

Artist Keshav Baburao Lele

Shri Keshav Baburao Lele (KB Lele) was the father of Prof. W. K. Lele. Shri KB Lele was born on 13-March-1901 in Mutat, Devgad Tehsil in Sidhudurg district in Konkan Maharashtra. His father family was engaged in agriculture. He attended middle school in Mutat, but could not continue further education because his father expired at an early age and Shri KB Lele was compelled to earn a living due to financial pressures on the family. He arrived in Mumbai (Bombay) in search of a job during his early teens. After doing some menial jobs initially, he joined the famous sculptor Shri R. K. Phadke as an assistant. Shri Lele himself was a skilled sculptor and he used to create Ganesh idols every year during the Ganesh festival.

Shri Lele quickly mastered the art of sculpture under the guidance of Shri Phadke. In those days (1920s-30s) Shri Phadke used to hold exhibitions of his sculptures in various parts of India. Soon Shri Lele started assisting him in arranging these exhibitions and later started doing this work independently because Shri Phadke was getting old.

After the demise of Shri Phadke, Shri KB Lele established his own art studio and started arranging his own exhibitions of clay and plaster of Paris sculptures. He earned tremendous response from the public and he soon became famous in the field of art and sculpture. He also took his exhibitions abroad – USA and UK and earned considerable fame there. At that time India was under British rule, and it was quite commendable for an Indian citizen like Shri KB Lele to establish himself as an artist of global fame at a young age of 35 years. He earned several awards during his life time for his art.

Unfortunately Shri Lele developed tuberculosis and succumbed to this life threatening disease on 5th January 1945. In the short span of his life of 44 years, he made a great contribution to the field of art that may inspire many budding artists.