .

Do you not feel that as compared to theatre, this has more scope in cinema, because the camera comes very near, it catches the smallest expression, which a theatre audience will not catch?

I think even the theatre audience will catch it, if the actor is confident. If the actor works out the character scientifically. Then there is no reason why the audience will not notice it.

Do you think that you will not do a particular role because it is against your political ideology.

No. No. Political leaning is different and a scientific method is different. There is a science behind my political leanings. The science has laws of development of human society. That is not political leaning, isn't it? If I have realised the laws of development of human society then it

In Hori



would help me in my acting. Because every person is a part of society and how he develops does help.

Mr Hangal, these laws you may read and I too may read. It is possible that you and I will interpret differently, because my inbuilt psychology may have some traits. The question is whether you would agree to do a role in which these traits are different from yours.

Look here. I am an actor and I will have to do all sorts of roles. But I will not do a film or a play of which the total impact is different from my ideology. But I will do the role, even if it is that of Ravana. If you want to do *Ramayana*, someone has to play Ravana. You will not catch hold of a thug to do it, would you? It is the actor's duty to do any role that comes his way.

But if it is against his ideology?

If it is totally against then I will avoid doing that.

Have you done this any time?

Yes I have refused some English films.

In Aakhari Shama



Then an allied question is whether you consider, Hangal-sahab, that every film, every play, every art form should have a message?

No. This is a totally different question. I do not consider it so. There are many questions (problems) in society. There is the question of progress. There can be an economic problem, there too the thought can be progressive. For example the news in the paper yesterday that three sisters hanged themselves on the question of dowry...

Do you want to say that it is principally wrong to commercialise any art form?

Commercialism is alright to the extent that the artist earns his livelihood; but when it gives rise to greed...

Then how would you place your film career?

I am not running it; I am only serving in it.

Now there is no political theme in it. Is it not social? Do you feel that whether it is social, political, economical, historical... That the message is essential?

No it is not essential. But should not your viewpoint of thinking be correct? ... In every department of life you must have a progressive attitude, a healthy attitude...

For an outright comedy?

I have no objection... The question is how to present it. The presentation is also very important.

But if it is comedy for the purpose of comedy, for the purpose of pure and simple entertainment, is the presentation to be necessarily political?

There is a difference between comedy and comedy... There can be healthy comedy, situational comedy. There is something in it which appeals. But if there is comedy for comedy's sake, I don't take any interest in that...

Mr Hangal, I will give you an example... If someone tells you a joke, the joke is a form of entertainment meant to make you laugh. It does not convey anything. If you want to be happy for a couple of hours... Now if you expand a joke into a play of an hours' duration, it is not necessary that there should be any message. It is enough that there is pure entertainment.

I only mean that the joke should not be very vulgar... It is alright that one should laugh. For example people perform a circus, they joke about on stage. What is the message? Nothing. Even that is possible...

Would you refuse to participate in that?

By participation I mean that I cannot do it myself.

But quite a few actors can participate in this activity. Oh, yes.

Do you subscribe to the same philosophy on part of IPTA?
Yes, that is what we believe in IPTA.

Do you consider this of utmost importance while selecting a script?
We pay attention to it.

I meant by asking this, whether it should be in keeping with your political ideology.

No, it is not necessary.

You said that was the idea in reviving IPTA.

When I came to India I found that IPTA was the only healthy institute and which was a pioneer . . . It was not commercial, that it was progressive.

What I wanted to bring out in our interview was how you bring in the political leaning in your life to cinema and theatre. . .

Hangalsahab, you were running a reputed establishment of tailoring and cutting. Now you have made films your daily bread. If you are against commercialisation why did you make it your livelihood?

Everything has its own limit. Man cannot exceed this limit. I have no quarrel against commercialisation . . . Commerce becomes commercialism. When it becomes an ism then it exceeds its limit.

Hangalsahab, in this are you talking about greed or commercialism? Our Hindi cinema movement is on the brink of com-

In Annabhau Sathe's Inamdar



mercialism. Then how do you justify your presence in it?

Look here, even today our society is a society which exploits. It is a capitalist society and commercialism dominates in a capitalist society . . . But another is taking birth . . . I do not say that commercial film is dirty . . . Commercial cinema dominates, but another kind of cinema is taking birth, a healthy cinema: the struggle goes on. Just as a struggle goes on in society . . . and as cinema is a part of society, a struggle goes on there too. Because the society is capitalistic, commercial cinema dominates.

You say a different cinema also exists, then why do you not confine yourself to it?

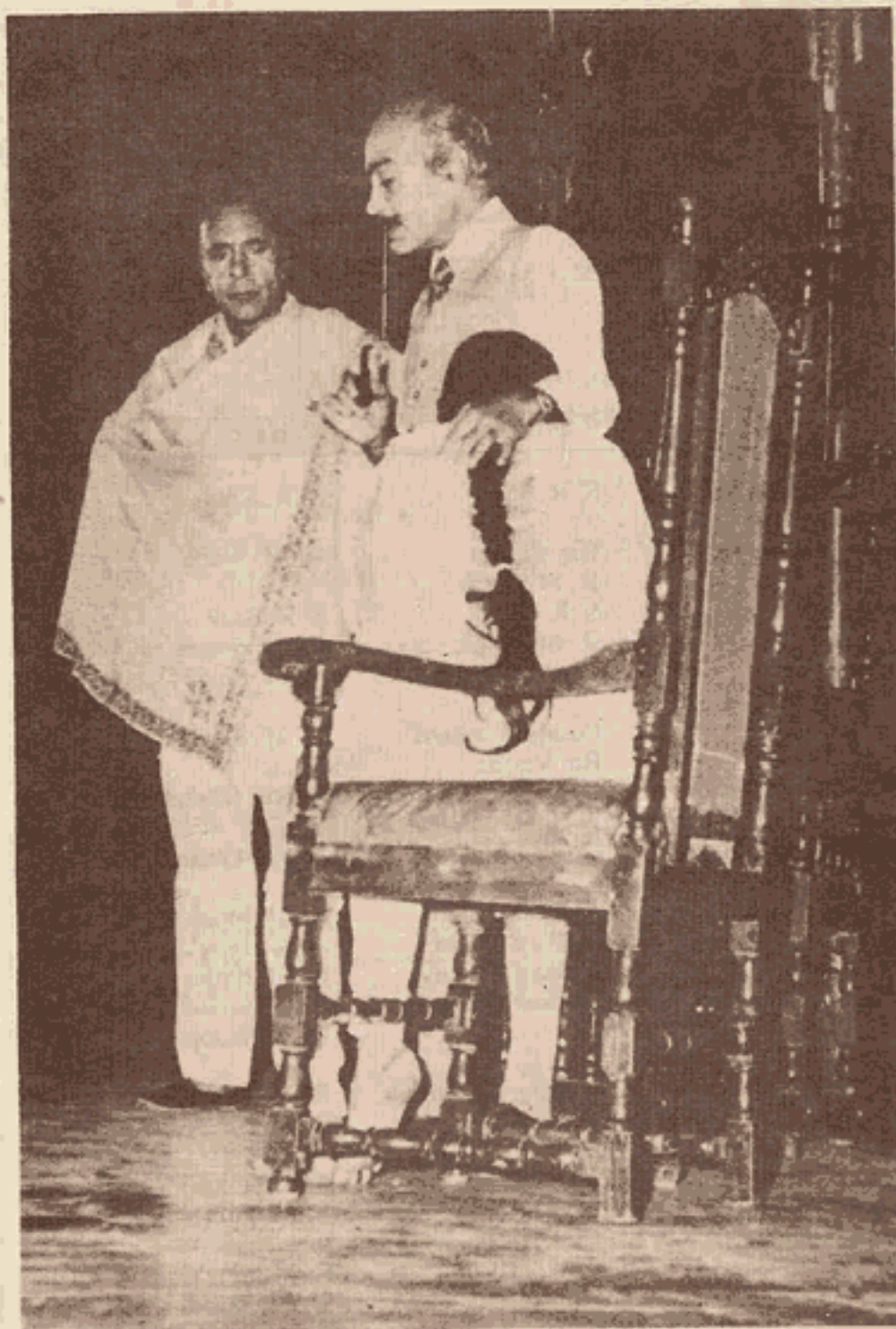
It is not in my hands. I am a servant, I am serving. Then I am an actor. I sell my acting. If you buy I will sell.

Hangalsahab, both kinds of cinema are running simultaneously. You have a choice.

No. I have no choice . . . When I get an offer for a progressive thing, I do not take money . . . The question is how far you go, how far you do not go. There is compromise at every step in the world. To what extent you compromise depends on that. No single person is at fault . . . There is compromise everywhere. This dialectical process continues. It is a part of my philosophy that in the dialectical process, two things

In Babu, 1952





With Balraj Sahni and Geeta Sedgha in Azar Ka Khwab

keep on clashing and in the process a third thing is born, a solution is found.

Then till such a solution is found, you will keep walking on both tracks?

Yes, we are a part of that society... certain things you have to compromise. And I don't call it compromise, I say you are selling your labour!

You said that you are a self-acknowledged leftist thinking person. Had you not been this you would have been an inferior

actor. Is this so?

Had I been a good person, I would have been a better actor.

I say, is a person whose political ideology is different, will he be an inferior actor?

No. I don't think so... Sensitivity is essential for art. If you are sensitive you will react to the sorrows of another person--- the sorrows of society, the sorrows of a character.

... Had you not been sensitive, and had you been a communist... it would be of no use.

Productions in Peshawar

<i>Sr. no.</i>	<i>Play</i>	<i>Role</i>	<i>Institute</i>	<i>Year</i>
1	Mahabharat	Narad Muni	Shri Sangeet Priya Mandal, Peshawar	1938
2	Talim-E-Nuswaan			1940
3	Prayschit	Written & directed by A. K. Hangal	Harmonica Club, Karachi	1942
4	Zulm-E-Kans	Krishna	Shri Sangeet Priya Mandal, Peshawar	1938

Productions in Bombay

<i>Sr. No.</i>	<i>Play</i>	<i>Playwright</i>	<i>Translator</i>	<i>Director</i>	<i>Year</i>
1	Vasiyat Nama	Stanley Houghton's 'Dear Departed'	S R Saaz	S R Saaz	1952
2	Prayog	St John Ervine's 'Progress'	Raj Bahl, R M Singh	R M Singh	1952
3	Babu	Acharya Atreya	S R Saaz, R M Singh	S R Saaz, R M Singh	1952
4	Teesri Jang (Dire)	Acharya Atreya	Pralhad Naidu	R M Singh	1953
5	Notice	Vijay Tendulkar's 'Char Divas'	Pushpa Kothare, Raj Verma	R M Singh	1955
6	Suraj	Lady Gregory's 'Rising Of The Moon'	C L Kavish, A K Hangal	Ritwik Ghatak	1956
7	Musafiron Ke Liye	Gorky's 'Lower Depths'	Govind Malhi	Ritwik Ghatak	1956
8	Imandar	Annabhau Sathe	A K Hangal	R M Singh	1957
9	Damaru	Acharya Atreya	Pralhad Naidu	A K Hangal	1958
10	Ward Number Six	Anton Chekov	Pralhad Naidu	R M Singh	1960
11	Malini	Rabindranath Tagore	Pralhad Naidu	A K Hangal	1961
12	Barah Bajkar Paanch Minit	K A Abbas		Faruk Shooja	1962
13	Kafan	Munshi Premchand	Mohamad Mehdi	R M Singh	1962
14	Africa: Jawan Pareshan	Zul Vellani's 'No Other Way'	V M Adil	R M Singh	1963
15	Lal Gulab Ki Wapsi	K A Abbas		A K Hangal	1965
16	Election Ticket	Ian Luka Caragiel's 'The Lost Letter'	V M Adil	V M Adil	1967
17	Aakri Shama	Kaifi Azmi		R M Singh	1969
18	Bhagat Singh	Sagar Sarhadi		Shama Zaidi, R M Singh	1969
19	Azar Ka Khwab	G B Shaw's 'Pygmalion'	Quidsia Zaidi	R M Singh	1970
20	Shatranj Ke Mohre	P L Deshpande's 'Tuze Aahe Tuja Pashi'	Ramesh Talwar	Ramesh Talwar	1970
21	Tanhai	Sagar Sarhadi		Ramesh Talwar	1971
22	Gudiya Ghar	Ibsen's 'Doll's House'	Quidsia Zaidi	R M Singh	1972
23	SookshmaRoop	Balraj Sahni	Sukhbir	M S Sathya	1972
24	Bhooke Bhajan Na HoiGopala	Sagar Sarhadi		R M Singh	1973
25	Paper Weight	Ramesh Upadhyaya		R M Singh	1973
26	Akhari Sawal	Vasant Kanetkar		Ramesh Talwar	1979
27	Apan To Bhai Aise Hain	Manohar Katdare	T Raman Kumar Sulabha Arya	Ramesh Talwar	1979