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Mohammed Rafi, the singer whose voice made hearts throb. He lent soul to the handsome talented actors, called heart throbs, and was born on 24 December, 1924. We celebrate his birth centenary this year. Writing anything in praise of Rafi's singing is like a firefly showing off its dazzle in front of a blazing sun. His career spanned decades (1940s to 1970s), he sang the playback for actors, from Dilip Kumar to Rishi Kapoor. He sang for three generations of the Kapoor family, Prithviraj, Raj, Shammi, Shashi and Rishi Kapoor. We celebrate his centenary by highlighting his qualities as a singer, be it classical, folk or fast beat songs.

He was trained in *Hindustani* classical music. Many songs prove his mettle in singing songs based on classical Ragas. An example is a song, *Kuhu Kuhu bole koyaliya*, (*Suvarna Sundari*, 1957) in the classical mood, sung by Rafi and Lata with the music direction by Adi Narayana Rao. The superb classical duet is based on four Ragas (Sohini, Bahar, Jhanpuri and Yaman). Rafi and Lata are in step with each other, singing the Ragas and blending their voices seamlessly. Their flawless rendering of the song earned Rafi and Lata the National Award. The other song which comes to the mind is *Madhuban mein Radhika nach re* (*Kohinoor*, 1958). More about this later.

SNIPPET: After Mahatma Gandhi's assassination, Rajendra Krishan, the lyricist, wrote a song, *Suno suno ae duniya walon Babu ki ye amar kahani*. It was sung by Rafi and became very popular. Pandit Nehru liked it so much that he invited Rafi to sing the song for Independence Day celebrations in 1948. Rafi was honoured with a silver medal by Nehru. Rafi had a knack for modulating his voice for the actor, who would sing on the screen, as also the mood and occasion, the song is to be picturised for.



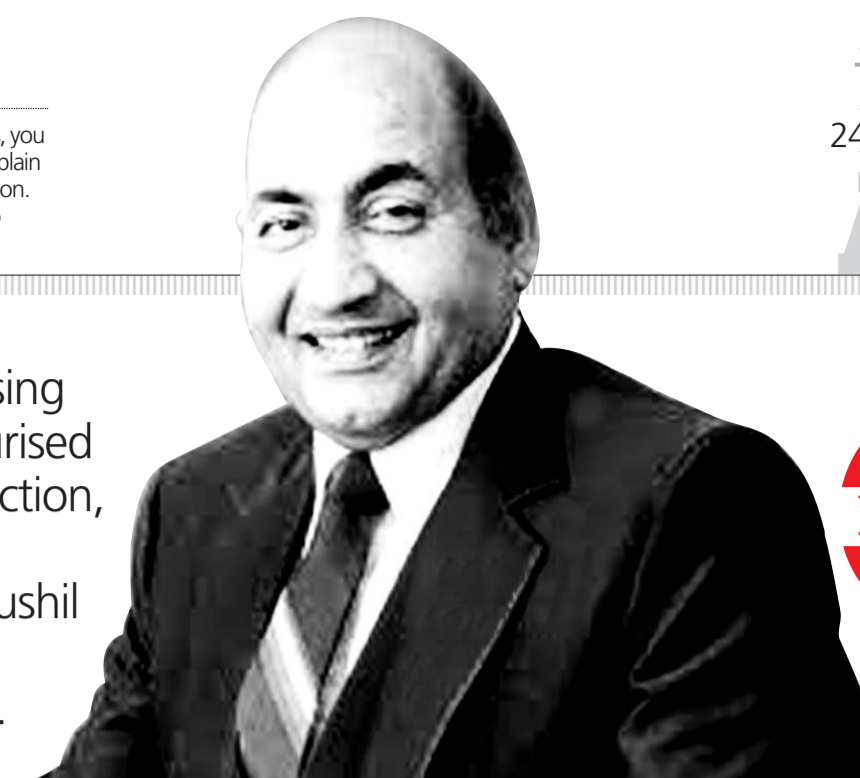
Lending Souls to Handsome Faces

#MOHAMMED RAFI

He sang sad, forlorn, depressed, in degrees, with such fine distinction, that it is a study in voice modulation. *Dosti* (1966) was a movie by newbies, Laxmikant Pyarelal as music directors, Sudhir Sawant and Sushil Kumar played blind and lame friends in the movie. Rafi asked L-P to arrange a meeting with the young actors to get a feel of their voices. This resulted in a superhit film, riding on Rafi's excellent songs. *Chahunga main tuhe saanjh savere* (He won a Filmfare award for this song), and *Jaane walon jara, mud ke dekho mujhe*, sung with lot of emoting by the blind, Sudhir Sawant, has a poignancy and longing in Rafi's voice. The lyrics go, *main tumhare tarah, ek insan hun*.

His modulation of voice for Johnny Walker (*Sar jo tera chakraya*) and Mehmood (*Hum kale hain to kya hua dilwale hain*) speaks volumes of his talent as a carefree, but melodious conversation. His range was exceptional, be it soft romantic songs, *Meri Duniya mein tum aagye* from the film *Heer Ranjha* or *O Duniya ke rakhwale* from the film *Baiju Bawara*, where at the climax of the song, he struck the highest notes humanly possible. He sang for all music directors, be it A, B, or C grade films, the tune had to appeal to him. This tribute to Rafi will celebrate the songs he sang for actors from 1950s to 1970s. Five songs of each actor have been selected. It is a personal choice, there can be other songs according to one's preferences.

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Dev Anand
Rafi sang 97 songs for Dev, all superb, one is spoilt for a choice, many under the baton of S. D. Burman.

Main zindagi ka saath nibhata chala gaya, Hum Dono, 1961. A simple song of life lessons with exceptional lyrics by Sahir; it was composed by Jaidev. Rafi sang in a soft, carefree voice. Dev said that this song was the philosophy of his life.

Nain lad jayein to maanwa ma kasak hoibe kari, Ganga Jamuna, 1961. This boisterous naughty *Bhopuri* folk song is as fresh today as it was 60 years back. It has a rustic charm, wonderful variation, set to foot tapping drums. Dilip Kumar has danced with a gusto of a villager, uninhibited and spirited. Rafi had a mastery in invoking a flirtatious turn to his voice, *Ankh mil jaye hein sajanिया se to nachan lagi hein*.

Koi sagar dil ko behlata nahin, Dil diya dard liya, 1966. Dilip Kumar portrays the tragedy king to the hilt. Rafi's voice is mellow and sad, and reflective, lending soul to his actor; *Main koi pattar nahin insaan hun/ Kaise keh dun gam se ghabrata nahin*.

Aaj purane rahon se koi mujhe awaz na de, Aadmi, 1968. A lame Dilip Kumar on crutches sings this song. Hear how Rafi has sung the song in a high pitch. He sings with lot of 'gam', *dard mein doobe geet na de, gam ka sisakta saaz na de*.

Kaun hai jo sapno mein aaya, Jhuk gaya aasmaan, 1968. Hear how Rafi belts out, *O Priya aaaa*. The orchestration is ominous, foretelling a grim event at the end of the song.

Yaad na jaye beete dino ki, Dil Ek Mandir, 1963. Rafi sings in the poignant voice of a lover, remembering his Ex, who is married off while he was away abroad for studies. Touching lyrics of a broken heart: *Din jo pakharu hote/ Pinjare mein main rakh leta/ palta unko jatan se/moti ke dane deta*.

Din dhal jaye hai, raat na jaye, Guide, 1965. This is a somber song of failed love, sung in a heartbroken voice by Rafi. This was so emotionally sung that Dev said Rafi made it easy for him to emot on the screen. Hear how Rafi gives a turn to *yaad and sataye*.

Hum bekhudi mein tumko pukare chale gaye, Kala Pani, 1958. Rafi begins the song with beautiful humming and *alaga*. Filmed on Dev and Nalini Jaywant.

Mere pairon mein ghungru bandha de to phir meri chaal dekh le, Sangharsh, 1970. Rafi's impish charm comes through this song of a youth yearning for a bride.

Mujhe duniya walon, Sharabi na samjho, Leader, 1964. Rafi sings the song as if he is drunk. The opening of the song, *la la la la*, is sung masterfully at a high pitch.

Mera prem patra padhkar, Sangam, 1964. The only song of Rafi in the film. Here, the lover has a burning desire to declare his love to his beloved.

Hunswale tera jawab nahin, Gharana, 1961. A unique picturisation of the song filmed on Rajendra Kumar and Asha Parekh.

Khoya khoya chand, Kala bazaar, 1960. A song full of exuberance for life, reflected in Rafi's rendering of the song, lyrics by Shailendra.

Sawan ke mahine mein, Sharabi, 1964. The story of an alcoholic, one sad, one peppy and one where Dev pours a drink and introspects, *Sochta hun main, piyun na piyun*. Rafi brings out the slurred speech of a drunk. He was a teetotaler.

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Yeh ansu mere dil ki zubaan hai, Humrahi, 1963. Rafi sings this melodramatic song with soft tones and a high pitch. *Ankh se tapki jo chingari/har aansu mein chabi tumhari*.

Hunswale tera jawab nahin, Gharana, 1961. A unique picturisation of the song filmed on Rajendra Kumar and Asha Parekh.

Man tadpat Hari darshan ko aaj, Baiju Bawra, 1952. Arguably one of the best *bhajans* of Hindi cinema. Rafi initially refused to sing this song because of its tough composition. But Naushad insisted on him and made him go through lot of rehearsals, the rest is history. Hear the opening, *Hari Om*, sung so flawlessly. It is based on *Raag Malkauns*.

Jinhein naaz hai Hind par woh kahan hain, Pyaasa, 1957. Sahir's searing lyrics, sung in low notes by Rafi to minimal music, is a master composition by S. D. Burman. The lyrics are the king here and Rafi has done full justice to them.

Baar baar dekho, hazaar baar dekho, China Town, 1962. A song so popular that it is still played in musical events. It is a dance number, full of Shammii's antics and wild steps.

Yeh chaand sa roshan chehra, Kashmir ki kali, 1964. Rafi does wonders here, the way he stretches *taareef* to suit Shammii's style. An O. P. Nayyar composition.

Man re tu kahe na dhir dhare, Chitrarekha, 1964. Sahir's spiritual lyrics put to a simple tune by Roshan was voted the best song of Hindi Cinema by a poll conducted by the magazine *Outlook* in 2010.

Sau baar Janam lenge, Ustadon ke ustad, 1963. A gem of a song, hauntingly sung by Rafi and composed by Ravi.

Zindagi bhar nahin bhulegi woh barsat ki raat, Barsaat ki raat, 1960. Romantic lyrics by Sahir, the song was sung in soft tones by Rafi. One of the best Rafi songs under the baton of Roshan.

Do ghadi who jo paas aa baithe, Gateway of India, 1957. This duet of Rafi and Lata is in form of a conversation, filmed in the confines of a room.

Yeh duniya agar mil bhi jaye to kya hai, Pyaasa, 1957. Guru Dutt plays a poor poet, his *Nazms* are printed by a con publisher without his consent. The publisher declares the poet dead to boost the sales of the book. Guru Dutt appears at the launch of the book to sing this iconic song, *Jala do, Jala do ise phoonk dalo yeh duniya*. Rafi takes his voice to a very high pitch.

Chahe koi mujhe jungle kahe, Jungle, 1961. This single song contributed to the image and persona of Shammii Kapoor: The way Rafi yells *Yahooo and Suku* (Suku in another song) made Shammii the Elvis Presley of India.

Yeh chaand sa roshan chehra, Kashmir ki kali, 1964. Rafi does wonders here, the way he stretches *taareef* to suit Shammii's style. An O. P. Nayyar composition.

Jo wada kiya who nibhana padega, Taj Mahal, 1963. Rafi sings for the character of Shah Jahan as he remembers his deceased wife, Mumtaz. He won a Filmfare award for this song.

Diwana keh ke aaj mujhe phir pukariye, Mulzim, 1963. A soulful romantic number that Pradeep Kumar sings for Shakila.

O duniya ke rakhwale, Baiju Bawra, 1952. Undoubtedly, one of the most difficult songs that Rafi has sung. The end of the song, where Rafi takes his voice to the highest pitch humanly possible. *Rakhwale! Rakhwale!* gives one goosebumps.

Tu mere saamne hai, Suhagan, 1968. A soft, seductive song by Rafi for a husband who wants to sleep with his wife. The catch is that due to his heart condition, the doctor has forbidden sex. Very carefully worded lyrics show the state of the husband's mind.

Chaudwein ka chaand ho, Chaudwein ka chaand, 1964. Rafi displays the loving intimacy of a husband who has returned home late to find his wife asleep. He won a Filmfare award for this song.

Is rang badalti duniya mein, Raj Kumar, 1964. A pensive Rafi singing for a lovelorn Shammii Kapoor on the screen.

Dil ke jharoke pe tujhko bitha kar, Brahmachari, 1968. The first stanza was sung in one breath by Rafi on Shammii's suggestion. He received a Filmfare award for this song.

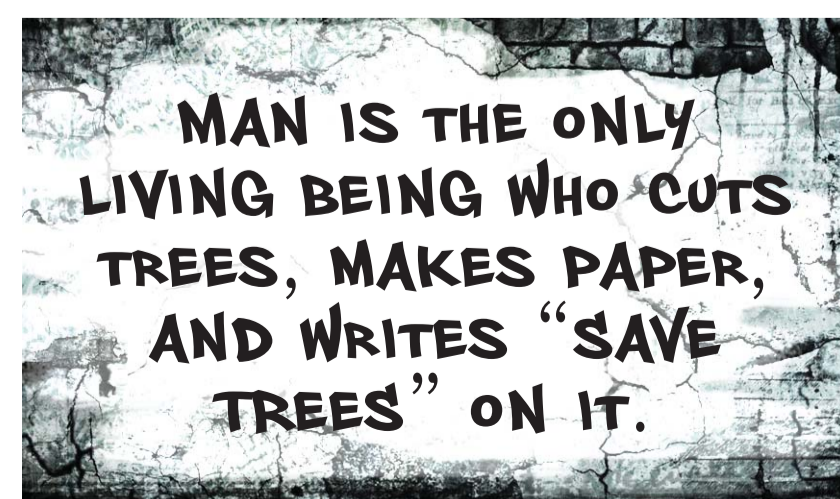
Dil jo na keh saka, Bheegi Raat, 1965. A superhit of that time. Pradeep Kumar has had one too many and wants to declare his love for Meena Kumari. Hear the effortless high notes by Rafi.

Diwana keh ke aaj mujhe phir pukariye, Mulzim, 1963. A soulful romantic number that Pradeep Kumar sings for Shakila.



Rafi and Geeta.

THE WALL



BABY BLUES



ZITS



By Rick Kirkman & Jerry Scott

By Jerry Scott & Jim Borgman

To be Continued...

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