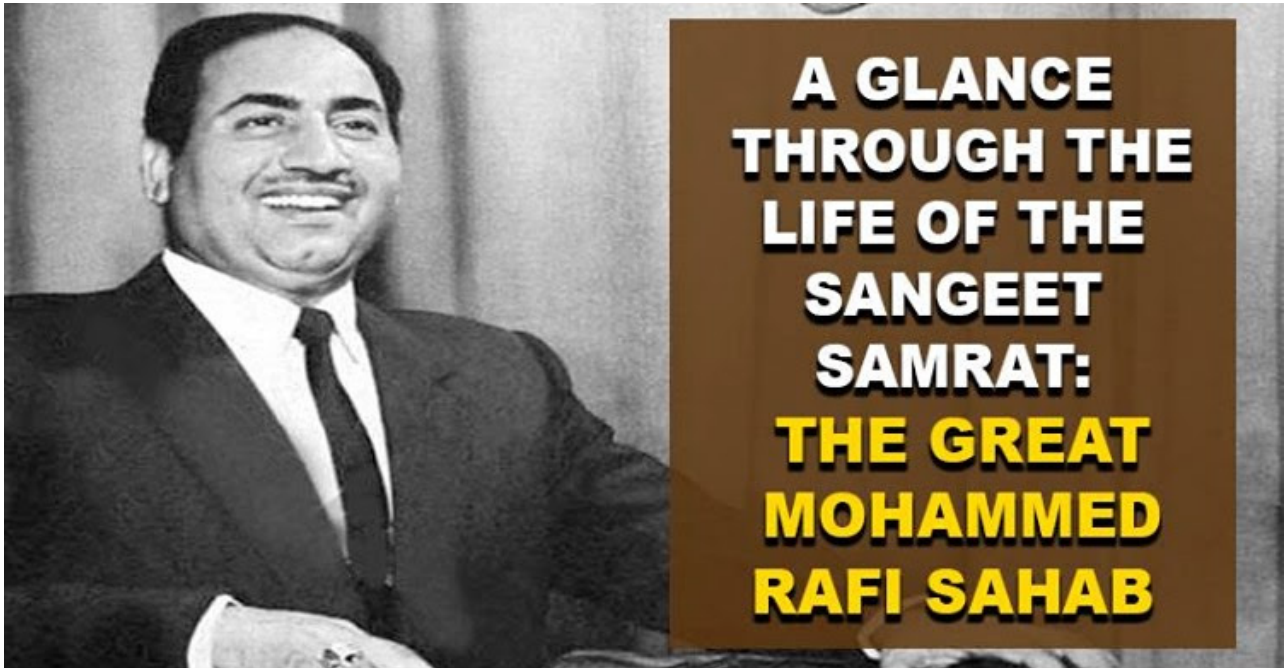


THE INCOMPARABLE MOHAMED RAFI



By Abdulrazak Fazal Updated: July 2020



➔ [Wikipedia on Mohammed Rafi](#)

There was this picture frame shop in Bhindi Bazar in Bombay which had displayed a photograph of the singer Mohamed Rafi in suit and tie. Being a Rafi fan, I'd go there and stare fixedly at it. The shopkeeper sensing my admiration for him would say "Yeh bahot nek insaan hai, itna parhezgar, aur takabburka nishana nahin."

Incidentally, Rafi passed away on the 27th of Ramadhan, a sacred day for Muslims, and felt by many as a tribute to Rafi's pious acts. Despite heavy rains thousands attended Rafi's funeral. The little I do know about Rafi suggests that he was a great human being. He funded quite a few charities. In fact, he always tried to promote the careers of budding music directors and aspiring singers. One can refer to Pyarelal (of the Laxmikant & Pyarelal duo) or Anandji (of the Kalyanj & Anandji duo). When they were new, and Shankar Jaikishan monopolized the scene it was Rafi who lent them a helping hand. Manna Dey in all his interviews lavished praise on Rafi, not only for his singing talent and throwing no tantrums but also his humility. Also, he readily agreed to a duet with the newcomers, be it Suman Kalyanpur or Sharda.

During my 1984 Bombay visit I happened to attend the Laxmikant Pyarelal Nite at Brabourne Stadium. They inaugurated their show by unveiling Rafi's huge portrait before a crowd of thousands and Laxmikant paying generous tribute to Rafi. He was never greedy. He did not exploit Music Directors and charged them very little for singing. In fact the rift between Lata Mangeshkar and Rafi was over royalty; while Lata insisted on it Rafi disapproved of it, otherwise he'd a humble background (hailing from a barber's family) and stayed in a normal house along Bandra Talkies after shifting from Bhindi Bazaar.

Brabourne Stadium at night also reminded of the 'Shankar & Jaikishan Nite' that I'd attended in the 1960s when the actress Sharmila Tagore joined Rafi to sing the 'Evening In Paris' number. Another highlight of the night was Sharmila Tagore, Mumtaz and a few other actresses walking onto the stage during Rafi's Suraj song 'baharo phool barsao' and throwing rose petals at Rafi as they passed by his side. Everyone in the stadium rose to their feet in applause. 'Baharo phool barsao' that year had been adjudged the best song winning the Filmfare award. [▶ 'Baharo phool barsao' song video](#)

My finest moment being Rafi's classic rendition during the 'Yaade Shakeel' concert under Maestro Naushad's orchestra at the Shanmukhanand Hall in Matunga in 1970 (referred to in the write up 'MUSIC MAESTRO NAUSHAD').

At a musical program in aid of Lala Lajpatrai at St.Xaviers School (beside St. Xaviers College on Dhobi Talao) in 1969 my pal Satish Patel (a Fijian) who was a great Rafi fan and myself went behind the stage during the interval to greet Rafi. He was humility personified while we were nobody and mere onlookers. Unfortunately, we could not work out a deal with the photographers around there and our desire of getting photographed with Rafi remained unfulfilled.

Rafi's voice suited every hero and he could modulate his voice according to the situation and actor in question. He held sway over the entire nation till the 70s. Rafi had a classic innings. It had begun as far back as 1944 and then the Jugnu duet 'yaha badla wafaka bewafaise' with Noorjehan gaining him immense popularity. Sadly, Rafi's reign faltered in the 70s as Kishore Kumar's 'idliiaa' and 'ding dong' captured the mood of the nation. India underwent a drastic change in its music taste that sadly keeps deteriorating.

Since my childhood days I'd found Rafi's velvety voice distinctively different from the other singers whose vocal range would crack at a certain point unlike Rafi. There evolved in me a strange fondness for Rafi. At the school some of my classmates who were keen on Indian music and great fans of singer Mukesh would argue about the Mukesh song while I always upheld the Rafi number. Anyhow, I must admit that today I'm also a Mukesh fan. Those old soulful Mukesh songs do touch the heart but then Rafi remains my all-time favourite. Rafi has hundreds of melodious songs to his

credit, but my favourite Rafi number is his nonfilm song 'is dilse teri yaad bhulai nahi jaati'. [▶ 'is dilse teri yaad bhulai nahi jaati' song video](#) So melodious! I keep on listening to it.

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