

National Anime Day: Celebrating Japan's Global Pop Culture Phenomenon

Observed on April 15, National Anime Day celebrates the global influence of Japanese animation and its passionate fan community. Anime has grown from a niche entertainment form into a worldwide cultural phenomenon, known for its distinctive storytelling, artistic style and diverse genres. From action-packed series like *Naruto* and *Attack on Titan* to emotionally rich films by Studio Ghibli, anime continues to captivate audiences of all ages. The day encourages fans to revisit favourite shows, explore new titles and appreciate the creativity behind this unique art form that blends imagination, culture and storytelling in powerful ways.

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## 'Raat Ki Rani' Is Lost But Her Fragrance Will Live On



Dr. Shoma A. Chatterji  
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History defines Asha Bhonsle as the globally recognized voice who recorded the largest number of songs in the world's musical history. But it is a golden voice silenced forever through that inevitable friend of everyone, called Death, on April 12, 2026. 12000 songs, 20 languages, eight decades. And as her sonorous voice reached out through the music waves, you felt she was singing only for you. That was Asha Bhonsle, who lived one of the most fulfilling lives ever and spread the charisma of her love for the culinary arts through her ten restaurants spread across the world, serving the best in North Indian cuisine. These, and her music, are now being managed and controlled by her sole surviv-



Asha with daughter Varsha.



ing child Anand Bhonsle, who lives and works abroad. Asha's other two children having predeceased her some years ago.

Her voice had a hypnotic quality to it, and though that was perhaps God-gifted, she did not bask in the glory of that God's gift and worked on her riyaz, her training, her learning till the last leg of her life. She made her debut as a singer on stage at the tender age of ten and had no clue about how to modulate her voice to the mike as she did not even know the function of the microphone in relation to her voice. "I was very diffident about my singing at that time because Didi (Lata Mangeshkar) was already a recognized singer by then, and I had no clue whether I could sing at all or not. But that day, I earned my confidence for the first time and since the performance went on well, I told myself that I could of course sing and could go on singing," said Ashaji in an interview with Arnab Goswami.

She sang for every music director one can imagine, spanning three generations of music composers and adjusted to the individual demands of each of them. She sang in 20 different languages but

was particular of getting the enunciation of every single word right if it was not her mother tongue Marathi till the composer and the lyricist were satisfied. This writer once saw her interview on Kolkata Doordarshan and she gave the entire interview in Bengali which must have been tough for her. She said that before she came to Kolkata to record Tagore songs in Bangla, her husband R.D. Burman warned her that there was no toying with Tagore and she just had to master her correct pronunciation of the Bengali poetry of Tagore before going in for the recording. She did just that but it was not an exception for her, it was a golden rule she followed right through her life.

If Lata Mangeshkar was known as the 'Nightingale of India', Ashaji was the 'Raat Ki Rani' (sticks of tall white flowers that emanated a beautiful smell only at night). She lit her songs like a live torch, turning music into a flame of raging fire. What can you say about a rendering like "hona hai jo ho jaane do" or "aiye meherban" (Howrah Bridge) or "piya tu ab to aaja," or "Parle Me Rehne Do..." "Sapna Mera Toot Gaya..." "Ye Ladka, Hai Allah, Kaisa Hai Deewana..." "Jaane Jaan, Dhoondhta Fir Raha..." and countless numbers we can and will never forget.

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### #ASHA BHONSLE (1933-2026)



Anand, her youngest son, who is settled in the US with his wife, stood like a solid iron wall behind his mother, managing her musical career, her travels and tours, her media coverages and last but not the least, the ten restaurants Ashaji began right across the globe under the name Asha's specializing in North Indian cuisine.

Phool Do Maali - 1969), "Reshmi Ujala Hai..." (Sharmilee, 1971). There are many more songs that bring back the talent who simply slipped away from us suddenly on April but will forever remain alive with her lilting voice echoing across the the skies electrically charged with songs of Asha like "Piya Tu Ab To Aaja..." "O Mere Sonu Re Sonu Re..." captured the rebellious spirit of the 1970s generation with "Dum Maro Dum (1971)," "Ek Main Aur Ek Tu (1975)," musical depth in ghazals of "Umrao Jaan" (1981) that earned her a National Award with "In Ankhon Ki Masti Me..." and a bhajan "Tora Man Darpan Kehlaye..."

(Kaajal - 1965) or the vivacious "Tanha, Tanha, Yahan Pe Jeena..." (Rangeela, 1995) and "Sun Sun Didi Tere Liye..." (Khoobsurat, 1980).

She was so full of fun and vigour, that no lay person could guess the personal tragedies that riddled her personal life which she preferred always to keep within her best-kept secrets. She eloped with an aide, Ganpatrao Bhonsle in 1949, at the age of 16 and married him, but her mother, Lataji and the entire family cut her off, though she continued with her tapasya in music. The marriage did not work and Asha came back to her mother and sisters and

brother with two little kids in tow and pregnant with a third one. Some say that Ganpatrao committed suicide soon after she left him, but others say that she could not live on in an abusive marriage. Hemant, the eldest, died of cancer in 2015. Hemant was a music director of considerable talent, having composed songs like "Jage jage nainon mein" for "Damaad," Marathi bhavgeet "Shaardar sundar" and "Ye kashi priya," all of which his mother sang. "Shraddhanjali" and "Nazrana Pyar Ka" became popular too. Her only daughter, Varsha Bhonsle, was a journalist of some renown but she suffered from deep depression and reportedly shot herself to death in 2012.

Anand, her youngest son, who is settled in the US with his wife, stood like a solid iron wall behind his mother, managing her musical career, her travels and tours, her media coverages and last but not the least, the ten restaurants Ashaji began right across the globe under the name Asha's specializing in North Indian cuisine. She is said to have been a very good cook of mainly Maharashtrian recipes and is reported to have once said that had she not become a singer, she would have become a Chef.

Under the batons of O.P. Nayyar, Burman father-son duo, Sachin Dev and Rahul Dev who she married later and many other great composers, Asha blossomed and grew, singing silky melodies to powerful crescendos, pop, disco, rock, classical and adapting easily to diverse genres. Her repertoire spanned soft songs, romantic melodies, peppy cabarets to exhilarating qawwalis, soulful ghazals, divine bhajans and classical compositions. She crooned under the batons of masters like Ghulam Mohammed to young geniuses like A. R. Rahman and many more.

Madan Mohan, known for his talent in directing music dominated by classical Hindustani musical ragas, was fascinated by her voice. Madan Mohan recorded a number

of songs with Asha Bhonsle, including the popular folk number "Jhumka gira re" from "Mera Saaya" (1966) and "Shokh nazar ki bijliyaan" from "Woh Kaun Thi?" (1964). When she went to Madan Mohan for recording "Jhumka gira re barely ke bazaar mein" for "Mera Saaya," she reportedly said, "Madan Bhaiyya, this song is nice but who is singing the other songs and why can't I sing them?" Madan Mohan bluntly remarked, "Jab tak Lata hai Lata hee gawegi." Madan Mohan's affection for Lata Mangeshkar and her voice is well known. The very fact that Asha managed to carve a niche for herself in the film industry is a tribute to her genius and perseverance.

Her long relationship with music director O.P. Nayyar lifted both of them to new musical heights unparalleled in the history of Hindi cinema. They together, formed one of Bollywood's most legendary composer-singer partnerships, revolutionizing Hindi film music in the 1950s and 60s with bold, rhythmic, and western-influenced tunes. Nayyar gave Asha her first major break, helping her overcome the "Lata phobia" (overshadowing by Lata

Mangeshkar) by utilizing her strong low register in hits like "Leke Peela Peela Pyaar." Their collaboration produced iconic hits like "Kajra Mohabbat Wala" and "Uden Jab Jab Zulfen Teri" before splitting in 1974. The grapevine insists that Ashaji and O.P. Nayyar were emotionally involved but neither of them confirmed the story. Asha Bhonsle and R.D. Burman married in 1980, combining a profound musical partnership with a personal relationship, though they lived separately in later years. Despite a six-year age gap, Bhonsle being older, and initial hesitation from her, the couple shared a deep bond until Burman's death in 1994, collaborating on iconic songs. Reports suggest they separated in the late 1980s due to Burman's deteriorating health and struggles with alcoholism, yet remained friends, and Bhonsle was by his side when he died of a heart attack on January 4, 1994. She last lent her voice to Gorilaz's Album *The Mountain* where she sang the track, *The Shadowy Light*, which was released on February 27, 2026.



Asha Bhonsle and RD Burman.

### #MEMORIES

## Asha Ji's Connect To Jaipur

Jaipur saw a rare occasion, when Ashaji came down for a wedding



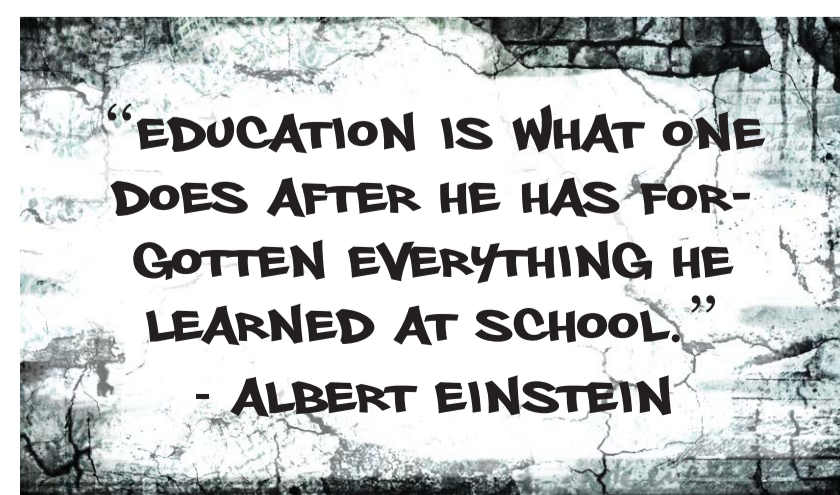
Jaipur saw a rare occasion, when Ashaji came down for a wedding. The family was Marwadis settled in Bombay as it was then called. Gokul Prasadji, of Bombay Hospital's grand daughter was to be married to the naati of Shri Hazarilal Sharma's daughter Indu Sharma, the owner of the Rashtradoot. As tradition held it, marriages and other important family occasions in marwadi families are held on home ground as far as possible.



Here are some rare pictures to remind us of her.



### THE WALL



### BABY BLUES



By Rick Kirkman & Jerry Scott

### ZITS



By Jerry Scott & Jim Borgman