

Sarita Joshi



Biodata

Name Sarita Joshi
Date of birth 17 October 1941
Address 16 Morarjee Mansion, Darabsha Lane (off Napean Sea Road) Bombay 400 026.

Phone 822 0016
Place of Birth Pune
Sex and marital status Female, married
Specialisation Acting, direction, production, costume design, makeup, dance, choreography

Education upto 7th standard
Training No formal training
Languages known Marathi, Gujarati, Hindi, English
Languages of work Gujarati, Hindi, Marathi
Awards/fellowships Maganlal Dresswalla Gold Medal, 1957-1960

Gujarat Govt. Best Actress Award for the film *Janam tip*, 1972-73.

Gujarat Govt. Best Supporting Actress Award for the film *Khamma Maralal*, 1983-84.

Honoured by the Akhil Bharatiya Marathi Natya Parishad, 1984.

Gold Medal from the Municipal Corporation of Greater Bombay.

Sangeet Natak Akademi Award, 1988

COMPUTER CARD

THEATRE PERSONALITY

NAME	SARITA JOSHI
BIODATA	1
PHOTOGRAPHS	45
ARTICLES/CLIPPINGS	
BROCHURES/PUBLICITY	6 + 7
BOOKS ON	NIL
BOOKS BY	NIL
AUDIO MATERIAL	NIL
VIDEO MATERIAL	1 + 1

Work for other media: films

- 1 Kanyadan, dir. Ramesh Saigal
- 2 Ramat Ramade Ram, dir. Dinesh Rawal
- 3 Samai Varte Sawdhan, dir. B. J. Patel
- 4 Sant Shiromani, dir. Brhambhatt
- 5 Narsia Ni Hundi, dir. V. M. Vyas
- 6 Janam Tip (as heroine), dir. Firoze Sarkar
- 7 Khama Mara Lal (as heroine), dir.

- 8 Trimurti, dir. Rajendra Bhatia
- 9 Suryakumari, dir. Basubhai Mistri

Work for other media: TV (Serials)

- 1 Titliyan
- 2 Manorajan
- 3 Intezar
- 4 Kashmakash
- 5 Kab Tak Pukaru
- 6 Kisse Miya Bibi Ke

Social work: For schools in cultural field

Excerpts from Video Interview of Sarita Joshi

Interviewer: Shri Shailesh Dave

Translated from the Gujarati by: Smt. Pallavi Maru

I enjoy to ruminate over stories, my stories of stage art, immense pleasure to bring forth all that for you all. I thank all those students, artists, actresses, all those who are connected or not connected with this art, I thank them all.

Whatever little I know, I have obtained this knowledge by listening to others, by observing others--what I heard from elders, I shall present today, keeping aside what I yet have to achieve. It is my pleasure to do so.

'Sarita', I shall address myself only as 'Sarita'. This is my stage name. . . . 'Sarita'. . . . 'Joshi', 'Khatau', 'Bhosle' are the surnames acquired through my mother, father, husband, but I am 'Sarita'. . . . an actress. I don't know if I were a born artiste though!

I began at the age of 8 years . . . yes! My entry on stage was at that tender age. We shall talk from that period.

I was born in a middle class Maharashtrian family.

My father was a barrister. My mother Kamlabai 'Rane' was from Goa. 'Ranes' rule an island village named 'Zooa'. They were like Sardars. They were called 'Khashe'. Her family was altogether different and yet, opportunities she got to watch Ramleela and such plays were immense. She was so impressed then! She would narrate stories to us in a sing song manner. I distinctly remember the atmosphere. It started with *Ramayana* which we saw at Goa. The memories still echo in my ears. My mother sang from that epic.

'Oh! Ravana what have you done? A jewel like Sita, you have stolen. . .'

That was our environment. There would always be music in her stories. My parents often visited plays by 'Gandharva'. I have seen his photographs but not attended any of his performances. I have also listened to his records at the residence of the famous actress Shantadevi.

The 'Bhosle' family enjoyed high status in Baroda. My father, Bhim Rao Bhosle was a barrister and Shakuntala Raje was the Chief Secretary. Mostly we lived in Baroda, but in between we went to Daresalaam. Our stay there was for short period, but often, in Baroda, we were addressed as 'Bhosle's from Daresalaam'.

I was born in Poona. We were in all seven-five sisters and two brothers. Our family environment was artistic and healthy. There was respect for art, you see, ours was a liberal family! One could dance, sing and do whatever one desired. There were no restrictions though there was a decorum. I have never seen my mother without a cover on her head. We were Maharashtrians but not 'Kashta ni lugdiwalaa'. We adorned sarees in a different manner . . . Palav of the saree would be placed in the front . . . Ladies of royal family of Gaikwad in Baroda, wear sarees in that style.



*With Arun Kantharia
and Shailesh Dave in
Saccha Bola Zutha Laga*



With Noshir Khatu in Balwant ni Baby

We followed their style. Our family though not born with a silver spoon so to say, but belonged to the well-to-do strata of the society.

We heard songs of Saigal, then a popular film actor. I loved singing, my voice was also good, though not of very high musical quality, but at least pleasant. Another thing I recollect is that 'Vanakaner stage theatre' was located on the way to school, I passed this theatre every day while going to school. Mostly Gujarati plays were staged at the 'Vankaner theatre' though there might have been few Marathi plays too, I don't recollect exactly, but the songs of those plays could be heard outside and I would listen intently. I never saw any play.

At school also I sang in our general programmes. If not major, at least few minor roles with short dialogues I did get during my school days. I wasn't a brilliant student nor was I a dull one. I loved going to cinemas. *Ramrajya* was very popular in those days. I must have seen it for not less than twenty times. The dialogues of Lav and Kush were at the tip of my tongue. That is how my life was flowing. I became aware of myself as an artist. I could act, I could sing and dance too. And I got my first opportunity. One Mr Ramanlal Moortiwala was a good singer. He was to give an item in a

programme. You see, by then my two elder sisters, Tilottamatai and Shalinididi, had started participating in stage plays. As I recall, Sanat Mehta and these people had formed an amateur group. They were not professionals, but they staged plays. You know how college students get together and enact plays. This Mr Ramanlal Moortiwala told my mother 'I am going to sing in a programme and need someone who can dance with it.' My elder sister refused to dance on stage. So he said 'Fine, then I shall make this little one dance to my song.' He pointed at me. That was my first appearance on the stage. One cannot call it a professional performance though.

That was a sort of first exposure.

Yes, there was the full auditorium and I danced before the audience. It might have been a wooden platform or a stage made of clay. . . there would be an audience sitting in the front and I would be on the stage giving my performance! This is how my drama career started.

Sarita, ordinarily you would mimic a person after meeting him or her just for a few minutes. This ability. . .

It was not just for teasing others, behind this need to mimic, there was the innate need of an artiste to entertain others. I loved to serve things which others enjoyed. I felt that artiste within me. I would imitate anybody, whether it is a character from *Ramayana* or someone like Bina Roy or even Nargis. I would mime and that brought encouragement. Yes, I used to mimic from my childhood days. Even today I remember the wordings of that song by Ramanlal Moortiwala. I understand its meaning also. Frankly I wasn't aware of its meaning when I danced for it. The meaning of that song was something like this. . .

'The moon light has splattered all over my courtyard. Come home my love, Do come back my beloved.'

The next opportunity was from one Mr Chimanlal Marwadi. He owned a drama company. Stage artistes like Ameerbai Karnataki . . .

Aba. . . very famous name that was. . .

Of course. Now Chimanbhai had a brother named Amritbhai Marwadi. He needed a child artiste. Somebody must have talked about me to him 'There is Indu, may be she can do the part though she cannot speak Gujarati very well. . . She does know Marathi. Why not inquire for her?' You see, we had many Gujarati friends in Baroda. So, though I could not speak nor read Gujarati language I could understand it very well. One day Amritbhai came to our house and asked me to accompany him for a fortnight. But my mother turned him down saying 'you can't take her out of station. . . ' Unfortunately my father had expired by then and our condition was deteriorating. Ours was a large family

but one after another most of the adults deserted us! All the youngsters remained behind and nobody to look after our economic condition. My eldest sister, too, was married. Financial worries had cropped up though we were never made aware of that. We had no idea whatsoever, how our mother managed to look after us. But gradually things started disappearing from our home and at a later stage awareness of our dwindling financial condition dawned on us. I became little obstinate when Amritbhai came for me. I told my mother 'I want to go for that play'. Later on she gave in, thinking 'after all she will be away only for a few days'. That was a professional stage, old theatre. The drama company, with its retinue would visit village after village. They would dig a huge pit and erect a pandal lighting it up with patromax. . .

That is how this old stage was known as 'Khada noo theatre'. . .

Yes, but that would be in villages. In small city towns like Dahod, there were no stages. You see, movie theatres of such towns were beyond reach. Besides they would need vast open surroundings where lot many viewers could be accommodated. Mikes were not yet known in those days. Our voice had to be powerful enough to reach the five hundred to six hundred people that thronged to watch the play. That is how it was in the olden days when I stepped in . . . That was professional theatre . . . where one could earn . . . Spectators bought tickets to watch the dramas. I have forgotten the title of my first play but I do remember the song and my dress I wore for it . . . I had worn long skirt and a blouse, 'Ghaghro polkoo', my most favourite dress. That was the drama with Ameerbai Karnataki and Chimanlal Marwadi . . .

'Hey! . . . It flew away. . .'

'See it has flown away. . .'

'Who?'. . . Now this question is to be thrown at the public . . .

'The caged bird . . . flew away.'

'Oh! see, may you please watch . . .'

'It is asking a question!'

Then someone will interrupt saying 'What?'

'Stories of your heart . . .'

'Asking all the time, it wants to fly . . . in the azure sky . . . and so it flew away . . .'

Roughly that was the meaning of that song and with that my real drama career began. I was enthralled. . . Every night the play was staged. I wasn't used to late nights. At home, we kids would go to bed latest by eight-thirty while on the stage, the show would begin at nine at night! These things did not deter me. I was 'bugged' completely. After the first performance, wherever I went, the audience loved me. With this first exposure, also originated my observations, my training. There was a lull after this drama completed its run and



In Kach nu Chandra

I returned to Baroda.

My third attempt on stage was with Irani Sheth-Sheth Faredun Irani I vaguely recollect, he used to run a drama company named 'New Laxmikant'. That was the beginning of my professional career. I call it 'professional' beginning because from then on I understood what acting involved.

In those days of theatre world, Rani Premlata's name was reverberating at the top level. Later she became also a very successful film star. She reigned in the film world. She was beautiful and had a personality. I haven't forgotten her till today. At that time, physical beauty was over-emphasised in the theatre. Imposing personality, long beautiful hair, etc. with these she also possessed many other exceptional qualities. I got an opportunity to act with her for the first time. I had seen her movie *Kunvar Bai noo momeru* and many others. When Irani Sheth came to visit us, our financial conditions had deteriorated; and my mummy thought 'I have two daughters. . .'. My elder sister Padmarani was studying then, besides Irani Sheth had come for me as he needed a child artiste. His child artiste had gone to Bombay and I was to pick up that role. The title of the play was *Ame paranyaa* written by Praful Desai. Of course the writer's name I discovered only

recently. I was not aware of his stature in those days. Today I know what a prolific writer he was. So that was the play: *Ame paranyaa* — my first as a stage artiste and my first one with Rani Premlata.

Let me here, talk to you about the director of those days. He would explain and teach the meaning of the words, where to put emphasis in a dialogue delivery so on and so forth. The director would guide you for your position on the stage, you were not to show your back to the audience.

How was the choreography?

Oh! there was nothing like choreography. You have to stand erect, two characters during their dialogues would face the audience; at the most you are allowed to move little forward or backward and that's that. . . .

I got a chance of my life-time to observe those great artistes. Shanta Apte used to visit Irani Sheth's dramas. Ashraf Khan too, visited. He was known as Pir, a Saint teacher. I observed them on stage. *Ame paranyaa* gave me a real chance to show my ability. I was taught Gujarati dialogues. Songs had important place in stage plays. So artistes with good voice were given more importance. I had a good voice, so I got the weightage as a singing artiste. Thus '*Ame Paranyaa*' was a green signal to my career. I remember that song very well . . .

In Santu Rangili



These were the wordings (in translation) . . .

On the sea shore,
While playing a game,
I built a sand house. . .
This doll is the Bride,
and that one is her groom.'

then the artist would narrate the story of the play, there would be few dialogues also like . . .

'Those two dolls fell in love . . .

Then what next . . . ?' Of course the end of the story would not be revealed at that stage.

That drama proved very successful on stage; and with it my acting career in the old theatre really started. We would be away to distant villages, small cities, towns for days together! Village life was different . . . One had to fetch water from a well. I wasn't used to that sort of life but nothing came in the way of my learning!

Now if you talk of the training for stage acting, there was none. Rehearsals were conducted from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. we rested in the afternoons. . . . You reach the theatre in the evenings. There would be a dress man, a make-up man, but you were expected to do all that on your own. Facial make-up meant mixing of three colours: yellow, white and red. You could mix them to your liking and of course 'Kajal' as a black liner for your eyes. Rani Premlata was a film actress and her makeup was different. She looked like a fairy. Once ready I would sit in the wings, and watch the stage. I never felt tired of watching, nor ever felt sleepy. That was their method, method of the old theatre! I have understood and used the word 'method' only today!

The strong voice was absolutely essential. It had to have good quality. Your vocal cords are regularly exercised when you act on stage. You see, that was an era of singing couplets forcefully from the stage, 'Chappaa' as we call it. That was a very forceful poetic form of dialogues. So, in fact, a lot was provided in the script by the writer. The first thing on the stage would be a prayer. The photographs of the goddesses, 'Sarasvati' and 'Laxmi' would be placed on either side of the stage. The bell would start ringing. . . The curtain would be raised and crackers would burst. The girls would be standing on the stage. A girl who could sing, would get a chance to garland the goddesses. Since I had a good voice, I was given the chance and got more exposure to the audience. I would pick up the garlands, walk down to the photographs and garland them one after the other. Then bow down to the audience also and with that begin the prayer . . .

'Oh Lord Shambho, Shiv Shankar
the ruler of the Universe . . .'

The prayer was in Sanskrit. The language itself provided phonetic exercises! You got rhythm . . . Call that my practice, my training . . . I got it there. This couldn't be called training for classical singing but I got

the grasp for notation . . . I would know, where was the second note on harmonium or where was the fifth black one. The moment note two was struck on the harmonium I would start singing. Of course, I did not have any theoretical knowledge of 'Saa, re, ga, ma . . .' as such but I knew the scale of my voice and where it could be reached on harmonium. I was trained in music just for that much . . .

That was due to every-day practice, through singing and listening. Wellknown stage and film actress Shanta Apte guided me to an extent. She did not teach me directly as such but I listened to her singing, while acting with her in the drama *Sajjan Kon*. She was an excellent singer. She would keep in her hand . . . the instrument . . . what is it called . . . yes . . . *damroo* or *tabor* as you call it. She would keep playing her own rhythm while singing on the stage. At that time she would be lost in her singing . . . she would forget her acting, her character for a while. The *tabor* did not help much for her acting. She would hold it from sheer habit. If the *tabla* player were not following her properly, she would start her own '*taal*', rhythm. Shanta Apte was a great singer and at times even carried a *Tumboor* on stage, while singing a classical song. Usually songs in drama followed popular, simple style but she could render it, in her own classical style. Let me sing one of her song . . . (translated)

'Oh' . . . Mighty ocean of mercy . . .

Where is your mercy . . .

this was her style . . . had classical touch . . . then I would follow

'Oh . . . there is no repose . . . no pleasures . . . ' and then I would continue my singing . . .

So the classical touch in my singing, I received from her.

I was greatly impressed by movies and consciously imitated film singers. I liked e.g. Noorjehan, and ceaselessly practised her songs and would go on listening to her. That not only enhanced my knowledge, but helped in evolving my own style in singing. As you know, my career as a stage artiste got a real boost due to my own style.

You said that when Shanta Apte sang on stage, her acting would be sidetracked. When did you notice that? When you were observing her on stage or while you were talking about it to me just now.

Yes. Even then, she appeared to me quite different from Rani Premlata. You know when Rani sang, she would look down like this, but her acting also continued. In case of Shanta Apte I felt the difference in her expression. She would not remain the character she personified on the stage. Just for a while she would be a changed person as if! That's how I felt for Shanta Apte. Premlata would be totally engrossed in her acting.

That is why I followed Rani Premlata's style of acting.

When drama was staged the harmonium or other musical instruments would be down on the floor near the stage. So if I looked down at the harmonium player, public would immediately notice where the instrument was placed. That won't be right. So when I would be acting, my attention was towards the public and not on the accompanist. Suppose *tabla* is going too fast for me, I would signal him, without taking my sight away from the audience. Just a hand gesture like this and *tabla* player would adjust his rhythm!

You were also saying something about directors . . .

Oh! yes. In the old theatre, when a director was directing a scene, he would not say much about movements on the stage. I remember about a director named Babaldas. My first play with his was *Ame Paranya*. He was very strict and besides I was a new entrant on stage, so he wanted to impress me probably! Once when we were rehearsing, he told me 'You don't know how to cry!' I was a mere child then. So I counter-argued 'How does one cry?' Promptly they applied glycerine to my eyes . . . I shrieked and cried . . . my eyes were burning. Anyway somehow that play closed. There was one another sordid experience, with a director--his name was Sorabjee Kewala. He had a very peculiar physique and had a bald head. I disliked that man! Putting it in nicer words I would call him a cruel man. A stage is a beautiful place but unfortunately an ugly incident took place there. The play was of Mr Aga Hashra titled *Dil Ki Pyaas*. I was given a boy's role in it. My name was Prataap. That was an Urdu play. Much later I acted as heroine in the same play. I was supposed to be crying in a scene, when I enacted Prataap's character. The dialogues went like this:

'Oh Daddy . . . Oh, daddy why are you throwing me out? . . . My mother is crying . . . '

While delivering this dialogue I could not shed tears, I could not cry. So this baldy came on the stage and gave a big slap on my face! My cheek turned red, and my ear burnt!

Ranibai was there too . . . She felt extremely bad. I saw compassion in her eyes, and tears rolled down my face. The scene turned out very well ultimately, and all but me were happy. I was shocked. 'What sort of method was that?' The word 'method' probably was not in my mind then; but I felt 'what sort of acting was this where one had to be slapped to teach something'?

I decided then and there that I would never work under that director, again. During that play *Dil ki Pyaas* later he called me ten times but anger still burnt in my mind and funny thoughts would pass through my mind 'I shall get even with you, oh, baldy *Tukloo*. . . ' Today he is not alive.

You were saying that participants had to face the audience, throughout the play; why so?

The artists had to show their acting, to the public . . . so the method was evolved accordingly.

Besides, there were no mikes, and the dialogues must reach the audience.

Also one could not show one's back to the audience. That would be considered disrespect to the public.

How far directors would help to bring out the character of a role?

The directors were helpful to an extent. The character, while delivering certain important dialogues would move forward on the stage. Let me reproduce a couplet from a play titled *Prithvi Raaj Chauhaan*. I was Sanjuktaa in that play. Ordinarily one would be expected to raise one's voice and overemphasize while delivering the dialogues. But the style at Irani Sheth's was different. In fact I grew up as a stage actress in that company. Here the dialogues were not over-exaggerated. Bhangwadi Stage had different style, here artists were wellknown non-Gujaratis. Of course they too, in a unique way, preserved the beauty of the language and clarity in expression. I will narrate to you the two different styles through Sanjuktaa's role.

'Baarot . . . Baarot . . . I too am a Rajputani, the brave girl, brave woman for a brave man. Battle and bed . . . in both I play very well . . .'

This was one style, not much feelings involved here. While at Irani Sheth's the dialogue delivery would be loaded with emotions. I too learnt to control the emotional expressions.

'Baarot . . . Baarot I also am a Rajputani, a brave girl, brave woman for a brave man. Battle and bed, at both I play very well. . . . My self, I have lost but not my knowledge. I am a warrior. . . haven't forgotten the pride of being one. . . Proceed my Lord . . . The emperor of the battlefield, may you proceed . . . Forget this body . . . and may thou please this Goddess of the battle field. The way you played with the colourful pleasures of life. . . Let your valour flow from you . . . Enhance the prestige of Hindustan . . . To you . . . we entrust the destiny of Hindustan.'

With this the curtain would come down.

You see the author helped a great deal.

Sure, I received immense help from them. Those were original writers, Prabhulal Trivedi, Manilal Pagal, Praful Desai. There were so many authors whose names I know not. They wrote beautifully.

Malavpati Munj, Ra Mandlik all those were mythological plays and then came the era of social plays. When I started my career, social dramas already had their place on Gujarati stage. There was a drama *Anokhi Pooja*. It was a social drama. The story was of an actress versus Indian womanhood.

Thus acting career began around 1949. I acted as child artiste for about 11 or 12 years. That was when I came in contact with artistes like Ashraf Khan, Rani Premlata, Shanta Apte.

When did you actually meet Rani Premlata and Shanta Apte?

Somewhere during 1949 You see, social plays were being staged much before I entered theatre. However, generally, mythological dramas were more popular. *Ra Mandlik, Prithviraj Chauhan, Nal Damyanti*, then *Ramayan, Lav Kush*; were the contemporaries to social dramas such as *Ame Paranya, Garib Kanya, Kuleen Kanya, Vahurani*. I cannot put a date to them, *Vadilona Vanke* was also a very old drama from Bhangwadi theatre.

Artistes like Motibai, Mohanlal were from Bhangwadi theatre of Bombay. I have seen their photographs. I haven't met them though. Mohanlal—it is said had his own style. Nobody could act a villain like him. Special plays were written to suit the styles of these artistes. Motibai, Master Kasam, he was a director also, Baburaje, all of them were very fine actors. Social plays with big cast would always be hits, as you find today with the films. In those days dramas were staged first and then they would be adapted for a film. Even today, if you have noted, things we cannot show in films, we can bring very easily on stage. In those days dramas were in forefront.

There was a play *Vidhva Vivah* based on problems of widows. Mahatma Gandhi was working for emancipation of women in those days. *Haveli me Holi*, a Hindi play, had woman's problems as its central theme. Actually, Rani Premlata, Motibai and Saraswatibai played the roles specially carved out for them in such dramas.

When did you become a heroine on stage?

When was it? . . . Actually I was just 14 years old when Irani Sheth came to reinvite me to participate in his drama.

I had shifted to Delhi by then. My mother was getting anxious that if I continued on stage, my studies would suffer, and there would be problems for my marriage too. Our's was a traditional Maharashtrian family, and marriage was a 'must' for all. My eldest brother had completed his education and sister Padma had already made her entry on the stage. Our finances had also improved. So I was sent to Delhi. There I picked up (one could not call it a formal education because I never went to a school there), read a great deal. I read great novelists like Sharad Chandra, Ravindranath Tagore, his book *Gora*. I remember even today Gulshan Nanda, Gurudutt and many others. I got interested in poetry too. Often my past observations, memories started catching up with me. While reading

great novels, I would visualise myself doing the central characters. That suppressed desire to be an actress, once again stirred within me. 'I wanted to be an actress, and what am I doing?' On God's oath, I kept mum. At that time my mummy visited me in Delhi. She immediately noticed my unhappiness and took me back to Baroda, and resolved herself to let destiny take its own course. Once I was back to Baroda, Irani Sheth came with the offer of the leading role in his play *Mangal Moorty*. That was very popular drama. Renu Maker was acting in the play. Somehow Rani Premlata had great faith in my abilities. The new name *Sarita* was given to me. Formerly, I was known in the theatre world as Baby Indu. With that play, I was addressed 'Sarita' . . . Sarita Devi . . . as the name 'Sarita' would be incomplete without a respectful prefix or suffix e.g. Sarita Devi, Rani Premlata, Saraswati Devi . When I returned to Baroda and rejoined the stage, my calibre was really put to test. I was given only 8 days; and they wanted to turn me into a heroine! They made me wear a saree, changed the hairstyle in such a manner that I would look like a lady. Rani Premlata helped me in that transformation. You see, I was only fourteen, though I looked mature. I wasn't tall, nor fair in complexion, and but they always regarded me to be a good artiste. My sister Padma was popular as a beautiful artiste. I knew, 'Since I am not beautiful, I must compensate for it with better acting.' I groomed myself in dialogue delivery. I did not like long dialogues and never shouted loudly on stage.

In the very first play, there was a song and Rani Premlata advised 'control your hand gestures, give more emphasis on your facial expressions, enhance the importance of your eyes . . .' I heard the same advice later on from Shanta Apte. Adi Marzban too, emphasised the facial controls. When I am acting, my eyes, even eye lashes are under my control. All those groomings came gradually to me.

I would say, during last 14 years, I mastered the techniques. Now let me demonstrate that song . . . (translated)

'When our eyes clashed . . .

Why quarrel? . . .

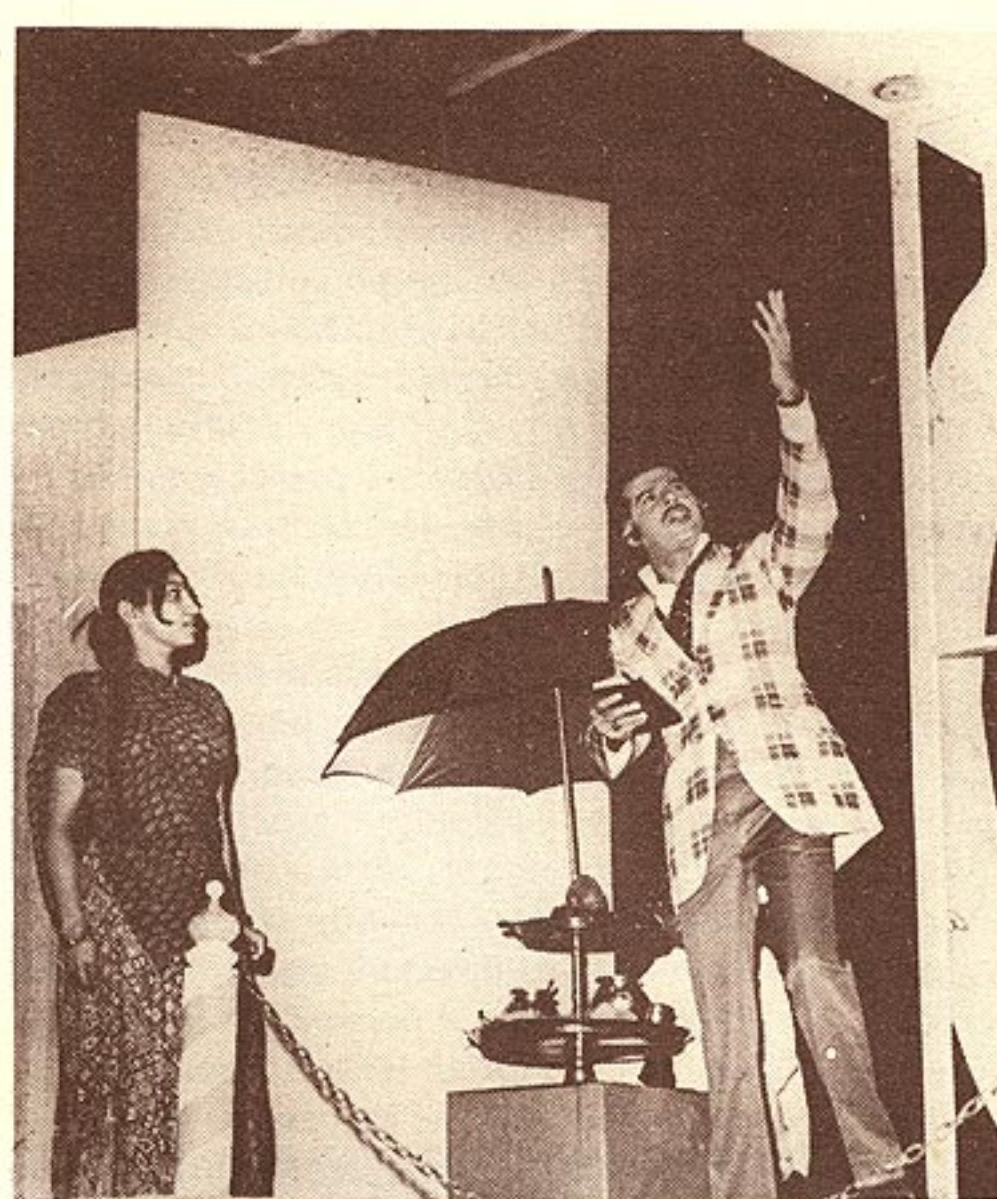
Oh watch out . . .

Those lunatics . . .

The way they are nodding . . .'

This song was about expressions of the eyes . . . it was the song for the eyes, so less movements of hands. I was a modern woman in that play. It would be different with other songs, there might be more hand gestures but definitely no over-acting. That was my style.

That was how I became a heroine. I might have worked for a year or two, because then I got married. I had my first baby a bit too early and my body lost its vigour. That feeling of not being beautiful always remained with me and once again I lost the theatre



With Pravin Joshi in Santu Rangili

world. I was absolutely 'domesticated' and was told so in no uncertain words 'You are a mother now, so you cannot take part in dramas any more'.

Once again after a lapse of a year or a year and half Irani Sheth came to invite me. 'Act as heroine; and that too with Ashraf Khan . . . as Sanyukta!' My heart fluttered with excitement that I should be getting a chance to be a heroine with a dignitary like Ashraf Khan. There was a song with him too about which I should narrate later on. Thus my re-entry in dramatics was in 1955, with the play *Kuleen Kanya*. All my childhood wishes were granted. I got wonderful roles in plays like *Dil ki Pyaas*, *Ankh Ka-Nashaa*. After Marriage and the baby, I had lost weight. With the play *Kuleen Kanyaa* I made my re-entry on stage; but the drama flopped and I was also branded as 'unlucky'. . . I had poor looks and bad luck too, to cope up with.

Padma by that time had reached to the level of a heroine. I was pushed to side roles; comedy characters. It pained me a great deal. There was a difference between a main heroine and a 'curtain heroine'.

She would not be the central character, her name would not have priority of place in the list of artistes.

In other words the central theme of a play would have main heroine, and the side plot of the theme would be different, her level also would be considered bit lower than in status compared to the main role, am I right?

Exactly. Besides there might not be any relationship

between the two sides of the theme. I continued that way for the time being. Let me tell you one thing, the stage always remained with me; the audience had full rapport with me. Imagine me being a 'curtain heroine' and yet the public was with me. However the sting remained in my heart. I had all the potentialities to be a big heroine. Comedies, I felt were below my aspirations. Later I realised 'No! Sarita, tremendous strength is required for comedy roles'. With this realization, my involvement became a dedication. I was determined to carve out my special position in the dramatic world and of course I succeeded. Then Adi Marzban invited me.

When was that?

It was in 1961 for Kala Kendra--the centre was established by Mr Kanaiyalal Munshi.

Wasn't it at Bhartiya Vidya Bhavan in Bombay?

That was the place where directors like Adi Marzban staged their plays. Oh! what a personality he was!!! I remember him often even today. He is no more with us but his name will remain with me as long as I am alive.

The first play that he called me for, was *Jo Jo, Moda Na Padaota*. I was offered the main role; but before acceptance, I had to clear some stage tests. I was nervous, I could not read the Gujarati script, I was afraid of my looks. Keeping aside the apprehensions, I faced the test. I was asked to make an entry from a side and pick up the flowers from a centre table and act. My fears surfaced again, 'I am an artiste from old theatre, how am I going to fit in to the new style . . . ' Namdeo Lahute, helped a great deal. He taught me the new style and guided me. I noticed the difference between the two styles; no exaggerated gestures and no artificial, high pitched tone . . . Once I grasped the difference, acting out the scene became easy and spontaneous. Adi Marzban was so elated, he shouted 'Excellent! Chandri Laloo, where have you picked her from . . . ' You see Chandrika Laloo had introduced me to him. The moment I saw his beaming face, I knew I had cleared the test. There began my new career, the origin of whatever I am today.'

Before this entry, how many dramas had you participated in?

During the old theatre era there would be a play everyday. A drama company would visit a city, a village, and settle down for three to four months. As long as there was the audience, plays would continue there. There were seven different plays for seven days of a week. All were staged till the demand from the public lasted.

If I enlisted all the dramas in which I acted, the total would be more than 150 or it might be more than 300. Once a script was written anywhere, it would be taken up for production by all the drama companies. I can-

not recollect all the titles today.

All the new actresses that entered the new stage, came after training in workshops, some learnt acting in colleges and some came from drama competitions. Amongst all those artistes you were far ahead. Even before stepping in to the modern dramas, you had already participated in hundreds of plays.

Yes, but there was a vast difference. So when I came to the new theatre I felt 'I am a new student there. Everything is so different. Entire technique of presentation is different'. The control over voice, breathing etc. which I acquired during my formative years, was extremely helpful e.g. 'Proceed . . . My Emperor . . . ' I have put certain emphasis on each word . . .

There was simplicity in the new technique, one had to reach nearest to the character while in the old theatre, the artiste enacted a *role* according to his or her own style.

That is without any deliberateness your performance must reach the audience . . .

Then you added emotions, bringing out your positions in the forefront. I recognized, from Adi Marzban, strength of my own voice; my eyes. He would say 'Utilize them, Sarita'. He helped to groom my eyes and voice to add depth to my acting. Importance of posture, I learnt 'If I sat this way it should look nice to the spectators'.

Then came Pravin Joshi. Meanwhile I had worked with Satyadev Dubey for the play *Inkilaab*. Amrish Puri was acting with me.

Pravin Joshi had a unique style. I tell you, I was very lucky to get opportunities to work simultaneously with directors like Adi Marzban, Satyadev Dubey, Pravin Joshi, Kanti Madia and Chandravadan Bhatt.

Each one with his own style, gave me vast experience. There was also a ballet, *Antarpat* by Nana Kasar, conducted in Bharatnatyam style. Here I learnt the expression of innermost feelings through eyes and dance *mudras*. I utilized some *mudras* later on, for other characters and that became my style. Now let us talk about Pravin Joshi. He believed in symphony . . .

Symphony?

Yes, symphony. Each dialogue he would say, had its own rhythm, its own tune which would reveal certain facets of character. Say, a dialogue starts at *Saa* level, the pitch of your voice is fixed at that note and it must not vary. Let me demonstrate to you.

'Sarita . . . '

'Huh . . . ?'

'How are you?'

'Very . . . well . . . '

Each word has its own notation. Then Pravin would say 'chin up Sarita and face the audience'.

One could notice the influence of film media on his stage style. He would say 'Sarita, when you speak this dialogue, I want your close-up. Your face must be at this particular angle'. This was there at the old theatre, but in a different way. Today emphasis is on both simplicity and beauty. Pravin paid attention to the footwork also. A character walked in a certain style, while talking, she would have her own mannerism. Same way while sitting—her legs would be stretched in a particular manner. I absorbed this new approach to acting and created my own style out of it.

A posture had its place in the old theatre, but the artiste would execute the way she would like. While in your case if you were enacting a character . . . say 'Manju' . . . you would adopt her mannerisms.

Of course, right now I am 'Sarita'. Then she sits this way, she walks like this . . . So while doing her role, I pay attention to her style. This is a 'practical' knowledge.

I have heard a lot about theatre, but have read very little. I am a good listener. I imbibed what Pravin said, what other good directors said about techniques. I also listened to friends, writers, singers. I preserved what was useful to me. This habit helped a great deal while working with new directors. After Pravin Joshi . . . haven't I worked with you too, Shailesh? But by that time I had reached maturity in acting and had established myself as a good stage actress. Pravin Joshi, Satyadev Dubey, Adi Marzban, all were my teachers. Adherence to the character with total honesty has been my contribution. I took part in Gujarati and Hindi films also. Film world is big, learnt new things. Geetabali was my 'special' actress. Nargis too, then Balraj Sahani, Dilip Kumar . . . all of them, left tremendous impact on me. Richard Burton from the English film-dom, was my most favourite. Film media taught me poise, and make-up technique. The word professionalism is used in our drama world. It does not involve money only. Our professionalism starts from regularity in rehearsals . . . I have this compassion in my heart! The audience which extends love constantly, gives encouragement to you, I am bound by duty towards them too. I have taken their care and also looked after myself. With honesty, I have preserved the method of acting, the style of dialogue delivery, where the words are not stretched unnaturally, but emphasised for weightage. All these I acquired from old theatre and replenished in the new theatre. This understanding I developed during last 14 years, and much more after I met Pravin Joshi. He could extract plenty of emotions from my dialogues. He used to say, 'Old theatre had the ability to bring out characterization adequately'. Language too, was very appropriate. Scripts were originals and not adaptations. Language was very forceful. All these things helped a great deal.

Directors like me can say and are actually saying today, 'Dialogues get better justice from Sarita'. There is no exaggeration in this statement. What is the reason behind this? You have mentioned Chappas earlier which helped you evolve your own style. It taught you to give weightage to words. When a word was emphasised, it would change the entire meaning. This understanding developed and shaped you to your present position.

Every dialogue has a meaning e.g. 'yes, I remember . . . I remember at every moment . . .' Now this dialogue has its own measurement. It has to be delivered in one breath. This measure would differ from artiste to artiste. If one can speak this dialogue in one breath, it gets its own rhythm. If it were broken and one failed to complete the whole dialogue in one span, then it would mean that more practice was required for the artiste. With practice the grip will come on its own. If this is impossible to achieve, then I shall deliver the dialogue, breaking it three times, in between taking my

In Moti Verana Chokma





*With Shailesh Dave
in Devaki*

breath, so that depth of the feelings is preserved—'I remember . . . I do remember . . . Every moment I remember . . .' If my lungs do not have enough strength, then I would get breathless before the completion of the sentence. So perfect breathing control . . . Sometimes my voice cracks. Today while you are interviewing me, you too must have noticed. But such shortcomings have to be made use of.

Sarita, you are one of the very few actresses to have worked with Shanta Apte and you also have an honour of acting in a play based on her life. What sort of feelings did it arouse in you?

That was the play *Kanch no Chandramaa*. When I took the lead role in that play, I felt, as if she were with me throughout. I used to think about her, her style as a person, as an actress, I tried to recapitulate her hand gestures while acting as 'Shanta Apte' in *Kanch no Chandramaa*. I tried to bring out that transparency of her lively eyes. I was enthralled when I uttered her name . . . 'Shantabai', and felt thrilled that I was enacting her life drama. On the other hand it evoked so much of pain and misery. Her life was a real tragedy. These two emotions, the thrill and the misery constantly clashed within me. I am an artiste and that too a very sentimental one. This inner conflict affected my own emotional equilibrium and I became one with my role. This involvement was totally disturbing for me. I tried my level best to keep her image separate from myself but that was impossible. Life is full of such incidents . . . There, I recall another incident. a tiny, dirty, filthy girl, with lint dripping from her nose. I went to her and taught her how to inhale back the lint while breathing in through the nose. Nothing much in this incident but it remained photographically imprinted in my mind. Much later I used it for a role in a play.

Even today you have a keen observation power.

I feel that it is essential for every artiste whether he is a painter or an actor.

Absolutely so. Do you have any suggestions for somebody who is striving with dedication to become a good artiste?

Lots of hard work. Only concentration for a particular career is not enough. Concentration must be aimed at the final goal. You have to traverse the path on your own. Acting is a learning process right from its basic alphabet to its highest finish. This does not end with playing few characters here and there. As we learn, our experience, ability, knowledge, grow along with one's strength . . . No, I am not getting the right word for . . .

Enthusiasm . . .

Yes . . . yes enthusiasm, and perseverance, have to be developed, also determination and patience. If one has all these qualities, then only ambitions can be fulfilled. A slow and steady person can reach his destination.

I think learning is not yet over. In fact . . . the last seven years have really brought out a deeper understanding. Previous to that I was a mere artiste constantly working, real hard work it was. In life there was nothing but work.

When Sarita entered the stage, it was the era of musical dramas. The singing ability of an artiste was emphasised. An artiste who can sing and act is one thing, one who can dance and act is another, and one who can deliver dialogues as if speaking naturally, is another dimension to one's acting ability. Sarita belongs to the group of artistes who have all the three dimensions. Her performance is a total summation of singing, dancing, delivering dialogues and acting.

Sarita Joshi
Acting: Theatre

<i>Name of Play</i>	<i>Director</i>	<i>Group/Prod.</i>	<i>Lang. Co.</i>	<i>Period</i>
1 Ame Parnya	Babal Das	New Laxmikant Theatrical Co.	Guj	1948 to
2 Aj Ni Waat	"	"	"	1950
3 Asha Nu Ghar	"	"	"	"
4 Sajan Kone	Nandlal Nakubhai	"	"	
5 Yug Prabhav	"	"	"	
6 Ra Mandlik	"	"	"	
7 Malav Pati Munj	"	"	"	1950
8 Prithviraj Chauhan	"	"	"	
9 Luv Kush	"	"	"	
10 Haveli Me Holi — Dil Ki Pyas	"		"	1957
11 Amaldar	"		"	
12 Kulin Kanya	"		"	
13 Hansa Kumari	"		"	
14 Garib Kanya	"		"	
15 Abol Haya	"		"	
16 Mare Nathi Paranvu	Chandrakant Sangani	"		
17 Jan Ma Aujo	"	"	"	
18 Patrani	"	"	"	
19 Kunvara Kankan	"	"	"	
20 Panetar	Jagdish Shah	Nila Theatres	"	
21 Huto Huti	"	"	"	
22 Bal Kanaiyo	Chandravadan Bhatt	Fourum	"	
23 Guneghar	"	"	"	
24 Inquilab	Satyadev Dube	Theatre Unit	Hindi	
25 Jo Jo, Moda Na Padaota	Adi Marzban	Kala Kendra	Guj.	1962-63
26 Prithvi Vallabh	"	"	"	
27 Sacha Bol Jutha Lage	"	"	"	
28 Balwant Ni Baby	"	"	"	
29 Mot Ni Musafiri	"	"	"	
30 Padho Re Popat	"	"	"	
31 Chandarvo	Pravin Joshi	I.N.T.	"	1963-64
32 Saptapadi	"	"	"	

<i>Name of Play</i>	<i>Director</i>	<i>Group/Prod.</i>	<i>Lang. Co.</i>	<i>Period</i>
33 Evam Indrajit	"	"	"	
34 Agan Khel	"	"	"	
35 Dhummas	"	"	Guj.	1973-77
36 Sapna Na Vavetar	"	"	"	
37 Sahebo Gulabno Chhod	"	"	"	
38 Kachno Chandra	Arvind Joshi	Prasthan	"	
39 Vaishakhi Koyal	Pravin Joshi	I.N.T	"	
40 Sharat	"	"	"	
41 Manju Manju	"	"	Marathi, Guj.	
42 Dhuka	"	"	Marathi	
43 Dhuka	"	"	Hindi	
44 Santu Rangili	"	"	Guj.	
45 Salgya Surajmukhi	"	Unit Rangbheru	"	
46 Him Dankha	Arvind Thakkar	I.N.T	"	
47 Moti Verana Chowkma	Pravin Joshi	"	"	
48 Leela Laher	C. Thakkar	"	"	
49 Mausam chhalke	Pravin Joshi	"	"	
50 Lady Lalkunwar	Arvind Joshi	"	"	
51 Laksha Graha	Suresh Rojala	"	"	
52 Kunwar Vehlare Padharjo	"	"	"	
53 Alak Malak Ni Albeli	"	"	"	
54 Gorambhu	Suresh Rajda	I.N.T.	"	
55 Ramat Sun Chokdi	Shailesh Dave	Shiram	"	
56 Lal Ni Raani	Arvind Joshi	Prashthan	"	
57 Ek Hati Rupali	Ajit Vachani	P.J. Theatre	"	
58 Savita Damodar Paranjpe	Siddharth Randeria	INAGE	"	
59 Do Diwane Shaharme	Shafi Inamdar	P.J. Theatre	"	
60 Devki	Sarita Joshi	P.J. Theatre	"	
61 Gup Chup Gup Chup	"	P.J. Theatre	"	
62 Sakha Sanyara	"	P.J. Theatre	"	
63 Mangal Moorti	Chhannalal	New Laxmikant Theatre	"	1957
64 Wrong Number	Vijay Bhatt	"	"	1963
65 Sambhav Asambhav	Shailesh Dave	Rangbheru	"	1983