

Suresh Dresswala

INFORMATION CARD

Theatre Personality

Name	:	Suresh Aundhkar (Dresswala)
Bio-data	:	1
Photographs	:	34
Printed Material	:	
Articles	:	17
Clippings	:	17
Brochures	:	—
Publicity Material	:	19
Books by	:	—
Audio Material	:	—

Bio-data

<i>Name</i>	:	Suresh Hari Aundhkar
<i>Date of Birth</i>	:	15th September 1936
<i>Birth Place</i>	:	Bombay
<i>Residential Address</i>	:	267 A, Sanghavi Mansion J. S. S. Road Bombay 400 002
<i>Profession</i>	:	Costume supplier
<i>Education</i>	:	Non-Matric
<i>Languages known</i>	:	Marathi, Hindi and Gujarati
<i>Language of theatre work</i>	:	Marathi, Hindi and Gujarati



Suresh Aundhkar (Dresswala)

Costumes, masks, headgears and all such accessories to theatre are difficult to procure. One agency rendering noteworthy service in this respect is run by Shri Suresh Aundhkar popularly known as Suresh Dresswala.

Sureshbhai has this business running in the family for over two generations. His grandfather, the late Shankar Hari Aundhkar, was a well-known *pagadbandh* (manufacturer of *pagdi* i.e. headgears particular to Maharashtra and adjoining areas).

Shankar Hari Aundhkar was born in the princely state of Aundh (District Satara) in 1871. Shankar lost his parents at an early age and was forced to come to Pune to stay with relatives engaged in *pagadbandhi*. Shankar had his school education as well as vocational training in Pune. At the age of fifteen, Shankar came to Bombay in search of a job. He could get a job at the shop of Laxman Venkatesh Rale, who was a famed *pagadbandh*. Rale operated at C.P. Tank, opposite Madhav Bagh. Shankar Aundhkar also used his time to act in dramatic companies such as Namdeo Prasadik Natak Mandali and Swadesh Hitachintak Natak Mandali.

By 1910, Shankar Aundhkar opened a shop of his own known as Shankar Hari Aundhkar Pagadyanche

Dukan. The business prospered and he opened a branch at Thakurdwar. Even though the Swadeshi as also the Khilafat Movement changed fashions (as far as wearing of headgear was concerned), Aundhkar continued making *pagdi*-s of all types and he was helped a great deal by movie companies such as Minerva Movietone, Bombay Talkies etc.

The Second World War had adverse effects on the business. Shankar also lost four of his sons, including Sureshbhai's father. As a consequence, Sureshbhai and his youngest uncle Vasant had to shoulder the entire responsibility of running the business. Sureshbhai chose to master the craft of *pagdi*-making while uncle Vasant looked after the family affairs. To supplement their income Sureshbhai also started selling grams, chikkis, rubber balloons etc. Sureshbhai gradually diversified into making and supplying other items of costume. By 1954 he renamed his shop: Suresh Dresswala.

Lakhoba Lokhande, the well-known character in P. K. Atre's *To Mee Navbech* (1962), had all his five costumes supplied by Suresh Dresswala. The play, in which the quick costume changes were noticed and appreciated, ran record performances. Those engaged in commercial theatre began to rely on him. Suresh Dresswala became a familiar name. All the amateur groups and those engaged in organising various theatre competitions began relying on Suresh Dresswala for their needs in costume. Various items of costumes, headgears and items of armoury were manufactured and supplied by Suresh Dresswala.

The growing business enabled Sureshbhai to open a branch in Bhuleshwar. In 1965 the shop had one worker. Now it has fortyfive! Sureshbhai's brothers Manohar and Madhukar share responsibilities with him. Today they also cater to the needs of those arranging processions, marriage ceremonies, felicitation functions, Ganapati festivals etc.

In Sureshbhai's opinion the industry has to face many problems. No items of the costume can be adequately stocked because the customers may ask for anything from a mere panpipe to a *tutari* and from a *kbadi topi* to helmet! The customers also need things of all shapes and sizes, thus complicating the storage. Maintenance is very demanding and investment is high. A loss, theft or a minor repair might render a whole set useless and that means a heavy outlay.

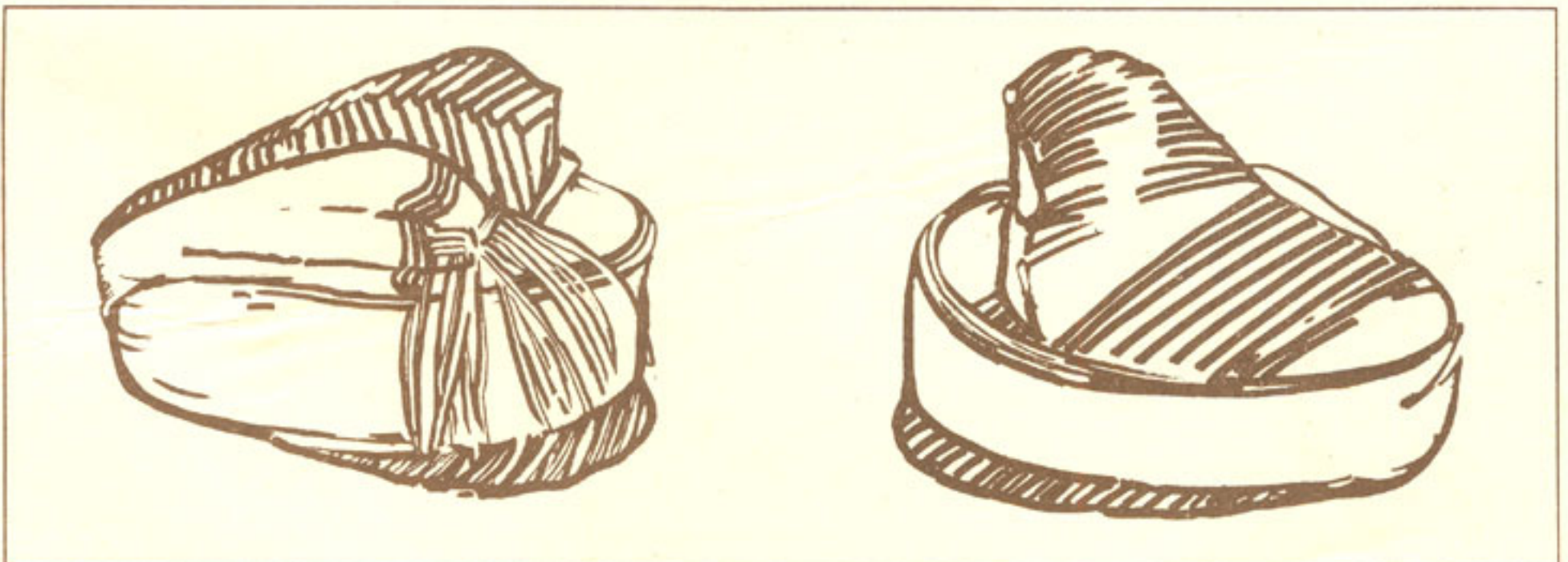
Sureshbhai remembers times when he was put to test! In 1974 when Babasaheb Purandare presented his performance on Shivaji's life at the Shivaji Park, a railway strike was on. Sureshbhai had to carry things to Shivaji Park and work throughout the night to be ready for the show!

By Chetan Datar

Puneri Pagdi (Padgi known after Pune)

(Suresh Dresswala gives step-by-step directions to make a *pagdi*.)

- 1) Make a pipe-clay mould with the shape of a *pagdi*.
- 2) Dry the mould. When it is sufficiently dry, glue on it two layers of three paper-sheets each. Use paper from the traditional account-books known as *kird-khatavani* for the purpose. This paper is light in weight and yet durable. Dry the mould in sunlight.
- 3) Remove carefully the paper-skeleton from the mould.
- 4) Using a saw cut the paper-skeleton (which is now shaped like a *pagdi*) into two. The lower part is known as *bini* while the upper, looking like a beak, is called *koki*.
- 5) The inner side of the *bini* is very hard. To avoid its rubbing against the head and forehead fix a layer of paperstrips. This layer is called *gote*.
- 6) The front-edge of the *bini* rests on the forehead above the eyebrows. On this edge place firmly and aslant 150-175 stripes of *baingani* (of the colour of an egg-plant) silk.
- 7) Now attend to the upper part of the *bini*. Wrap this entire circular part with old cloth. Over the cloth wind three silk-strips. The old cloth is known as *batana*.
- 8) Take up the *koki* described earlier. Fix on it both horizontally and vertically, brocade from Yeola. First make thick roll of the *batana*. (The roll is called *pelu*.) Cut the *pelu* into 125-150 pieces three inches in length. Wind these on the *koki* from right to the left. With each piece of the *pelu* is to be intertwined a silk-strip of 3/4 inch breadth.
- 9) Join the silk-strips to the *pelu*-s to complete the *koki*.
- 10) Sew the completed *koki* with the *bini*.
- 11) To give a smooth appearance to the upper and the lower *pagdi* cover with *batana* the portion to which they join. This is to be covered with a three-inch strip of *baingani* silk.
- 12) Decorate the sides (of the middle portion) of the *pagdi* with the well-known Yeola brocade and ornamental shreadings.
- 13) Complete the *pagdi* by spreading lining inside.
- 14) From the day the clay-mould is made it should take about three days to make one *pagdi*.
- 15) Today to make a *padgi* costs around 200-250 rupees.



Some Important Productions (Costumes supplied by Suresh Dresswala)

<i>No.</i>	<i>Name of the Play</i>	<i>Institution</i>	<i>Year</i>
1)	Bhaubandki	Mumbai Marathi Sahitya Sangha, Natyashakha	1942-44
2)	Sanshaykallol	Mumbai Marathi Sahitya Sangha, Natyashakha	1946-49
3)	Vaijayanti	Mumbai Marathi Sahitya Sangha, Natyashakha	1950
4)	Honaji Bala	Mumbai Marathi Sahitya Sangha, Natyashakha	1954-55
5)	Sunder Mee Honar	Mumbai Marathi Sahitya Sangha, Natyashakha	1957
6)	Raigadala Jenhva Jaag Yete	The Goa Hindu Association	
<i>(Only headgears supplied to the above productions)</i>			
7)	To Mee Navhech	Natya Niketan	1962
8)	Langachi Bedi	Cine Kalavant Natyasanch	1962
9)	Vichchha Majhi Puri Kara	Shahir Dada Kondke & Party	1967
10)	Kaka Kishacha	Nataraj, Bandra (East)	1967-68
11)	Alibaba Ani Chalis Chor	Little Theatre	1968-69
12)	Allaudin Ani Jaducha Diva	Little Theatre	1968-69
13)	Kanjoos (Hindi)	Kamalakar Sontakke (Bahurupi)	1970
14)	Rajputra Thaksen	Natya Nandini	1973
15)	Pala Pala Kon Pudhe Pale To	Purnima Theatres	1973
16)	Rao Jagdevrao Martand	Kalavaibhav	1973
17)	Dayitra	Gomantak Maratha Samaj	1973
18)	Nala Damayanti	Kalavaibhav	1975
19)	Pareekathetil Rajkumar	Vandana Theatres	1975
20)	Mrutyunjaya	Ameya	1975
21)	Mudrarakshasa	Mumbai Marathi Sahitya Sangha, Natyashakha	1975
22)	Show Must Go On	Uday Kala Kendra	1976
23)	Raktakarobi	Natyashilpi, Goregaon	1976
24)	To Rajhans Ek	Natyasampada	1976
25)	Sangeet Bhakta Pundalik	Harish Kulkarni	1977
26)	Hamlet	Baban Chavan Production	1977
27)	Maibaap	Sanmitra Kala Kendra, Thane	1983
28)	Sakhi, Priya Sakhi	Chaurang	1983
29)	Kar Ha Kari	Ninad	1985
30)	Chitrlekha (Hindi)	Bambai Hindi Vidyapeeth	1988
31)	He Ram	Art Circle	1988
32)	Dhik Tam	Kautuk	1988
33)	Kashi Mee Rahu Tashich	Suyog	1989
34)	Soniyacha Divas Aaji	Durvanchi Judi	1990
35)	Shivadarshan	—	1990
36)	Dhamal Bal Ekankika	—	1990
37)	Tu Phakta Ram Mhan	—	1990
38)	Chanakya Vishnugupta	Roopvedh	1990
39)	Mahayog	Kalavaibhav	1991
40)	Punyatirtha	Yuvak Biradari	1992
41)	Tughlaq	Ank	1992

Winner of the first prize for the best cultural float for the State of Maharashtra at the Republic Day Parade, 1993.