

A VOICE THAT WENT OUT OF OUR LIVES



Voice that moved millions. Rafi with Madan Mohan



Remarkable adaptability. Mohammed Rafi

BY Siraj Syed

FIVE years. Five years without Rafi. Five years the music industry has spent trying to un-earth another Mohammed Rafi. Five years gone by with every single day reminding us that Rafi was the greatest.

Five years ago, on July 31 1980, Rafi died. But legends don't die. Five years later, Rafi's rich musical heritage is very much alive. Radios, records, tapes, cassettes, television and nostalgic memories – Rafi Sahab, will never die!

Trying out various singers in the 1944 playback era, Naushad said *Pahele Aap* (you first) to Mohammed Rafi. The song was a chorus, and Rafi's voice took the lead, singing *Hindustan ke hum hain, Hindustan hamaaraa*. *Pahele Aap* was a small budget A.R. Kardar film which did not establish Rafi as a singer, though with Shyam, Rafi sang two other duets in the same film. *Tum Dilli menand Ek baar unhe mila de*. In 1944, Rafi was barely 19, and *Pahele Aap* was to mark the beginning of the Naushad-Rafi association, an association which lasted 36 years. Rafi's last song recording for Naushad was *Duniya chhoote yaar na chhoote*, a duet with Bhupinder for the film *Dharam Kanta*.

Naushad picked him

Soon after Naushad spotted him, many other composers sent for Rafi. Among them were H.P. Das: *Begum*, Gobindram: *Hamara Sansar Laila Majnu*, Allarakha Khan: *Kul Kalank* and Feroze Nizami: *Sharbat-e-Ankhen*, *Amar Raj*. Feroze Nizami gave him no less than three solos in the former and two in the latter. 1945 was a memorable year, both for Rafi himself and for his growing number of fans. Under the baton of Naushad, he followed Saigal's lead in the Shahjehan chorus, *Mere sapnon kee rane, Roohe, Roohe, Roohe*. That is probably the only song in which the two immortals came together. When actress-singer Lata Mangeshkar turned playback singer in 1947, we heard Rafi singing three other songs in the same film. *Aap ki Sewa Main*. The composer was Datta Dawjekar. Rafi and Lata were yet to sing their first duet together. The Rafi Noor Jehan duet from *Jugnu*, *Yahaan hadlaa vafaa kaa* was among the earliest hit duets of Rafi. Interestingly, the Rafi-led hilarious chorus song in *Jugnu* *Voh apnee yaad dilaane ko* was picturised on a group of actors playing college hostelites. They included Dilip Kumar and Mohammed Rafi! I wonder who convinced him to make this brief (and only) screen appearance – director Shaukat

Husain Rizvi, Feroze Nizami or Dilip Kumar – for Rafi nursed no star aspirations. The 1946 *Anmol Ghadi* had just one Rafi solo which was lost among Noor Jehan and Surendra's self sung hits like *Aawaaz de kahaan hai*. Rafi had to wait till 1948/49 to gain true recognition. And who would get him his due, but Naushad?

An ode and a ballad

Naushad's title song from *Mela* proved Rafi's mettle. Then Rafi sang *Mohabbat ke dhoke men koyi na aaye* in *Badi Bahen*. Thousands of heart-broken lovers felt he was voicing their sentiments. Hunsal Bhagatram joined Naushad in putting their money on Rafi.

After *Badi Bahen*, they got him to record an unparalleled eight-part ode to Mahatma Gandhi soon after his death. *Bapu ki amar kahani* still remains one of the best tributes to the Father of the Nation. Ironically, when Naushad got Mukesh to sing for the "other man" Dilip Kumar, in *Andaz*, Rafi sang for the hero, Raj Kapoor. Shankar-Jaikishan felt privileged to have "Rafi Sahab" making a one-song appearance in Raj Kapoor's *Barsaat*, their first film. The song, *Main zindagi men hardam* is essentially a defeatist's ballad. Only a Rafi could make it sound as convincing as it does.

Then came the three 1949 Naushad films that ensured a glorious career for Rafi: Possibly in the order of musical popularity as well as alphabetical order, they would be *Chandni Raat*, *Dillagi* & *Dulari*. Picking one Rafi solo from each, we have *Dil ho unhe mubarak*, *Is duniya men aye dilvala* and the lately rediscovered masterpiece *Suhami raat dhal chuke*.

Rafi for Raj Kapoor

These days one hears a lot of talk about Anil Biswas and C. Ramchandra's reluctance to have Rafi sing for them. The fact is the Rafi did sing for both. Anil Biswas was gradually withdrawing from films as Rafi was rising and C. Ramchandra had ego problems even with K.L. Saigal! Rafi has sung for Anilda and whereas C. Ramchandra never worked with Saigal, dozens of his songs were sung by Rafi. We can trace the team right back to *Patanga* (1949), where Rafi gave playback to Shyam in the popular duet *Bolojee dil loge to kya kya doge*. This was the only song the hero sang in the film.

Talat Mahmood, Shamshad Begum and Rafi together sang *Nadi kinaare* for Babul (1950) with Naushad as composer. And in *Begum* released that same year, Anil Biswas composed a qawwali for Rafi and G.M. Durrani, *Khabar kisi ko nahen*. While Suraiya sang for

herself in *Dastan*, Rafi gave playback for Raj Kapoor in both the duets, *Tarari tarari* and *Dhadak dhadak dil*. Another C. Ramchandra film that year had the rare trio of Lata, Chitalkar (C. Ramchandra himself) and Rafi singing two hit numbers: *Baaphadaa naa bhaiya, sabse badaa rupaiya* (in two parts) and *Main hoon Allauddin*. In producer-director Bhagwan's *Albela* there was a Rafi-Lata duet *Deevaanaa aayega*. While Shankar-Jaikishan had become staunch Rafi supporters by 1951, S.D. Burman, Jaidev, Roshan, Madan Mohan and D.P. Nayyar were yet to weave their magic with his magical voice. In the multi-starrer *Deedar*, Rafi sang such evergreen hits for Naushad as *Huye jam jinke liye barbaad* and *Meri kahaani bhoolnevale*. Veteran G.M. Durrani gave playback for Ashok Kumar, while Dilip Kumar sang through Rafi.

stars, all the comedians, the character actors and even other actor-singers: Bharat Bhooshan (*Baiju Bawra*) Shammi Kapoor (*Laila Majnu*, the 1952 version) Manmohan Krishan (*Railway Platform*), Johnny Walker, (*Chhoo Mantar*) Gemini Ganesh (*Miss Mary*), Sunil Dutt (*Mother India*), Dev Anand (*Nau Do Gyarah*), Guru Dutt (*Pyasa*), Shekhar (. *Iakhri Dao*), Kishore Kumar (*Ragini Shararat*), Rehman (*Phir Subah Hogi*), Mahmood (*Chhoti Bahen*), Dharmendra (*Shola Aur Shabnam*), Joy Mukerji (*Love In Simla*), Pradeep Kumar (*Tu Nahin Aur Sahi*). From 1951 to 1960 Rafi had sung for all of them and more.

Beginning in 1952, Binaca Geetmala remains the only available yard-stick for measuring the popularity of film songs. In the twenty-five years from 1953 to 1977, Rafi reached the top berth no less than eight times with

Laxmikant-Pyarelal, Sonik-Omi, Ravindra Jain, Rajesh Roshan, all had Rafi songs to boast.

The sixties 'and seventies' stars borrowed heavily on the remarkable adaptability of Rafi's voice. It could be identified with Manoj Kumar (*Banarsi Thug*), Shashi Kapoor (*Yeh Dil Kisko Doon*) Sudhir Kumar (*Dosti*), Ashok Kumar (*Meri Soorat Teri Ankhen*), Ajit (*Shikari*), Feroz Khan (*Main Shadi Karne Chala*), Biswajit (*Mere Sanam*), Rajesh Khanna (*Raaz*), Uttam Kumar (*Chhotisi Mulaqat*), Sanjay (*Dil Ne Pukara*), Jeetendra (*Farz*), Parikshit Sahni (*Anokhi Raat*), Sanjeev Kumar (*Nishan*), Vinod Mehra (*Elaan*), Vinod Khanna (*Nateja*), Navin Nischol (*Sawan Bhadon*), Amitabh Bachchan (*Pyaar Ki Kahaani*), Randhir Kapoor (*Bhai Ho To Aisa*), Shatrughan Sinha (*Milap*), Vijay Arora (*Yaadon Ki Baaraat*) and Rishi Kapoor (*Amar Akbar Anthony*).

During 1968-1975, one heard very few new songs in Rafi Sahab's silky soothing, emotive, unique, incomparable, out-of-this world voice. The reasons were many, but nothing could justify the absence of Rafi With the hopes of crores of his fans pinned on him, Rafi made the most spectacular come-back in playback singing history.

For the next six years, it was Rafi at his peak again, the veritable King of playback singers, with songs like *Kya hua tera vaadaa*, *Parda hai parda*, *O meri mehbooba*, *Tere dar pe aayaa hoon*, *Aadmi musafir hai*, *Yeh khidki*, *Main ne poocha chaand se*, *Mere dost qissa*, *Darad-e-dil*, *Logon ka dil*, *Aate jate huye*, *Too is tarah se*, *John Jani janardhan* and *Yeh goteydaar lahega*.

While one super-hit song in *Sargam* had Lata and Rafi going *Dafli vaale*, *dafli hajaa* Rafi Sahab was already on his way to his heavenly abode, as symbolised by the *Sargam* solo *Hum to chale parda hum parda ho gaye*. I am sure heaven is proud of Mohammed Rafi's soul. But 55 was no age for him to die.

The best of Rafi

CHOOSING the best of Rafi is a welcome job but an unenviable task. He sang between 20,000 and 30,000 songs in his life and a large number of them were all-time greats.

I just have to list some of them and I can manage only a few. Remember, this is a newspaper, not a book. So forgive me if your favourite song (s) are found missing.

- *Hai duniya usiki*: O.P. Nayyar – *Kashmir Ki Kali*
- *Man re too kahe na*: Roshan – *Chitralekha*
- *Tum jo mil gaye ho*: Madan Mohan – *Hanste Zakhm*
- *Din dhal jaaye*: S.D. Burman – *Guide*
- *Sao baar janam lenge*: Ravi – *Ustadon Ke Ustad*
- *Jaane kya dhoondhte*: Khaiyyaam – *Shola Aur Shabnam*
- *Dilke jharokhe men*: Shankar-Jaikishan *Brahmachari*
- *Yeh raat hai pyaasi pyaasi*: Kalyanji Anandji *Chhoti Bahu*
- *Vaadiyaan mera daaman*: R.D. Burman *Abhilasha*
- *Chhalkaen jaam*: Laxmikant Pyarelal – *Mere Humdum Mere Dost*
- *Madhuban men Radhika*: Naushad – *Kohinoor*
- *Koi saagar dil ko*: Naushad – *Dil Diya Dard Liya*



Earlier, in *Shaheed*, Gulam Haider's patriotic title track had Rafi holding his own against another top singer, Khan Mastana. The song was *Latan kee raah men*. Years later, after G.M. Durrani had quit singing, he played a music teacher in the Shankar-Jaikishan film *Lal Patthar*. While Durrani gave lip movement to *Unke khayaal aaye to*, Rafi provided playback! A duet with Lata, one song with Lata, Chitalkar and chorus and another with Shamshad, Chitalkar and chorus were featured in C. Ramchandra's 1951 musical hit, *Sagai*. The next twenty years marked the phenomenal rise of Rafi as the King of playback singers. He sang for all the

Too Ganga kee maui (*Baiju Bawra* 1953), *Iye dil hai mushkil* (*Rafi*, *Geeta* – CID 1956), *Zaraa saamne to aao* (*Rafi*, *Lata* – *Janam Janam Ke Fere* – 1957), the hat-trick in 1960, 61 and 62 *Zindagi bhar naheen bhoolenge* (*Barsaat Ki Raat*), *Teri pyari pyari* (*Sasural*) and (*Ehsaan tera hogaa* (*Jungle*)) the all-time great in 1963: *Jo vaadaa kiya* (*Rafi*, *Lata* – *Taj Mahal*) and the smash hit of 1966: *Baharo phool barsaao* (*Sagai*)

A whole new generation of music directors and actors composed and sang their way into millions of hearts via Rafi. The debut films of Usha

Khanna, Kalyanji-Anandji: R.D. Burman, Sapan-Jagmohan

