



## NARGIS

**F**ROM the clown of the class-room to the greatest tragedienne of the Indian screen seems a paradoxical metamorphosis and yet that's exactly what has happened to filmdom's most versatile heroine. The naughty, noisy Miss Fatimā Rashid who set scores of her school-mates giggling with laughter is, today, the uncrowned queen of tragedy themes. A sad dreamy look on her face is enough to bring tears to a million eyes in countless auditoriums. Her name, in case you haven't already guessed it, is Nargis.

One of silver screen's top-most fan favourites, Nargis made her screen debut at the age of 14 in Mehboob's *Taqdeer*. Unquestionably the darling of film-going legions, she is the least pretentious of the top-grade stars of Indian screen. Dressed immaculately in white, she looks the very picture of simplicity come to life.

Daughter of the celebrated songstress-cum-star and India's first woman film producer, the late Jaddanbai, Nargis has inherited the histrionic talent from her mother. Though she had the stellar blood in her veins, her greatest ambition was to take up medical career, become a doctor and heal the wounds of the suffering humanity. Born at Calcutta on June 1, 1929, Nargis has the distinction of playing the very first film-role of her career as a child in *Talash-E-Huq* which the late Jaddanbai produced under the banner of her own film concern, Sangit Movietone. Nargis's screen-name then was Baby Rani. It is also on record that at the age of four she appeared in Sagar's *Natchwali*.

Jaddanbai was a renowned and popular songstress of her day and her songs had thrilled music lovers over the Radio, through gramophone records and (after the talkies came) through her film songs. Her *thumris* and *dadras* were the rage of connoisseurs of classical music. In 1918 she was admitted for an operation in a hospital at Lucknow. There she met a brilliant medical student hailing from Rawalpindi, Uttamchand Mohanchand, and they fell in love with each other. He embraced Islam to marry Jaddanbai. He was converted by the well known Indian leader Maulana Abul Kalam Azad.

**W**HEN Nargis was born, she was given the name Fatima and she was the pet of Papa Mohan Babu. She fondly remembers her childhood under the loving care of her parents. "My father had a very generous heart and even when my mummy affectionately used to say 'Never give her money,' my daddy always gave it to me", she told us remembering the early days of her childhood.

In 1934, Nargis moved to Bombay with her parents. Though Jaddanbai started her own production concern, neither she nor Mohan Babu had any



Nargis as child star Baby Rani with Yakub in "Talash-E-Huq" produced by her mother Jaddanbai.  
*(This very rare and unavailable picture of Nargis as a child star is reproduced here from the collection of one of the authors, Mr. H. S. Bopch)*

intention to groom Nargis for a screen career. In 1936 she joined the Queen Mary's High School and passed her Senior Cambridge. Called "Baby" at home, she was a bright student at school. She secured distinctions many a time; her favourite subject in school being drawing. "Nobody took me in school-plays," she complains with a faint smile. She was very good at comedy but, strangely enough, was considered a bad risk for serious roles. "Look, now she wants to act!", her school-mates used to say with a twist of nose.

In the class-room, she was known for her delightful sense of humour, and her jolly good antics earned for her the title: "the clown of the class." School-mates used to derive great fun from the boisterous pranks of young Nargis.

She used to take life easily as a child. Cycling was one of her favourite hobbies and she used to ride her cycle so fast that her falls from the bike became a regular feature. Her earliest hobby, therefore, may be said to be "falling from bicycle." "You see I wanted some sort of martyrdom for myself," she mused defending those dare-devil feats with her bicycle.

"Please, don't exert yourself", was her motto for the class-room and she prepared for examinations only at the last minute. Two months before her final examination, little Miss Rashid would sit with all earnestness in her class and become a brilliant student. Her teachers were dazzled by her final success and wondered how she managed to pass.

**A**FTER finishing her studies, she wanted to join the M.B.B.S. course, exactly as her father had done. She had no inclination at all for a screen career. She was never a regular picture-goer. In fact, she had no permission from parents to visit cinemas and they were very strict about her upbringing. When she was in the VI standard, she saw Bombay Talkies' *Kismet* with about ten friends and enjoyed Ashok Kumar's acting as a pick-pocket. Little did she know then that three years later she herself would act in a picture against Ashok Kumar. Once Director Mehboob, a good family friend, put forward a suggestion that she should join the screen. She vehemently protested against this and just in keeping with her age, broke into tears and declared that her

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Cycling was one of Nargis's favourite hobbies when she was in school.

brothers were big enough to support her. As for her, she reiterated that she had made up her mind to become a doctor.

But Mehboob did not leave the matter there. "Later on, on a Saturday evening," said Nargis vividly recalling the incident, "he came and asked whether I would like to see the famous star Motilal acting on the sets of his new picture *Taqdeer*." She accepted the invitation and went to dress up. There she was intrigued when Mrs. Mehboob started plucking her eyebrows, preened her hair, dressed her in a sari, applied lip-stick and gave her high-heeled sandals

that made her feel like walking on a tight-rope. Then they all went to the studio. Motilal was there with his inseparable smile. Nargis was persuaded to deliver a few lines of dialogue against Chandramohan. There was the usual hubbub and shots were taken. Then she was told that she was the heroine of that picture. She argued that she didn't want to become a film-star and she had decided to become a doctor. But Director Mehboob pleaded that if she refused work any more, he would suffer a great loss as he had already taken some shots. As Nargis did not have any idea about production and its costs in those days, she believed Mehboob's story and consented to work, but it was to be strictly for *Taqdeer* alone so that Mehboob may not undergo any loss. "Only one picture and no more of it," Nargis pleaded and Director Mehboob nodded assent.

*Taqdeer* proved a big success and her refreshingly pleasing personality and acting captured the heart of film-goers. Critics hailed the entry of a "smart new face." Against such top-notch veterans as Motilal, Chandramohan and Charlie, she gave a commendable portrayal as the heroine. Overnight the teen-ager Fatima Rashid, hardly out of the portals of her school, became Nargis, the heart-throb of film fans. The nation-wide welcome she got through her very first screen appearance and the pleas of friends and relations to take up acting as profession, finally succeeded in persuading Nargis to take up screen as her career.

After her flying start in Mehboob's *Taqdeer* in 1943, under the loving care of her mother Jaddanbai, she acquired further training in acting and developed an excellent poise. Among her earlier achievements are such diverse subjects as Famous Pictures' *Nargis*, Mehboob's *Humayun*, and *Romeo and Juliet* which mother Jaddanbai produced under the banner of Nargis Art Concern and which was directed by her brother Akhtar Hussain. Her other brother Anwar Hussain has also taken to film acting and proved quite popular.

By her consistently good acting, Nargis attained a unique position and acquitted herself creditably when pitted as a heroine against veterans like Ashok Kumar, Motilal, Jairaj, Pahari Sanyal and others. And today Nargis belongs to that very small group of artists who have to their credit the largest

number of silver jubilee hits. Among the wide variety of outstanding portrayals she has given, her performances in Fazli's *Imsat*, Sunny's *Mela* and *Babul*, Raj Kapoor's *Aag*, *Barsaat*, *Awara*, *Aah* and *Shree 410*, Nitin Bose's *Deedar*, Dharamsey's *Anokha Pyar*, Mehboob's *Andaz*, Ranjit's *Jogan* and *Papi*, S. K. Ojha's *Adhi Raat*, K. Asif's *Hulchul* and her double role in K. A. Abbas's *Anhonee* deserve special mention. Today, in sheer tragedy, there are very few



Even a top-tragedienne must laugh some time and here is Nargis sharing a joke with Nirupa Roy at a film function.

actresses who can come anywhere near Nargis. "My best picture has not been made yet. Yes, the picture in which I have done my best is yet to come", she modestly says even after such a proud record of screen successes. Her other notable pictures include *Lahore*, *Chhoti Bhabi*, *Darogaji*, *Birha ki Raat* and a mythological role in *Bhisma Pratigya* which is the only such one so far in her career.

Her later acting triumphs include *Chori Chori*, *Miss India*, *Pardeshi*, *Adalat*, *Lajwanti* and Mehboob's memorable colour film, *Mother India*. Her recent film assignments include *Din Aur Raat* and *Ek Tha Raja, Ek Thi Rani*.

1958 proved an epoch-making year in her career. President Dr. Rajendra Prasad conferred on her the Award of Padma Shree in the Republic Day Honours. She won another unique honour when her acting in *Mother India* was adjudged the best among the pictures exhibited at the International Film Festival at Karlovy Vary, Czechoslovakia. She also bagged the *Filmfare* Award for her superb acting in *Mother India*.

Socially also 1958 proved historic for her. Her romance with the accomplished film hero Sunil Dutt, which started on the sets of *Mother India*, culminated into a happy marriage. They got quietly married in Bombay on March 11, 1958. In 1959, they have been blessed with a son—Sanjay.

As a leading lady to Raj Kapoor, she made one of the most popular romantic pairs on the Indian screen, but when she saw the rotund Raj as a boy, she was totally scared and not knowing who he was, shouted from a passing car, "Mummy, look! What a fat boy!" It was only when mother Jaddanbai retorted: "It's Prithviraj's son" that she knew the identity of that buxom lad. Later on, when Raj became an actor and acquired fame on stage and screen, Nargis used to boast before her friends that she knew Raj well and that they used to play

together etc., though she did not have the slightest acquaintance with him. She was, therefore, unnerved a bit when one fine morning, Raj unexpectedly turned up at her house and signed her up for *Aag*, his maiden venture. Both of them appeared for the first time in this picture and became friends. With *Barsaat*, their popularity as filmdom's most appealing romantic pair rose to dizzy heights. Like Raj, Nargis has contributed a great deal to lift R. K. Film's studio to its present enviable position.

Nobody can seriously dispute the mastery with which she has portrayed various characters. The following observation by Raj Kapoor is but a modest tribute to her histrionics:

"With Nargis on the sets, the director has no need for rehearsal. He can shout 'take' as soon as lighting is fixed. This is because Nargis makes it her business not only to study the script, but also to study and understand the star or actor opposite her. Her response on the sets thus comes from complete understanding. Her performance has, therefore, hardly to be directed and at no time to be improvised."

**T**HOUGH recognition and fame increased year by year, fate had not been very kind to her because just within a period of one year, death snatched away her parents. Mohan Babu died on November 18, 1948 and Jaddanbai on July 21, 1949. This domestic bereavement has left an indelible mark on her sensitive personality.

However, by a strange sense of premonition, she foresaw the coming tragedies. Once she was acting a scene in *Andaz* which depicted that her father died of heart failure. Suddenly she felt that her own father was on the death-bed. The shooting over, she rushed to the hospital to find her ailing father in a very serious condition. "I saw my father. He was there by my side. I knew he was going...going, but couldn't help it," Nargis recalled, grief writ large on her face. Nargis had a similar experience regarding her mother as well. During the shooting of *Hulchul*, she somehow felt that her mother was very ill and immediately after that she lost her mother through heart failure. "Mother collapsed in my arms: . . . I simply couldn't believe she was dead," she said, tears dripping from her eyes.

Nargis was extremely fond of Chandramohan. Once trying to fool Raj, she told him: "Chandramohan has died of heart-failure at nine today." In the matter of hours, to the grief of all, news came that Chandramohan who was ill for sometime had passed away.

We asked her to recollect some of the happy incidents of her life. Her reply is significant, "I find it difficult to remember happy incidents. Sad things are unforgettable."

"Many of the situations in films portray scenes of our inner conflicts and personal tragedies. There I act well. Tears come rushing to my eyes," she explained with a melancholy look, almost giving us a clue to her mastery over tragic roles. But soon she warmed up and recalled with pride an interesting



encounter with Pandit Nehru. Once she was invited to a Government House party at Bombay. At that time she was not so well-known as today. Her simple, elegant dress without any artificial trappings attracted the eyes of Panditji in the midst of the colourful parade of costly saris and shining blouses. Panditji came up and greeted her, not knowing who she was. Nargis took the opportunity to remind him that her mother Jaddanbai was once given an appointment by Panditji for only five minutes but Panditji was so interested in Jaddanbai's conversation that from the scheduled time of five minutes, the meeting lasted for one hour and a half. Panditji remembered that incident and had a very pleasant chat with Nargis. Afterwards, she has met Panditji several times at important film functions and holds him in high esteem.

**D**URING off moments, she likes to play with dolls and she has a beautiful collection of dolls from all parts of the world. When she was a newcomer to the films, Motilal, Ashok Kumar and Devika Rani were her hot favourites. She has great regard for Mehboob, who happens to be her very first director. She told us in an affectionate tone: "I always feel that working with Mehboob Saab is like being at home and not in a studio." Among foreign stars, she likes Ingrid Bergman, Greer Garson, Betty Hutton, Charles Boyer and Gary Cooper.

Nargis has gone to the United States and the U.S.S.R. as a member of the respective Indian film delegations. She proved very popular in the social sphere as well as on screen in both the countries. Her performance in *Awara* was liked tremendously by Soviet audiences and here is a typical example.

When Mr. M. V. Donde, a leading Bombay educationist, went to Soviet Union in a cultural delegation after the return of the Indian film delegation, a professor at Moscow University gave him two albums of Russian pictures and requested him to present them to Nargis and Raj on his behalf.

On Mr. Donde's return to India, a special function was held in Bombay to present these albums to Nargis and Raj. During the course of his speech Mr. Donde made a startling revelation: "Among the members of our delegation there were several young women. Big crowds used to surround us at various places in Russia and people used to whisper among themselves 'Look, that's Nargis'. Nargis, of course, was no longer in Russia at that time, but that only showed how popular she has become among the Russian people." And he added amidst laughter, "Unfortunately, we had no Raj Kapoor among the members of our delegation!"

**B**ESIDES being an accomplished actress, Nargis has remarkable conversational brilliance and she is a talented sportswoman. She is quite good at badminton and cricket. Ask her to talk on the Radio or at a social gathering, she would be equally at ease.

She reads, knits and writes her own diary. "For once I become truthful to myself and scribble down the diary without a break," she admits. Her

favourite subject for reading is novels and dramas with tragic themes. Her favourite among authors is Marie Corelli. White is her favourite colour. "Colour lost all importance for me after I joined the films. On the screen, there are only two colours, black and white. That I looked beautiful on screen, according to my fans, proved that simple white dress was enough to give you grace and beauty provided you knew how to wear it," she declared explaining her love for white apparel.

When asked what are her likes and dislikes, she promptly replies; "Well, I don't know what I dislike," and after looking pensive for a while adds: "I prefer peace and hate noise."

"I like acting in films, of course! More.....I am very happy as an artist," she proclaims with an air of complete self-satisfaction, revealing the indomitable artist that reigns supreme within her.

#### MEENA KUMARI (Continued from page 86)

She dislikes parties and big gatherings and keeps herself away from crowds. Most of her spare time she spends in knitting and painting. She has a weakness for beautiful pictures and paintings and has built up quite a big album with her collections. At times she "doodles" on a pad of paper and she could well be proud of her achievements in writing poems in Urdu. Her book of self-composed poems is vividly illustrated by her. Her pen-name is "Naaz." Neatly written and scrupulously kept, the verses are a modest attempt but reveal a highly sensitive mind.

Here is a typical bit from her treasured collection of self-composed poetry:

*"Tum kya karonge sunkar, Muzse meri kahani, Belutf zindagi ke, kisse hai phike phike"*—"Naaz" (What's the use of your hearing my own story from me? The episodes of a prosaic life are quite colourless).

But Meena Kumari is neither prosaic nor is her life colourless.

Modest in her aims and ambitions, with a flair for literature and the fine arts and possessing a very sensitive mind, Mehjabeen has merited and won top honours as Meena Kumari of the Indian screen.





## NIMMI

“WHEN I was young, my favourite dream was to become a queen. It has come true... I played the queen in *Aan*.” That’s a typical remark, typical of the ambitious star with tell-tale eyes who goes by the name of Nimmi. With *Barsaat* she jumped to nation-wide fame; by *Buzdil*, she consolidated it and through *Deedar*, *Daag* and *Uran Khatola*, she maintained it. The bunch of contracts that have followed keeps her terribly busy. But one thing Nimmi hasn’t given up and that is her dreaming habit.

Long before *Barsaat* was released, she dreamt to own a Cadillac. People at home thought it was a mad idea, somewhat like a child in a cradle crying for the moon. But when thousands in Bombay were applauding her performance in *Barsaat* at its premiere and were feverishly searching for Raj Kapoor’s sensational discovery, Nimmi was in search of her *Cadillac*. And she got it. Raj had given her the present of a cheque to buy chocolates. Nimmi bought Cadillac instead. It was a rash thing to do as Nimmi hadn’t any fresh contracts. *Barsaat* was her first picture. But her dreaming habit came to her rescue. She dreamt of more and more contracts. And after a brief spell of suspense, the dream came true with a vengeance. More contracts came to her than she could work with.

CONTRARY to public belief, film-fame did not knock at Nimmi’s door. She had to undergo most trying times before she got her first break in *Barsaat*. Daughter of the famous star and singer Wahidan, Nawab Banoo (that is Nimmi’s real name) was born at Agra in February, 1933 and had the natural gift of acting and singing but never thought she would any day become a film-star. “I thought it was impossible for me to act though at times I used to practise acting before the mirror just for fun,” she recalls.

During the days when her mother worked in films in Bombay, Nimmi stayed with her and cultivated the friendship of the Mehboob and Kardar families. Her mother used to take her to the studios. Unfortunately, her mother passed away when Nimmi was but nine years old and she went to live with her granny at Abbotabad. Her father Mr. Abdul Hakim continued to stay at Meerut as a military contractor. Following the tragic developments of Partition in 1947, she came away to Bombay with her granny and stayed with her aunt Jyoti, who was once a leading film star.

The changed circumstances compelled her to seek a job in films. Mehboob being an old family friend, she approached him for “Kaam” (work) Mehboob misunderstood “Kaam” for “Makan” and said it was very difficult as things were but could give her only a small room near Central Studios.



Nimmi with the replica of the Ashoka Pillar given to her as an award for her performance in "Bari Bahu" at the Mussoorie Film Festival.

## NIMMI

She gladly accepted this unexpected offer of a room which she needed ever so desperately and pressed her original request for "Kaam." As *Andaz* was then nearing completion, Mehboob told her that she would have to wait till his next picture.

And she went from producer to producer and studio to studio. Nothing but disappointment greeted her everywhere. A prominent producer took her test and made her sing a couple of lines. "O.K. I will call you tomorrow", he promised. "That tomorrow has yet to come. I am still waiting for it," Nimmi says recollecting her early days in search of a film role. Yet another prominent director thought her unfit for screen.

Feeling totally frustrated, she met Mehboob again and told him, "I have lost all hopes. My only ambition is to get myself photographed by a studio cameraman." Mehboob consoled her and asked veteran Cameraman Faredoon Irani to get a still of hers.

Irani asked her to collect the photo after a few days. When she went to get a copy, Raj Kapoor who was working in *Andaz*, happened to be there. He almost gave her a fright. For a while he would look at the photo and then stare at her, again would look at the photo and then stare at her. The intense anguish and frustration portrayed in the photograph struck Raj's imagination. Here was the tragedienne whom he wanted for his new picture *Barsaat*. But Nawab Banoo did not know. Nor could she find anything exceptional in her photograph except that it really and intensely reflected her frustrated state of mind. She left the place suddenly, awe-struck, displeased at the straight stares of the stranger.

Next day Mehboob sent for her and pointing to Raj Kapoor asked her, "Look, do you know who this is?"

"No", Nimmi replied.

"This is Raj, Raj Kapoor".

"Namaste . . ." she said in a trembling voice, remembering the previous day's photo incident.

"You are to work in his picture *Barsaat*".

She was dazed for a moment, unable to believe the sudden stroke of luck. Then recovering her poise, she thanked them both profusely.

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Nimmi prefers seashore for outings whenever she has some spare time.

A COMPLETE new-comer to screen, she went on the sets of *Barsaat* and her trial shot proved very successful. But Raj was astute enough to tell everyone *not to reveal that to Nimmi*. It might have given her a swollen head.

Acting a role is not as comfortable as getting one. And Nimmi very soon realised it. For her romantic lead in *Barsaat* she got a tall, hefty person, like Premnath. "I was really afraid to work with the big hefty Prem," she admits and, adds "I was asked to rehearse a love scene with him and, would you believe, I could hardly look at him. I closed my eyes and reeled off the dialogue."

Raj realised her plight and asked Premnath to "kill" her shyness. Prem devised a new technique. Off the sets, he began befriending her, talked to her about various artists, how they worked etc. He often warned her, "See this is your first picture. Big stars like Raj and Nargis will steal all

the honours. You and I will be forgotten. See, how freely they act. We too must. Otherwise . . ." This process helped a lot in giving her confidence. The other was Raj's chocolates which he gave her in plenty before and after shots together with a word of praise for her performance.

After the first shot was taken, Nimmi was anxious to see how she looked on the screen. She stole into the studio theatre where the rushes were being shown. But Raj asked her to clear out. Nimmi could not bear it. But discipline after all was discipline.

And this discipline was applied with equal "ruthlessness." When the question of choosing her screen name came up, Nawab Banoo was too conventional. According to Raj's request a number of suggestions had come, but Raj did not like any. Then he hit upon a new idea. He called her Nimmi, the name of the dream-girl in his first picture *Aag*. Nawab Banoo did not like such a short name. "I want a long, long name. Look at other stars. Am I so small after all?", she argued. But Nimmi, she was to be; Raj had decided about it once and for all.

**B**ARSAAT proved a sure-fire hit. And so did Nimmi. "I never imagined *Barsaat* would prove such a big success", Nimmi confesses frankly. Nor was she sure of her future in films though she waited with bated breath for new offers at her small apartment at Churchgate then. Whenever she saw a motor car come and stop near the flat, she would run in and tell her



brother Niaz: "Brother, a producer is coming to sign me up. Be prepared". But no one would turn up. After a few such disappointments, a well-known director suddenly turned up, quite unexpected but brother Niaz turned him away thinking that she was not ready to meet the visitor. Nimmi became angry when she came to know about this. "Brother, you have lost a golden chance," she rebuked.

Then she rehearsed with him as to how to welcome a producer—how Niaz should talk, first he should shout "Baby," then she should come etc., etc.

They rehearsed it over and over again. Then the director came again. And the drama was enacted. But Nimmi wanted to act only the heroine. The director wanted her to play a side-role. The performance failed to fetch the desired role. Nimmi went through a number of similar disappointments while *Barsaat* continued to draw big box-office returns. This changed the attitude of producers towards her. In a remarkably short period, she secured contracts for the role of heroine in more films than any star of her standing in the line. *Jalte Deep*, *Buzdil*, *Raj Mukut*, *Deedar*, *Bedardi*, *Wafa*, *Banwra*, *Bari Bahu*, *Sazaa*, *Durd E Dil*, *Kache Dhage*, *Alaf Laila*, *Sabz Bagh* and others followed in rapid succession. She has produced the film *Danka*, under her own banner, in which she gave a commendable performance. Her acting in Nitin Bose's *Deedar*, Amiya Chakrabarty's *Daag* and Sargam Pictures' *Kasturi* has been hailed by fans and critics as really outstanding. In *Buzdil* also she was tops. Her other pictures include *Aabshar*, *Anghian*, *Wafa* and Mehboob's *Amar*. She has made a good impression in India and abroad as a talented actress by her performance in Mehboob's technicolor production *Aan*. When she went to London to attend the premiere of Mehboob's *Aan*, her statement that she has not been kissed so far by anyone, sent the London press-boys in a flutter and earned for her the title: "Unkissed Glamour-star of India".

She played the double role in Sohrab Modi's *Kundan* remarkably well.

Among her notable pictures are *Shikari*, *Jaishree*, *Uran Khattola*, *Anjali*, *Chhote Babu*, *Bhai Bhai*, *Basant Bahar*, *Sitaron Se Aage* and *Sohini Mahiwal*. She got the critics' Award in 1957 for her work in *Bhai Bhai*. Among her recent notable acting triumphs are *Pehli Raat*, *Angulimala* and *Shama*.

**T**HUS the dreamy-eyed Nawab Banoo has come to stay as Nimmi, one of the few talented tragediennes of the Indian screen. She has a great respect for Raj Kapoor and thinks that while working with him one feels that one is not acting at all. She has great regard for Dilip Kumar as a co-artist. She considers Mehboob and Raj as great directors and is immensely grateful to them. "They have made me what I am today", she proclaims with a lump in her throat.

She considers her role in *Barsaat* to be the best among her earlier attempts and equally likes the role she played in *Buzdil*. Ingrid Bergman and

Joan Fontaine are her idols among foreign stars. In her pre-film days, she liked Ramola and Motilal.

Her favourite game is Badminton and she likes to read Urdu books in her spare time. If there is anything that she utterly dislikes, it is pride.

Nimmi is called "Baby" at home but brother Niaz teases her by calling her "Chocolate Baby" thanks to her weakness for chocolates. She likes 'salwar' and 'Kurta' in dress and her favourite colours are white, light blue and mustard.

She is very fond of music and can sing pretty well. In her child days, she was awarded a prize for rendering the songs of Nurjehan from *Khandaan*.

Another prize event was her part in the first film star cricket festival match at Bombay. After having fielded all day and that too for the first time in her life when she went out to bat, the movie-camera ran short of films. By the time the camera was reloaded with film, she was already out, clean bowled by the very first ball.

Nimmi might have missed the news-camera; but the movie-camera has not missed her. She has succeeded in carving out a covetable position for herself in the Indian film-world as one of its talented tragediennes. Having realised her dream of playing the queen, she now dreams of producing a film in Hollywood with Indian artists. An unrealisable dream, one would say. But you never can tell with that tell-tale-eyed girl!

NALINI JAYWANT

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to my liking is yet to be made," she modestly told us. She believes that if we get the script in advance and get sufficient time to study it, we can give much better performances—"even better than Hollywood"; she adds with an emphasis. She has a melodious voice and it is her ambition to sing her own songs in pictures some day. She rendered a couple of tunes in Bombay Talkies' *Sangram* and they had a lilt all their own. She feels that in India we have to slightly over-act because it is required for the large section of illiterate people who come to see our pictures.

She believes the best thing in life is to keep busy. "My ambition is to work, work and work. Worries come when there is no work. I would like to work till death," she said in a voice that had the unmistakable stamp of earnestness about it. Thanks to this robust outlook on life, Nalini has emerged triumphant in the face of the hardest ordeals.



## NIRUPA ROY

FROM the heavenly goddess of the ancient mythology to a down-to-earth peasant girl of modern era is a long long way but Nirupa Roy has covered the distance with the proverbial ease of a miracle performed by a goddess! Many have been the miracles on screen in which she has figured as a mythical figure, but her change-over from a successful film-goddess to an equally successful luminary in the firmament of social melodramas is perhaps the biggest miracle that has taken place in her entire screen career.

From *Har Har Mahadev* to *Do Bigha Zamin* and *Heera Moti*, and from *Alakh Niranjana* to *Aulad* and *Chhaya*, Nirupa has gone through the histrionic transformation with superb ease and adaptability. She has won unique recognition in India and abroad as one of the most talented actresses of the Indian screen.

Popularly known as the goddess of the silver screen, Nirupa Roy has perhaps played more goddesses in films than any other Indian star. In fact, there are very few goddesses or "Satis" Nirupa has not played on screen. She has played Laxmi thrice, Draupadi twice, Sita four times, in addition to playing hallowed roles like Rukhmini, Tilottama, Devaki, Damayanti, etc. in an endless series of mythological movie-marathons.

Indeed, she has been so closely associated with godly roles that fans started addressing her as a "goddess" and the success of her mythological pictures inspired even film-producers to believe that she is some sort of a goddess, the goddess of box-office.

Her fame as a screen-goddess did spread far and wide. One day she was startled out of her wits when an elderly *Brahmin* from Benaras came all the way to Bombay to have her *darshan* and presented her such pious offering as a rosary, a pot of the holy Ganges water and a volume of Bhagwad Gita. This old god-struck fan lay prostrate before Nirupa and went away only when he was convinced that "the goddess" had bestowed enough blessings on him. He still writes to her calling her "Mataji" (mother), like other Nirupa fans, and invoking her blessings in every letter. This is by no means a solitary instance of the divine fan-worship to which Nirupa is subjected by her admirers. There are letters and letters with such profuse praise that they would make the goddesses in heaven sit up and take notice.

Such overwhelming god-like worship is likely to give a swollen head to any star but not to Nirupa. She still remembers her early struggles before she reached such heights of popularity.



This unique photo gives us a glimpse of Nirupa Roy as a teen-ager long before she joined the screen.

UNLIKE most of the stars, Nirupa had never dreamt she would be a star. She was born on January 4, 1931 in a poor family of Bulsar. Her father Bhagwandas was working in the railways. She came to Bombay in 1945 after her marriage to Mr. Kishorechand Lallubhai Bulsara. Bulsara, having worked in a factory on a pittance, had long since migrated to Bombay for bettering his prospects. He was struggling against heavy odds to earn enough to support a big joint family. He first joined a mill and then the rationing department and married Nirupa in 1945. The match was arranged by family elders and bride Kokila (Nirupa's family name) came from Bulsar. To balance the family budget, Bulsara decided to try his hand at new ventures. Having a personable face, he tried to get a job as a film actor. But instead of hubby Kishore getting a job in a studio, Nirupa managed to land one.

Producer V. M. Vyas was planning a Gujarati picture titled *Ranak Devi* and he signed Nirupa for a minor role. She kept on drawing salary and waited for the day when she would be called on the sets; but *Ranak Devi* was completed without Nirupa. The very news of Mrs. Kokila Bulsara having joined the films had an adverse effect on relations and family friends. The film line is taboo in the majority of Gujarati homes and people in Bulsara's circle did not like the idea of Kokila acting on screen.

CAME the day when Nirupa got the leading role in *Gunsundari*, a picture produced by the Gujarati unit of Ranjit Film Co. The role fitted Nirupa Roy like a glove. The picture proved a hit and scored jubilees in many centres and she became famous in every Gujarati household. Mrs. Kokila Bulsara, the rustic belle from Bulsar, at last became Nirupa Roy, the star. The screen-name was given by her husband Kishorechand Bulsara who also changed his own name to Kamal Kishore Roy. This change was in keeping with the new life they had entered.

After *Gunsundari*, Kamal Roy gave up his job in the rationing department and became Nirupa's business manager. Soon, Nirupa appeared in her first Hindi film: *Lakhon Me Ek* directed by Taimur Baïramshaw which remains still unreleased. Followed Wadia's *Amar Raj*. Mr. Roy was proving to be a good business manager. Even today all her contracts, all her shooting days, all her business affairs are scrupulously managed by Mr. Roy. Even her fan-mail is looked after by him.

The success of *Gunsundari* inspired its makers to produce more Gujarati pictures. *Nanand Bhojai* and *Mangal Phera* came to the screen. The latter proved a sensational box-office hit and further consolidated her reputation



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## NIRUPA ROY

as the top-most Gujarati star. She identified herself so thoroughly with the twin social roles of an oppressed daughter-in-law and a suffering wife that fans came to look upon her as an ideal Gujarati daughter-in-law.

For both *Gunsundari* and *Mangal Phera*, she was awarded gold medals at their golden jubilee celebrations. These pictures were directed by Ratibhai Punatar, a nephew of Mr. Chandulal Shah, the famous veteran of Indian films and the head of the Ranjit Film Co. And it was her work in these two Gujarati pictures that established her as a star in the early days. An important change in her career was yet to come. She played a few mythological roles in Gujarati pictures but did not win any fresh laurels. It was then that Director Jayant Desai cast her as Parvati in his *Har Har Mahadev*. This proved a sure-fire hit, created new records and incidentally opened up new vistas for goddess Nirupa Roy.

Thanks to *Har Har Mahadev*, the pair of Nirupa Roy and Trilok Kapoor got mythological roles in umpteen pictures planned after the *Har Har Mahadev* pattern and Nirupa gradually became the most popular goddess of the Indian screen.

*Vishnu Bhagwan, Alakh Niranjan, Gorakhnath, Ishwar Bhakti, Jai Mahakali, Ganesh Janma, Bhimsen, Rukmani Haran, Satyavan Savitri, Shiv Shakti, Lav Kush, Ram Janma, Veer Arjun and Damayanti* followed in rapid succession. So the favourite daughter-in-law of Gujarati audiences was metamorphosed into the goddess of the Hindi screen.

**B**UT too much of goddesshood is tiresome for anyone and Nirupa was no exception. She yearned for a change from this non-stop cycle of mythologicals. She was fed up with playing miracle performing *satis* and earth-shaking goddesses and very much wanted to come down to earth from the seventh heaven of godly film-roles.

The much-coveted change-over came at last but gradually. Along with mythological roles, she started playing social characters. Her work in social themes like *Grihalaxmi, Uddhar, Ma Ka Dil, Hamari Manzil, Naya Rasta* and Shantaram's *Teen Batti Char Rasta* brought her more such roles. *Bhagyawan* and *Dharmapatni* made her a popular domestic type.

But the biggest triumph of her career came when she acted the peasant's wife in *Do Bigha Zamin*. Her own life as a poor hard-working girl in her village of Bulsar helped her to play the role with commendable ease. She just re-lived her old days and had no necessity to act. The picture brought her great fame and later on her performances in *Aulad* and *Garam Coat* further consolidated her reputation as a mature artiste who excelled in delicate, highly sensitive roles. She also continues to play mythological roles and her films *Shuk Rambha, Shivratri, Naag Panchami, Chakradhari* etc. have proved quite popular.



Nirupa Roy in her very first picture in Hindi, "Lakhon Me Ek." Others seen in the picture are Ghulam Mahommed and Bipin Gupta.

By virtue of her excellent acting in *Do Bigha Zamin*, Nirupa was invited to tour Russia as a member of the Indian Film Delegation and she proved quite a popular figure wherever the delegation went. The Russian people called her Nipura Roy. She enjoyed the tour very much and says she will treasure the memories of this trip for a long time.

Her other pictures include *Waman Avtar*, *Sati Madalsa*, *Unchi Haveli*, *Bhai Bhai*, *Tangewalli*, *Munimji*, *Teen Bhai*, etc.

Among her other notable films are *Janam Janam Ke Fere*, *Ram Navmi*, *Chandrasena*, *Navratri*, *Chandragupta*, *Karigar*, *Ghar Ki Laaj*, *Baazigar*, *Heera Moti*, *Anchal*, *Veer Durgadas*, *Jai Chittor* and *Chhaya*. In the last-named she has given a memorable performance as a mother.

Whenever she is free, she reads famous novels of Gujarati authors like Ramanlal Desai or goes to films and occasionally does cooking. Among her favourite foreign stars are Jennifer Jones and Danny Kaye. She considers Jayant Desai and Bimal Roy among the most talented directors with whom she has worked. Among Indian stars, she has great regard for Nargis and Kamini Kaushal. She considers Balraj Sahni as one of the best co-stars.

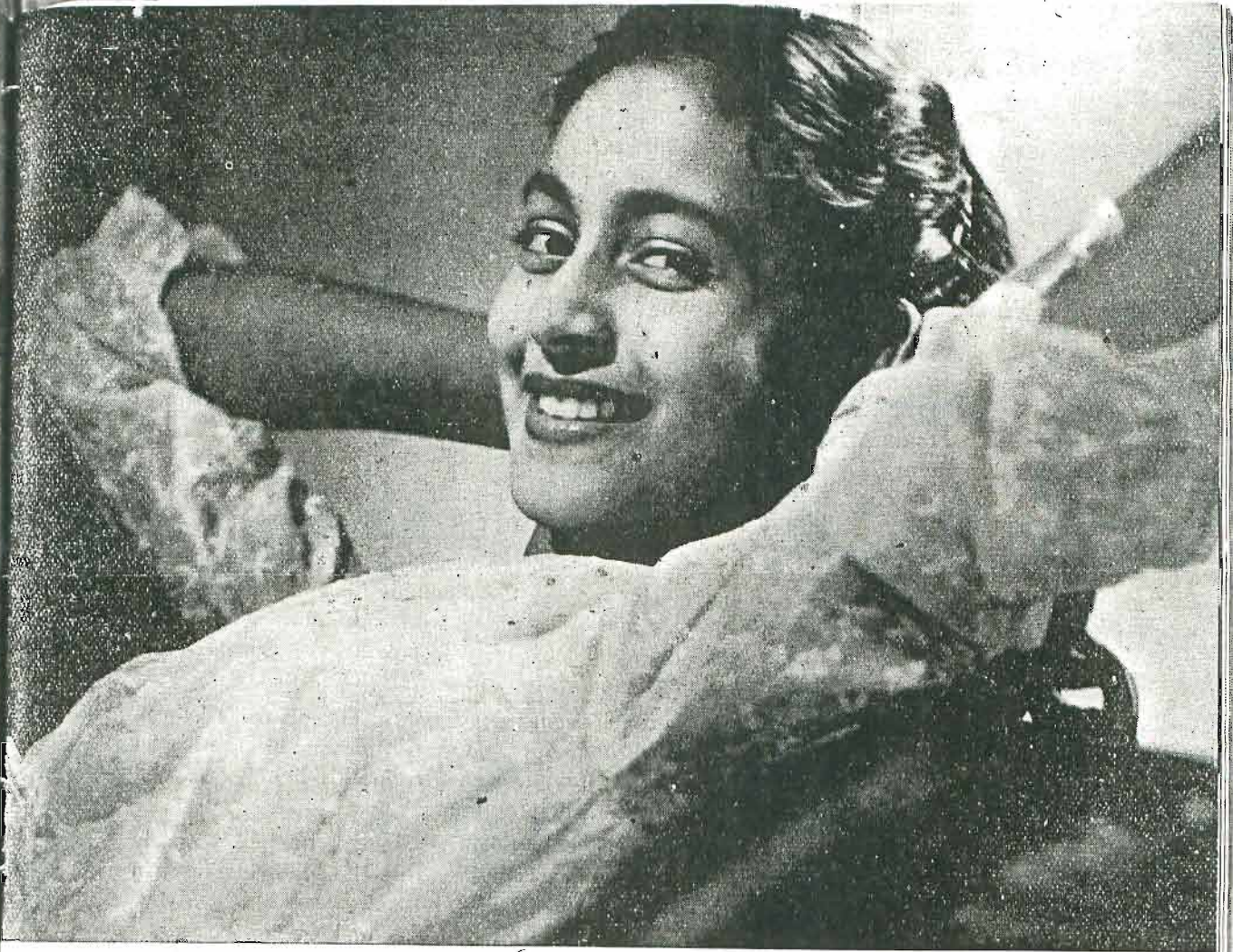
One thing Nirupa never forgets is her morning prayers. For, even a screen-goddess must pray. And obviously Nirupa has prayed to her gods with good results! Recently Mr. Kamal Roy and Nirupa have been blessed with a bonny son.

In today's film-set-up Moti does not find the team-spirit and camaraderie of old which provided a big factor in the success of film ventures. In spite of his success and the lapse of two decades, he retains the same affectionate ties with Director K. P. Ghosh who gave him his first film-break in *Lure of the City*, which is warmly reciprocated by Ghosh. In one of his letters which we had the privilege to read, he wrote to Moti: "I am very proud of you. You will always have my blessings ..... I shall come to Bombay and spend a few days with you". Such friendly comradeship even after a lapse of twenty years is a unique compliment to camaraderie of old. "K. P. Ghosh is one of the most intelligent directors I have worked with", Moti declares and feels proud and happy that this veteran has given some of the greatest pictures produced in Bengal like *Vidyasagar*, *Kar Papey* and *Rani Roshmoni* during the last few years.

Moti has acted against almost all the outstanding heroines of the screen ranging from the veteran Gohar to a comparative newcomer like Shyama during past two decades. His first picture with Shobhana Samarth as heroine was *Be Kharab Jan* based on a novel of Shri K. M. Munshi. The list makes an imposing line-up and includes such prominent names as Sabita Devi, Maya Bannerjee, Rose, Madhuri, Khurshid, Veena, Munavar Sultana, Shamim, Vanmala, Nargis, Naseem, Suraiya, Anjali, Nurjehan, Geeta Nizami, Mumtaz Shanti, Snehaprabha Pradhan, Meena Kumari, Madhubala, Meena and many others.

Reminiscing over his experience of working with these glittering luminaries of the screen he told us: "On the sets of *Taqdeer* it was quite an experience for me to make love to the same Nargis whom I used to lift on my shoulders as a child when she used to accompany her mother Jaddanbai to Sagar Studios as a tiny-tot," and then added with characteristic candour: "Recently I met that child-star Daisy Irani at a party and told her, 'Don't worry, I am not going to quit the screen in the near future. I am waiting for you to grow up and play a heroine opposite me.'" A typical Moti-remark, revealing his affectionate approach to his colleagues as well as tremendous self-confidence.

"I have lot of faith in a guy called Motilal", Moti affirms and you feel that even though here he refers to himself in his usual care-free manner, the remark could have as well come from one of his oldest comrades in all sincerity.



## NUTAN

“I OFTEN dream of sitting in one of the stars in the sky and then watch the whole universe from there,” Nutan takes you on the wings of imagination with a delightful abandon when you ask her about her future ambitions. “This typically robust, juvenile imagery symbolises her entire approach to life and its problems.”

Nutan is the star-sensation of the past few years. Till she made her debut in *Hamari Beti* in 1950, no one knew her. Today she is in the headlines as filmdom’s talented glamour-queen. When mummy Shobhana cast her 15-year-old daughter as the heroine of *Hamari Beti*, people looked askance. But this slim, slight girl took the film-world by storm. At 15, she established

herself as cinema-world's youngest heart-throb. Came Pancholi's *Nagina* and she literally swept people off their feet. Mother Shobhana was right. Nutan revealed a wealth of histrionic ability which surprised people. Then came *Hum Log* and it stabilised Nutan's reputation as a front-rank star.

*Parbat, Nirmohi, Aagosh, Aasman, Shisham*,—more film roles came to her than she could manage. Her performance in *Hangama, Malkin* and *Shabab* won her more praise. She acted the age-old character of Laila in Arora's *Laila Majnu* with refreshing dignity. After continuously working in picture after picture, she went on a well-deserved holiday to Paris and Switzerland in 1954. After staying there for a few months, she returned to India looking lovelier and fresher than ever before.

And gradually she has reached the top place among our younger heroines by her brilliant performances. Her notable films include *Seema, Baarish, Paying Guest, Chandan, Akhari Dao* and *Anari*. She won the Critics' Award and *Filmfare* Award for her acting in the late Amiya Chakrabarty's *Seema*. Her other recent films are *Chhaliya, Chhabili* and *Manzil*.

Her recent topping histrionic achievement is *Sujata*. The picture has won the unstinted praise of less a person than India's Prime Minister Shri Jawaharlal Nehru. Nutan's arresting portrayal of a Harijan girl in this film has earned for her the 1960 *Filmfare* Award for best acting.

Besides being an actress, Nutan is a talented singer. In fact, as early as 1942, *Filmindia*, the famous magazine of India, wrote the following lines in an interview of Shobhana: "Her eldest daughter, who is six years old, is a very clever little dancer and singer." That little girl is today making film history.

Nutan actually surprised people when she was four. In the famous Taj Mahal Hotel at Bombay, she gave her first dance performance. Again when Jutika Roy, that nightingale of Bengal, came to Bombay, Nutan appeared with her on stage and received great applause. When she was eight, she played her first role in *Nal Damyanti* directed by her father. Nutan, like mother Shobhana, had her education at the Baldwin's High School, Bangalore. Surprisingly enough, she liked Geography and Arithmetic, the hoodoo of all students. She learnt classical music for four years under the famous maestro Jagannath Prasad. Her mastery of music was well revealed in *Hamari Beti*. She dances quite well and is able to compose readable verse.

Born at Bombay on June 4, 1936, Nutan is the eldest child of the Samarth. When she was born, the parents were anxious to give her a new type of name. According to horoscope, her name was to begin with "NU" and both Shobhana and hubby Samarth simultaneously said: "NUTAN." As a child, she attended the Villa Theresa School, Bombay.

**N**UTAN SAMARTH, then being the baby of our team of film heroines, was chosen for the signal honour of garlanding the foreign delegates at the inauguration of the International Film Festival in 1951. Her age was not always an advantage and Nutan realised this when she could not go to see her own per-



formance in Pancholi's *Nagina*, because the picture was given "A" (for adults only) certificate and Nutan, the heroine, happened to be not quite an adult then.

Nutan likes work. She gets terribly bored at home if there is nothing to keep her busy. During her off moments, she does a bit of painting and prefers a real outdoor holiday than wasting time in idling about the house.

She regularly goes to foreign pictures and among her favourites are such a varied lot as Hedy Lamarr ("I admire her for glamour", she says), Elizabeth Taylor, Ava Gardner and Jennifer Jones. She is very fond of playing with her sisters Tanuja and Chatura while her brother Juju is her chum despite all his mischief. Their pet dog Too-Too is also a "film-star" having acted with Nutan in *Nirmohi*. Nutan could knit, swim, ride and play a number of musical instruments. She loves simple white dress. She has inherited her mother's gift of repartee and whenever fussy foreigners ask her: "Did you get tanned in sun?", she promptly replies: "No, we are born in sunny land."

She stayed in Switzerland for six months and attended the La Chatelaine school near Geneva where she proved quite popular among fellow students. During her stay abroad she visited Rome, France, Venice and saw most of the important landmarks and also increased her weight by twenty-two pounds.

She receives a large fan-mail, but she has no time for replying sweet nothings of star-crazy idlers. At the same time, Nutan is Shobhana's greatest fan. She says that she was so moved by mummy's performance in *Ram Rajya* that she saw the film not less than eleven times.

**S**HE is very fond of comics, collects lots of them and nothing pleases her more than a cone of ice-cream. Picnics are a craze with her, but now it is no more possible to join her teen-aged friends on such hitch-hiking expeditions. Her sister Tanuja too has become a star in her own right.

When young, mother Shobhana taught her the art of mobile facial expressions and helped her to overcome many a juvenile mannerism. Veteran Motilal made her rehearse every scene in *Hamari Beti* and under their guidance, Nutan mastered the finer points of histrionics.



A shining luminary of film firmament herself Shobhana Samarth has presented another brilliant star to screen by grooming daughter Nutan into a talented artiste.

Strangely enough, mummy Shobhana feels a bit nervous on the stage. "The responsibility of putting on the show unnerves me", she admits and adds: "But Nutan is not like that. She is perfectly at home on the stage..... Temperamentally too, we are a bit different. I am short-tempered, but Nutan is calm and cool. Even if she loses temper, she would at the most retire into her room."

"Mummy, don't say that!" interrupts Nutan at mummy's good-humoured exposure and both share hearty laughter. The pleasantries and the "sharp exchanges" between this brilliant mother and daughter pair are always a treat to those present.

As a leading luminary of film firmament, Shobhana has also risen to dizzy heights of popularity and fan worship. Her superb portrayals in *Ram Rajya*, *Bharat Milap*, *Ram Baan* and many other pictures are still fresh in one's mind. Now in the wake of her glorious screen-career, she has groomed daughter Nutan into a full-fledged artiste and presented another gifted star to the nation's screen. She has thus kept alive her association with films and made a notable contribution to the domain of screen-histrionics.

Nutan's ambition was to build her own studio and produce and direct her own film. "I like to build castles in the air," she used to say with a smile.

She doesn't believe in astrology but still she likes to talk about stars and soar higher on the wings of imagination. If according to her pet ambition, she has not been able to sit in one of the twinkling stars in the far distant sky, hasn't she already realised her dream in a way by becoming a star herself in the film firmament and thus watching the universe from her olympian heights of screen-glory?

After her marriage on the Dusserah Day in 1959 with Capt. Bahl, a smart, handsome Naval Officer, she had announced her retirement from the screen, but luckily she has continued her screen career and promises to go higher and higher in the domain of histrionics.

On the Independence Day, 1961, Nutan and Capt. Rajneesh Bahl have been blessed with a son.





## RAJ KAPOOR

**T**O millions of our film-goers and to a large circle of his friends, Raj Kapoor appears as a happy-go-lucky person, almost on the side of comedy, who is interested in all sorts of pranks. But all this comedy and pranks are only the unobtrusive means to keep everyone out of track of the busy, serious working of his mind. A man of extremely restless nature, a personality who could not adjust his dreams to the subordination of others, he is a jolly good friend to his close associates while to the millions of film-goers in India, he is an idol. In the Soviet Union where lakhs of people saw his *Awara*, he became Comrade Awara overnight. Raj thus creditably distinguished himself as one of India's best director-actor-producers.

Born on December 14, 1924 at Peshawar, Raj is the eldest son of Prithviraj Kapoor, India's outstanding screen and stage personality. Originally, the Kapoors belonged to Kabul but Raj's ancestors left this place and settled down in Peshawar. After graduating from Edwards College, Peshawar, Prithviraj had to shift to Bombay and Calcutta in his pursuit of a successful screen career and hence Raj had his schooling partly at Calcutta and partly at Bombay.

Raj's boisterous, prankish nature made him a popular boy at Antonio de Silva School at Dadar, Bombay. As a student, Raj excelled more in elocution than in studies. It was a familiar sight in the Kapoor household to see young Raj performing indoor dramas before family audiences. The whole drawing room used to be turned into an improvised theatre and things became completely topsyturvy with furniture, curtains, make-up articles and costumes lying scattered all over the place in magnificent disorder.

Next to dramatics and elocutions, he was very fond of delicious dishes. Thanks to his love for eating, Raj grew into a rotund youngster and his portly appearance made him a target of many good-humoured jokes. In the early forties when Nargis did not know him, the plumpish, chubby Raj once caught her eyes while she was going in a car with her mother, Jaddanbai, and Nargis shouted excitedly, "Mummy, mummy. Look there, what a fat boy! He looks like a baby elephant; doesn't he?" Mother Jaddanbai at once reprimanded her and said: "Keep quiet! Don't you know, he is our Prithviraj's son?"

**F**AT people do not gatecrash into films so easily. Raj was more than fat. In those days, people knew him more as a champion sandwich-eater than an aspirant to screen fame. At Bombay's popular restaurant Marosa's he stunned his friends by his record score of sandwiches.

In 1937 when he was a student at St. Xavier's School in Calcutta, Raj's



Seen together at a "pooja" ceremony at R. K. Studios are the four generations of the well known Kapoor family (From left): Grandfather Basheswar Nath, Father Prithviraj, Uncle Trilok Kapoor, Grandson Dabboo and Son Raj Kapoor.

attempts to play a minor role in the annual school gathering enraged the teacher in charge so much that he told Raj in all seriousness: "You will never be an actor." But papa Prithviraj's encouraging words always inspired Raj and saved him from those

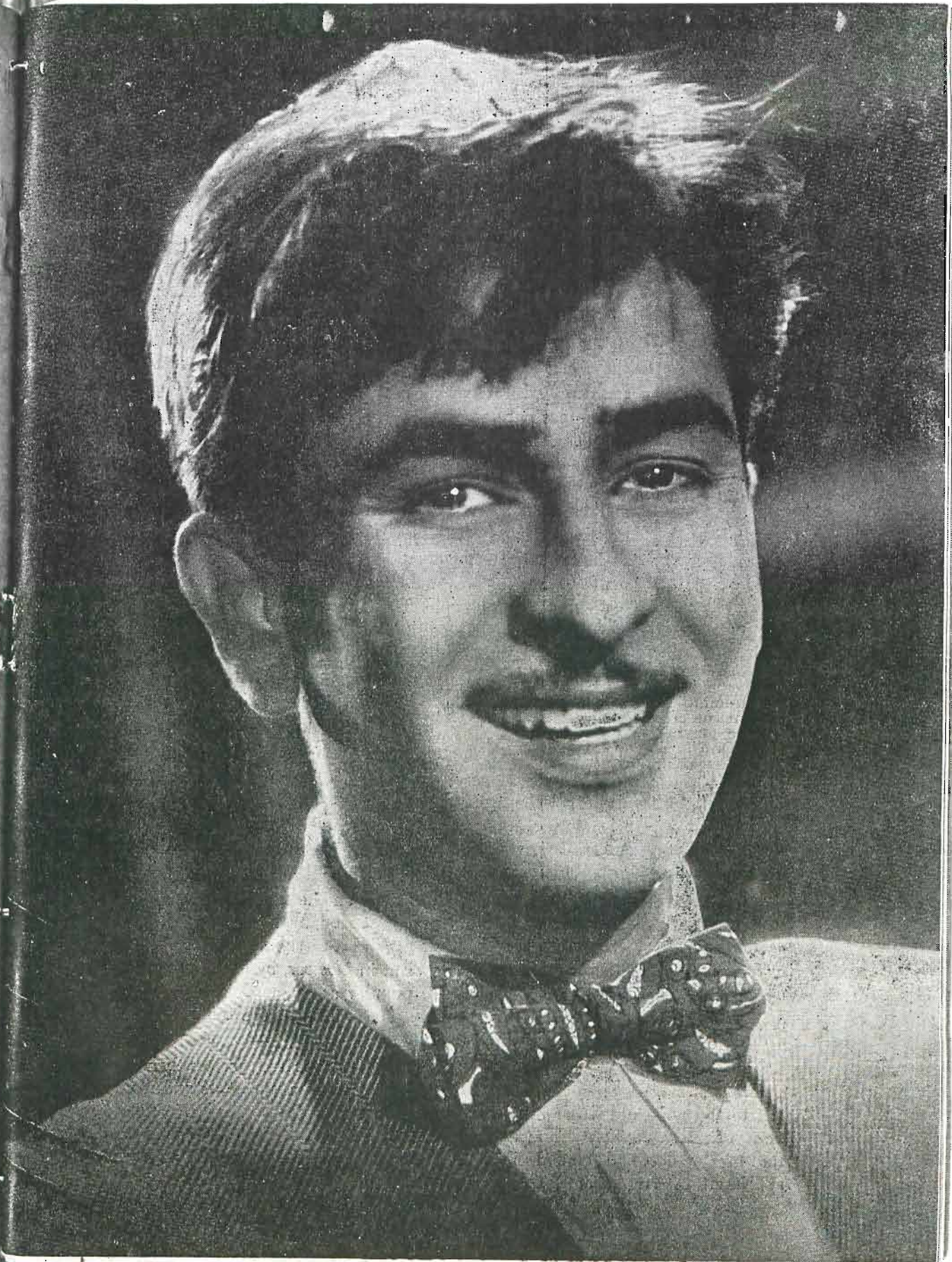
depressing blues that kill the creative urge in an artiste. "I remember one particular incident," Raj recalls while trying to illustrate his daddy's helpful attitude. "I was hardly eight years old at that time. I had to play a small role in my school drama. Papaji was present at that function. I hesitated to go before the audience through stage-fright, but Papaji patted me and pushed me on the stage. His kind, inspiring gesture did the trick for me. I could act with great confidence that day."

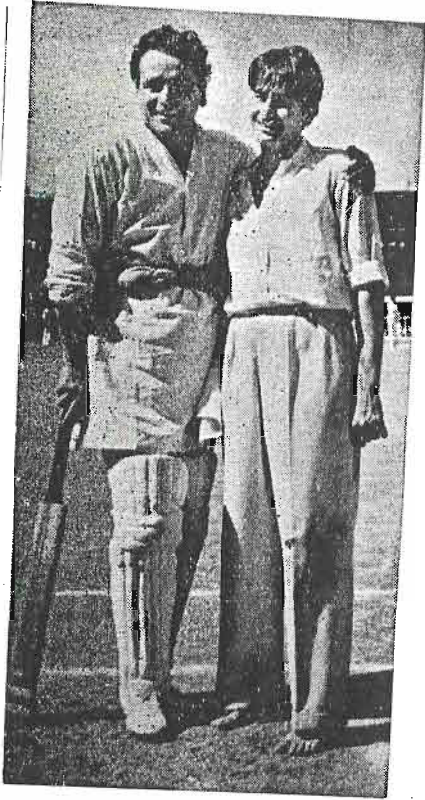
Drama enthusiasts of Matunga, Bombay, still recall an interesting episode which took place in the early forties. Northern India Association of Matunga was having its usual periodical celebrations. A drama was staged. Raj was to play a servant's role and Prithviraj was among the distinguished guests. Raj rushed to daddy at the eleventh hour and said, "I think, I will look nice if I put on moustaches".

Prithviraj replied: "O.K. but see that you look like a servant and not a king. Be careful about the type of moustaches you wear."

"Yes, papaji, I know it too well. I know acting," Raj argued. Prithviraj rose from his seat and with his inevitable broad smile said: "Oh, then I am here to learn from you!". The whole gathering burst into laughter.

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Papa Prithviraj embraces son Raj Kapoor on the cricket ground while playing for the opposite team in a film stars' charity match.

THOUGH he did take part in a drama or two here and there, upto his seventeenth year, Raj had not evidently decided about his future career. For in October 1941, *Filmindia* contained the following reference to Raj in its profile of Papa Prithviraj: "His eldest son (Raj) has just won the Cama Memorial Cup for elocution. This boy, as a child, has acted with his father in a stage-play called *The Toy Cart* but he has not yet decided whether he wants to be an actor, a director or an engine driver."

Finally, when the school-leaving examination drew nearer and when Raj was confronted with the choice of a career, he told father: "Daddy, I want to become a film-artist." Papa Prithviraj remembered that years ago he himself had made a similar plea before his father Diwan Basheswar Nath Kapoor on completing his studies. He at once gave his consent and entrusted Raj to director Kidar Sharma for grooming. Raj started right at the bottom as a clapper-boy. But after three years of hard grooming under Kidar Sharma, he shifted to Bombay Talkies with a personal recommendation from his father to Mrs. Devika Rani who was then Controller of Production at the famous Malad studio. Raj joined here as one of the junior assistants to Director Amiya Chakrabarty. There he got the first chance to play a role on screen—not as a hero but as a peon! With the bit role of a peon in B.T.'s *Hamari Baat*, Raj started his acting career also right from the bottom. His name appeared last in the credit-list of the picture. He was still at the lowest rung.

He left Bombay Talkies in sheer frustration and, after some time, joined Prithvi Theatres, the celebrated dramatic unit started by his father. There he got ideal scope to develop his talents. He was the art-director and special-effects expert for their maiden drama *Shakuntala*. But in *Deewar*, by his hilarious caricature of a domestic servant, he became popular as a comedian. In *Pathan*, another memorable play of Prithvi Theatres, Raj portrayed the difficult role of a dutiful son who sacrifices his life for the honour of his father.

By now he had slimmed down considerably and appeared smarter than ever before. His success on stage attracted the attention of film producers and it was left to the good old Kidar Sharma to give him his first major film role as the hero of *Neel Kamal*. Though not much of a hit, this picture gave Raj the break that had eluded him all throughout. Earlier, he had appeared as Narad in Prabhakar Pictures' *Valmiki* with Prithviraj in the title-role.



Thus daddy and son appeared together for the first time on screen in *Valmiki*. In one of his earliest pictures, *Radha Krishna*, Raj was cast as Krishna opposite Madhubala who played Radha. Following *Neel Kamal*, Director Mohan Sinha featured him as the hero in his comedy pictures like *Dil Ki Rani*. He played an important role in Gajanan Jagirdar's *Jail Yatra* also.



Nargis sticks a flower in Raj's button-hole. They made a memorable screen pair.

**H**AVING slaved and sweated for years in film-studios, Raj yearned to do something more spectacular than merely acting romantic roles of the slapstick variety on screen. In his usual carefree, audacious way, he mustered enough courage to produce his own film. The very idea sounded fantastic to the grey-haired veterans of film-industry. Well-meaning friends warned him about the inevitable pitfalls of film production. Undeterred, Raj put his production plan into practice. As an unknown newcomer to the field, it was difficult to secure finance but Raj staked all his prestige and earnings into R. K. Films and with the unstinted co-operation of his colleagues and co-workers, he produced his first film *Aag* in 1948. Raj's first essay in production had already made a sensation as it mounted the set because for the first time he cast three popular and accomplished heroines of Indian screen, Nargis, Nigar and Kamini Kaushal, together in one picture—a feat which has not been equalled again. With himself portraying a memorable role of his career and with newcomer Premnath making a welcome screen appearance, *Aag* created a flutter in the dove-cots of both the new recruits and old-timers of production field.

In story-value and directorial treatment, in standard of acting and technical excellence, in shot composition and music embellishments, *Aag* was far ahead of the pictures produced in that era. With his youthful team of co-workers, Raj Kapoor established the trade-name R. K. Films as a hall-mark of quality pictures.

**H**E consolidated his position as a producer-director-actor by giving *Barsaat*, a roaring box-office hit which is reported to have collected nearly a crore of rupees. Due to its delightfully catchy music and enjoyable romance, *Barsaat* set a new vogue. The popularity of Raj-Nargis romantic pair made them the idols of film-going millions. *Barsaat* also gave two sensational stars in Nimmi and Premnath. Having earned sufficient money to stabilise R. K. Films, Raj concentrated on quality themes and gave *Awara*, a touching theme based on the problem of juvenile delinquency. Written by K. A. Abbas, *Awara* proved

another triumph for Raj-Nargis pair and R. K. Films. It was hailed as a provocative subject in India and became very popular in the Soviet Union where it was shown in 1954 during the visit of the Indian Film Delegation which synchronised with the holding of the Indian Film Festival in the U.S.S.R.

To hostile, unthinking critics who condemn promising talent with one stroke of pen, Raj's plea is: "We don't know things when we are born. We learn them gradually. We work with best of intentions. Please recognise this fact and encourage us."

Happily married in 1946 to Krishna Mehra, the charming sister of Premnath, Raj has three lovely kids. In his quiet residence at Chembur, he lives quite near his newly-built studio and looks after the welfare of his staff-members with personal care. With his usual flair for creating records, Raj made film history by casting four generations of his family in *Awara*. Besides himself and Papa Prithviraj in important roles, he featured his kindly grandfather, the late Diwan Basheshwar Nath in the role of the judge and his tiny son *Dabboo* appeared on the credit-titles of *Awara* fondling a dog. His younger brother Shammi Kapoor is fast becoming a popular star and the youngest brother Shashi, who played the younger roles for Raj in *Aag* and *Awara*, promises to be an equally outstanding actor. His uncle Trilok Kapoor is also a popular star in mythological films.

**S**UCCESS or no success, Raj is still the same old Raju to his parents and all at home. He still indulges in those juvenile pranks which are the privilege of any son. Yes, Raj Kapoor may be the idol of film-going millions, but in his house he is still the same old clown of the family.

His hobbies range from swimming and riding to football and marathonsinging. He had a very melodious voice when he was young and was considered an excellent singer. Even today in his off moments he bursts into songs, plays all kinds of instruments from tabla to toy clarionets. And daddy Prithviraj always feels that Raj should sing his own songs in the films.

"Key to success is hard work", says Raj and his motto is "Work unto death, it is a heritage that you will leave for generations to come". According to him, the "thought content" has improved in Indian films during recent years. "You want good productions and I want good audiences", he quips in response to clamour for good pictures. "Let our ideals not be merely rupees, annas and pies", is Raj's favourite dictum. Raj feels that with sincerity and hard work, nothing is beyond achievement in filmdom.

He considers his performance in Director Mahesh Kaul's *Gopinath* among his best. Besides his own productions, his acting in Mehboob's *Andaz*, Filmistan's *Sargam*, Kidar Sharma's *Bawre Nain* and Kardar's *Dastan* ranks among his early histrionic triumphs. To those who were thrilled to see him in tragic, sober roles as in Mehboob's *Andaz* and Prithvi Theatres' stage-play *Pathan*,

(Continued on page 136)



## RAJENDRA KUMAR

“**F**ORTUNE may have yet a better success in reserve for you, and they who lose today may win tomorrow,” these famous words of Cervantes acquire a stunning significance when one tries to survey Rajendra Kumar’s career. His has been a life of nerve-shattering ups and downs. The harrowing experiences through which he has passed would have broken the back of any other person. But Rajendra Kumar is made of sterner stuff and so have been his ambitions. “Those critical days have been a school of experience for me. They have brought me close to life and its fascinating uncertainties,” he says with an air of a true Samaritan.

Today Rajendra Kumar is right on top in the galaxy of our scintillating stars. The films in which he has worked have been scoring jubilees in a row. Producers and directors have been vying with one another to sign him up for their pictures. Indeed, the name Rajendra Kumar has today become synonymous with box office success. But to attain this pinnacle of fame and fortune Rajendra had to pass through severe fire-tests. He did not zoom his way to film glory overnight. He had to wage a lonesome battle against the freaks of Dame Fortune, sometimes fulfilling his desires, sometimes faltering in the way, but at no time losing his faith in himself and the Almighty who reigns supreme over the destinies of mankind.

Rajendra’s prosperous family had to leave everything behind when the country was partitioned in 1947. People who had rolled in wealth found themselves destitute within the twinkling of an eye. But Rajendra Kumar, unlike those who have suffered in the wake of Partition, has not even a tinge of rancour for those responsible for the decision to partition the country and those responsible for its aftermath. One finds him surprisingly free from the bitterness usually associated with those who have lost their all as a consequence of the bifurcation of the country in 1947.

This admirable trait is also reflected in his film career also. He has taken all the jerks and jolts of life with a commendable spirit of resignation. “Life has been a revelation to me. Unless we face difficulties with fortitude we can’t learn the intrinsic values in life as it exists today,” he says in his usual calm and collected manner.

**R**AJENDRA Kumar Tuli was born on July 20, 1929, at Sialkot (West Punjab) in a well-to-do family. His father Lala Laxmi Chand Tuli had a flourishing business in cloth at Sialkot and Karachi. Rajendra’s grandfather was a catering contractor for the army. The family led a happy life. Young Rajendra was educated at Government High School at Sialkot, and S. D. College at Lahore.

He was an inveterate film-goer and did not miss an important picture. At times, he saw more than one film in a day. "I had nursed dreams about myself becoming a great film star one day since my childhood. My Indian film idols in those days were Prithviraj Kapoor, Chandramohan and Motilal and among the heroines I had a fancy for Swarnalata, Khurshid and Nurjehan. The foreign heroes who captured my imagination were Clark Gable, Tyrone Power and Gary Cooper. Alas, all three of them are dead today. My visits to the cinemas became so much a part and parcel of my early life that once when I returned home late after seeing a film, my grandfather told me, 'I have a feeling that one day you will become a part of the cinema'. How I wish the grandpa is alive today to see that his prediction has come true!", Rajendra Kumar observes while recalling his early craze for film-going.

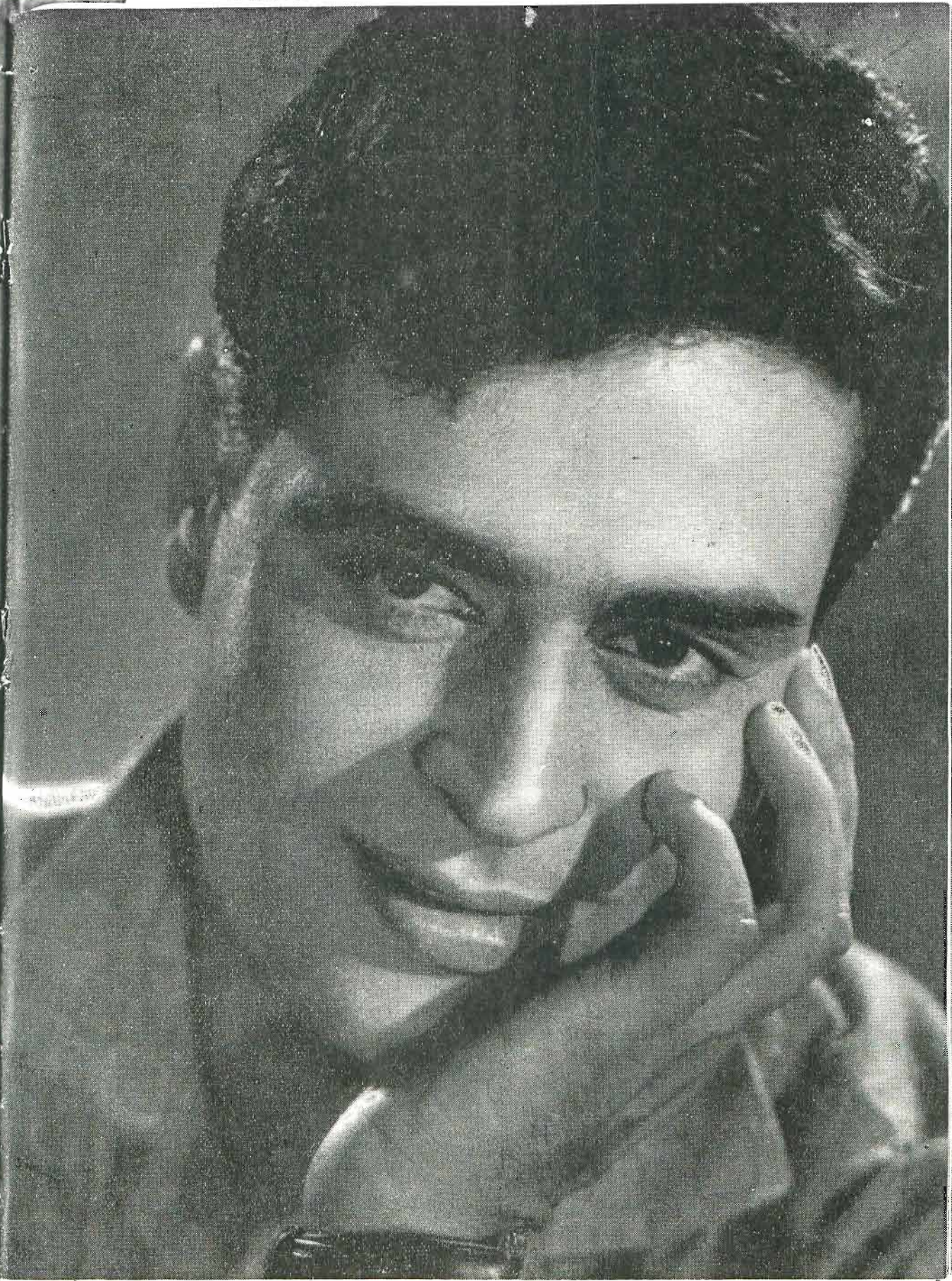
But Rajendra's childhood dreams were not realised in a trice. He had to receive some of the most cruel blows that Fate could deliver. For years he hovered between abject defeats and flickering hopes. When in the August of 1947, millions all over the country were celebrating the birth of our hard-won freedom, Rajendra Kumar and his family had joined the seemingly endless march of dispossessed humanity that trekked the no-man's land in the wake of Partition. They just managed to escape death in the communal riots that broke out in the Punjab and left their all behind. Rajendra Kumar cut short his commerce studies in the College at Lahore and joined the family in their greatest hour of trial. For one full week, the family which was rolling in wealth only a few days ago, kept walking without food or money, in the perpetual terror of being done to death in the tornado of communal frenzy that was raging over Punjab. After passing some anxious days in a refugee colony at Amritsar, the family managed to reach Delhi. Life as destitutes was unbearable. Rajendra Kumar, who had seen his family lavishly distributing food and money among the poor and the suffering, found that they had to wait for hours in food-queues in the refugee camps. There seemed to be no end to the miseries they had to undergo.

Asked how he felt during that critical period, Rajendra Kumar replies, "Well, I felt that I had to take up this challenge of times. These were little frolics of Fortune, and mercifully I could face these with gusto by the grace of God. That period of trial was not without its lessons. 'Why have any grudge against fate?' I said to myself."

After getting a small compensation from the Government, his family settled down in Delhi. His father started business, but eighteen-year-old Rajendra Kumar took a date with destiny and made a trip to Bombay to land a job in the film industry. Forlorn and friendless, he wandered from studio to studio in search of a job only to be turned out. He was a complete stranger to Bombay and for a while found himself lost in the din and bustle of the metropolis. After many heart-breaks a letter of introduction he had got from Delhi on the well-known writer Rajinder Krishen proved very helpful. Rajinder Krishen gave him all possible help but it was difficult for him to get a role for this absolute newcomer fired with ambitions of becoming a film hero ever since his childhood.



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## RAJENDRA KUMAR

**H**OWEVER, always a source of encouragement and inspiration, Rajinder Krishen introduced Rajendra Kumar to Producer-director H. S. Rawail who promised to train him up as an assistant director. Rajendra was prepared to work in any department of a film studio as he then was convinced that before becoming an actor, it was necessary to learn the process of film making and watch top stars in action. For a period of five years, he slogged as an assistant to Director Rawail and his active association with day-to-day shooting tremendously helped Rajendra who now set his heart on becoming a director instead of a star. He worked as assistant director for nearly 10 pictures.

In fact, his interest had almost ceased in acting and he pinned all his hopes on film direction which he found quite interesting. At that crucial moment in his life, a momentous event took place which proved the biggest turning point in his career. Producer-director Devendra Goel gave him the main role in his picture *Vachan*. The film released in April, 1955, proved a success and Rajendra heaved a sigh of relief. He had made a flying start as an actor in his very first film. Followed roles in Mehboob's *Mother India*, V. Shantaram's *Toofan Aur Deeya*, Mahesh Kaul's *Talaq*, Vijay Bhatt's *Gunj Uthi Shehnai*. These were outstanding films made by some of Indian screen's top directors and Rajendra acquitted himself creditably. Especially *Mother India* helped him a lot to gain recognition as an important star. Hits like *Ghar Sansar*, *Ma Baap*, *Chirag Kahan Roshni Kahan* established him as a star with a big pull at the box office. *Ma Baap* celebrated a silver jubilee in the East Africa and Rajendra Kumar was the first Indian star to be invited to Africa to grace a picture's jubilee function. He was mobbed wherever he went in Africa by his fans. His work in *Patang* and *Dhool Ka Phool* proved equally popular. The Gujarati film *Mendi Rang Lagyo*, in which he played the main lead, created new records for films in that language. His recent films *Kanoon*, *Sasural* and *Aas Ka Panchhi* have scored jubilees. *Gharana* and *Pyar Ka Sagar* have brought him more laurels.

His recent films include *Akeli Mat Jaiyo*, *Zindagi Aur Khwab*, *Ek Ladki Ek Diwane*, Rawail's colour film *Mere Mehboob*, Raj Kapoor's *Sangam*, *Ghera Daag*, produced by his brother-in-law, and forthcoming pictures of Gemini and Prasad.

He liked his roles in *Mother India*, *Chirag Kahan Roshni Kahan*, *Gunj Uthi Shehnai*, *Aas Ka Panchhi* and *Kanoon* which he considers "best of all." It was a great thrill for Rajendra when his childhood film idol Prithviraj Kapoor complimented him for his work in Producer-director B. R. Chopra's novel song-less courtroom drama *Kanoon*.

Asked about the most memorable experience of his screen career, Rajendra Kumar replied after a little pause. His face became meditative and he mused: "Two incidents stand out in my memory. The first is the occasion when Mr. Goel told me to work in his picture *Vachan*. It turned my entire career. The second is my first meeting with Mr. Mehboob prior to being signed up for *Mother India*. It was the biggest thrill of my life."



**Rajendra Kumar is very much in love with his home and children. Here he is enjoying a breezy moment with his son Manoj and daughter Dimple with their pet-dog Soozey.**

**R**AJENDRA Kumar believes that Providence always helps those who are sincere to their profession. While he has implicit faith in God, he feels that one's faith in the Almighty should be backed by solid hard work.

He points out the examples of some of our leading stars who have reached the top through their consistent slogging on the sets. Among present-day film favourites he likes Ashok, Dilip, Raj, Nargis, Meena Kumari and Vyjayantimala. His foreign film idols today are James Mason, Montgomery Cliff and Marlon Brando.

He is very fond of reading. During off-moments he likes to devour the works of Tagore, Kahlil Gibran and Stefan Zweig. His other recreations are outings and long drives in the countryside. Formerly he used to play hockey, tennis and badminton. Now the busy studio-life doesn't leave him much leisure.

He got married in December 1954 when his first acting vehicle *Vachan* was nearing completion. The match was arranged by parents. He leads a happy married life and has two smart children Manoj, a boy, and Dimple, a girl. His parents occasionally come down to Bombay and stay with him. They are delighted to find that their eldest son, who left everything behind, with them, at Sialkot and who left Delhi at the age of 18 to try his luck in films, has today realised his fondest childhood dreams. Virendra Kumar, one of Rajendra's younger brothers, is also undergoing training for film acting at Filmalaya School for acting and hopes to follow the footsteps of the elder brother.

**S**ITUATED at Bandra sea-face, his bungalow "Dimple" (named after his daughter) has a delightful air of informality about it. The simple and unassuming Rajendra is a loving husband, a kindly father and a sincere friend. "I am very fond of my home and my children," he admits.

Rajendra has great regard for Pt. Jawaharlal Nehru among our leaders. "He is the Indian I love most, a symbol of sincerity and selflessness," Rajendra says, paying his humble tribute to Panditji.

Sober, dignified and restrained in speech and gestures, Rajendra Kumar has a stamp of sincerity which endears him to one and all. With that eternal dreamy look in his eyes, he seems destined to attain greater heights in the domain of film histrionics.

#### RAJ KAPOOR (Continued from page 130)

his hilarious antics in *Dastan* reminded of his rip-roaring comic role in *Deewar* and convinced them about his versatility in acting.

**T**HE popularity of Raj-Nargis screen-pair could be judged from the fact that once during a Ganapati festival in Poona, the clay idols of the elephant-headed God were shaped like Raj Kapoor and Nargis. The scene showed Goddess Saraswati and Ganapati standing after the style and fashion of Nargis and Raj Kapoor in the poster of *Barsaat*. They worked as the main romantic pair in many pictures including *Jan Pahechan*, *Amber*, *Bewafa*, *Ashiana*, *Pyar*, *Papi*, *Dhooon*, *Anhonee* and *Chori Chori* besides R. K. Films' *Aag*, *Barsaat*, *Awara*, *Aah* and *Shri 420*.

Raj made history by winning the Grand Prix for his *Jagte Raho* at the International Film Festival at Karlovy Vary, Czechoslovakia, in 1957. His acting in *Jagte Raho* got him the Critics' Award in 1957. His other notable films include *Sharda*, *Parvarish*, *Phir Subah Hogi*, *Kanaiya*, *Anari*, *Main Nashe Men Hoon* and *Do Ustad*. In *Anari*, he has given another unforgettable performance. It has won him the 1960 *Filmfare* Award for best acting. His recent films include *Sriman Satyawadi*, *Chhalia*, *Nazrana*, and *Jis Desh Men Ganga Behti Hai*.

Raj has travelled extensively all over India. "That has given me the background and strength to make pictures", he explains. He was a member of the Indian Film Delegations that toured United States in 1952 and the Soviet Union in 1954. He can act as a fluent platform speaker and bring the house down with his penetrating gesticulations and conversational artistry. Of late he has visited several foreign countries to participate in Film Festivals.

The baffling phenomenon of unbounded hilarity and rigid sobriety of Raj's enigmatic personality was once admirably summed up by Nargis, when she said: "This man to whom tragic roles and situations on the screen are food and drink, is in life the kindest of people and the most disarmingly mischievous of friends. His very mischief is kind, his appearance of irresponsibility is infectious—altogether, he is a lovely person and a friend.....The iron hand with which the Producer-Director Raj rules on the sound-stage is shed there when he steps out. And then you find an impish schoolboy." Well, that's Raj!



## SHYAMA

WAY back in the mid-forties, a little girl saw a picture starring Ishwarlal and that matchless singing siren of Indian screen, Khurshid. Khurshid's sad, soulful melodies captured her heart and brought tears to her eyes. The name of that little girl was also Khurshid. After seeing the film, she asked herself: "Why I too can't become a star like that Khurshid?" She went home determined to be a celluloid sweetheart and started song rehearsals before the mirror. She imitated songs from her favourite films and put up stage shows at home with friends. After years of yearning for stardom, all that the ambitious girl got was a bit role as an extra as a singer in a *quawali* song. Today that film-crazy teen-aged Khurshid is known by a name familiar to thousands of film-goers—Shyama.

Remember that very first all female *quawali* in *Zeenat*—"Aahen na bharin, Shikway na kiye" led by the melody-queen Nurjehan? A bevy of comely faces surrounded Nurjehan in this rip-roaring sequence which brought the house down. Among this line-up of charmers was Shyama who appeared here as Baby Khurshid. Her ambition to become another Khurshid seemed to have been partly fulfilled. But she was a very small fry in that scene. The lime-light was stolen all throughout the picture by the one and only Nurjehan. When Khurshid Akhtar (Shyama's real name) saw Nurjehan reigning supreme over the sets like a queen, she felt one day she too must become a big star, a rather audacious dream for a girl in pig-tails who started film career as an "extra"!

THUS Shyama started her career from the bottom of the ladder. Her phenomenal rise to stardom during the last few years has almost nullified the time-honoured film maxim—"Once an extra, always an extra." But her journey to the pinnacles of fame has not been without its sighs and sorrows. She had to struggle for eight long years without losing hope.

Born at Lahore on June 7, 1935, Khurshid Akhtar had to also face a domestic storm after her debut in *Zeenat*. As the role was rather small and insignificant, she had to rehearse only for a fortnight. "I did not feel camera-shy as there were many other newcomers taking part in the *Quawali*-scene." Her father was away from Bombay and did not know about her role. He lost his temper when he came to know that daughter Khurshid had taken to film acting. Her mother and sister somehow managed to pacify him. Baby Khurshid left the school from the fifth form to seriously concentrate on film acting.

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She made a resolve to hit the top-mark and took intensive training in dance and music from the well-known dance-teacher Badri Prasad. She specialised in Kathak. She got some more bit-roles in films and appeared as Baby Khurshid. As a teenager, she was mainly cast as the hero's younger sister.

**S**HE got the rare opportunity to act as a younger sister of the celebrated Saigal in *Parwana*. "I can never forget the encouragement that the great Saigal gave me on the sets of *Parwana*," she says, recounting a memorable anecdote, "You see, one day I sat on his lap, feeling terribly nervous. Saigal realised my plight as a beginner. He tried to shed my neurosis by humming a song which had words to the effect, 'Don't be afraid, Sister, work hard and success is bound to be yours.' His words had an electrifying effect on me. But for his inspiring words, I would have fared miserably that day."

She continued to be cast in similar roles and played the younger sister to the late Shyam in *Kaneez* and to Motilal in *Beete Din*. Unfortunately her frail and delicate figure was not considered good enough for major roles by the tin-gods of the film industry, so she had to act in a non-stop series of insignificant roles. She had to discontinue her music lessons for reasons of health and she concentrated on acting with a vengeance. In *Tarana* she got a slightly bigger role while in *Hum Log* she acted as Balraj Sahni's girl friend.

**M**EANWHILE, Baby Khurshid, had undergone a change in nomenclature. In 1944, she was acting in Prakash's *Nai Ma*. Director Vijay Bhatt felt that at that time there were too many Khurshids in films and he gave a new screen-name to her—Shyama.

She got her first major role in *Chhoti Bhabhi*, but for a still bigger break she had to wait for years. I. S. Johar surprised friends and foes by selecting her for the title-role in Filmistan's *Shrimatiji* from over one hundred applicants.

However, the sudden rise to stardom was not without its inevitable tears. After a few shots were taken, an important executive said on the sets of *Shrimatiji*: "This girl is too thin for a heroine's role". The remark gave her a rude shock. She went home and wept bitterly. She felt a chance that came to her after a long struggle was slipping away. She at once saw a medical consultant who put her on tonics. She put in the necessary weight. The boisterous role of the modern girl, Indira, in *Shrimatiji* gave her plenty of histrionic scope. Her sister Gulzar Akhtar helped her with rehearsals and, of course, I. S. Johar was a perfectionist, who knew how to extract the best work from an artist.

Shyama put her best in it, realising fully well that her entire future depended on this role. Her performance was well appreciated by all and Shyama heaved a sigh of relief.

**T**HEN she acted a serious character in Bimal Roy's *Maa* with equal ease. Came *Shart*, another acting triumph of hers. Followed *Aasman*, *Nishan-Danka*, *Char Chand* and *Chori Chori*. Shyama had arrived as a star. By 1956 she had the distinction of acting in over 100 pictures though the majority of the roles were small.

Since then she has played all sorts of roles in all sorts of pictures. Her notable films include *Chandan*, *Chhoti Bhabhi*, *Do Dulhe*, *Ha Ha Hi Hi Hoo Hoo*, *Bhai Bhai*, *Mirza Sahiba*, *Sharda*, *Chhoo Mantar*, *Aar Paar*, *Tulsidas* etc. She has topped her acting triumphs by her memorable double role in *Do Behnen*. Her earlier ones include *Sabak*, *Sartaj*, *Sazaa* etc. Her work in *Sharda* brought her the 1959 *Filmfare* award for best supporting role. Her recent films include *Duniya Jhukti Hai*, *Bus Conductor*, *Apna Ghar*, *Zabak* and *Barsaat Ki Raat*.

Shyama is a quiet, retiring type. She seldom attends any public functions and prefers to stay indoors. That does not mean she is a stiff highbrowish type. At get-togethers she is known for her scintillating sallies and, what is still rarer, she can sportingly take jokes at her own expense.

**S**HE swims, drives, dances and has a go at Cycling also. She is left-handed. "Is that why people pay left-handed compliments to me sometimes?" she chirps with a mischievous twinkle in her hazel eyes. She has a pair of rabbits as a pet at home and she gives them daily bath with almost juvenile delight.

Today she is among the much sought-after heroines of the Indian screen, right on the top-rung of fame and fortune. And yet, she modestly admits: "I have not forgotten the days when I used to wait endlessly for a bus to reach a film-studio with visions of becoming another Khurshid—another Nurjehan".

Extra girls seldom—if ever—become front-rank heroines. Shyama has achieved the miracle through sheer hard work and merit. What's her ambition now? "To remain in films all throughout my life", she says with supreme self-confidence.





## SURAIYA

“**A** SONG is more lasting than the riches of the world”, said Padraic Colum. The singing idol of the Hindi screen, Suraiya subscribes in full to this philosophy. But in her every day life, the song has meant something more—her songs have won her recognition, paved the way to her entry into films and thus to the riches of the film-world.

In Kardar Productions' *Sharda* Suraiya sang the popular tune “*Panchhi ja*” for the heroine Mehtab. The song proved a sensational hit and became a hot favourite with the film-goers. Ever since then, Suraiya reigned supreme over the heart of the film-goers as the singing sweetheart of the silver screen. Perhaps, she has to her credit more songs than any other singing star of the Indian screen.

After the migration of Nurjehan and Khurshid to Pakistan in the wake of Partition, Suraiya is the only film-heroine in India who sings her songs in the pictures. She has a mellow voice that rings with melody and echoes in one's memory for a long time. All this, however, does not mean Suraiya owes her success in filmdom to her voice alone. Had it been so, she would have still remained only a popular play-back singer. No doubt, her voice is her biggest asset and it did facilitate her entry into films. But her flair for acting coupled with her dancing talent played a great part in making her the success she had been because rare, indeed, is a film-star who could claim the three-in-one distinction of being a singer, a dancer and an actress.

**B**ORN at Lahore on June 15, 1929, Suraiya has been educated in New High School for Girls at Bombay. Simultaneously, she was given religious teachings in Persian at home. Her study of Persian literature and *Quaran* has helped her a lot in building up her personality. Therefore, Suraiya, today, appears more as the hallowed heroine of Persian poetry than a mere glamour goddess of the celluloid world. The eloquent testimony to this was her grand performance in *Mirza Ghalib*. Suraiya, in fact, strikes one as more Oriental in outlook than some of her sister stars in the film-firmament.

Like many of our leading artists of today, Suraiya's entry into the world of movies was more accidental than otherwise. In 1941 during a holiday from school she accompanied her uncle Zahur (then a popular character actor) to Mohan Studios to see the shooting of the picture *Taj Mahal*.

A child was needed for a scene and she was asked whether she would like to face the camera. Out of sheer fun, Suraiya said “Yes”. The shot

proved a success and everyone around including Director Nanubhai Vakil congratulated her. But at that time none had imagined that she would some day become one of film-land's top-most singing stars. For Suraiya, this new experience was nothing more than an enjoyable juvenile adventure. She continued her studies and occasionally took part in the children's programmes of All-India Radio along with Shammi, today's starlet, and Raj Kapoor who were also unknown to film-world in those days.

AS a youngster, Suraiya surprised everyone with the commendable ease with which she reproduced the film songs of those days. Her sweet voice was her biggest asset and the attraction for others. And literally, she sang her way to success because it was actually her voice that gave her the first major break into the dream-world of the movies. Her fame as a melodious singer spread at once with the popularity of her play-back songs in *Sharda*, *Station Master*, *Sanjog* and *Kanoon*. Soon she started getting roles in pictures. She first caught the eye of the film-goers by her popular dancing and singing performance in Bombay Talkies' *Hamari Baat*. Her song "Ghar humne le liya hai tere ghar ke samne" proved a big hit.

Then came D.R.D. Productions' *Ishara* and Suraiya leapt into the headlines by acting opposite veteran Prithviraj. Roles came one after the other and the name Suraiya became synonymous with successful musical pictures. She had thus become a full-fledged star and won for her the endearing title "Chocolate Charmer" of the Indian screen. The list of pictures in which she has worked is an imposing one. Among the outstanding ones could be mentioned *Phool*, *Samrat Chandragupta*, *Anmol Ghadi*, *Omar Khayam*, *1857*, *Aj ki Raat*, *Dard*, *Dillagi*, *Natak*, *Afsar*, *Kajal*, *Vidya*, *Jeet*, *Tadbir*, *Dastan*, *Sanam*, *Char Din*, etc. Among her major hits are *Pyar ki Jeet* and *Bari Bahen*. In *Tadbir*, *Omar Khayam* and *Parwana*, she had the rare privilege of acting the feminine lead against that singing idol of millions, the late Saigal. Indeed, they made a unique singing pair. Her other assignments include *Enam*, *Pagalkhana*, *Heer Ranjha*, *Khayal* and *Bilwa Mangal*. Her performances in Nitin Bose's *Waris* and Kashyap's *Shama Parwana* brought her new laurels. Her recent films include *Malik* and *Mr. Lambu*. She has staged a remarkable come-back in *Shama*.

During her off-moments, Suraiya likes to browse over books and magazines. She is a discriminating reader and her favourite authors are Somerset Maugham, Marie Corelli and Kahlil Gibran.

Suraiya has thrilled millions with her melodious film-songs. Many have been the popular tunes rendered superbly by her. Though her song-hits are too numerous to mention, among her most memorable numbers could be mentioned the following: "Tum muz ko bhul jao", "Woh pas rahe ya dur rahe", "Dil Tere Anese Pahle" and "Bigdi Banane Wale" (*Bari Bahen*), "O Dur Jane Wale" and "Na tadapne ki Izzat" (*Pyar ki Jeet*), "Mun Mor Huwa Matwala"

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and "Nayana Diwani" (Afsar), "Dur Papiha Bola" (Gajre), "O Sanam" (Sanam), "O Ishk Hame Barbad na Kar", (Naach), "Lai Khushi ki Duniya" (Vidya), "Murtiwale murli baja" and "Char Din ki Chandni" (Dillagi).

**S**URAIYA's ambition is to play a rollicking comedy role. Another of her more well-known ambition was to meet Gregory Peck, her hot favourite among the celluloid idols of Hollywood. And she realised it in 1954 when Peck broke journey at Bombay on his way to Ceylon for location shooting of *Purple Plain*.

According to her, she experienced the greatest thrill of her screen career when Saigal one day strayed on the sets of Jayant Desai's *Chandragupta* where she was rehearsing a song. He congratulated her for her lilting voice and made a suggestion to Director Jayant Desai to cast her against him in *Tadbir*, which was readily accepted. And, hey presto, Suraiya realised one of the greatest dreams of her life. She was always a Saigal fan and had longed to co-star with him in a film. And here it was Saigal himself coming to her. It was one of the most memorable moments of her life. They co-starred in two more films *Omar Khayam* and *Parwana*. Suraiya today regrets that Saigal is no more. But still she is a devoted Saigal fan.



## USHA KIRON

**A**MONG the scintillating starlets of Indian screen who have toiled their way to the top rung of success and fame in recent years, Usha Kiron is perhaps the most outstanding. Starting with minor roles in Gujarati, Marathi and Hindi pictures, she has gradually obtained full-fledged stardom by hard work and sheer merit.

Usha was born on April 22, 1929 in a middle-class Maharashtrian family at Bassein, a historic place thirty miles to the North of Bombay. Encouraged by her father Mr. Balkrishna Marathe, she underwent dance training in Kathak, Manipuri and Bharat Natyam along with her schooling. After studying upto matriculation, she started appearing in stage-plays and attracted the attention of that well-known doyen of Indian dancing, Uday Shankar who gave her a dancing role in his picture *Kalpana*. By this time, she had already made a name in local stage and dance circles.

In 1942, she acted for the first time in a stage-drama. It was a Marathi play titled *Ashirvad*. Though here she played a child role, both the public and the press liked her acting immensely. Of course, she was nervous and excited about her debut on the stage, but she was pleased to know that even the hard-boiled critics had applauded her work.

However, she got her first film role as the heroine in *Vevishal*, a Gujarati picture, though her mother tongue was Marathi. The film was a moderate success and critics appreciated her performance. She did not encounter any difficulty in delivering the dialogues because she knew Gujarati quite well.

Having appeared in a Gujarati film, she found it difficult to get a break in Hindi pictures. At times, she even felt dejected, but her father asked her not to lose heart. "My father has been mainly responsible for my success in this sphere", Usha says today, remembering the encouragement and impetus her father gave her whenever she felt frustrated in the beginning of her career. Meantime, Director Amiya Chakrabarty, who was looking for a new face for his *Gauna*, gave her the leading role. She gave a convincing performance and it was in this film that she appeared with the screen-name Usha Kiron.

Then she signed up for *Vasudev Balwant*, a Marathi picture which proved a roaring hit. Her portrayal of a bandit's daughter was immensely liked by people. Followed more roles in Marathi and Hindi films. Her poignant performance in Datta Dharmadhikari's Marathi hits *Bala Jo Jo Re* and *Stri Janma Hi Tuzi Kahani* and Director Ram Gabale's *Doodh Bhaat* earned her the reputation of a popular tragedienne. As for Hindi films, she



**Usha Kiron and her amiable husband Dr. Manohar B. Kher, who is a leading medical practitioner of Bombay.**

started playing the second heroine and by giving consistently polished portrayals reached the top and played the main feminine lead in *Patita*, *Baadbaan*, *Aulad*, *Dhobi Doctor* and others.

Her performance in *Baadbaan* won her *Filmfare's* Clare Award for the best supporting role of the year 1954. Her portrayals in *Patita*, *Baadbaan*, *Aulad*, *Samaj* and *Adhikar* rank among her best. In *Bala Jo Jo Re*, she acted the three stages of womanhood—as a school girl, wife and mother with consummate skill. Equally memorable was her portrayal of a gypsy street-acrobat in *Jashas Tasen*. Her other important films are *Kalyan Khajina*, *Madhosh*, *Daag*, *Dost*, *Nasibdar* (Gujarati) and others. Her rendering of the lavanis in *Kanchan Ganga* and *Jashas Tasen* was in a class by itself.

Her other notable pictures include *Awaz*, *Anban*, *Bahu*, *Jeevan Sathi*, *Dushman*, and the Marathi hits, *Shikleli Baiko* and *Kanyadan*. Her recent films include *Nazrana*, *Dil Bhi Tera*, *Hum Bhi Tera*, *Amrit Manthan*, *Kabuliwala* and the Gujarati hit *Mendi Rang Lagyo*.

When she was young, her favourite stars were Khurshid and Motilal. "I owe a deep debt of gratitude to Shri Amiya Chakrabarty who has been mainly responsible for my success on the screen," she says paying a tribute to the late Amiya who was her very first director in Hindi pictures.

In the midst of her busy working schedule, she has maintained a live contact with her social surroundings and she has always been conscious of her domestic duties. Stardom and fame have not made her swollen-headed nor

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Usha Kiron as a child.

does she make a fetish of her achievements. She does not swank about in costly saris and hardly wears any jewellery. At parties and functions, she is again the same modest, simple woman. Thus in her behaviour and outlook, she appears the typical middle-class Maharashtra house-wife. Her marriage with Dr. Manohar B. Kher, a leading medical practitioner of Bombay and a smart, charming gentleman with polished manners, on May 23, 1954 had no tinsel dazzle of a glamour-girl's wedding. In their newly-occupied home at Bandra, Usha and her husband live with the austere simplicity of a middle-class family. She is a good linguist and has a good command over English, Hindi, Marathi, Gujarati, Tamil and Bengali.

They have a smart boy (born on June 22, 1957) whom they have named Adwait.

In 1956, she was invited as a delegate to the Sixth International Theatre Congress held at Yugoslavia. She took that opportunity to visit many important places in Europe. In this capacity, she made a valuable contribution to the deliberations of the Congress.

Since her entry into films, she has played a variety of roles from comedy to tragedy, from a heroine to a vamp and from a mythical goddess to a realistic social-heroine with equal artistry. A conscious artist, a devoted daughter and a loving house-wife, Usha has achieved a lot in the world of histrionics and bids fair to rise to bigger heights with her sincerity of purpose and her capacity for hard work.





## VYJAYANTIMALA

**A**MONG the most dazzling additions to screen, Vyjayantimala has hit a new high. She has literally danced her way to success. Often described as filmdom's tantalising 'It girl', Vyjayantimala has thrilled film audiences with her bubbling youth and her elasticity of form. Today, she is among the most sought-after stars of the silver screen.

Vyjayanti's greatest assets are her well-shaped youthful figure and her mastery over dancing. Though she took film-world by storm through her very first appearance on screen in A.V.M.'s *Bahar*, she had not originally decided to take up films as a career. Her main interest was dancing and even today dancing does claim her priority of attention over film-acting.

Often described as Kalasahitya Saraswati Kumari Vyjayantimala by her ardent admirers from South, Vyjayanti belongs to a reputed family of Mysore. Daughter of the famous star of the South, Vasundhara Devi, she was born on August 13, 1933. From her childhood she was trained in various schools of dancing. Bharat Natyam is her forte and she started learning it from Vazhuvoor Ramaiah Pillai. She is also the disciple of Shri K. N. Dandayudhapani Pillai, a well-known maestro of classical dancing who is known all over South India and who is associated with the well-known Kalakshetra of Adyar, Madras.

Her dancing ideal in her days was the accomplished Bharat Natyam dancer Pandanallur Jayalakshmi. But Vyjayanti was not satisfied by mastering only a particular school of dance art and, therefore, she underwent intensive training in three other schools of classical dancing.

**S**HE started appearing in dance recitals at a very early age and drew appreciative audiences. At the very tender age of six, in 1939, she accompanied her mother and grandmother on a Continental tour. She visited the Vatican and was given an audience by the Pope. She gave a dancing performance and won a gold medal for it from the Pope. After her school career as well as the intensive training in dancing, she undertook a dancing-tour of over a hundred important centres in South and won great applause. Director M. V. Raman, an old family friend, was so much impressed with her dancing performance at Gokhale Hall, Madras, that he decided to cast her in his new picture. Director Raman had seen and admired her dance-recitals on previous occasions also, but Vyjayanti's exhibition of the Marwari folk dance captivated him so much that he straightaway offered her a role in A.V.M.'s *Life*, which was titled *Jeevitham* in Telugu and *Bahar* in Hindi. The role of the



Vyjayantimala as she appeared in her first Hindi picture, A.V.M.'s "Bahar"

dancing heroine suited her to finger tips and provided an ideal vehicle for her dancing talents.

AFTER the success of the Tamil and Telugu versions in the South, its Hindi version *Bahar* made her famous all over India. Her fresh-as-flower-petal personality and the gay abandon with which she acquitted herself throughout the picture were enthusiastically applauded by film audiences. Thus the star discovery of Director M. V. Raman proved a sure-fire-hit as did the picture *Bahar*. With her very first screen appearance, Vyjayantimala leapt into the limelight of nationwide fame.

Offers of roles came to her a-plenty. She has played the dancing heroine in many pictures, the notable among them being Sunrise Pictures' *Anjam*, Jayant Desai's *Miss Mala*, Jagat Pictures' *Peheli Jhalak*, Hindustan Arts' *Jashan*, A.V.M.'s *Ladki* and Filmistan's sensational box-office hit *Nagin*.

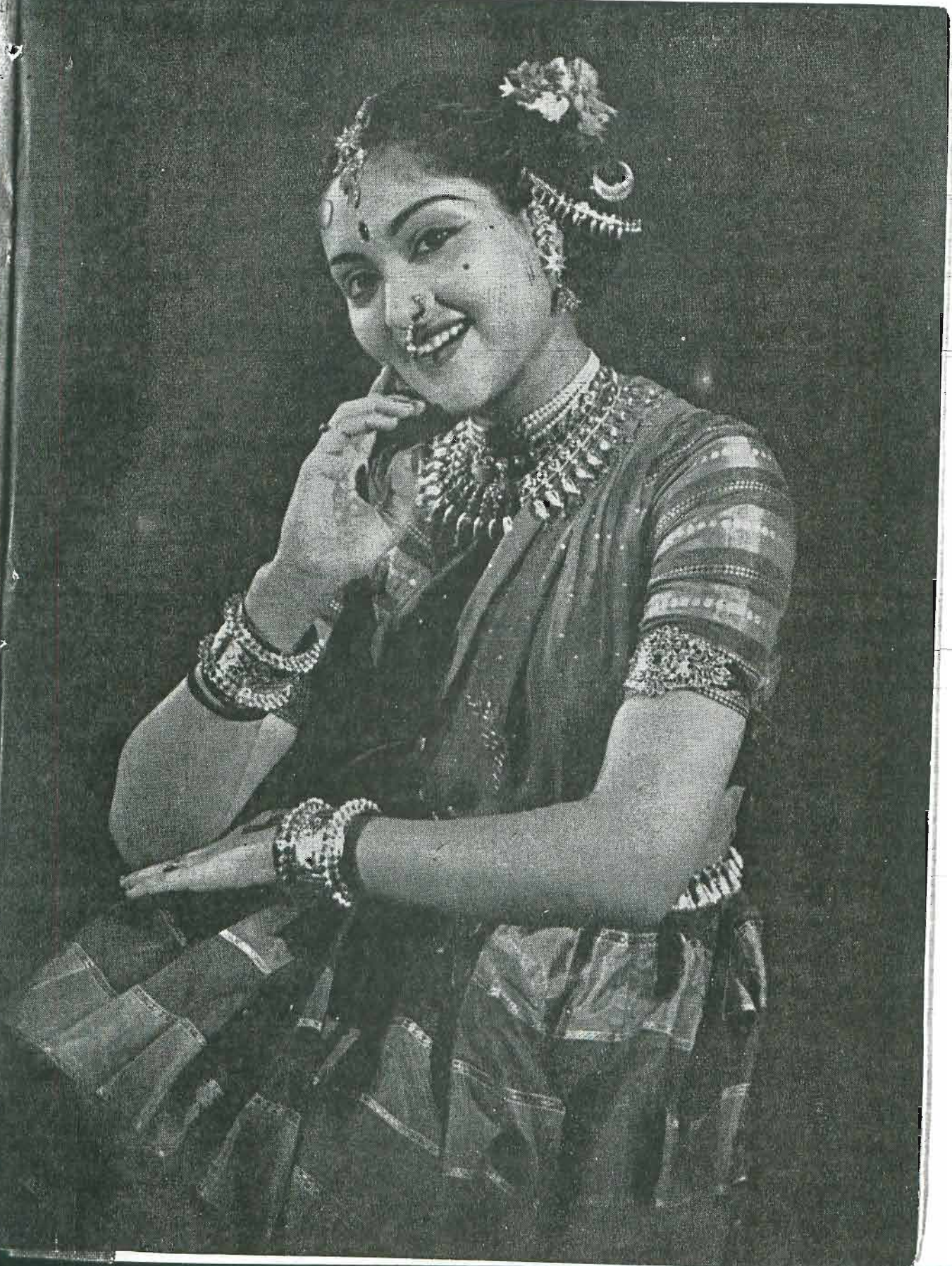
She has reached the top rung of the ladder by her captivating performances. Her other acting triumphs include *Devdas*, *Aasha*, *Kathputli*, *Devta*, *Raj Tilak*, *New Delhi*, *Patrani*, *Naya Daur*, *Madhumati*, *Sadhana*, *Amar Deep* and *Paigham*. Her work in B. R. Chopra's *Sadhana* has won her the Filmfare Award for 1959. Her recent films include *Nazrana*, *College Girl*, *Aas ka Panchhi* and *Gunga Jumna*.

Her recent dancing tour of Europe proved a thumping success.

As a child she had no particular fascination for the screen. After matriculating with distinction in English, in 1948, she wanted to take up an academic career but strange indeed are the ways of Dame Fortune. Her entry into films came to her somewhat as a surprise. Of course, she remembers that as a child she has acted in the concerts of her school. Her performance as Prince Charming in the play *Cinderella* was admired by pupils, teachers and audiences alike.

Vyjayanti started her dance career under the loving care of her grandmother Shrimati Yadugiri Devi who is her inseparable guide and companion. Vyjayanti has received a good deal of encouragement from her father Shri M. D. Raman whose well-brought out journal on dancing, *Natyamala*, has helped her a lot in putting forth her ideas before the public.

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She is very fond of sports. When in school, she played table-tennis, badminton and other games. In 1948, she won a table-tennis championship in Madras in partnership with Gool Nasikwala, the famous table-tennis star of Bombay. She speaks English, Tamil, Telugu, Kannada and Hindi with remarkable fluency. She reads a lot and her favourite subject is mystery novels.

**B**EFORE joining the screen, she was very fond of films and used to see lots of pictures. Even today, she is an ardent film-goer but mostly sees foreign pictures. Her favourite is the late Tyrone Power. In her pre-film days, she had great admiration for Ashok Kumar and Devika Rani.

Though she is far from being superstitious, her devotion to Hanuman, the monkey God of Ramayan era, is indeed noteworthy. When she was a child, she wanted to buy an idol of Hanuman but could not decide about the size and pose of the idol. Then, one night, she saw Lord Hanuman in her dream and He advised her to buy an idol of the size and form in which He appeared before her in the dream. She followed the advice faithfully and ever since then she keeps the idol with her. She believes Hanuman to be her protecting deity and attributes to Him her success and also the escapes from difficulties.