

MIC DROP MAN
THE LEGEND CALLED
Mohammad Rafi

MANOJ TANDON



BlueRoseONE^{.com}
Stories Matter

New Delhi • London

BLUEROSE PUBLISHERS

India | U.K.

Copyright © Manoj Tandon 2025

All rights reserved by author. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise, without the prior permission of the author. Although every precaution has been taken to verify the accuracy of the information contained herein, the publisher assumes no responsibility for any errors or omissions. No liability is assumed for damages that may result from the use of information contained within.

BlueRose Publishers takes no responsibility for any damages, losses, or liabilities that may arise from the use or misuse of the information, products, or services provided in this publication.



For permissions requests or inquiries regarding this publication,
please contact:

BLUEROSE PUBLISHERS
www.BlueRoseONE.com
info@bluerosepublishers.com
+91 8882 898 898
+4407342408967

ISBN: 978-93-7310-310-5

Cover design: Daksh
Typesetting: Tanya Raj Upadhyay

First Edition: December 2025

Dedication

Grandkids Kiaan, Kiash, Pranvi and Kashya – For whom my heart beats...

Parents Prabha and Manmohan Nath Tandon – The Gods I pray to

Kids Gaurish, Ekaanshi, Madhav Aishwarya and Tanya – The people I draw strength from

My wife, Chhavi – without her, my life would be worthless and meaningless.... I may not be the best husband a wife can have, but she is the best wife a man can get....

How Is the Book Organised?

When I sat down to write this book, I almost immediately realised that there is so much to talk about Rafi Sahab from different perspectives that the book needs to be carefully organised, or there is a high chance of the reader going all over the place and getting confused.

Kissa Goi or Kissa is a word of ancient times used by the nobility. It essentially means story, anecdote or tale.

Instead of dividing this book in Chapters etc., I have divided this book in Parts and Kissa.

Each Kissa talks about one facet or one incident or one perspective about Rafi Sahab.

These Kissa's have been clubbed together to highlight one of the five parts of the life of Rafi Sahab viz:

Part 1: General Introduction of Rafi Sahab

Part 2: Rafi Sahab as a singer

Part 3: Rafi Sahab as a human being

Part 4: Peers talk about Rafi Sahab

Part 5: Summary, Closing and the end

Each of the above Parts have multiple Kisse within them to highlight that part of Rafi Sahab's life.

Hope you will enjoy reading them as I have enjoyed writing them.

Thank you note

This book would not have been completed without the untiring help of Pooja Gupta and Nisha Gupta.

The research, discussions on various aspects, and the continuous work that went into writing this book would not have been possible without their brilliant dedication and commitment.

Pooja is also a budding author, and I am quite sure that soon her name will be talked about in the world of authors. My best wishes to her.

अल्लाह-अल्लाह रफ़ी की आवाज़
रूहे-महमूदो-जान-ए-बज़्मे-अयाज
उसकी हर तान, उसकी हर लय पर
बजने लगते थे खुद दिलों के साज़।।

गायकी है हुस्न-ए-फ़न तेरा रफ़ी
तेरे फ़न पे हम सभी को नाज़ है
तेरे शाहकोरों ने समझाया हमें
ज़िदगानी प्यार का इक साज़ है
मेरी सरगम में भी तेरा जिक्र है
मेरे गीतों में भी तेरी आवाज है
गूँजते हैं तेरे नगमों से अमीरी के महल
झोपड़ी में भी गरीबों के तेरी आवाज है

**अपनी मौसीक़ी पे सबको फ़ख़ होता है मगर
मेरे साथी आज मौसीक़ी को तुझ पर नाज़ है**

शख़्सियत दिल नवाज़ रखता था
क्या गले में गुदाज़ रखता था
अपने हों या पराये सब के लिए
दिल का दरवाज़ा बाज रखता था
कभी इस पार और कभी उस पार
बहती नदिया था उसका हर आकार
याद करते हैं सब मिशालों में
उसका वह चेहरा उसका वह किरदार

कभी बरछी कभी कटार था वह
गीत संगीत की बहार था वह
इश्क़ और प्रेम उसका था पैगाम
दिल की दुनिया का राज़दार था वह
मुस्कराती नज़र चुराये हुए
चल दिया हक़ से लौ लगाये हुए
हश्र तक लोग गाये जायेंगे
जो तराने हैं उसके गाये हुए

महफिलों के दामनों में साहिलों के आस-पास
यह सदा गूंजेगी सदियों तक दिल के आस-पास
मोहम्मद रफ़ी, मोहम्मद रफ़ी, मोहम्मद रफ़ी

----- Naushad, Music Director

सलाम -इ -रफ़ी, तुझे लाखों सलाम,
हमेशा रहेगा तेरा जग में नाम
बहुत से यहाँ खुश गुलो आएंगे,
ना वह तेरे िन तक पहुँच पाएंगे
ज़माना हो चाहे ककसी मोड पर,
लबों पे तेरी गीत ही आएंगे
हर एक दौर में होगा तेरा मक़ाम,
हमेशा रहेगा तेरा जग में नाम...

-Ravi Music Director

Preface and Introduction

Why Should You Read this Book?

Before we deep dive into the book, I must share with the reader my reasons for why I decided to write this book.

It is important because unless you understand my motivation, the reader (especially of today's world/generation) will not be able to appreciate what Rafi Sahab was, why is he considered to be an all-time great of playback singing and most importantly why is Rafi important in today's highly commercialised, dog eat dog world where ambition (more often than not) drives the profession (s) rather than pure class and quality.

Once the readers have gone through the book, they will realise that sometimes when the capability and competence of a person transcend the normal human boundaries, when the person (through sheer dint of his hard work) goes beyond the normal human capability/capacity, words like number 1, the best, outstanding etc become meaningless.

If some of the readers have read the famous book "Jonathan Livingston Seagull" by Richard Bach, they would realise that Rafi Sahab was like that famous seagull who keeps working on his abilities till his singing goes beyond what a normal human being is capable of.

I am not an expert in music, either in singing or playing musical instruments. So, who am I to write a book on Rafi Sahab? It's simple: I don't have to be God to write about God because if that were the case, no religious book would have ever been written!!

I wanted to write this book because in the modern world of "use and throw", performers come and go in no time, where the audience memory is very short and attention span even more so, where allegedly manipulation, politics, pandering etc. to the lowest level of human desires is the name of the game.... Rafi Sahab was diametrically opposite of everything "supposed" to be required for success. He was a simple man, a beautiful human being and the world's greatest singer, and I wanted to elaborate on this to today's reader.

By the way, there is nothing original about this book. This book is a collection of some incidents and some commentary from Rafi Sahab's life. Incidents

that will give the readers a glimpse into what he was as a singer, professional and human being.

It is just a collection of all the happenings I have ever heard about Rafi Sahab—heard, as in read, saw videos, had conversations about, and so on.

Can I vouch 100 % for the veracity or accuracy of everything? no, I cannot. However, they point towards “something” ...and THAT “something” is more important...

Rafi Sahab, his songs, his singing, the humane side of his personality, his simplicity, and his overall persona seem to be the solid proof of the saying...

“Nice but hard-working, dedicated and people who are geniuses at their work can also win...because they take their work to a level where others, despite trying every **good, bad, ugly or dirty trick in the book, are unable to catch up**”

I welcome you to sit back, relax, and sip a cup of tea as you enjoy the experience called Mohammad Rafi...

Table of Contents

PART 1: Introducing Rafi Sahab	1
Rafi Sahab—An Overview and Dedication	2
Make the heavens happier, Rafi Sahab; meanwhile, we will listen to your songs and manage... Music, Playback Singing	6
How Did It All Begin?	7
Kissa – Rafi Sahab, The Beginning	13
PART 2: Rafi Sahab – The Singer	15
Kissa – Naushad Sahab kee Atthani	16
Kissa – O Duniya ke Rakhwale.....	19
Kissa – "Huyi Shaam Unka Khayal Aaya, Vahi Zindagi Ka Sawal Aa Gaya,"	20
Kissa – Javed Akhtar Sahab and His First Experience with Rafi Sahab's Singing	21
Kissa – Do You Know Who Sang India's Best Bhajans?	23
Kissa – Desire for perfection 24*7	24
Kissa – Tansen of Hindi Cinema	26
Kissa – His commitment and preparation	28
Kissa – Tareef Karoon Kya Uski Jisne Tumhe Banaya.....	30
Kissa – Din Dhal Jaye	32
Kissa – Ae Diwane Dil, Chal Kaheen Door Nikal Jayen	34
Kissa – The Genius of Rafi Saab	36
Kissa – Creativity thy Name is Rafi	38
Kissa – The Grace and Humility of Mohammed Rafi	40
Kissa – Rafi Sahab, Rishi Kapoor and Madan Mohan	41
Kissa – A Legendary Moment at the Airport	43
Kissa – Music Director Ravi Talks	44
Kissa – Unique Ability of Rafi Sahab	48
Kissa – From Gumnaam to Global Fame the Journey of "Jaan	

Pehchaan Ho"	60
Kissa – Rafi Sahab’s Voice Range	63
PART 3: Rafi Sahab – The Human Being	68
Kissa – Rafi Sahab (The Secular Man) ISKCON Temple	69
Kissa – Invitation from Teen Murti	71
Kissa – Replaced the Driver, Left Side Car, Bought Him a Taxi	73
Kissa – Would Never Count Money	74
Kissa – When He Sang for the First Time with a Music Director	75
Kissa – The Dialysis Machine	76
Kissa – Always Acknowledge the One Who Comes to Your Door	77
Kissa – Always Fair.....	79
Kissa – People Take Advantage of the Nicest of People	81
Kissa – The Quiet Generosity	83
Kissa – You Are a Greater Human Being than I am	84
Kissa- Selfless help	87
Kissa – What a Beautiful Human Being	88
Kissa – His Team- a Family	89
Kissa – Rafi Sahab- the Family Man	93
Kissa – A Typical Day in the Life of Rafi Sahab	101
Kissa – The Autograph	103
Kissa – Never Letting Anyone Down	106
Kissa – Rafi Sahab ‘A Farishta’	108
Kissa – An Inspiring Fan Story	111
Kissa – From the gate to the studio	112
Kissa – The Chanaa Jor Garam	114
Kissa – A True Performer	115
Kissa – Rafi Sahab’s Playful Side	116
Kissa – Rafi Sahab in Cycle Rickshaw	117
Kissa – Rafi Saab on and off the Mike	118

PART 4: Peers Talk	120
Kissa – The Unique Friendship of Rafi Sahab and Manna Dey	121
Kissa – When the Chela Met Guru	124
Kissa – Tera Rafi Kharab Ho Gya Kya?	127
Kissa – Wo Sirf Rafi Sahab Hi Hain	129
Kissa – The Words Rhythming Themselves- Dilraj Kaur	131
Kissa – Uttam Singh Remembers	134
Kissa – S.P. Balasubramaniam on Rafi Sahab	136
Kissa – CNN Poll when the Fans spoke up	138
Kissa – Suresh Wadkar – On Rafi Sahab	139
Kissa – Rafi Sahab, the Concert Master	141
PART 5: Summary, Closing and the END	143
Kissa – Temples in the Name of Rafi Sahab...	144
Kissa – The Voice Immortalized Into Research	146
Kissa – Mohd. Rafi is the Greatest, Scientific Research Proves	148
Kissa – Bharat Ratna	150
Kissa – The only constant thing in life is change.....	153
Kissa – The Moment I Lost My Voice	155
Kissa – The End	157

Part 1: Introducing Rafi Sahab

Rafi Sahab—An Overview and Dedication

31st July 1980 was a very very very sad day in the world of music - the God of playback singing, Mohammad Rafi Sahab, passed away.

The year 2025 is very special; this is the year when, if Rafi Sahab were alive, he would have completed 100 years. This is the 100th year since the God of the Universe sent the God of playback singing to the Earth to show us what singing is all about.

All his fans remember him on this day, as we do when we listen to his songs daily.

I am sure many of you who don't go very deep into music must be thinking, Why am I calling him Khuda/God? Am I just a crazy fan, or is there more to his singing than just regular playback singing?

Today, let me talk about two BIG reasons why I almost worship him. One, Rafi as a singer and two, Rafi as a human being.

Let's start with playback singing. Playback singing has many levels:

1. Level 1 (Sur and Taal): Typically, all singers who sing as playback singers in movies have this. One cannot become a playback singer unless the singer has mastered these basics.
2. Level 2: This is the ability to sing in different octaves, keeping level 1 intact. Think of songs like "Aasman se aaya farishta" by Rafi Sahab in "An Evening in Paris". That is singing in a high octave, keeping Level 1 intact. Think "Aaj ki raat, ye kaisi raat ki humko neend nahi aati" by Rafi Sahab. That is singing in a very low octave, again keeping Level 1 intact.
3. Level 3: Being able to sing different types of songs, keeping levels 1 and 2 intact. Different types could be romantic, sad, happy, fun, bhajans, classical, Qawwali, etc.

4. Level 4: Being able to sing for the actor for whom you are supposed to be giving playback. For example, think of when Rafi Sahab sang for Shammi Kapoor (e.g., "Badan pe Sitare") vis-à-vis when he sang for Dilip Kumar ("Mere paire mein ghunghroo bandhade to phir meri chhal dekhle"). In both cases, Rafi Sahab sings very differently. The Dilip Kumar song is a Holi song (a high-energy festival), but unlike Shammi Kapoor, Dilip Kumar was a low-key actor, so Rafi Sahab adjusted his singing style to be low-key so that it did not look odd when Dilip Kumar enacted it on the screen.

I hope by now you have gotten a high-level feel of how the playback singing ladder is.

Now, think of all the singers in the world (I am not talking about India only), and you will NOT find a single singer except Rafi Sahab who could exhibit all four levels (detailed above) and at the same time could sing romantic, sad, happy, fun, bhajans, classical, qawwali etc. with aplomb and be the best compared to all the singers.

Confused? Let me explain by giving some examples. Manna Dey was a great singer, but he could not do all the nuances of levels 3 and 4. Perhaps his voice did not suit all types of songs. Kishore Kumar was a grand master of fun, romance and sad songs, but if one were to think if he has done any bhajans, qawwalis, or classical-based songs, it would be tough to find an example. Think Mukesh - great in sad and philosophical songs, maybe in some light songs, but even he could not do most of the types.

Think of anyone - you won't find an equivalent, even in the most successful ones.

BTW, all the names I have mentioned above were for sure greats, but in their own styles.

Go overseas and think of Eric Clapton, Elvis Presley, Nat King Cole, BB King, or anyone else - you will not find any singer who could do all types of songs.

Think of the singers that have come since then, you won't find one singer who could do what Rafi Sahab could do.

Now, let me give you some more evidence of what I am saying.

The biggest praise one can get is what one gets from peers (because you are their competition). Let's see what some of his peers had to say about Rafi Sahab:

1. Manna Dey: Jo koi nahi gaa sakta, woh Rafi gaa sakta hai (What nobody can sing, Rafi can). Mahendra Kapoor: I learned my music by listening to him. I am a playback singer now, and I still keep learning by listening to Rafi Sahab
2. Pandit Jasraj: I cannot sing what Rafi sings, and he cannot sing what I can. However, if Rafi practices as much classical singing as I do, he will be able to sing like me, but even if I practice as much playback singing as he does, I cannot sing like him.
3. Shammi Kapoor: Shammi Shammi naa hota agar Rafi Rafi naa hota.
4. In a tribute to Mohammed Rafi's unmatched talent and versatility as a gifted artist, the late Mohamad Vayid, well well-known critic and fan of the playback singer, captured the essence of Rafi Sahab's uniqueness as an artist in his personal diary. He wrote: "For the uninitiated, "Vayid wrote, "to realise the stature of Mohammed Rafi as a singer, he must mix on Lanza, two Sinatras, four Beatles and half a dozen Presley, shake them together, add a dash of Scotto (Vincent), three beats of Berlin (Irving), twenty bars of Rodgers and Hammerstein and serve with some melody of Litz and Chopin... And he will still not have achieved the complete formula that explains Rafi because the tenderness of the Sitar and the exquisite harmony of the ragaas are missing from this composition."

5. Sonu Nigam: He considers Rafi Sahab to be his musical father.

And the Ultimate from Naushad Sahab...

“Aise bahut singers huey jinki mausiqi par hum sabko naaz hai..lekin Rafi ek akela singer hai jis par khud mausiqi ko naaz hai" ("There have been many singers whose music we are proud of, but Rafi is the only singer of whom music itself is proud.")

Now, the above is a great testament to both Rafi Sahab, these singers and people associated with music. It takes a very big heart to say the kind of things they have said (so salute to them as well).

But let me turn towards the second reason why I respect Rafi Sahab so much.

Rafi Sahab was very successful. He was also very rich. By some very very loose estimates, based on his fees from singing over the years, by today's standards, he would be worth around 300 to 400 crores.

That's a lot of money, considering that the above number is only for singing fees.

He was also a man with taste and desires; he had some 18 cars (mostly imported) and 10 odd houses/flats, including one in London.

But do you know that it is also estimated that he used around 100 crores of this money to help educate poor girls all over India?

Let me give you one example - six months after he had passed away, an old man came to Rafi's mansion and asked for Rafi Sahab. His family told him that Rafi Sahab had passed away. This man became distraught. On asked why he was crying, he said that Rafi Sahab used to pay the fees of his two daughters, and now, since he has not received any money for the past few months, his daughters will not be able to complete their education. This man had come from a city 1,000 km away. Rafi Sahab's family took care of him and made sure that enough money was given for the school fees.

Such was this man...a genius singer and someone with a heart of gold.
A grandmaster of playback singing with the personality of a saint.

He was a poor tailor's son, born in a village in Pakistan, grew up in Amritsar, and stayed in a chawl in Bhindi Bazaar in the early part of his life

And

went on to RULE the world of music. But when his turn to rule came, he used one-third of his massive wealth to educate girls all over India (The feminist movement, Girl Child, etc., were not even slogans back then).

That was Mohammad Rafi.

He died at the young age of 55 because of a heart attack; the entire film industry was at his funeral. By one estimate, approximately 1 million people were in his Janaza (funeral procession).

It was raining heavily in Mumbai, almost as if even the Gods were paying homage to him.

As someone said, Rafi Sahab was sent by God to this earth so that ordinary humans could get some entertainment. But God soon realised that he/she was getting bored instead, so he called Rafi back. Now, the heavens are happier!

Make the heavens happier, Rafi Sahab; meanwhile, we will listen to your songs and manage... Music, Playback Singing

How Did It All Begin?

Before we open the chapters on Rafi Sahab, the maestro of playback singing, let me take you on a journey back to the origins of Indian cinema and Music, including playback singing, tracing its evolution and the transformative milestones that shaped its legacy.

To truly understand his genius, we must appreciate the path paved by those early pioneers—the silent storytellers, the daring innovators, and the voices that taught India to dream through song.

The Silent Era (1913- 1930s)-A New Dawn.

It all began with the vision of Dadasaheb Phalke, the man whose dreams gave birth to Indian cinema.

Known as the Father of Indian Cinema, Phalke's pioneering work culminated in the creation of Raja Harishchandra (1913), India's first full-length feature film.

Imagine the scene: a small theatre with a flickering screen, where people sat mesmerised, their eyes glued to the larger-than-life images.

Raja Harishchandra was silent—there was no dialogue, no background music, only intertitles to narrate the story. Yet, the audience wept, laughed, and held their breath as the drama unfolded.

It was a testament to the universal power of storytelling. Families crowded into theatres, and even those who didn't understand the language or the art form were drawn by the magic on screen.

Imagine their reaction to seeing the pictures move, walk, and dance on screen for the first time.

During this era, live orchestras often accompanied screenings, providing music that added emotion to the silent visuals.

Slowly, regional cinema began to bloom, with silent films emerging in Bengali, Tamil, and other languages. Films like Lanka Dahan (1917),

Bilwamangal (1919), and Devdas (1928) carried forward this legacy, each one touching the hearts of its viewers in profound ways.

India always had a deep-rooted tradition of music and storytelling. The cultural heritage of using music, dance, and dialogue in traditional forms like Ramleela, Kathakali, and folk plays aligned perfectly with the idea of sound in cinema. This connection would soon become the backbone of Indian cinema, carrying its traditions into the age of sound.

Early Talkies (1930s- 1940s): Giving Cinema a Voice

Then came a breakthrough; Indian cinema experienced a groundbreaking moment with *Alam Ara* (1931), directed by Ardeshir Irani.

This was India's first "talkie," a film that introduced synchronised sound to storytelling.

For the first time, audiences heard the actors speak—and sing. The film included seven songs, with "De De Khuda Ke Naam Pe" being the first recorded song in Indian cinema, sung by Wazir Mohammed Khan. The inclusion of music became an instant success. Music became an inseparable part of Indian films, touching hearts and setting a precedent that continues to this day.

The journey to achieving this cinematic milestone, however, was far from easy. Irani faced numerous technological and financial challenges in bringing sound to Indian cinema.

In an interview, Irani himself recounted the hurdles:

"Rustom Bharucha and I picked up the rudiments of recording from Mr. Deming, a foreign expert who had come to Bombay to assemble the machine for us. He was charging Rs. 100 per day—a colossal sum at the time, one we could barely afford. So, I took it upon myself to handle the recording of the film with Bharucha's help."

This determination and resourcefulness paid off, etching Irani's name into history as the man who revolutionised Indian cinema.

People from all walks of life began flocking to theatres.

Young lovers found themselves humming romantic melodies, while elders nodded in appreciation of songs that reflected their values and traditions. Films like *Indra Sabha* (1932), which featured a staggering 70 songs, demonstrated how music could expand the emotional canvas of cinema.

The Invention of Playback Singing: A Revolution Starts

Before playback singing, actors performed songs live during filming, a technically challenging and limiting process. This changed in 1935 when pre-recorded songs were used for the first time in *Dhoop Chhaon* (directed by Nitin Bose), introducing playback singing. Imagine the amazement of audiences as they watched characters sing with flawless voices, backed by beautifully orchestrated music. The song “Main Khush Hona Chahun,” sung by Suprava Sarkar, Parul Ghosh and Uma Shashi Devi, was a revelation. Music directors R. C. Boral and Pankaj Mullick pioneered this innovation, setting the stage for playback singing to become a defining feature of Indian cinema.

Playback singing soon became a hallmark of Indian films, giving rise to legendary voices like K. L. Saigal and Mohammed Rafi Sahab, shaping the musical landscape of Indian cinema for generations.

Consequently, songs soon became an integral part of Hindi films, reflecting the deep-rooted connection between music and storytelling in Indian culture.

Now, allow me to flash the light to the other corner of history; during the evolution of Indian cinema in the early 20th century, which was also the crucial time for India's freedom struggle and social reform movements.

Films like *Achhut Kanya* (1936) dared to address caste discrimination, offering a poignant call for equality that resonated with Gandhi's message.

World War II and its aftermath saw Indian cinema addressing themes of patriotism and social change.

Directors like V. Shantaram and Debaki Bose began incorporating nationalist undertones in their films.

In 1942, Gandhi's call for the British to leave India gained widespread support. Meanwhile, Indian cinema continued to evolve, with films like *Kismet* (1943), which contained subtle anti-British sentiments, becoming a massive success.

The song "Door Hato Ae Duniya Walo" became an anthem of resistance; those songs inspired ordinary people to dream of a free India and to believe in a brighter tomorrow.

Even today, when these songs are sung in schools or cultural gatherings, they bring back the echoes of a time when cinema was a tool for change.

Indian cinema and its music thus grew not in isolation but as part of a larger cultural and political awakening, mirroring and contributing to the spirit of the freedom struggle.

Some of the readers must have heard stories of the radio from their grandparents, as to how listening to the radio became a sacred ritual, a gathering place for families and friends.

Programs like *Binaca Geetmala* or special film music hours were moments of magic.

People would huddle close, their ears pressed to the speakers, hearts pounding with excitement as the announcer teased, "And now, the latest song from the much-awaited film..."

As the melody began, a collective hush would fall. Each note was savoured, each lyric memorised as though it were a treasure to be preserved. The crackling sound of the radio didn't matter—it was the gateway to something pure, something deeply personal.

In those early days, songs were more than sound; they were moments of connection, woven into the very fabric of life. A romantic duet might echo the unspoken words of a lover, while a soulful ghazal becomes a friend in solitude. People sang these songs while working in the fields, while walking home at dusk, or even while dreaming of distant aspirations.

Playback singing was not just a technical innovation; it was a bridge between the story on screen and the emotions in the audience's hearts. It elevated songs from mere moments in a film to universal experiences that could be carried into everyday life.

Let me explain the role of playback singing in Indian films.

I am sure you know this, but any Film has a plot, a story and a screenplay.

The plot is a one-page synopsis of the story of the film. As an example, when you see a book, you would notice that on the back cover and in the foreword, you would see a page/couple of paragraphs which talk at a very high level about the book and its theme. That is the plot.

The story is the detailing of the plot wherein the writer breaks down the plot into smaller parts and then details them. The story is when the plot comes to life for a reader.

Lastly, if one has to make a movie or a web series out of it, the writer converts the story into a screenplay.

A screenplay is a written work for a film, television show, or other moving media that expresses the movement, actions and dialogue of characters. Screenplays, or scripts, are the blueprint for the movie. A screenplay is written in a specific format to distinguish between characters, action lines, and dialogue.

In Indian movies, there is another critical element of a movie, and it is the songs. Songs come at specific places in the movie

Songs are inserted to capture the mood of a scene—be it delight, love, grief, passion, fear, etc. The words are carefully worked out to fit in

with the plot and characters, digging deep into the human spirit with emotions that are hard to put into words.

Songs, as someone said, summarise the feelings in 3-4 minutes, whereas dialogues would eat away 10-15 minutes of a regular screenplay. Making the movie crisper.

To understand it better, think of one 3-minute song between the hero and heroine of the movie, and their romance comes to life. They don't have to speak lengthy dialogues to express their love for each other.

So, you must be wondering why I am talking about this in a book on Rafi Sahab.

Think carefully, if you put on a Rafi song, close your eyes and listen, the whole atmosphere of the movie/song starts to float in front of your eyes.

As someone said, you could almost say that Rafi was not just a singer, he was an actor who conveyed feelings and meanings through his singing instead of dialogue.

A Rafi song could convey said and unsaid emotions. He goes on to say that with Rafi singing in the background, the actor did not need to act; he just had to ad-lib, and the audience would get all the intended emotions through Rafi Sahab's song.

It's a great way to explain the mastery of his craft.

With that as the background, let's go back to the subject of the book, Rafi Sahab....

Kissa – Rafi Sahab, The Beginning

Rafi Sahab was born in Kotla Sultan Singh, then a small village near Amritsar. In the initial part of his life, he did not show any specific inclination towards music. He was an ordinary, quiet, but disciplined student.

Before the partition, his family moved to Amritsar. His father opened a shop in one of the lanes of the city. Rafi Sahab, after school, used to come and sit with his father in his shop, helping him with his work.

During those days, a faqir used to come in that lane and used to sing soulful melodies as he walked, collecting alms. His songs had lyrics that spoke of the fleeting joys of Childhood in specific and life in general.

The words would go something like this:

Khedan de din char ni maye,

Khedan de din char...

(The days of play are but few, O mother; The days of play are but few...)

A young Rafi Sahab used to listen to him. Gradually, he started becoming so influenced by the music that he started walking behind the faqir. He would keep walking and listening to his singing till the time the faqir would leave his lane. And then, *Rafi would come back to his shop singing the same song. It became a daily routine.*

Slowly, everyone around him observed that his singing was improving day by day...

One of his cousin brothers noted this and requested his father to allow him to take Rafi to learn singing from the masters. His father reluctantly allowed it. Rafi Sahab started learning music from Ustad Abdul Wahid Khan, Pandit Jiwan Lal Mattoo and Firoze Nizami for almost a year.

In between, an interesting thing happened: there was a concert by the famous singer KL Sehgal. Just when the concert was about to begin, the power failed. Since the crowd was getting restless, Rafi Sahab's cousin, Brother, told the organisers that my younger brother is also a singer. why don't you let him sing till the time power comes? Reluctantly, the organisers agreed. Rafi came on the stage (all of 13 years old) and started singing. People were enthralled.

He kept singing till the time power came back. People listened happily. Amongst the audience was a Hindi Film Music Director. He told Rafi that whenever you are in Mumbai, meet me, and I will give you a song in a film to sing.

That was a small beginning of the making of history.

PART 2:

Rafi Sahab – The Singer

Kissa – Naushad Sahab kee Atthani

This is a story of the times when Rafi Sahab had just reached Mumbai. He used to live in a Chawl in Bhindi Bazar along with his elder cousin brother.

During his struggle days, in the early 40s, through a reference, he got an opportunity to sing in a chorus for a song whose music legendary Naushad was giving.

The chorus song was “Hindustan Ke Hum Hain” from the film “Pehle Aap (1944)”. The song was a stirring anthem meant to evoke the spirit of unity and pride during the time when the freedom struggle was at its peak. To capture the effect of soldiers marching in unison, Naushad Sahab had provided the chorus team with army boots and instructed them to march in place while singing, creating the rhythmic sound of soldiers marching.

They kept practising the whole day, but somehow Naushad was not happy. Finally, in the evening, Naushad said Let's call it a day and continue tomorrow.

When Naushad, after packing up, was coming out of the studio, he noticed that a young man was sitting on the bench outside the studio. Recognising him as one of the chorus singers, he said Miya ghar jao ab kal aana 9 baje.

The young man (Rafi Sahab) told him that he did not have the money to go back. He had thought that after today's recording, he would get paid, which would enable him to take the bus home. Naushad, feeling pity, gave him a 50 paisa coin (atthanni) and told him to take the bus home.

The next morning, when Naushad came to the studio at 8.45 am, he saw that the same young man was sitting on the same bench waiting for the studio to open.

He asked Miya Didn't you go home. The young man replied, Sir, I did go home but came early today so that I don't miss the practice.

Naushad was impressed. He took him inside.

Yesterday's unfinished recording finally got done. However, marching in Army boots was not easy. The singers had blisters and sore feet.

Fortunately, the recording went well, and the work was over. The young man collected his balance fees.

Yet, amidst the discomfort and pain, Rafi's face was still glowing with a huge smile of joy and satisfaction. His unwavering and pure smile was a testament to his profound love for music and his dedication to his craft.

Such commitment at that young age set him apart, even in the chorus. His willingness to endure any physical discomfort for the sake of art demonstrated his commitment and dedication.

When he was leaving, Naushad (impressed by his dedication and singing) stopped him and said that Naushad would consider giving him a solo song, but he had to prove himself worthy of it. Naushad gave him the lyrics and played the tune on his harmonium so that he could go home and practice.

After a week or so, Rafi Sahab met Naushad and sang the song as told. Naushad was very happy, and Rafi Sahab got his first solo song. The film was *Anmol Ghadi*, and the song was "*tera khilauna toota balak tera khilauna toota....*"

Rest, as they say, was history.

The most interesting bit of this happening.... Rafi Sahab was so overwhelmed by getting the 50 paisa coin from the great Naushad that he never used it (he had gone home walking and came in the morning the same way). He used to always keep that 50 paisa coin with him as his lucky charm.

It is said that the coin is still lying in his home in Mumbai, in his room in the display cabinet, which his son Shahidji maintains.

Amazing judgment from the great Naushad to judge Rafi Sahab's talent so quickly, and the amazing ability of Rafi Sahab to impress a man like Naushad in the first meeting itself.

Kissa – O Duniya ke Rakhwale.....

One day, the famous Naushad Sahab called Rafi and told him that for Baiju Bawra, there is a song which you will be singing, but it is a tough song to sing, so I want you to do a lot of practice before you come for the recording.

He explained the song to Rafi Sahab. The song was O Duniya Ke Rakhwale, sun dard bhare tere naale..He told him the lyrics, their nuances, etc.

The toughest part of the song was its ending, where the song goes gradually into the highest octave (saptak). The pitch rises from normal to high to higher and then finally to the highest...it was not easy, because the singer had to do this without missing a sur or voice cracking...

Rafi Sahab went home and, as was his habit, started doing daily Riyaz day after day.

After a week or so, he told Naushad Sahab that he was ready for recording, and the date was set.

On the day, after one or two practices, the recording started, and the song was recorded as planned to the satisfaction of Naushad Sahab.

It is said that when the song was over, Rafi Sahab had put so much effort into it that his vocal cords were swollen (inflamed) and had started bleeding.

Naushad Sahab, later in an interview, said that he is not sure about the bleeding bit, but he does know that the vocal cords were swollen to the extent that Rafi Sahab could not talk for the next 7-10 days.

He had to postpone all his recordings of that period, sat at home with a muffler around his neck, and spent his time taking medicines and recuperating.

Such was the dedication and devotion to his craft

Kissa – "Huyi Shaam Unka Khayal Aaya, Vahi Zindagi Ka Sawal Aa Gaya,"

This melody, from the superhit film Mere Humdum Mere Dost (1968), was written by the legendary lyricist Majrooh Sultanpuri and composed by the illustrious duo Laxmikant- Pyarelal.

The story behind its recording is a testament to the emotive power of Rafi Sahab's artistry.

During the recording, Rafi Sahab took everyone into the moment where a lover is deeply missing his beloved. Rafi Sahab sang this song in such a way, and it carried so much intensity and heartfelt sorrow that it mesmerised the entire team of musicians and technicians.

The music directors later reflected on this moment and how the song speaks of the evening, the time of day when memories of a lost love can weigh heaviest.

The song is a melody of late evening or night; however, you will be surprised to know that this masterpiece was recorded early in the morning because Rafi Sahab had other songs to record during the day.

If you listen to the song, you will realise that despite the early hour, Rafi Sahab's voice conveyed the fatigue and melancholy of twilight with such authenticity and depth that one could never guess the actual time of recording, could you?

Pyarelal Ji explains that as the recording was completed, everyone was so stunned and moved by the song that there was a pin-drop silence for a while in the studio.

No one wanted to speak; no words seemed adequate to break the spell of the moment Rafi Sahab had created.

The spellbinding experience of recording "Huyi Shaam Unka Khayal Aaya" remains a powerful reminder of the transformative power of music and the unmatched genius of Mohammed Rafi. The song continues to evoke deep emotions and timeless nostalgia in the hearts of listeners even today

Kissa – Javed Akhtar Sahab and His First Experience with Rafi Sahab's Singing

I heard this in a video from the great Shri Javed Sahab, where he was recounting his experience of Rafi Sahab.

He had gone to a music studio for a meeting. Since he became free earlier than expected, he was on his way out when suddenly he heard beautiful music coming out of a recording studio.

Curious, he went inside the studio. He saw that the famous Music Director duo Shanker Jaikishan were getting rehearsals done with the musicians for a song.

While Javed Sahab was enjoying the music, Rafi Sahab walked in (By the way, he was never late for the recordings; it was said that one could tune their watch by his arrival at the studio.

After a quick small talk, he got to business. The lyricist gave him the lyrics of the song. He promptly re-wrote them in Urdu (it is said that Rafi Sahab was most proficient in Urdu and Punjabi, so he used to write down his songs in either Urdu or Punjabi. He was not very comfortable in Hindi and was not very good in English.

After that, he requested Shankar Jaikishan to play the music of the song, which the orchestra did.

As the musicians were playing the music, Rafi Sahab sat quietly and listened with his eyes closed. In between, he would open his eyes, and make some notations where he had written the lyrics in Urdu and then again close his eyes.

When the song was over, he requested one more repeat, again, the same closed eyes, making notations was repeated.

This time, as the song got over, he opened his eyes and told Shankar Jaikishan and said, Let's do the take (meaning record the song).

During those days, in the middle of the recording area, there used to be a transparent glass-walled room. The singers would step into it, go to the microphone and sing. The musicians and the music directors were outside...playing the music while the music directors would sit next to the recording console.

This song was a duet with Sharda as his co-singer.

The music started, and Rafi Sahab started singing the *Mukhra* (the opening line); it was flawless (remember Rafi Sahab had not done any rehearsals for the song).

In between, when his line got over and Sharda started her *Antara* (Para), Rafi Sahab (feeling thirsty) walked a few steps back towards a jug where water was kept, poured the water into his glass, drank it and then walked back to his microphone.

By that time, Sharda's *Antara* was getting over, and Rafi Sahab had to pick up the song from there.

Javed Sahab says that Rafi Sahab calmly walked back to the mic and, without a blink, picked up from where Sharad had left the song and sang his lines... it was as perfect a transition as it is humanly possible. The song was recorded in one take.

Do you want to know which song it was...let me tell you...

The movie was the famous suspense horror film of the 60s, "Gumnam" starring Nanda and Manoj Kumar, and the song was "Jaane Chaman Shola Badan Pehlu Main aa Jao...".

Next time, when you listen to that song, close your eyes and imagine Rafi Sahab preparing for the song and then, in between leaving the mic and walking back to have water, etc, the fun and enjoyment will double.

Kissa – Do You Know Who Sang India’s Best Bhajans?

These days, secularism, religion, religious freedom, my religion, your religion, religious fundamentalism, etc., etc., etc. have become such common words that we hear them on social media, in the printed media, in the digital media, on TV, and God knows where else.

Everyone is an expert, and has an opinion and a solution to the problem....

Instead of talking about some big things, I just want to give you a beautiful example of real people, simple people who practised secularism. The 3 people I am talking about are Naushad Ali (the famous music composer), Shakeel Badayuni (the famous Shayar and lyricist) and Rafi Sahab.

The films were Kohinoor and Baiju Bawara. The songs... the iconic Mann Tadapat Hari Darshan ko Aaj and Madhuban main Radhika nache re...Both devotional Hindu bhajans.... considered to be milestones in Indian devotional songs.....

Do you know who wrote them, who gave music to them and who sang their heart out to make them what they are..... Shakeel, Naushad and Mohd. Rafi.....

Just stop here, assimilate, and absorb for 10 seconds what I have just told you...

All 3 were known to be devout Muslims, used to do namaz regularly, and were (as we call them today, Allah-fearing men), but look how beautiful a thought, music and melody they created for a Hindu Bhajan....

Wah bhai wah.... may there be more like you....

Kissa – Desire for perfection 24*7

This Kissa I had read somewhere during my research on Rafi Sahab.

Unfortunately, my mistake was that I did not save it, and hence, I don't remember the name of the music director who told this Kissa.

The music director recollects, the previous day, he had recorded a song with Rafi Sahab. The song was difficult, and Rafi Sahab had to do a lot of practice before the song was recorded.

The Music Director was finally satisfied, and the pack up was announced. He came back, happy and satisfied.

As it happens when one has finished a difficult task successfully, he was feeling on top of the world. He spent the evening with his family and finally went to sleep after dinner.

Suddenly, in the middle of the night, somewhere around 2-3 am, the call bell of his flat rang. Thinking that he must be dreaming, he ignored it. After some time, the bell rang again.

Muttering under his breath, he walked to the main door and opened the door to his flat. He was shocked; he saw a very unhappy Rafi Sahab standing there.

Surprised and also worried, he asked Rafi Sahab what had happened. It's midnight, hope everything is all right.

Rafi Sahab, in his soft voice, said Sir (he used to call even his junior people Sir), the song that we recorded yesterday.... I don't think I sang it very well.

After you approved the take, I went home. However, I couldn't stop thinking about it, and the more I think, I am feeling unhappy with myself. I don't think I did proper justice to it. When I was completely unable to sleep, I decided to come here.... Can we please re-record it?

The Music Director was stunned. Here was the biggest singer of the Indian Music Industry, in the middle of the night, had come all the way

from his home to meet me because he thought he could not get the perfection he aims for in each and every song that he sings...

The Music Director, completely floored, told him, that Rafi Sahab, Don't worry, we will re-record the song in the morning. Please go and sleep peacefully, and meet me at the studio tomorrow morning. When he reached the studio in the morning, Rafi Sahab was already there rehearsing...

The song was re-recorded, and Rafi Sahab did not charge any fees.

How many people do you know or have even heard of, who would aim such perfection in their craft...I don't. Do you?

Kissa – Tansen of Hindi Cinema

Whether Rafi Sahab had to sing for Dilip Kumar Sahab, who had a deep, soft and expressive voice perfectly captured in "Madhuban Mein Radhika Nache Re"

or

Dev Anand Sahab, who had a playful and suave voice, came alive in "Khoya Khoya Chand", where Rafi Sahab matched Dev Anand's signature head-shaking and charming persona;

or

had to sing a song in an energetic and exuberant tone for Shammi Kapoor, like "Tumse Acha kon hai"

or

contrast with Rajender Kumar's, who had a gentle and soothing tone, just like the song in "Mere Mehboob Tujhe"

Rafi Sahab had a remarkable ability to adapt his singing style to suit the unique personalities and tones of various actors.

Rafi Sahab's unparalleled versatility made him the ultimate voice of Hindi cinema's golden age.

During the radio era, before the advent of television and widespread movie theatres, when the songs of upcoming Films were played on the radio, people could identify the actor just by the style and tone of the songs in which Rafi Sahab had sung them.

The magic of his voice bridged the gap between cinema and audiences, enabling fans to imagine entire scenes from his emotive singing alone.

Music composer Jatin Pandit once remarked:

"After playback singing was introduced in Hindi Cinema,

K.L. Saigal was the first playback singer who gave it strong ground, but Rafi Sahab took it to the seventh cloud. To this day, no one has been able to reach that level.”

Renowned singer Sonu Nigam praised Rafi Sahab’s unparalleled emotive power:

"Even if someone does not understand the language or has never seen the song’s video, merely listening to his voice allows one to visualise the story, whether it’s a father giving away his daughter in marriage or a heartbroken lover mourning a lost partner”

Rajender Kumar said for Rafi Sahab, “There was the Tansen in Akbar’s time, and there is another in the Hindi Cinema.” If no one could touch a note, then only Rafi Sahab could reach that note.”

Rafi’s vocal prowess was so extraordinary that he could effortlessly reach musical notes that no one else dared to attempt—an ability that solidified his place as the eternal

Tansen of Hindi Cinema....

Kissa – His commitment and preparation

Sachin Pilgaonkar—you must have heard of him. A very talented actor, director, producer, writer, and singer, he has made significant contributions to the film industry. Sachin Pilgaonkar won his first National Award for Best Child Artist for his role in the 1962 Marathi film ‘Haa Maza Marg Ekla’ when he was just five years old.

During that era, musical shows often invited other artists to attract larger audiences and enhance the event's appeal. Sachin was invited to one such show of Rafi Sahab to be held in Kolkata.

Upon reaching the hotel, Sachin inquired about Mohammad Rafi's arrival, and he was informed that Rafi Sahab had already arrived the previous day.

Sachin thought that he would only be able to meet him at night during the show.

Later in the afternoon, while returning to his room after lunch for some rest before the show, Sachin heard some sounds in a corridor near the lift area. Assuming it to be some musicians rehearsing for their performances, he decided to greet them on his way to his room. On slightly opening the door, he realised that it was a suite, where Rafi Sahab was seated on the carpet of the drawing room area, doing his Riyaz on his harmonium before the show.

Sachin beautifully describes his meeting with Rafi Sahab: “Before I could say anything, Rafi Sahab noticed me and raised his hand to offer salaam dua, and in a very soft voice, said, "Oh, Sachin ji, please come". I hesitated, not wanting to disturb him, but the chance to personally meet him was too precious to pass up, so I took a seat on the other side of the harmonium.

Rafi Sahab asked me, "Have you had your lunch?" I replied, "Yes, I've had.

I gently asked Rafi Sahab, "You have a show in the evening, shouldn't you take some rest in the afternoon?"

Rafi Sahab then shared a valuable piece of advice that I could never forget, saying, "If you have a show in the evening, you should avoid sleeping or napping in the afternoon, as it makes the voice heavy." I was deeply moved by this insight, and it demonstrated Rafi Sahab's dedication to his craft.

Then Rafi Sahab asked me, "Would you like to listen to something?" I was caught in the moment as it was hard for me to believe that the great Mohammed Rafi himself was asking me about my choice. I paused, unsure of what to request, and replied, "Anything you sing will be a treat."

With a warm smile, Rafi Sahab turned the pages of his notebook and began to sing. What happened there after was purely magic—three hours of seamless, uninterrupted music. I just sat spellbound, completely immersed in the enchantment of Rafi Sahab's voice.

There was no orchestra, no background music—Just on one side sat Rafi Sahab delivering his marvellous melodious reverence and on the other, me, overwhelmed with awe, silently soaking in every precious moment of this unforgettable experience."

Sachin again expressed how precious that moment was for him:

"Those three hours that Rafi Sahab gave me are the greatest award I could ever receive. Those moments became the golden moments of my life. A part of my soul, my being, will always be connected to Rafi Sahab."

He also mentions in a lighter vein, beautifully saying, "The only complaint I have with Rafi Sahab is that he never let anyone greet him first. Whenever we met, his hand would always go up first to greet us. No matter how much we tried to greet him before he could, he always managed to do it first. It didn't matter if the person was younger, older, or of any position—he was always the first to greet."

Kissa – Tareef Karoon Kya Uski Jisne Tumhe Banaya.....

I am sure you all have heard of the iconic film Kashmir Ki Kali. The movie launched the great Sharmila Tagore into the world of Hindi films.

There is a famous song in this film. Yeh chand saa roshan chehra, phoolon kaa rang sunhara...the line ends with Tareef karun kya uski jisne tumhe banayaa.

To jog your memory a bit, the song was picturised on Dal Lake on boats...

Shammi Kapoor, unlike his image of Indian James Dean, was very serious about his films, especially when it came to songs. He would be present for every song recording. He would listen to the song, visualise how he would perform the song in the movie and give suggestions to both Rafi Sahab and the music director if he wanted any changes.

When this song was initially planned, lots of repeats of the last line “Tareef Karun kya Uski...” were not planned. The song would end like any other song ends. When Shammi Kapoor heard the song, he visualised the song slightly differently. He felt that if the last line was repeated many times (and a bit differently every time) he could create an impact on the screen which would make the song even better.

He told this to the Music Director, OP Nayyar. OP Nayyar did not like the idea. Both Shammi Kapoor and OP Nayyar started arguing. Rafi Sahab, the quiet person he was, stood there listening. Finally, when things were going nowhere, he quietly requested OP Nayyar to let him sing the way Shammi Kapoor wanted it and then later, if he and the Director didn't like it, it could be edited out.

OP Nayyar agreed, and the song was recorded the way Shammi Kapoor wanted it. During the recording, Rafi Sahab poured his heart out in the last leg of the song. If you listen to it, you will notice the tremendous

amount of variations Rafi Sahab created in repeating the same line. It takes a master to do it.

When the final tape was made, both Shakti Samant (Director) and (to the credit of the big-heartedness of OP Nayyar) quite liked it.

Rafi Sahab called Shammi Kapoor the next day and said,” Kyon ji Shammi, gal ban gayi” to which Shammi Kapoor laughed and said, “ban gayi jee ban gayi”.

The shoot happened the way Shammi Kapoor wanted it; the song became a huge hit.

As they say, the rest is History...

Kissa – Din Dhal Jaye

Dev Anand, the legendary Indian actor, filmmaker, Director, etc., was making a movie called Guide. I am sure neither the movie nor Dev Sahab needs any introduction. The music of the film was being given by another great...Shri S.D.Burman.

On the day of the recording, as was the method, Burman Sahab was preparing Rafi for the song.

Now, Burman Sahab himself was an excellent singer, so his approach quite often used to be that after discussing the lyrics, he would sing the song for the singer and the singer was supposed to pick it up by listening to Burman Sahab sing the song.

On that day, the song to be recorded was Din Dhal Jaye Raat Naa Aaye. The (later) super hit song of the movie.

Burman Dada sang the song while Rafi listened carefully. After a few times, when Rafi felt confident, he told Dada Let's record.

Recording started, and multiple takes happened. Dada finally got satisfied. However, Rafi Sahab stepped out of the booth and asked Dada if he could sing again. Dada agreed, Rafi Sahab again sang the song, again Dada was satisfied, again Rafi Sahab wanted to sing again...

This continued for quite some time. The recording had started at around noon, 15-16 takes had been done, it was early evening, but Rafi Sahab was not feeling satisfied. Dada took Rafi Sahab aside and asked him what was bothering him.

Rafi Sahab said, Dada, when you were teaching me the song in one of the stanzas, Dada sang the words 'Kaun Manaye' in a certain way. Rafi Sahab had thought that it was the most beautiful way it could be sung.

During all these takes, Rafi was trying to reproduce the same words the same way, but while he was singing the entire song extremely well,

however, when those words came, he thought he could not reproduce the same magic which Dada had produced when he was teaching him.

Dada was floored when we heard that.

He told Rafi that while he could understand what Rafi was saying, however, it was getting late, the musicians were getting tired, and it was time to wrap up.

Rafi Sahab requested Dada to give him more time and to take care of the tired musicians. he immediately pulled out money from his pocket and asked the studio help to get Malpua, Jalebi and Lassi for every musician. By the way, these were also Rafi's favourite desserts.

The food came, a break was taken, and everyone enjoyed the food.

Post the break, the recording started again.

Tough luck, Rafi Sahab was not feeling satisfied with his singing those words.

Finally, it was almost early night when Dada told Rafi that we had done more than 25 takes, and left to Dada, more than 15 out of those 25 were fit to be the song. Rafi requested Dada to allow him to sing just a few more times, and if he doesn't get it, he will stop and pack up can be done.

On the 28th take, after the song was over, Rafi stepped out of the recording booth, very tired but smiling... he told Dada that finally he thought that he got it. The 28th take was to go as the song.

Dada got so emotional that he hugged Rafi and said, You are a blessing to singing...

long after we all are gone, you will always be remembered for your talent, passion and dedication.

We are all lucky to have you...

Kissa – Ae Diwane Dil, Chal Kaheen Door Nikal Jayen

This was the 70s, and a movie called Doosra Aadmi was being made. Rajesh Roshan was the music director.

There was one song where Kishore Kumar, Lata Mangeshkar and Mohammad Rafi were required.

Rajesh Roshan briefed Rafi Sahab a week before at his house and gave him a cassette with the music so that Rafi Sahab could practice. Rafi Sahab smiled and returned the cassette, saying that I don't practice with cassettes.

For one week, they were out of touch. On the day of the recording, after Kishore Kumar and Lata Mangeshkar had reached the recording studio, the rehearsal started. Usually, Rafi Sahab was known to reach work before time, but that day, due to some unavoidable circumstances, he was late.

Rajesh Roshan, rightly so, was getting worried. Especially because in the intervening one week, he had not been able to meet Rafi Sahab.

Rafi Sahab walked in, apologised and, realising that the other singers were already in position, walked up to the mic and indicated to Rajesh Roshan to start the recording.

Rajesh Roshan was a bit surprised because, since their meeting a week before, they had not met. However, since Rafi Sahab had asked for the recording to begin, he decided to take a chance and begin the recording.

The song and recording started. Now, if you remember the song (the title of the song is in the title of this Kissa), it starts with Kishore Kumar and Lata Mangeshkar and then in between Rafi Sahab takes off, sings his para and then the song again goes on.

Rajesh Roshan was waiting with bated breath as the song approached Rafi Sahab's para, he was not sure.

Came the point, when Rafi Sahab took off and what a take-off it was (listen to the song and you will know what I mean by take-off) ...

It was a picture-perfect rendering of the para, not a sur this side or that side, not a note this side or that side....it was flawless...Rajesh Roshan was stunned by the beauty of it...

Rajesh Roshan, the great and humble music director that he is, says I was seriously impressed by the great man's singing.

The song was completed in that take.

Rajesh Roshan says it's Rafi Sahab's greatness that he could sing the song so flawlessly after a week.

Kissa – The Genius of Rafi Saab

Rafi Saab sang about 190 songs for Shammi Kapoor. For Shammi Kapoor, Rafi Saab wasn't just a playback singer; he was his vocal alter ego. Rafi captured the essence of Shammi Kapoor's unique style and infused his songs with the same passion, playfulness, and magnetism that Shammi Kapoor brought to his performances.

There was a profound association between the artists.

In his career, Shammi Kapoor always made sure that he was present at the recording of every single one of his songs. As an artist, Shammi Kapoor knew that songs were not just an accompaniment to his acting—they were an extension of him, his emotions and his energy.

But there was one time when one of his very beautiful songs had to be recorded.

For some reason, Shammi Kapoor was called out of the country. When Shammi Kapoor returned and learned that the recording had been done without him, he was furious, absolutely furious with Shankar and Jaikishan, the composers of that song.

He reproached Shankar and demanded, "How could you record it without me?", his voice raised with indignation. "You know how important it is for me to be there!" He went to Jaikishan and started muttering the same.

Shankar, calm as ever, tried to pacify him. "Shammi," he said, "just listen to the song first." Reluctantly, Shammi Kapoor agreed, though his anger still simmered beneath the surface. The moment the notes of the song "Aasman se aaya farishta" started hitting his ears, something shifted inside Shammi Kapoor.

The music was electrifying, the energy palpable, and then came Rafi Saab's voice—powerful, dynamic and mystical. Shammi Kapoor was stunned, completely blown away.

He wasted no time in reaching out to Rafi Sahab, as he couldn't contain his curiosity. "Rafi Saab," Shammi Kapoor asked, "How did you do it? How did you manage to bring me to life in that song without me there?"

Rafi Saab, the magician, smiled and gestured towards his notebook, where he wrote down every song he recorded.

"When I was preparing for the recording, I asked who was going to perform this playful song." Rafi Sahab looked at Shammi Kapoor, "The moment I heard your name, I closed my eyes and thought of you. I imagined you acting this song, throwing one hand this way, the other hand that way, and when the third line of the song would hit, you would be flying your feet dancing to this song. And I sang it as if I were you."

Shammi Kapoor was speechless. Rafi Saab had captured the essence of Shammi Kapoor's style, energy and soul into his voice.

Rafi Sahab wasn't just a singer; he was a visionary, a magician who could transcend distance and bring a performer's essence to life through his voice.

Kissa – Creativity thy Name is Rafi

There was this film called Kajal. The music was entrusted to a great music director of the time, Ravi, and the lyrics for the songs were to be written by another very popular and great lyricist, Sahir Ludhianvi.

Sahir brought a song to the Music Director, Ravi. The song was “Yeh Zulf agar khul ke bikhar jay to achcha...”. Ravi loved the song and its Shayari.

But he had a problem. The song used the word “Achcha” 12 times in the lyrics. He thought that was too many repetitions of the same word for a short 3–4-minute song.

He spoke to Sahir about it and asked him to change the word so that the repetitions could be avoided. Sahir did not agree and insisted that this word is a must for the song and is required to be left where it is to ensure the full impact on the listener.

Ravi was not convinced, and an argument started. Neither budged from their views.

Finally, frustrated, Sahir told Ravi that he would write another song for him and give this song to someone else.

On one side, Ravi loved the song, but on the other hand, his head said that the word “Achcha” was coming too many times. It will make the song very dull (due to too many repetitions in a short song).

When Rafi Sahab came for the recording, he heard about the argument. He smiled and, in his typical soft voice, told both Ravi and Sahir Let me try and sing the song my way. I will not change the tune that Ravi has made, and also will not remove Achcha from it.

Both confused, told him to go ahead.

The recording started, and Rafi Sahab started singing.

Both Ravi and Sahir were stunned by what they were hearing.

Rafi Sahab, purely due to his creative excellence, sang the word, each time it came in the song, differently.

The word Achcha comes in the song 12 times, and each time, Rafi Sahab sings it and treats it differently.

By doing so, he fulfilled Sahir's desire not to remove the word even once and Ravi's desire not to make the listener feel that the word is being repeated too many times.

That was the genius, the creativity of this person called Rafi Sahab.

My suggestion, go to YouTube, search for the song and play it.

You will be amazed.... Happy listening...

Kissa – The Grace and Humility of Mohammed Rafi

“Rafi Sahab's popularity was so immense that even the biggest film stars couldn't match his presence. They all seemed small in comparison.”

“One time at the Bengaluru Airport, where many renowned actors were passing through. However, the crowd wasn't interested in them. They were eagerly searching for one man—Mohammed Rafi- pushing past the actors just to get a glimpse of him. Some even bent down to touch his feet.

In those days, airport security wasn't as strict, and fans could gather near the staircases leading to the aircraft. Whenever Rafi Sahab stepped off a plane, people would bow before him as if he were divine. But his humility was unmatched. He would gently stop them and say:

“No, no! Don't consider me a god. There is only one God, the Almighty. I am just a mere human.”

Despite his greatness, he always saw himself as just another man.”

Kissa – Rafi Sahab, Rishi Kapoor and Madan Mohan

Madan Mohan, famously known as the King of Ghazals, was a maestro whose melodies left an indelible mark on Bollywood music. A lieutenant, who served in the army for two years until the end of World War II, returned to pursue his musical interest.

Though Madan Mohan composed for several playback singers, his most cherished compositions were crafted with Rafi Sahab in mind.

Madan Mohan's Eldest son, Sanjeev Kohli, writes, "I can never forget some of the recordings of Heer Ranjha and Chirag that I attended, only to marvel at the complete respect he commanded from the fraternity - musicians, recordists, singers, poets and even his peers."

The association of Madan Mohan and Rafi Sahab was very long. Some of the all-time great songs came out of this duo.

One of their films together was Laila Majnu (1976), which was released after the death of Madan Mohan, starring Rishi Kapoor. It is said that initially Rishi was unsure of Rafi as his prime playback singer, and he wanted Shailender Singh to sing for him because during 1970s, as Bollywood was experiencing many changes, voices like Kishore Da or Shailender Singh were in more demand.

However, due to Madan Mohan's insistence, Rishi had to agree.

It is said that during the recording of the song Yeh Deewane Ki Zidd Hai Apne, Rishi Kapoor was also present at the studio. When he saw Rafi Sahab breathing life into the song, he was completely mesmerised by the magic done by Rafi Sahab. After that, he finally accepted Rafi Sahab wholeheartedly as his playback singer.

Out of the ten songs planned for Laila Majnu, Madan Mohan had completed the recording of seven before his untimely death. However, three songs were still unfinished, creating a challenge for the filmmakers.

The Filmmakers signed Jaidev to complete the songs for the film.

Despite this unexpected change in composers, the entire music album of Laila Majnu became a massive success. The songs were widely appreciated and are still considered timeless classics. Songs like “Barbad Mohabbat Ki Dua Saath Liye Ja”, “Tere Dar Par Aaya Hoon”, and especially “Yeh Deewane Ki Zidd Hai” became iconic.

These hits proved that the great Mohammed Rafi’s style and voice could never fade away.

Kissa – A Legendary Moment at the Airport

During a grand musical tour in Suriname and Trinidad, Rafi Sahab performed two back-to-back concerts. The demand was so overwhelming that both shows were completely sold out, leaving thousands of fans disappointed as they couldn't get tickets- some couldn't secure tickets because of unavailability, and some found it too expensive.

The next day, as Rafi Sahab was about to board his flight back to India with his team, he noticed something very unusual. The airport was packed with thousands of people (as, at that time, the security was not that tight). Confused, Rafi Sahab asked the airport staff:

“What’s happening? Why is there such a huge crowd?” One person smiled and replied, “Rafi Sahab, they’re all here for you. Many couldn’t attend your concert last night, but they didn’t want to miss a chance to take a glimpse of you before you leave.”

Rafi Sahab was deeply moved. Rafi Sahab couldn't bear to leave them disappointed. Without a second thought, he turned to his team and said, “Bring me a microphone.”

The airport staff and organisers scrambled to accommodate his request. Within moments, the bustling terminal transformed into an impromptu concert hall. The atmosphere created was electrifying. Thousands of fans stood there, mesmerised, some with tears in their eyes, cherishing this once-in-a-lifetime moment.

That was the moment when Rafi Sahab proved that his melodies were not dependent on any orchestra or a grand stage to create charisma.

Kissa – Music Director Ravi Talks

If I say that these songs are not played at weddings, the ceremonies feel incomplete, and the farewell seems a little empty. Yes, I am talking about those timeless melodies— "Aaj Meri Yaar Ki Shaadi Hai" and "Babul Ki Duaayen Leti Ja", without which Indian weddings feel incomplete.

The genius behind these beautiful tunes is the legendary Ravi Shankar Sharma, aka Ravi. He gave Hindi cinema many unforgettable songs that touch the heart deeply. His music is not just a collection of notes; it is pure emotion—whether it's the glow of "Chaudhvin Ka Chand Ho", the softness of "Yeh Reshmi Zulfein", the playfulness of "Aaj Kal Teri Meri Pyar Ki Charche", or the innocence of "Nigahein Milane Ko Jee Chahta Hai".

Talking about his journey, Ravi once shared, "I actually came to films to become a singer because I had a deep love for singing. From the very beginning, I admired Mohammed Rafi Sahab immensely. When India gained independence in 1947, a grand celebration was held by the government at the Red Fort, where Rafi Sahab and Mukesh Ji were invited to perform. When I heard that Rafi Sahab was coming to Delhi, I made inquiries and found out that he was staying at the Coronation Hotel in Fatehpuri. Without a second thought, I went there to meet him. I spoke with him for a while, and my friends told him that I had a passion for singing and wished to come to Bombay to sing in films and become a music director. Rafi Sahab kindly advised me that before anything else, I should work as an assistant to music directors, learn musical notations, and gain experience. That first meeting with him became a turning point in my journey."

In 1950, Ravi finally moved from Delhi to Bombay, but the initial years were full of struggle.

After years of perseverance, he got his first break as a music director for the film 'Vachan'. In this very film, he had the opportunity to

compose his first song for Mohammed Rafi— "Ek Paisa De De O Babu". While preparing Rafi Sahab for the song, Ravi thought of telling him about their first meeting in 1947 at the Coronation Hotel, Delhi. However, he decided to wait for the right moment, thinking, "There will be many more occasions when I will work with him and make him sing... I'll tell him someday." But as life moved forward, projects kept coming, and time kept slipping away. Despite working with Rafi Sahab on many songs, that moment never arrived, and Ravi could never share that special memory with him.

The journey continued, and rehearsals became a daily routine. Whenever there was a recording, come around 8:30, Mohammed Rafi Sahab would arrive, and we would sit together, going over the songs.

One day, I was preparing him for "Babul Ki Duaayen Leti Ja". As usual, I first explained the song to him and then began singing the opening lines to guide him. When it was his turn to sing, he remained silent. I looked up, waiting for him to start, but instead, I saw tears in his eyes. He wasn't singing—he was just sitting there, lost in emotion.

I was confused. There was nothing in the song that should make him cry like this. Worried, I stepped out and found Zaheer Sahab, his brother-in-law and secretary. I asked him, "What happened? He is not singing, just crying."

Zaheer Sahab read the lyrics, then looked at me and said, "Ravi Ji, he recently got his daughter engaged. Maybe this song reminded him of that moment, and it touched his heart deeply."

When Rafi Sahab finally sang the song, it was as if his own emotions poured into every word. There are a few lines in the song where you can hear his voice tremble, as if he was actually crying while singing. That pain, that depth, that raw emotion—he didn't just sing "Babul Ki Duaayen Leti Ja", he lived it. And maybe that's why the song still touches hearts, even today. It wasn't just music; it was pure, heartfelt emotion flowing straight from his soul to ours.

After sharing a few incidents, Ravi narrated another one that still makes him laugh whenever he thinks about it. He said,

"Once, I was at a party when an announcement was made— 'Dinner is ready!' Like everyone else, I picked up my plate and headed toward the buffet.

Just then, I heard a familiar, gentle voice behind me—' Ravi Sahab, can I help you with something?' I turned around, and there stood Mohammad Rafi Sahab, smiling warmly. Without thinking much, I quickly responded, 'No, no, Rafi Sahab, I'm a vegetarian!'

As soon as I said that, he suddenly paused and looked at me with a puzzled expression. Curious, I asked, 'What happened, Rafi Sahab?'

Still lost in thought, he replied, 'But... I've been sending you sevaian and mutton every Eid for years!' I couldn't help but smile. With a playful grin, I said, 'Yes, Rafi Sahab, I used to enjoy the sevaian very much...' Then, after a brief pause, I added with a chuckle, '...and the mutton? Well, my assistant used to take care of that!'

The moment he heard this, a smile spread across his face. He started laughing, shaking his head, and said, "All these years, I had no idea! I thought you were enjoying every bit of it!"

We both had a good laugh about it. That innocence, that pure- hearted charm of his—it's something I will never forget.

As Rafi Sahab has passed away, this loss is irreparable. I remember..."Once, an event was organised in Singapore— "Ek Shaam Rafi Ke Naam"—a tribute to the legendary Mohammed Rafi Sahab. One day, the organiser called me and said, "Ravi Ji, we want your orchestra to perform. The night should belong to you, and the songs should be of Rafi Sahab."

It was an honour. After all, so many of Rafi Sahab's iconic songs were composed by me, and this was a chance to celebrate his unparalleled legacy. But as I thought about it, I felt that just performing the songs

wasn't enough. This night was special. Rafi Sahab deserved more than just a tribute—he deserved a song dedicated to him.

That's when I decided to create a title song—a special composition that would set the tone for the evening. A song that would express what he meant to the world, to music, and to all of us who loved him.

I composed and recorded it before the event, and when the night finally arrived, I played it at the very beginning. As the first notes filled the air, the words carried the weight of every emotion we all felt for Rafi Sahab. Each line held deep meaning.

"Salaam-e-Rafi, tujhe laakhon salaam, Hamesha rahega tera jag mein naam..." "Bahut se yahan khush gulo aayenge,

Naa woh tere fun tak pahunch payenge..."

(Many great singers would come, but none could ever match his artistry.)

"Zamaana ho chahe kisi mod par, Labon pe teri geet hi aayenge..."

(No matter how much time passes, no matter where life takes us, his songs will always be on our lips.)

"Har ek daur mein hoga tera maqaam, Hamesha rahega tera jag mein naam..."

(His place in music is eternal. His name will always shine.)

As the song played, I could see the emotions in the eyes of everyone present. It wasn't just a performance; it was a moment of remembrance, of love, of gratitude for the voice that had given life to our emotions for decades.

That night in Singapore, Rafi Sahab was not just remembered—he was felt, he was celebrated, and he was alive in every heart.

Kissa – Unique Ability of Rafi Sahab

Rafi Sahab's singing, mastery over melody and rhythm, and his deep connection with music are unmatched in the world of music. Much as one would like to, the list of his songs is so long that analysing each of his songs is practically impossible; therefore, let's go a bit deeper into some of his songs to understand what made Rafi Sahab, the Rafi Sahab...

He was the first of his kind in the Indian music industry, a singer who mastered the art of singing across such a wide range of high and low notes. Moreover, he flawlessly brought to life every type of personality through his songs, embodying them with unmatched precision and depth.

In the realm of romantic songs, Rafi's soulful renditions left a lasting impact on audiences. His voice evoked the profound emotions integral to songs like "Chaudhvin Ka Chand" from the movie of the same name and "Baharon Phool Barsao" from "Suraj." These performances showcased not only his vocal prowess but also his ability to infuse songs with genuine sentiment, making him the quintessential voice for romance.

Rafi Sahab's film songs are so popular that they overshadow his hundreds of non-film ghazals, geet, nazm, bhajans, naats, etc that remain relatively less heard. These are real gems for ardent fans of Rafi Sahab, as we can hear him in his true form. There was no constraint of modulating his voice to suit the actor on whom film songs were picturized, and so in these songs, one can hear the true voice of Rafi Sahab!

Mohammad Rafi Sahab's voice possessed unparalleled versatility, allowing him to masterfully render a vast array of musical genres. Whether it was a devotional hymn, a soulful ghazal, an energetic qawwali, a patriotic anthem, a rustic folk song, a lively club number, a playful tune, or a melancholic song, Rafi Sahab's voice seemed tailor-

made for each composition. The purity and depth he infused into every song were unmatched, making it feel as though no one else could deliver the piece with such authenticity and emotion.

Mohammed Rafi Sahab had an extraordinary ability to adapt his voice to match the unique styles of different music directors and the personalities of the actors he sang for. He could mould his singing to align with each composer's distinct composing styles, delivering performances that resonated with authenticity and depth. This unique ability to immerse himself in the essence of each song ensured that the emotions conveyed travelled directly from the singer's heart to that of the listener, creating a profound and lasting impact.

What is playback singing? It's when you sing not for yourself but for someone else. You need to make it seem like that person is singing. The challenge comes from the fact that each actor has their unique voice, style, and personality. With so many actors and only one voice, how do we make it look like the actor is the one singing on screen? This was the challenge, and the first person to do it so beautifully was Rafi Sahab. It wouldn't be an exaggeration to say he was truly one of a kind, the first to master this art so perfectly.

Let's take a couple of examples. Think about the song "Mere Mahboob Tujhe Meri Mahboob Ki Kasam," which was filmed on Rajendra Kumar. This song has a sense of calmness and grace, sung with a lot of delicacy. Similarly, there's another song, "Abhi Naa Jao Chod Kar, Ki Dil Abhi Bhara Nahi," which was filmed on Dev Anand. Both songs have a certain stillness in them, but if you pay attention to the voice quality and the style of delivery, you'll realise that even though both songs share a sense of calm, they are portrayed with different emotions. The emotions of each song are uniquely captured in a way that reflects the subtle differences in their delivery. This is the kind of quality in his singing.

Another example can be found in Dilip Kumar's portrayal of Shyam, a modern and sophisticated character in the film *Ram Aur Shyam*, where he sings the song "Aaj Ki Raat Mere Dil Ki Salaami Lele." His singing

here carries a sense of dignity, blended with romantic emotions. On the other hand, in Ganga Jamuna, Dilip Kumar plays a village boy, and the song "Nain Lad Jaiyve Toh Man Maa Kasam Hoive Kri" is sung in a much rawer, more rustic style, reflecting the simplicity and earthy nature of his character. The rendering of his voice in these two songs is starkly different, with one showcasing refinement and the other capturing the rawness of rural life, an unpolished emotion.

Similarly, he sang the song "Ye Chand Sa Roshan Chehra" for Shammi Kapoor. If you've listened to the song, you'll notice the way he sings the word "tareef" in the line "Tareef Karu Kya Uski." The delivery is so perfectly tailored to Shammi Kapoor's persona that it feels as though it was meant for him alone. If he had sung the same song for another actor, the way he rendered it would have been different.

The song, "Din Dhal Jai, Raat na jai," sung by Mohammed Rafi Sahab and filmed on Dev Anand, is indeed a classic example of a deeply emotional and poignant piece. The voice of Rafi Sahab encapsulates a blend of sorrow, loneliness, and pain, perfectly complementing the emotional weight of the song. Every nuance of feeling is conveyed through his voice, with the emotions left intact and unforced.

Keeping all the emotions intact while delivering the style of Dev Anand in his voice is a remarkable feat. The way he delivers the lyrics, especially "teri yaad sataye," is heartbreakingly tender. You can feel the pain of a lover's heartache and the deep sorrow brought on by the memory of lost love. The result is a seamless blend of emotion and character that leaves a lasting impact on the listener and viewer alike.

The song "Jaag Dil-e-Diwana," sung by Mohammed Rafi Sahab, is another exquisite example of how Rafi Sahab's voice can perfectly match the mood and setting of a scene. Set against the backdrop of a foggy hill in the freshness of morning, the song brings out a sense of awakening, both literal and emotional. The imagery of the cool, serene morning mist and the hills is beautifully mirrored in Rafi Sahab's voice, which carries a gentle, refreshing quality. The lyrics and the soft yet passionate delivery convey a sense of renewal, urging the heart to

awaken and embrace love. The purity and vibrancy in Rafi Sahab's voice makes the song not just a listening experience but almost a sensory one.

The way the environment and the emotions are captured through Rafi Sahab's voice shows his brilliance. The freshness of morning is not just visually felt in the fog and the hills but is also experienced through the purity and vibrancy in Rafi Sahab's voice, making the song not just a listening experience but almost a sensory one. "Man Re Tu Kahe Na Dhir Dhare" (Chitralkha, 1964), a philosophical and reflective song where Rafi Sahab's voice carries an almost meditative quality. His delivery is calm, yet each word resonates with depth and wisdom.

The song evokes introspection, with Rafi Sahab's voice providing a soothing reassurance.

"Chaudhvin Ka Chand Ho" (Chaudhvin Ka Chand, 1960) - This romantic song exudes elegance and devotion. Rafi Sahab's voice is smooth and velvety, perfectly capturing the admiration and awe of a lover. The way he elongates certain syllables adds to the song's charm, making it a timeless ode to beauty.

"Yeh Reshmi Zulfein" (Do Raaste, 1969) - Rafi Sahab's voice takes on a flirtatious and playful tone, making this song a beautiful expression of admiration and charm. The way he maintains a balance between romance and mischief is delightful.

"Baharon Phool Barsao" (Suraj, 1966)

This is one of Rafi Sahab's most romantic renditions. His voice sounds fresh and uplifting, creating a sense of joyous celebration.

The song is vibrant and jubilant, with Rafi Sahab adding layers of warmth and excitement.

"Kya Hua Tera Wada" (Hum Kisise Kum Naheen, 1977)

The song is both nostalgic and heartbreaking. Rafi Sahab's voice is reflective yet tinged with the betrayal and sadness of broken promises. This song won him a National Film Award.

"Jo Wada Kiya Woh Nibhana Padega" (Taj Mahal, 1963)

In a duet with Lata Mangeshkar, Rafi Sahab's voice complements hers beautifully. His rendition is filled with sincerity and commitment, perfectly suited for the context of the song.

"Meri Duniya Mein Tum Aaye" from Heer Ranjha, sung by Mohammed Rafi Sahab, is a beautiful testament to his ability to adapt his voice to the subtlest emotional nuances of a song. This particular composition, rendered in a soft, whispering manner, showcases Rafi Sahab's unparalleled vocal control and his mastery of emotive singing. What stands out in this song is Rafi Sahab's ability to convey profound emotions with minimal vocal force. Not many could maintain such precision and emotional intensity at such a low volume. It's a masterclass in subtlety, where he transforms a simple romantic song into an ethereal experience.

How skillfully Rafi Sahab must have controlled his breath and voice projection, ensuring that even his low-volume singing retained its clarity and emotional impact. This level of control could only come from immense practice and innate talent.

The music director, Naushad, played a pivotal role in shaping Muhammad Rafi Sahab's singing career. Their partnership, or "jodi," can be admired in many ways. Together, they primarily created ghazals, semi-classical and folk songs, though they also ventured into a few modern tracks. When it comes to modernisation in music, much of it can be credited to three key music directors: Shankar Jaikishan, O.P. Nayyar, and S.D. Burman.

Shankar-Jaikishan had a unique approach, revolutionising both composition and orchestral styles. O. P. Nayyar stood out with his distinctive style, using a small orchestra. Meanwhile, S.D. Burman carved his own path with a completely unique way of creating music.

Shankar-Jaikishan, who composed the music for the movie *Junglee*, created one of the most iconic songs, "Chahe Koi Mujhe Jungli Kahe." The song is full of tempo, energy, and vibrance, and even though it's over 50 years old, it still carries the same level of excitement and intensity. This was a perfect example of the modernisation Shankar-Jaikishan brought to the music industry at that time.

Shankar-Jaikishan showcased the versatility of Mohammed Rafi Sahab's voice through two remarkably different songs. In the timeless romantic song "Is Rang Badalti Duniya Mein," Rafi Sahab's voice exudes subtlety, tenderness, and depth, perfectly complementing its reflective theme. On the other hand, in the playful and lively "Hum Kaale Hain Toh Kya Hua Dilwale Hain," used for *Mehmood*, his voice takes on an entirely different character—energetic, humorous, and vibrant. The stark contrast between these two songs highlights Rafi Sahab's unparalleled ability to adapt his voice to suit the mood, emotion and personality of each performance.

Shankar-Jaikishan's versatility is evident in two contrasting songs: "Chashme Buddoor" (filmed on Rajendra Kumar) and "Yaad Na Jaaye Beete Dino Ki." In "Chashme Buddoor," the composition is lighthearted and melodious, with Mohammed Rafi Sahab's voice capturing a sense of playful charm. On the other hand, "Yaad Na Jaaye" is a poignant, heart-wrenching melody where Rafi Sahab's voice transforms, becoming deeply emotional and soulful. Listening to these songs with closed eyes reveals the incredible voice modulation and adaptability of Rafi Sahab, whose ability to embody such contrasting emotions is truly unmatched. S.D. Burman's (Sachin Dev Burman) minimalist approach to music composition was indeed unique, especially in an era where grand orchestration was common. His compositions often relied on simplicity, subtlety, and a deep connection to the soul of the song. This contrasted sharply with the grandeur and orchestral richness typical of music directors like Shankar- Jaikishan or Laxmikant-Pyarelal.

Mohammed Rafi Sahab, with his immense versatility and talent, was known for his ability to incorporate intricate nuances, variations, and dynamic vocal expressions even within a single line of a song. However, when working with S.D. Burman, Rafi Sahab adjusted his natural style to align with the composer's restrained and minimalistic requirements. Instead of showcasing his full range of vocal techniques, Rafi Sahab chose to channel his energy into delivering the pure essence of the song, matching the simplicity of Burman's compositions while still imbuing them with profound emotion and depth.

"Khoya Khoya Chand" (Kala Bazar, 1960):

A playful yet melodic composition, where S.D. Burman's understated music blends seamlessly with Rafi Sahab's vibrant, carefree voice. The simplicity of the tune is elevated by Rafi Sahab's ability to infuse it with joy and energy, without overpowering the minimalist arrangement.

"Tere Mere Sapne" (Guide, 1965):

This song showcases how Rafi Sahab could maintain restraint and let the composition breathe. His gentle yet emotionally charged voice aligns perfectly with Burman's vision, creating a masterpiece of simplicity and elegance.

Rafi Sahab's adaptability was remarkable—despite his vast repertoire of skills, he never let his talent overshadow the requirements of a song. With S.D. Burman's minimalist compositions, he carefully subdued his vocal gymnastics and focused instead on conveying the raw emotion and simplicity that Burman intended. This collaboration is a shining example of how two maestros, with distinct styles, could come together to create music that was both understated and unforgettable.

"Abhi Na Jao Chhod Ke" is a timeless classic from the movie Hum Dono (1961), composed by the genius Jaidev, with lyrics by Sahir Ludhianvi. Even in today's modern times, its emotional resonance remains unmatched. When a lover wishes for their beloved to stay a little longer, they often find themselves humming this evergreen

melody. Mohammed Rafi Sahab's rendition of this song is a masterclass in emotive singing, showcasing his unparalleled ability to infuse each word with meaning, emotion, and nuance.

When he sings, "Abhi Shaam Dhal To Le Zara"...The way Rafi Sahab sings the word zara is incredibly delicate, almost like a soft plea. There's a gentle lingering in his voice that makes the listener feel the subtle charm and longing in those words. This is a perfect example of his ability to hold back just enough to let the emotion breathe.

On the other hand, when he says "Nasha Ke Ghoont Pi to Loon", the phrase nasha ke ghoot carries a unique intoxication in Rafi Sahab's voice. His delivery of nasha is smooth, yet layered with an understated sensuality and romance. It's not just the word but the emotion behind it—love, desire, and admiration—that he conveys effortlessly. There's an almost tangible nasha in his tone, which complements the mood of the song. Rafi Sahab, a devout and disciplined man who never touched alcohol, brought an unparalleled authenticity to lines like "Nasha ke ghoot pi to loon". Without ever experiencing intoxication, he conveyed the very essence of it with subtlety and grace.

Rafi Sahab always had a fragrance in his voice—an ethereal quality that elevates the lyrics and composition. Rafi Sahab could evoke not just emotions but also the atmosphere and essence of the moment.

In this song, Rafi Sahab captures the tenderness of a lover who doesn't want the moment to end. His voice oscillates between a playful request and an earnest longing, balancing the emotion perfectly.

He doesn't overpower the melody but enhances it, allowing the soft orchestration and lyrics to shine through while his voice acts as a gentle guide to the listener's heart.

This song, in its simplicity, highlights everything that made Mohammed Rafi Sahab great—his attention to detail, his emotional depth, and his ability to make the listener feel every word as though it was being whispered directly to them. The combination of Jaidev's

minimal yet soulful composition, Sahir Ludhianvi's poetic brilliance, and Rafi Sahab's voice results in a song that transcends time.

Rafi Sahab's artistry in "Abhi Na Jao Chhod Ke" reminds us of his rare gift, not just as a singer but as someone who could bring poetry and music to life with unparalleled grace and depth.

The song "Kar Chale Hum Fida" from the 1964 Bollywood movie *Haqeeqat* is a masterpiece that resonates deeply with patriotism and sacrifice. The song was directed by Chetan Anand, which portrays the lives of soldiers during the Indo- China War. It is one of the most stirring tributes to the soldiers of India. It remains an iconic patriotic song in Indian cinema. Its timeless appeal lies in the perfect synergy between Madan Mohan's poignant music, Kaifi Azmi's evocative poetry, and Mohammed Rafi Sahab's soul-stirring singing. Together, they created a song that is not just a tribute to the past but an inspiration for generations to come.

Mohammed Rafi Sahab's voice elevates the song to a divine level. His flawless rendition conveys both the pride of a soldier and the sorrow of separation. The way he infuses emotion into every word ensures the song leaves a lasting impact. Rafi Sahab's voice feels like a tribute in itself, honouring the sacrifices of the brave soldiers, evoking goosebumps and nostalgia even today when you listen to it.

Mohammed Rafi Sahab shared a prolific partnership with many music directors, but his association with Laxmikant-Pyarelal was particularly significant. They collaborated on an impressive 300+ songs, of which 180+ are solo performances by Rafi Sahab. This makes Laxmikant-Pyarelal the music director with whom Rafi Sahab sang the highest number of songs in his career.

This collaboration showcases Rafi Sahab's versatility and brilliance, as he brought life to compositions across genres— romantic melodies, soulful songs, playful numbers, and even qawwalis. Their partnership resulted in many evergreen classics that continue to be cherished by music lovers worldwide.

The song, "Tere Pyar Ne Mujhe Gham Diya, Tere Gham Ki Umar Daraz Ho," from the movie Chailla Babu (1967), is indeed a masterpiece. With Rafi Sahab's soulful rendition and the heartfelt composition by the young duo, it became a timeless classic. The song beautifully captures deep emotions and still resonates with listeners today.

This marked the beginning of a remarkable partnership between Mohammed Rafi Sahab and Laxmikant-Pyarelal, which went on to produce countless iconic songs that remain etched in the hearts of music lovers.

"Jahan se shuru hui thi raahatein, wahi khatam hui,

Har sur mein ek kahani thi, har raag mein ek dastan chhupi."

It's truly remarkable that the first song of Laxmikant-Pyarelal as music directors, "Tere Pyar Ne Mujhe Gham Diya," was sung by Mohammed Rafi Sahab, marking the start of their journey together. Even more poignant is the fact that Rafi Sahab's last recorded song, "Shaam Phir Kyun Udaas Hai Dost" from Aas Paas (1981), was composed by the same duo.

"Chahunga Main Tujhe Saanjh Savere" (Dosti - 1964)

This heartwarming song is one of the most beautiful expressions of love and friendship. Sung by Mohammad Rafi Sahab, the song reflects the deep affection and commitment of a friend who vows to always be there. The gentle yet emotive melody composed by Laxmikant-Pyarelal, paired with Rafi Sahab's soulful voice, makes this a truly unforgettable track. The song became a huge hit and has been cherished for decades.

"Rahi Manwa Dukh Ki Chinta Kyun Sataati Hai" (Dosti - 1964)

A song that blends emotion with spirituality, this track shows Rafi Sahab's versatility in expressing pain, sorrow, and introspection. The song is about dealing with life's struggles and finding inner peace through devotion. Rafi Sahab's voice and the serene music by

Laxmikant-Pyarelal beautifully capture the emotional weight of the lyrics, creating a meditative mood. It stands out as one of the finest examples of the composer-singer duo's magic.

"Meri Dosti Mera Pyaar" (Dosti - 1964)

This song is a soulful ode to the eternal bond of friendship. With lyrics expressing deep loyalty, affection, and camaraderie, Rafi Sahab's rendition of this track is heartfelt and touching. The melody by Laxmikant-Pyarelal is soft and sincere, perfectly complementing the emotional tone of the song. The pairing of Rafi Sahab's voice with this composition solidified their place in the hearts of listeners.

Here is another example, Mohammad Rafi Sahab sang as a street singer who sings a ghazal "Hui Shyam Un Ka Khayal Aagaya", he is singing for a sophisticated person. It is a soulful ghazal that resonates with divine longing. In this ghazal, Mohammad Rafi Sahab sings with such grace and sophistication, perfectly suited for someone like Dharmendra Sahab, whose portrayal of melancholy enhances the song's emotional depth. The ghazal emerges pure and profound, drenched in the fragrance of longing, desire, and an unspoken yearning of a lover. Every note feels like a whisper of love, resonating with the sorrow of separation and the sweet anticipation of the beloved's return.

it's a fascinating and lesser-known aspect of Mohammed Rafi Sahab's illustrious career that he lent his voice to Kishore Kumar in the movie Shararat (1959). The song, "ajab hai daastan ae zindagi ye teri," is a testament to Rafi Sahab's unmatched versatility as a playback singer.

"Man Mora Bawra" from the movie "Ragini" (1958). Singer: Mohammed Rafi Sahab

Music Director: O.P. Nayyar Picturized on: Kishore Kumar

This song is a perfect example of Mohammed Rafi Sahab's versatility, where his voice brings out the playful yet melodious tone required for Kishore Kumar's onscreen character. The composition by O.P. Nayyar

is rich with his trademark rhythm and orchestration, blending seamlessly with Rafi Sahab's effortless singing style.

It's fascinating to see how Rafi Sahab's voice could adapt so well to suit Kishore Kumar's persona, further showcasing his unparalleled range as a playback singer

Kissa – From Gumnaam to Global Fame the Journey of "Jaan Pehchaan Ho"

Let me tell you something, which, I am pretty sure, will make you sit up and will at least mildly shock your brain in a positive way.

We have heard countless times that Bollywood music directors often draw inspiration from Western tracks or old classics to create their songs. It's a claim we come across quite often.

Quite honestly, I have no idea to what extent the above claims are true.

However, there is one song of the Hindi film industry which has been used in Western music many, many times.

I am quite sure many of you would be thinking, "Seriously....is it true, I don't believe it..."

Don't worry, I had exactly the same thought.

For obvious reasons, I decided to dig deep into this. What I found was astounding.

In 1965, a horror film was released, it was called "Gumnaam". The movie went on to become a hit of that year. Its songs were also chartbusters. The music for the movie was directed by the great Shankar Jaikishan.

In the opening part of the film, there is a song which starts something like this: "Jaan Pehchaan ho, Jeena Asaan ho...". The song is a blend of rock 'n' roll and cabaret-inspired music, a unique genre for Bollywood at that time. The song uses an elaborate band arrangement featuring brass instruments, electric guitars, and fast-paced percussion. The song demands a high-energy delivery with rapid changes in pitch, dynamics, and tempo.

I am sure singing that song would have been challenging for any singer, including Rafi Sahab.

Rafi Sahab delivered bang on the money. A singer who sang calming bhajans and emotional ghazals with such serenity could also mould himself into an electrifying rock 'n' roll performer?

If you listen to the song (and I would strongly recommend that you do), you would notice that Rafi Sahab's voice cuts through the dense arrangement of instruments without losing its melodic appeal. Rafi Sahab infuses it with an almost theatrical vibrancy, ensuring that the vocals match the instrumentation and the lively choreography of the song. His playful and mischievous expressions, captured beautifully in his voice, add a charm that complements the visuals of the song.

This versatility is precisely what makes Rafi Sahab the undisputed king of playback singing. As someone aptly said, Rafi Sahab was a whole “University of Music”.

The song's international journey began in the early 1990s, and it's worth following. So here goes:

□ The Cramps, a punk rock band, showcased it during their appearance on the Los Angeles Request Video TV show. In 1994, “Jaan Pehchan Ho” gained further attention when it was performed live by Heavenly Ten Stems, an experimental indie rock band from San Francisco.

□ It reached even greater international fame when it was featured in the opening credits of the 2001 film *Ghost World*.

The film's writer, Daniel Clowes, revealed that he discovered the song through a 20th-generation tape copy he got from a friend who had been house-sitting for Peter Holsapple, a guitarist for the dB's band. Clowes and his team contacted the producers' sons to secure the rights for the film. The *Ghost World* DVD even includes the full musical sequence, celebrating its electrifying appeal.

□ In 2011, the song was reintroduced to global audiences when the soundtrack was used in Heineken's famous commercial, *The Date*, featuring it prominently.

- In 2012, the Australian band The Bombay Royale covered the track in their debut album, *You Me Bullets Love*, giving it a modern twist.
- The English indie rock band White Lies paid homage to the song in their 2013 music video for “There Goes Our Love Again.”
- The song even made its way into gaming culture. In Ubisoft’s 2014 video game *Far Cry 4*, “Jaan Pehchan Ho” plays in the background during a thrilling sequence as the protagonist storms the antagonist’s fortress.
- In dance, the Cullberg Ballet included costumes and choreography inspired by the song in their performance of Ekman’s *Triptych*. ‘Jaan Pehchaan Ho’ continued to make waves in Bollywood cinema, where it appeared again in the 2017 film *Basmati Blues* and the 2019 Bollywood movie *Luka Chuppi*.
- In the same year, Olivia Jean recorded a cover of the song for her album *Night Owl*, further cementing its legacy as a truly timeless piece of music that continues to captivate audiences around the globe.

“Jaan Pehchan Ho” is not just a song; it’s a cultural phenomenon that has travelled across boundaries and generations. The combination of Shankar-Jaikishan’s energetic composition and Mohammed Rafi’s vibrant performance has made this track an unforgettable piece of cinematic and musical history.

Kissa – Rafi Sahab’s Voice Range

I read this article written by Santhanakrishnan Srinivasan. It impressed me so much that I thought it would be worthwhile to share the gist of it for the readers of this book.

So, here goes...

The human voice has many qualities. Of these, some, such as melodiousness, cannot be measured... while some qualities, such as range, are measurable.

What is the range of voice? It is the range of musical notes – that is, the difference between the lowest note and the highest note that can be sung by a human voice.

Typically, a human voice that can reproduce musical notes would cover the range of 2 octaves. An octave has 12 notes: Shadja, Komal Risabh, Shuddha Rishabh, Komal gandhar, shuddh gandhar, shuddha madhyam and teevra madhyam, Pancham, komal dhaivat, shuddha dhaivat, Komal nishad and shuddha nishad. The note above Shuddha nishad, will be the Shadja of the higher octave.

Well-trained singers can cover more than two octaves.

While notes can be denoted using western notation C, D, E, F, G, A and B, to cater to the Indian audience, I have chosen to write using the Indian scale (sa, re, ga, Ni).

Songs may have notes in three octaves (sthayee). The lower one is called mandra sthayee, the middle one is called Madhya sthayee, and the higher one is called taara sthayee. Songs that are within a single octave are rare but do exist.

Usually, playback singers will choose the appropriate frequency of their voice to be the shadja of Madhya sthayee so that they can cover the notes of mandra sthayee and tara sthayee comfortably. Also, playback singers mainly give songs for the actors on screen, and hence, the notes when sung should be free of strain, unlike classical singers

who have the liberty to demonstrate their range with whatever syllable they choose to sing.

How do we find the true range of voice of a singer? An ideal way would be by making the singer sing the lowest and highest notes possible.

Since the singers that we are interested in are not alive today, it is not possible.

However, an approximation can be made by the lowest note and the highest note sung by a singer in a song. If we collect data from a large set of songs, we can find out the range.

We should also be aware that the natural range of a human voice shifts downward with age, as the readers might have noted that the voice of Rafi in his later years covered a lower range, and he did not try to reach very high notes.

With these considerations, he took the following approach.

1. Get a first approximation of the widest range by finding out the range of notes in a song sung by singers.
2. Make it more accurate by comparing notes (actual frequencies) across songs sung by the singer around the same period (within 0-3 years). Check if live recordings are available and see what is the range of notes sung by the singer, across songs in the live program.

Now, how do we measure the range? The different songs that a singer has sung give us an idea of what is the range of the singer, but the singer might have been able to sing more notes than those covered in the song.

A comparison of a set of songs sung by each singer gives us an approximate idea of the typical range of songs that were offered to a singer. Or if a song has been composed, the range requirement of the song helps in the selection of a singer who can do justice to the song.

We can measure the range by counting the number of musical notes that are covered between the lowest and highest notes. For example, if

a song's lowest note and highest note are the same from two subsequent octaves, the range of the song is 13 (12+1) notes; if the song covers two octaves, then it is 25 (12+12+1) notes. If we have a keyboard, then the range can be found out by counting all the keys (black and white) between the lowest note and the highest note, including them.

Here is a comparison of songs of Rafiji and his contemporaries Manna Dey, Mukesh, Talat and Kishore.

As a fan of Rafiji, I happened to register in my memory a lot of his songs, which cover a vast range of notes. I have validated the range of notes using my keyboard. There are some songs where the highest note is a khand swar (a note that is sung for a small fraction of a maatra instead of sustaining in that note for even as short as half a maatra). Here are some observations:

Rafiji has at least two songs where he has covered two full octaves and 25 notes – *Yeh zindagi ke mele* (25 notes) and *Pyar ki raah dikha duniya ko* (25 notes).

The next highest is *Mori Vinathi Suno Bhagwan* - 24 notes and *Tune Mera Yaar Na Milaya* – 24 notes,

The next are *Yeh duniya ke rakhwale* from Baiju Bavra, *Kunj Kunj Gunjan bhanvre ka*, *Nigahein na Phero*, *Dil ho unhe Mubarak*– all 23 notes.

The author could talk about at least 15 songs that cover 22 notes.

Likewise, there are many Rafi ji that cover 21 notes, including songs like *Parda Hai Parda* from Amar Akbar Anthony.

The author goes on to say that he has not registered in his memory all the songs of other singers, but there are some which demonstrate their voice range. It is not an exhaustive list

Mukesh ji, *Mujhe raat din ye khayal hai* - 23 notes, *Jhoomti chali hawa* 22 notes – and *Jaane kahan gaye woh din* – 20 notes.

Talat Mehmood –Two songs of 22 notes – *Zindagi denewale sun* and *Raahi Matwale tu chhed ek baar*.

Manna Dey, One song of 22 notes – *Bhaya Bhanjana vandana sun hamari*. Laga chunri me daag and Phul gendwa na maaro cover 20 notes.

Kishore Kumar, one covering 22 notes (*Thandi hava yeh chandni Suhani* and another 21 notes – *Koi hota jisko apna* from *Mere Apne* and one of 20 notes – *Matwale hum matwale tum fom jhumroo*.

Some inferences which can be drawn are – songs that require a range of 22 notes seem to be within the reach of all of them.

Mukesh reached up to 23 notes in a song with a khandswar.

But the number of songs by Manna Dey, Mukesh, Talat and Kishore that demanded a vast range are very few.

Rafi Sahab is in a class of his own. The difference in singing songs that have more than 23 notes is that beyond 22 notes, the strain on the voice starts showing.

Now the question is, if a singer did not get songs that cover a wide range, could we be mistaken to say that he/she had a limited range? Yes, but the sheer number of songs that Rafiji has sung with a range of 22 notes are more far outnumbers other singers' songs, hence one could conclude that possibly Rafiji's voice range was the widest.

And his songs have been composed by a variety of composers, some well-established composers and some who did very few films. Some of the lesser-known composers were instrumentalists in orchestras and were probably inspired by Rafi's voice and range to take up composing music.

The list of music directors who gave songs to Rafi Sahab of 22 notes or more are Naushad, Ravi, SD Burman, Shankar Jaikishan, Hemant Kumar Anil Biswas, Chitragupta, Dulal Sen, GS Kohli, Hansraj Behl, , Husnlal Bhagatram, Jaidev, Khayyam, N Datta, and SS Mohinder – which is a true acknowledgement by all the music directors of Rafi's

voice range. Another reason could be that Rafi could sing any syllable at a high pitch. One can hum a high pitch rather than singing an open syllable at a higher pitch, which is difficult. Rafiji seems to reach high pitches effortlessly

But how does one find his true range? by listening to songs that were recorded around the same time (same movie, same year, etc.) which the lowest and highest frequencies from the collection of songs can be compared to find out the range.

There are recordings of live programs of Rafiji singing Naushadji's compositions available on YouTube.

I know for sure that in that live program, Rafiji sang one extra higher note in the song *Yeh duniya ke rakhwale*, making the range to 25 notes.

PART 3:

Rafi Sahab – The Human Being

Kissa – Rafi Sahab (The Secular Man) ISKCON Temple

There is so much to understand about the personality of Mohammed Rafi- a man whose life was not just about music but also about resilience, devotion, and humanity beyond religious boundaries.

Rafi Sahab was a devout Muslim. He used to do Namaz 5 times a day. He went to do Hajj twice during his lifetime (a not-so- common phenomenon). He was born into a conservative Muslim family, conservative to the extent that his father was against his pursuing singing and music. He always attempted to strictly discipline him to not pursue this passion of his. He remained deeply spiritual throughout his life, never failing to offer his five daily prayers (namaz), and never missing a prayer without thanking the Almighty God for blessing him with unmatched brilliance in the art of music.

Rafi Sahab was also the person who witnessed the devastation of the 1947 partition of the nation based on two majority religions violence between Hindus and Muslims. He witnessed the massacre and bloodshed in the name of religion. In this sad event, he witnessed his father-in-law (his first wife's father) losing his life. It hurt the sentiments of his first wife so much that she was unable to accept India as her home and left India for Pakistan, leaving Rafi Sahab alone and thus ending his first marriage.

Any typical person, born in a conservative Muslim family and experiencing such turmoil, would have started hating the other religion. But not Rafi Sahab. He, despite being a devout Muslim (to the extent that whenever anyone would congratulate him on any success, he used to look up and say it's all because of Allah above), decided to pursue the path of peace and harmony. He never allowed bitterness or prejudice to take root in his heart.

People don't call him great for nothing.

He was the person whose vision and belief went beyond the stereotypical religious boundaries. He believed that religion is meant for joining individuals, and they were just different routes to the same God.

His belief was not just about empty words.

In Juhu (a suburb of Mumbai), an ISKON temple was planned to be built. Haridas Prabhu, a long-time affiliate of ISKON, organised a Musical Night to generate funds for building the auditorium in the temple. Stalwarts like Shankar Jaikishan conducted the night. Singers like Rafi Sahab, Manna Dey, etc. participated in it. The collaborative performance of these giants was sure to receive an amazing response from their fans and devotees. The reaction was overwhelming, and by the end of the event, a total of ₹75,000 had been collected- a substantial amount at that time.

When Haridas Ji visited Rafi Sahab's house to personally thank him, Rafi Sahab enquired about the collection. Despite this success, Rafi Sahab was not entirely satisfied. He believed the event should have raised at least ₹1 lakh.

Without hesitation, pomp or show, he wrote out a cheque for ₹25,000 to cover the deficit, ensuring that the auditorium project would receive the full amount it needed. Despite being a devout Muslim himself, Rafi Sahab's sense of duty toward humanity was far greater than any religious categorisation.

See around you in today's world, not just in India, but anywhere in the world, do you see any other Mohammad Rafi? Practising his religion with all the devotion, yet not belittling other religions.

Because, for this great man, religion was just a path to only ONE God, all mighty, who was above man-made things like religion.

Kissa – Invitation from Teen Murti

Not many people would be aware that India's greatest Prime Minister, Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, was a big fan of Rafi Sahab. One day, he told his secretary to invite Rafi Sahab to Teen Murti whenever next time Rafi Sahab was in Delhi.

The secretary called Rafi Sahab and told him about Panditji's invitation. Rafi Sahab was so overwhelmed that he decided to make a program specially to meet Nehruji.

Nehruji, a lover of chaat, asked his people to get the finest chaat from old Delhi and laid out a big spread for Rafi Sahab.

When Rafi Sahab came there, they spent some time in small talk and then Nehruji told Rafi Sahab Rafi, I have arranged for special snacks for you. Rafi Sahab very humbly accompanied Nehruji into the hall where all the Chaat stalls were laid out.

As soon as he entered the hall and saw what was on the spread, he stopped dead in his tracks.

In a very small voice, he told Panditji "Sir, I don't eat Chaat. I have not eaten Chaat since I started singing because it can spoil my vocal cords."

Nehruji was one of the greatest men, but he had one major weakness: he could be very short-tempered.

Nehruji was shocked. he looked at the entire spread of the best chaat Delhi had to offer, and then he saw his main guest, Rafi, refusing to eat any of it. His face turned red with anger. The secretary noticed the face turning red. He immediately took Nehruji to the side and said Sir, I know you are angry, but think about it, this man is so great and true to his work that he has the guts to refuse the most powerful man in India, its Prime Minister.

Nehruji saw the logic, he immediately cooled down, walked towards Rafi Sahab, hugged him and said that he is so impressed by his

dedication towards his work that if he could get 10 Rafis, it will change the face of India.

He then took Rafi Sahab to Teen Murti Lawns and asked Rafi Sahab what he liked to eat. Rafi Sahab told him that he likes sweet things, particularly Mal Pua, Rabri and Jalebi.

Nehruji immediately sent his people to get the above dishes, and then later, they all ate together...

Imagine the greatness of Nehruji that he did not take it on his ego instead understood the situation and turned it around so quickly.

Now imagine the dedication of Rafi Sahab to the love of his life, his craft, and his singing that he had the guts to refuse the most powerful and most loved person in India at that time, the Prime Minister of India, Jawaharlal Nehru.

Kissa – Replaced the Driver, Left Side Car, Bought Him a Taxi

Readers, I must confess, I don't recall where exactly I had heard this Kissa, but I must also say, it has stayed in my mind forever...

Here is what happened.

As we all know, Rafi Sahab had a hobby of buying cars. It is said that he had 18 of them. Even during those days when the taxes and duties were very high, he used to have lots of imported cars.

Once, the latest model of a car had been launched in the US. Rafi Sahab wanted to have that car, so he imported it.

When the car reached India, he got into a dilemma. His driver had driven only Indian cars. This car was left-hand driven.

On one side, the driver was very good, but at the same time, Rafi Sahab knew that he would not be able to drive this car.

Rafi Sahab was not able to reconcile in his heart that he would have to let this driver go. He was concerned about his livelihood.

To solve this dilemma and this issue, he purchased a new Fiat, got it a Taxi license and GIFTED the Fiat Taxi to the Driver and told him that while I have to let you go because I know you won't be able to drive my new car but I don't want you and your family to suffer hence I have bought you a taxi. Run this taxi, earn your living and take care of yourself and your family. The driver was floored and got very, very emotional.

He told Rafi Sahab that "you are not a human being, you are God."

Imagine, Fiat is not a toy, it's not something where you open your wallet and just give the money to buy one.

Even if someone has to buy one for themselves, people think 10 times before buying. Just so that his driver doesn't have any difficulty, he gifted one to him.

Rafi Sahab, tussi greatest of all time ho...

Kissa – Would Never Count Money

Rafi Sahab had this habit that whenever anyone would praise him, he used to look up and point his finger towards the sky and say... It's all because of him and his kindness.

Whenever he was going anywhere and his car would stop at the red light, beggars would come and knock on his car window.

Rafi Sahab would put his hand in his pocket, pull out whatever notes came out, and give them to the beggar without counting.

Once, someone who was accompanying him asked him, Rafi Sahab, why don't you at least count and then give the beggar the money?

He smiled, looked up and said that *“Jab Upar Wala mujhe gin kar nahin deta to main kyun ginti kar ke doon...”*

What greatness, what humility, what a genuine person.... They don't make people like him....

Kissa – When He Sang for the First Time with a Music Director

I heard this on a YouTube video when the amazing Lakshmikantji of the great Lakshmikant Pyarelal duo (also popularly known as LP) talked about Rafi Sahab.

After assisting Kalyanji Anandji, LP started giving music on their own. For one of the films, they decided to get a song sung by Rafi Sahab.

During those days, Rafi Sahab used to take Rs. 10,000 per song.

On the day and time of recording, Rafi Sahab reached there, rehearsed the song, and the song got recorded.

When the recording was over, LP gave an envelope to Rafi Sahab with his fees in it.

Rafi Sahab looked at the envelope, opened it, looked at the contents, smiled and asked Laxmi ji if he had one more envelope.

Confused, Lakshmii got him one more envelope. Rafi Sahab opened his envelope and transferred 5000 Rs. Into the new envelope, added 1 rs. Coins into both envelopes and handed one envelope each to Lakshmikant and Pyarelal.

Seeing the confusion, he smiled and said, I don't take any money when I sing for a Music Director for the first time. Consider this as my blessing for your successful future.

That was Rafi...in a dog-eat-dog world, he was an example of how human beings should be...

Kissa – The Dialysis Machine

Rafi Sahab was the first singer (or, for that matter, film personality) who started the trend of going overseas to do shows.

During his life, he travelled all over the US, UK, Africa and Asia for his shows.

Normally, if you see today's stars or, for that matter, even earlier also, whenever they travel overseas for any work, shooting, shows, etc., the star (s) always stay in the most expensive and posh places. The other junior members of the team stay at other average hotels.

Guess what? never with Rafi Sahab. He would insist on staying at the same hotel where everyone else was staying. He would eat with them; he would spend his time with them.

Rafi Sahab (as is with many people) said that during his trips, he used to bring lots of things for his Children, his Family, his musicians, etc.

Once, when he was going for a show to the US, he called up Naushad Sahab (his guru and mentor) and asked him that since he was going to the US for the show, what he should bring, which would be of use to people at large?

Naushad Sahab thought and then told Rafi Sahab that he should think of buying and getting a Dialysis machine.

During those days, it was a very expensive treatment and was very tough to afford by poor people. Rafi Sahab remembered, and when he came back with a Dialysis machine, after his return, he donated the machine to one of the big hospitals of Mumbai with a directive that poor people should be given free dialysis on this machine.

We do not know how many people's lives were saved by this beautiful act of kindness by Rafi Sahab.

He was a big man, so are many...he was a rich man... so are many...

How many of them, though, save lives by this direct act of kindness...I am still searching for one.

Kissa – Always Acknowledge the One Who Comes to Your Door

There are fans, and there are devotees, however, there are people whose devotion takes a different form. Unable to build temples or museums, they devote their lives instead only to live a message with simplicity given by Rafi Sahab himself.

Here is a tale of one such devotee in Kolkata's Baghbazar neighbourhood, who encountered Rafi Sahab only briefly, yet the meeting left an eternal mark on his soul.

In a narrow lane stands a small, modest jewellery shop, aged and worn by time. On entering, you would find that there is nothing much left in his shop to sell, but there is a big picture of Rafi Sahab with a few small pictures hung together on a wall. The man who runs the shop is elderly, living quietly with his older sister. The old man, with a glimmer in his eye, refers to Rafi Sahab as a Farishta (an angel), an angel who once visited him and left him with a lesson he cherishes to this day. The old man can still remember that day so vibrantly.

He shares his story as:

“My father was a naval officer. After his untimely passing, I was the one left responsible for running this shop with little knowledge of the trade. Lacking proper training as a goldsmith, I faced countless hardships. Eventually, somehow, I gathered enough funds to renovate the shop, hoping to turn my fortunes around.” He continued:

“During renovation one evening, around 8:30, I was exhausted and famished. All I wanted was to close the shop and go home. The carpenters were still finishing their tasks when I heard a man's voice from behind, asking if I could show him some rings. Frustrated and exhausted, I dismissed him without turning around, telling him the shop was closed for the day.

He asked again, but I refused him.

A few moments later, a very soft, more gentle voice spoke. “Sir, it is very urgent. we have to go somewhere, and we want to buy a ring to gift there. please show us something.”

That softness and humility in his tone made me turn my head around and look into his eyes.

I was stunned, hesitant, and unsure of his identity, so I asked, ‘Aap kaun ho?’ (Who are you?)” (He explained that in those days, there were not many pictures of him around, but he had seen Rafi Sahab’s pic one time in a newspaper.)

“That gentleman smiled and answered, ‘My name is Mohammed Rafi.’

“My heart raced. Mohammed Rafi—the great singer, the voice of a generation—was in my humble shop! I felt overwhelmed and embarrassed for my earlier rudeness. I immediately reopened the cabinets and displayed every ring I had. When I asked about the size, Rafi Sahab called the man who had come before, perhaps his driver, and gestured towards his finger, ‘This size will do.’ “When I pleaded with him to accept the ring as a gift, Rafi Sahab gently declined and insisted on paying the full price. I was feeling overjoyed to get to see him with my real eyes.

As Rafi Sahab was leaving, he paused, returned to me, and said something that changed my life...

‘Always acknowledge the one who comes to your door... never turn him away.’

“Those words echo in my mind to this day. Since that evening, I have never turned away anyone seeking my help. He was none other than a Farishta, who visited me to give me a lesson.”

And till today, he is still worshipping Rafi Sahab, remembering that brief encounter. The person who has lost one eye due to his illness and the other is at risk as well, but with no regrets in life, the glow in his smile says it all. It seemed the purpose of his life was fulfilled the moment he met Rafi Sahab.

This is the kind of impact a pure soul has on people....

Kissa – Always Fair.....

There was a time when Rafi Sahab ruled the music industry, mainly in the 1950s and 60s.

He was the highest-paid singer in the country (by some estimates, he used to get Rs. 10,000 per song), so if he sang 6-7 songs in a film (which was normal for him), he was paid 60 to 70 K for the film. Remember, the top heroes, during those times, used to be paid around 1 lakh per film. I am not sure if it is possible to give a current equivalent of that because none of the inflation indices give a correct picture of the cost of living or the cost of luxury. But approximately, by today's standards, it comes to 1 cr per film.

Came the 1970s, Rafi Sahab faced a bit of a downturn in his career.

Jitendra, the great thespian and one of our most successful stars of all time, told in a function that for his film Deedare Yaar, there was a song which was supposed to be recorded with Kishore Kumar and Rafi Sahab. After the recording was over, Jitendra's assistant asked him how much he should pay. Jitendra told him to pay them the same, whatever the market price is.

Since Kishore Kumar was paid 20 K during those days, the assistant made two envelopes of 20 K each and gave them to the singer's secretaries. Rafi Sahab went home and opened the envelope. The envelope had Rs. 20,000 in it.

He was a bit shocked because, since Rafi Saab was facing a downturn in his career and the completely market-driven film industry was paying him only 4 K per song those days (sad but true). Rafi Sahab took out 4 K only and gave the remaining money to his secretary to give it back to Jitendra.

When Jitendra received 16000 back, he was taken aback. He called Rafi Sahab.

Rafi Sahab said, “Jeete bahut paise aa gaye tere paas.”

Jitendra said, “Rafi Sahab yeh aapke aur Kishore Kumar ke baraabar ke hain.”

Rafi Sahab, in a sad voice, said.... “Jeete ab to mujhe sirf 4000 milte hain aajkal kaise tumse 20000 le loon, galat hoga.”

Jitendra had close to tears in his eyes as he recalled that incident.

What a wonderful person Jitu Ji is, and what a decent human being Rafi Sahab was.

Kissa – People Take Advantage of the Nicest of People

Humans may be the most intelligent species, but it is definitely not the most flawless. I will talk about a happening in Rafi Sahab's life, I will not make any comments. I will leave it to you and your heart to judge.

Once, there were two brothers. The elder one was a highly successful film director with his own film company. While the younger one worked under his guidance. The younger brother, though talented, was also very selfish and ambitious.

At some stage, he decided to make a film under his own name. The elder brother did not agree. A fight broke out between the two brothers.

When news of this decision broke, tensions escalated between the two. Eventually, the conflict reached a point where the younger brother left his elder brother's house.

During this difficult time, his wife stood by his side, despite being in a delicate condition due to pregnancy.

All alone, without a name or financial stability, they faced an uncertain future.

They had known Rafi Sahab a bit, so they decided to go to him to ask for help. Rafi Sahab, as was his habit, offered them tea, etc. The younger brother told him the whole story, including that they were now without a home and his wife's pregnancy.

Rafi Sahab quietly listened to the whole story. After he had heard them, he asked the couple to wait while he went to his bedroom.

He came back and quietly gave a key to the younger brother and told him that he has a flat in Pali Hill, which is empty these days. He told him to stay in the flat and make sure that he and his wife were well taken care of.

That brother made the film, it became very successful, and he stayed in Rafi Sahab's flat for 2 years. Rafi Sahab never took a penny of rent from him. After 2 years, he bought his own house and vacated Rafi Sahab's flat.

Over time, his talent and hard work paid off, and he rose to become one of the leading directors in the industry.

This was the 1970s—the era when Kishore Kumar's magic was beginning to dominate the music scene.

One day, there was a recording of a song for his film where Kishore Kumar, Lata Mangeshkar, and Mohammed Rafi were the playback singers. Rafi Sahab arrived slightly late, as he was coming from another recording. But when he finally sang his part, he delivered a flawless performance in just one take.

However, when the recording ended, the 3 came out of the recording booth. The Director (known for doing things in style) had only 2 bouquets in his hands. Both Lataji and Kishore Kumar stayed back, assuming that since Rafi Sahab was the most senior of them, the first bouquet would be for him.

To everyone's surprise, the Director gave one bouquet to Kishore Kumar and one to Lata Mangeshkar. There was NONE for Rafi Sahab.

He completely ignored Rafi Sahab, the man who had sheltered him for 2 years in his Pali Hill flat during his difficult times but was facing a downturn in his career.

It was one of the rare times when Rafi Sahab lost his cool. He walked out of the studio and, at the door, turned and looked at his secretary and said, "Make sure to collect my full payment."

Kissa – The Quiet Generosity

Rafi Saab's golden heart shone brightly in his acts of quiet generosity, leaving lasting impressions on those who crossed his path.

One day, while heading to a recording session, he struck a conversation with the liftman at the studio. During their exchange, the liftman shared that his daughter's wedding was approaching, and he was struggling to manage the expenses despite working tirelessly. Rafi Saab listened attentively, offering warm encouragement before proceeding to his recording.

After the session, as was customary, the music director handed Rafi Saab his fee in a sealed envelope.

Tue to his style, Rafi Saab did not open the envelope to check the amount.

On his way out, he discreetly handed the sealed envelope to the liftman without saying a word.

In another instance, Rafi Saab noticed a studio musician struggling with a damaged instrument.

Understanding its importance for the artist's livelihood, he quietly arranged for the purchase of a new one, ensuring the musician could continue his craft without worry.

These selfless acts, often done in silence and without fanfare, were a true reflection of Rafi Sahab's character—a man whose joy lay not in receiving but in giving with grace and humility.

Kissa – You Are a Greater Human Being than I am

A name famous for his distinctive style of rhythms in Hindi cinema during the golden era of the 1950s to 1970s; the name who was recognized for his lively compositions beautifully crafted with key elements like tonga (horse-carriage) rhythm heard in songs like Maang Ke Saath Tumhara (Naya Daur, 1957), harmonica just like in the song Yeh Hai Bombay Meri Jaan (CID, 1956), or the combination of guitar, strings, and light percussion or even using whistling, ghunghroos, claps, and echo effects to create the song's free-flowing, romantic charm.

Yes, this is about O.P. Nayyar. Once Rafi Sahab said “Yun to Humne Lakh Music Directors Dekhe, Nayyar Sa Nahin Dekha.” (Though we have seen hundreds of thousands of music directors, we have never seen one like Nayyar.)

OP Nayyar was known for his stubborn nature, strict discipline and strong decisions, yet he had a delicate heart. He was the person who could be compared with a coconut—hard and rough on the outside, but soft and sweet within; the one who would fire his musician for not adhering to his discipline, but would also be the one who would understand the financial struggle of and help him.

He was the man of his own rules, an artist Par Excellence. The man who had an unwavering faith in the power of his tunes. He never hesitated to go against the stream, just like in the mid-50s when the music arrangement was being influenced heavily by Jazz and Blues with string harmonies, OP Nayyar boldly composed songs with just Harmoniums, Clarinets and Flute for Interludes with Dholak setting the Rhythm.

For male voices, he had a deep preference for Rafi Sahab; his collaborations with Mohammed Rafi created magic, leaving behind a

musical legacy of the duo that continues to captivate hearts across generations.

O. P. Nayyar was once quoted as saying, “Agar Mohammed Rafi na hota, to OP Nayyar bi nahi hota.” (If there had been no Mohammed Rafi, there would have been no O. P. Nayyar.)

O.P. Nayyar was the man who brought together two legendary voices in a rare musical moment—he made Mohammed Rafi sing for singer-actor Kishore Kumar in the song “Man Mora Baawara” from the film Raagini. Nayyar believed that the song’s classical depth required Rafi’s trained voice, making it a perfect fit.

According to some estimates, Rafi Sahab sang a total of 197 numbers (56 solos) for Nayyar, marking a long and close association.

The legendary partnership between Mohammed Rafi and O.P. Nayyar hit an unexpected rough patch during the recording of the film Sawan Ki Ghata (1966).

As OP Nayyar was of strict punctuality, he always scheduled his recordings in the morning. By 9:00 AM, the entire orchestra would be in place, and by 9:10 AM, the studio gates would be firmly shut.

One day, Rafi arrived nearly an hour late. As soon as he entered, he sincerely apologised, saying, “Maaf kijiyege, main Shankar- Jaikishan ki recording m phans gya tha.” (Extremely sorry, I was stuck in Shankar-Jaikishan's recording.) Hearing the name of Shankar-Jaikishan, his strong competitor, Nayyar’s temper flared. “You have time for Shankar-Jaikishan but not for Nayyar?” he retorted. At that moment, he made a firm decision: “From now on, I too don’t have time for Rafi.” He abruptly cancelled the recording and instructed his manager to settle Rafi’s dues.

For the next three years, Nayyar never worked with Rafi Sahab. However, Rafi Sahab, known for his humility, never harboured resentment or spoke ill of Nayyar. When a journalist attempted to provoke him by asking, “How could Nayyar treat you with such

disrespect?” Rafi, with his characteristic grace, simply responded, “I was wrong. Nayyar Sahab was right.”

Rafi Sahab’s humility was not just in words but in actions. Then, after three years, one day, Rafi Sahab decided to end this by visiting Nayyar’s house.

He did not let pride or past grievances stand in the way of reconciliation.

As they sat down and began talking, all resentment and misunderstandings melted away.

Nayyar, deeply moved, admitted, “Rafi, by coming here today, you have proven that you are a far greater human being than I am. You have conquered your ego—something I failed to do.”

With tears in their eyes and smiles on their faces, the two embraced, and just like that, one of Bollywood’s greatest musical duos reunited—ready to create magic once again.

Rafi Sahab’s ability to forgive, his refusal to hold grudges, and his willingness to take the first step toward reconciliation truly exemplified his greatness, not just as a singer but as a human being.

Kissa- Selfless help

Rafi Sahab wasn't just a legendary singer; he was the kind of person who quietly made a difference in people's lives.

One such story revolves around CV Nagaiah, a prominent figure in the Telugu film industry.

He was directing Bhakta Ramadasu, a passion project that meant the world to him, but the film was in serious trouble. Production delays, mounting debts, and a string of betrayals by dishonest associates had left Nagaiah nearly bankrupt. The dream he had worked so hard to bring to life was slipping through his fingers.

Meanwhile, in Bombay, Mohammed Rafi, the golden voice of Indian cinema, was riding an unstoppable wave of success. Hit after hit, Rafi Sahab was the go-to playback singer for every major star. But despite his skyrocketing fame, Rafi Sahab remained grounded, a man of humility and kindness. When Nagaiah, desperate and out of options, reached out to Rafi Sahab for help, he didn't expect much. After all, why would a superstar like Rafi care about a struggling filmmaker from the South?

But Rafi Sahab, without hesitation, agreed to lend his voice to the film.

Not only did he record the soulful song 'Dil Ko Hamaare Darshan Dena' for free, but he also went above and beyond. Rafi offered financial support to help Nagaiah complete the film and even travelled to the South at his own expense to ensure everything went smoothly.

For Rafi Sahab, it wasn't about money or fame—it was about helping someone in need and preserving a piece of art that mattered. This selfless act of kindness not only saved the film but also earned Rafi Sahab immense respect and love from the South Indian film industry.

Kissa – What a Beautiful Human Being

Another story that captures this side of him involves a woman from Hyderabad, a relative of Fazal Nawaz Khan Jung Bahadur, the finance minister under Nizam's rule.

She had been diagnosed with thyroid cancer and travelled to Bombay for surgery at JJ Hospital.

But life isn't always kind, and despite her connections, she found herself struggling to gather the funds needed for the operation.

She reached out to everyone she could think of—film personalities, businessmen, anyone who might help.

But doors kept closing, and hope began to fade.

Just as she was about to give up and return to Hyderabad, a chance encounter in a small tea shop changed everything.

A musician, overhearing her story, casually said, "Why don't you try Rafi? He might be able to help."

It wasn't a grand recommendation, just a simple suggestion. But it was enough.

She approached Rafi Sahab, not knowing what to expect. What happened next was no dramatic scene—just a quiet, heartfelt gesture.

Rafi Sahab listened, understood, and without fanfare, handed her Rs 10,000.

No questions, no conditions. Just help when it was needed most. That money wasn't just a donation; it was a lifeline.

It allowed her to undergo the surgery and gave her a second chance at life. Rafi Sahab never made a big deal about it. For him, it was just another day, another person he could help. But for her, it was everything.

Rafi Sahab's legacy isn't just in his music—it's in the lives he touched, one quiet gesture at a time.

Kissa – His Team- a Family

Mohammad Rafi Sahab had a dedicated team of musicians who accompanied him on his world tours for music shows. This team included Sunil Kaushik as the guitarist, Narendra Kaka as saxophone player and Ameer on tabla, Narayan Naydu on dholki, Lasley Kudino on drums, Ali Ji on the accordion, and Usha Timothy as the female co-singer. Today, two members from this team are the only ones who are left with us to tell their stories from remarkable moments— guitarist Sunil Kaushik and singer Usha Timothy.

Guitarist – Sunil Kaushik

Sunil Kaushik shares that his first tour with Rafi Sahab was to Muscat, where they performed three packed shows. The audience response was overwhelming. During one of the performances, Rafi Sahab even sang a local-language song for the Sultan of Muscat.

Whenever we toured with Rafi Sahab, it never felt like just another work trip—it felt like a family travelling together. Unlike other singers, who often stayed in separate hotels from their musicians, Rafi Sahab ensured that everyone stayed in the same hotel, travelled on the same flight, and even ate the same food.”

Rafi Sahab’s wife also accompanied us, and we all fondly called her Baaji Aapa. If anyone faced any issues, she was always there to listen and support them.

The strong bond within the team was evident on stage as well. Our performances weren’t just a replication of recorded songs; everyone had their own magic. Rafi Sahab would add his own improvisations— new variations, fresh melodies— making each performance unique.

I once asked him why he sang differently from his recorded versions. Rafi Sahab smiled and said, “If I sing exactly like the recorded version, why would people come to hear me live? They might not enjoy it as

much. But when I suddenly introduce a variation, the audience's reaction is priceless.”

Whatever Rafi Sahab sang on stage—whether he took the melody in one direction or another, went higher or lower, or introduced new variations—we, as his musical band, simply followed his lead. His improvisations made every performance unique, and we adapted to his artistry in real time.

Rafi Sahab sang in his own style, elevating it with his improvisations. It was as if time stood still—people would close their eyes, completely immersed in the depth of his voice. They weren't just listening; they were experiencing the song, feeling every note resonate within them. Such was the magic of Rafi Sahab's live performances—pure, soulful, and utterly mesmerising.

Singer - Usha Timothy

Usha Timothy, a veteran Bollywood playback singer, began her illustrious career at the age of just 13 with the film *Himalaya Ki God Mein* in 1965. A remarkable aspect of her musical journey is that she had the privilege of being a part of the legendary Mohammed Rafi's final two decades in the industry. She got to sing many duets with Rafi Sahab and became the first choice to perform the female version of Rafi Sahab's duets at the concerts. During an interview, when Usha was asked about her journey and how it all began, she smiled and reflected before replying...

From the tender age of three, Usha Timothy was drawn to music.

By a twist of fate, she got her a chance to sing with legends at the age of seven, at Kalyanji-Anandji Night in Nagpur—a grand musical event featuring iconic voices like Mukesh, Manna Dey, Hemant Kumar, and Rafi Sahab himself.

What happened there! The scheduled female singer couldn't make it to the event. That's when Usha's elder brother, who worked there,

hesitantly suggested, “My little sister sings filmi songs very well. If you allow, she can try.”

Kalyanji raised an eyebrow after looking at the girl and asked, “How old is she?” “Seven years old.”

He laughed. “No, no, no. This is not child’s play!”

But another of her brothers, a tabla player, was determined not to let this opportunity slip away. Knowing that the sound engineer of the Kalyanji-Anandji Night was a friend of his, he persuaded him to let Usha sing a song during the interval, just as a trial. During the break, little Usha was asked to sing. She sat on a stool, her feet barely touching the ground, and began:

“Rasik balma, rasik balma, dil kyun lagaya tose...”

The moment she sang, the entire hall went silent. Kalyanji immediately turned to the sound engineer, surprised.

“Who is this girl singing?”

Someone pointed at the tiny figure on stage. “This little girl!” Even Rafi Sahab was impressed. After her performance, she was called up and asked to sing a few more songs. Rafi Sahab then inquired if she could sing certain songs, including some of his own duets that he was supposed to perform that evening.

Seeing her immense potential, Kalyanji insisted that she move to Mumbai to pursue music professionally.

A year later, she got another call to come to Mumbai. This time, it was Rafi Sahab himself who encouraged her.

She vividly remembers his reassuring words:

“You sing so well; you should not let this opportunity go to waste. You should come to Mumbai. Whenever you miss home, we will send you back to Nagpur to visit your parents. Don’t worry—I am here. I am your Abba.”

With those heartfelt words, he became more than just a mentor—he became a father figure to her. He also imparted invaluable wisdom about music. He often told her: “Never treat singing as just a profession. Never treat riyaz (practice) as a job. Singing is ibaadat (devotion). Do your riyaz every single day—never skip it.”

When asked why, as a female singer, she was most influenced by Rafi Sahab—a male singer—she explained, “He was one of a kind. He sang with such precision that he could perfectly hit all the microtones (shrutis) in a single note. His sustained notes were simply magical.”

“Rafi Sahab’s greatest quality—he always encouraged others, whether they were newcomers or seasoned professionals. He never let anyone feel small,” she says.

She recalls a defining moment from her childhood, the time when she got to record her first duet with Mohammad Rafi Sahab for the composer Kalyanji, and while it was a dream come true, it also brought unexpected anxiety.

“As I stepped into the recording studio, nervous but excited, Kalyanji playfully remarked, 'Saamne sher (lion) hai!'— implying that I would be singing alongside a true giant of the music industry.”

When I entered the recording area, Rafi Sahab asked Why are you looking nervous. Hesitantly, I replied, “Kalyanji said that you are a lion... Are you?”

Rafi Sahab chuckled and calmed me, “Who told you that? I’m not a lion—I’m your Abba!” “But Kalyanji said so,” I murmured.

“Oh, he was just joking!” Rafi Sahab reassured me, his kindness dissolving all my fears. With newfound confidence, I recorded the song “O Soniye Hiriye, Hiriye, Tu Pahad Ki Kudi” and you cannot guess it was sung by a thirteen-year- old girl.”

Kissa – Rafi Sahab- the Family Man

Mohammed Rafi's tale is incomplete without his family. To the outer world, he might have ruled the golden era of Indian music, with every hero wanting his voice, every composer craving his melodies, and every fan cherishing his songs like treasures; his music might have had crossed borders, touched hearts, and became a part of people's lives, making him one of the most beloved voices around the world- yet in the world inside his house, he was simply a loving husband, a caring father and a doting grandfather.

Rafi Sahab – A dutiful Son

Rafi Sahab's humility and grounded nature can be traced back to the teachings of his father, who initially disapproved of his decision to pursue a singing career but gradually accepted it. Even in his final days, his father gave him one piece of advice that Rafi carried with him throughout his life: 'Whatever you do and wherever you go in this world, always keep your feet on the ground.' This simple yet profound guidance became the cornerstone of Rafi Sahab's life. No matter how much success he achieved, no matter how many accolades he earned, he remained humble, kind, and deeply connected to his roots.

But it wasn't just his father's wisdom that shaped his journey—his mother's prayers were just as

significant. In an interview, Rafi Sahab once revealed that he believed his success was largely due to his mother's dua (prayers). She had an unshakable faith in his talent and often told him, "One day, you will be on top of the world."

Together, the teachings of his father and the blessings of his mother created the foundation of the legend that was Mohammed Rafi.

Rafi Sahab- The Dada Abba

In an interview, Rizwan, the eldest grandson of Muhammad Rafi, revealed, "At home, Dada Abba was far from the star the world knew.

He was simply a family man, embracing his role as a husband, father, and later, a doting grandfather. The moment he stepped through his door, he shed the trappings of fame and became just Mohammed Rafi, a loving and humble man.”

Every morning, at the crack of dawn- 5:30 AM sharp- he bowed in prayer, never missing his namaz. His day always began with devotion, followed by intense Riyaz, a disciplined blend of devotion and dedication to music.

After his practice, he would check his schedule for the day and prepare himself before heading to the recording studio, where his golden voice would create timeless melodies.

He was always punctual, never late for a recording or a session.

“Work was important to him, but family came first. When I, his first grandson, was about to be born, he dropped everything, cancelled all his meetings, and flew to England without a second thought. That’s just who he was.”

“Whenever Dada Abba found a free moment, you could almost always find him with a badminton racket in hand, another greatest passion beyond music, ready for a game. On quiet Sunday mornings or breezy evenings, he would step onto the court with a spark in his eyes, the sound of the shuttlecock filling the air. He played not for competition, but for the sheer joy of the game, his laughter echoing as he exchanged swift rallies with friends and family.

In his free time, Dada Abba also enjoyed playing carrom. he would gather all of us around a carrom board and play with us. With every flick of the striker, conversations flowed, laughter erupted, and bonds strengthened. These weren’t just games- they were precious moments of the world inside his house, in which we were his greatest joy. He would never be too tired to spend time and share a laugh with us.

Dada Abba's other interest was kite flying. He had a distinctive style- he always preferred flying a black- colored kite, a small yet striking

choice that became a personal trademark. In our neighbourhood in Bandra, not far from our house, lived Manna Dey Sahib.

Both Dada Abba and Manna Dey were luminaries of their time, competitors in the world of music but friends in life. Whenever they found time away from their busy schedules, they would climb to their terraces and engage in friendly kite- flying duels.

As kids, we would hold his chakri (a spool used to wind and control the kite string), watching him fly his aspirations in the form of a kite, which could effortlessly touch the sky in no time, was a pure delight for us.”

Recalling his calm demeanour, Rizwan shared an incident and said, “He had a deep love for cars. If he liked a new model, he wouldn’t think twice—he’d buy it on the spot. Once, he got the latest Audi 100, a dark sky-blue beauty, shipped in. Around that time, there was Chacha’s wedding, and the whole family was travelling to Indore for the celebration. While Dada, Dadi, Chachu, and Mama rode in the Audi, most of the family was in a bus.

The kids were riding in a bus, full of excitement, throwing crackers out the window. And in all the excitement, I accidentally threw a cracker onto Dada’s brand-new Audi. I was sure I was in for a good scolding and thought, ‘That’s it, I’m going to get a real scolding from Dadi too!’

When they stopped for a meal, I was expecting Dada Abba to be upset. But he simply smiled and said, ‘Aaram se khelo, beta.’ (Play carefully, my child.)

That was my Dada abba—kind, calm, and full of grace.”

Rafi Sahab: The Foodie

Despite being diabetic, Dada Abba had an undeniable sweet tooth. “He enjoyed almost every kind of dessert. Whenever a craving hit, he wouldn’t think twice- he would just open the fridge and grab

whatever caught his eye. But if there’s Gulab jamun, there’s no competition- that was his absolute favourite!” Further adding, Rizwan

said, “When he would see us eating something sweet, he would say, ‘Give me a little to taste, but don’t tell your grandma!’”

Yasmeen Khursheed, Rafi Sahab’s daughter-in-law, who resides in London, once shared a fascinating incident about the legendary singer.

She recalled that during a music show in Coventry, Britain, she and her husband, Khalid, went to meet him. “However, Khalid noticed that his father seemed a little off—something wasn’t quite right. When they asked, they discovered the reason. Frustrated, Abba sighed, ‘Yaar, I haven’t had a proper meal in three or four days here. The food just doesn’t taste right.’ Explaining the situation to me, Khalid said, ‘Abba is very particular about his food. If he doesn’t get the right meal at the right time, it affects his mood.’

In those days, there weren’t as many Indian restaurants, and the event organisers would manage meals in whatever way they could—sometimes prepared by a chef and other times brought from someone’s home. But Abba wasn’t satisfied. Suddenly, he turned to Khalid and said, ‘Chalo, let’s go home. Let’s go to London for a proper meal.’

Everyone was stunned. Khalid hesitated, reminding him, ‘Abba, you have a show at 7 PM. The organisers won’t let you leave.’

But Abba was firm. ‘No, we’re going. I’ll eat and come back.’

Khalid was baffled, asked, ‘But how?’ Abba asked, ‘How long will it take?’ Khalid replied, ‘It’ll take 2-3 hours to reach and another 2-3 hours to return!’

Abba simply said, ‘Toh chalte hain!’ (Then let’s go!)

Without informing anyone—because if we had, no one would have allowed us to leave—we quietly slipped away to London on the earliest next flight.

When we arrived, Abba eagerly told me, ‘Quick! Make first- class dal-chawal, hari mirch ki chutney, kachumber salad, and that Singhal dish.’ I rushed to prepare everything. As soon as Abba took his first bite, his face lit up with joy, just like a child who finally gets his favourite toy.

Completely satisfied, he placed his hand on my head, blessed me, and said, ‘Now everything is fine. Let’s go back.’

And just like that, we returned to Coventry. We were able to reach before the show started, but in the meantime, everyone had been searching for him, wondering where he had disappeared. When they finally found out that he had travelled all the way to London just to eat, their eyes widened in disbelief— ‘You actually went to London... just for a meal?!’”

Rafi Sahab – The Father Figure

Rafi Sahab always kept his distance from the glamour of the film industry. If invited to parties, he would make a brief appearance, often just to pay his respects or fulfil his obligations, before quietly returning home. But Nitin Mukesh shared a special moment from his wedding. He said, ‘He usually doesn’t stay long at such events, but at my wedding, it was different. Since my father was no longer with us, he stayed for a long time, almost as if he had taken on a fatherly role for me. He wanted to make sure I didn’t feel my father’s absence that day.’

For Usha Timothy, Rafi Sahab’s reassuring words- ‘Don’t worry, I am here. I am your Abba.’, While she had to leave Nagpur, her home, were not just words; they were a promise he never broke. Whether taking her along for concerts or recordings, his priority was always her safety and dignity. He looked after her with the care of a father, ensuring she was treated with respect in an industry where such kindness was rare. His unwavering support made her feel protected, valued, and truly like a daughter under his guidance.

Rafi Sahab- An Adoring Husband

One evening, before a grand music concert, Baji (Rafi Sahab’s wife) had a special request for Mohammad Rafi. With a hopeful smile, she said, ‘Sahib, I have a small wish. If you go on stage tonight, please sing ‘Teri Pyari Pyari Surat Ko Kisi Ki Nazar Na Lage’ song, just for me.’

Rafi Sahab, ever the gentleman, nodded and assured her, ‘Okay, okay, I will sing it.’

The concert began, and song after song filled the air. Baji eagerly waited, convinced that any moment now, her request would be fulfilled. But as the night went on and the event came to an end, the song never came.

She kept thinking, now he will sing... now he will sing... but he never did.

Baji got furious. Frustrated, she, in a tone filled with both disappointment and hurt, said, ‘He listens to the whole world, but never to me! He didn’t even sing my song. Look at him- He forgets everything when he’s on stage.’

Later that night, his colleague playfully approached Rafi Sahab and asked, ‘Rafi Sahab, you didn’t sing the song that Baji requested?’

Rafi Sahab looked genuinely confused. ‘Which song?’ he asked, completely unaware that he had forgotten.

Usha Tmothi reminded him, ‘The song ‘Teri Pyari Pyari Surat’—the one Baji requested! Baji is furious now, very furious! You’re in big trouble tonight. There’s no escape for you. Today, your game is over!’ As she spoke, she burst into laughter, reminiscing about the good old days when she used to tease Mohammad Rafi Sahab like this, cherishing the warmth of their shared moments.

Realising his mistake, Rafi Sahab smiled mischievously. ‘Wait, wait....’

He then walked over to Baji, gently lifted her chin, looked into her eyes, and in his signature melodious voice, began singing, ‘Teri pyari pyari surat ko, kisi ki nazar na lage...’

Baji, despite her anger, couldn’t help but smile.

She laughed, saying, ‘That was Rafi Sahab for you- playful, full of life, and always ready to melt hearts with his little gestures.’

Rafi Saab's golden heart shone brightly in his acts of quiet generosity.

Rafi Sahab - Sharing Stories

Rafi Sahab's family shared how their father would find joy in sharing the stories from his memorable concerts or recordings with them. Yasmeen Khursheed shares another remarkable incident from his life, one that truly highlights the immense love and respect he received worldwide.

In 1980, Rafi performed at a grand music concert in Colombo, Sri Lanka. The event was attended by the country's President, J. R. Jayewardene, and Prime Minister, Ranasinghe Premadasa. However, what made the occasion truly extraordinary was the overwhelming crowd—an astonishing 12 lakh (1.2 million) people had gathered to listen to him. The venue was simply not big enough to accommodate such a massive audience, making it impossible to manage. As a result, the concert had to be postponed to the next day.

To handle the enormous crowd, organisers had to take an unprecedented step. They set up loudspeakers along the roads, effectively turning the streets into an open-air concert venue. This was perhaps the first time such a colossal gathering had been witnessed at a music event.

A particularly memorable moment was when the President and Prime Minister themselves came to receive Rafi. Their protocol dictated that they were only to attend the opening ceremony and then leave. However, the moment Rafi began singing, his mesmerising voice cast such a spell that both dignitaries stayed back, captivated, listening to him for a long time.

‘When Abba later shared this with his family, I remember how his eyes lit up with joy. He said, ‘The amount of love and respect I received was incredible. People were so passionate about my music- it was truly heartwarming.’

This gesture deeply touched Abba. The honour he received, not just from the common people but also from the nation's highest leaders, filled him with immense happiness. To make the occasion even more special, he sang a song in Sinhala, the local language—a unique tradition of his, where he made an effort to sing in the native language of the place he performed.'

Shahid Rafi, Rafi Sahab's son, shared another heart-touching story about him. He recalled, "One day, Abba returned home after a recording session for the song 'Chal Mere Bhai Tere Hath Jodta Hun' from the film Naseeb. The moment he arrived; he eagerly called all of us children together. With eyes full of excitement like a child himself, he said, 'Do you know who I sang with today? I recorded a song with Amitabh Bachchan!'

And he would hug us and share love and joy. We would always gather around him, eager to listen to his stories and imagine the vivid pictures in our minds of the whole scene.

What made him truly special was his simplicity- he would be amazed at the immense love and admiration he received, while we, without a doubt, knew the greatness of our Abba. However, within the walls of our home, he was.... he was simply our Abba.'

Kissa – A Typical Day in the Life of Rafi Sahab

One of the things that always comes to all our minds about rich and famous people is how they spend their day.

Quite often, it is either because we are so much in awe of them or because the media (especially social media) writes all kinds of things about them.

However, it is not all fake.

Celebrities, film personalities, and famous and rich people have a lifestyle which an ordinary person can only aspire to.

BUT NOT ALL...

There are some rich, famous, and big people who, despite all that God has given them, live lives which make ordinary people love them even more.

Rafi Sahab was one of them.

His typical day used to start very early in the morning (4-5 am). After daily ablutions, he would do his Namaz and then go into his music room.

For the next 2 hours, he would do Riyaz (yes, and he maintained that habit till the end of his years despite being the most famous and accomplished singer of the country; he would do Riyaz daily... this is called commitment). It is said that his Riyaz was not only about singing; he would practice things like breathing between lines, doing thirki/murki at different octaves, practising classical songs and so on. In other words, he would practice every kind of requirement that may come up for him to sing.

Post Riyaz, he would get ready, have his breakfast and leave for recording studios (his food and special tea made of jaggery and honey would go with him. Depending on how many songs he is recording that day, he would return in the evening. The first thing he would do after

returning home was to play Badminton (he loved the game), and then sit down with his children to play carrom. He would have dinner and would be in bed by 10 pm.

He never used to like going to parties or socialising, etc. Even if he had to go somewhere, he would be the first to eat and leave (as soon as it looked appropriate).

Do you notice something? is it any different from any one of us.... a man who was so big, so respected, so loved led such a simple life.... just like you and me...

That is where his true greatness lay... a simple man who became the world's greatest singer.

Kissa – The Autograph

This heartwarming kissa will give you a tickling in your heart and compel you to smile, thinking.... how innocent was Rafi Sahab being such a huge personality of his time.

The king of playback singing, who ruled Bollywood with his mesmerising voice and extraordinary hold on classical music, was also a personality so down to earth that it set him apart, making him a rare gem not just in music but in character as well. Despite being the most sought-after singer of his era—adored by music directors, actors, and fans alike—he never allowed his success to overpower his simplicity.

Even at the peak of his career, when his voice was the first choice of almost every major composer and superstar, Rafi Sahab never let it show. He maintained a sense of quiet dignity, never flaunting his achievements or demanding special treatment. His respect for his peers was evident in the smallest gestures—standing up when someone entered the room, being the first to greet, and treating everyone with kindness, regardless of their stature in the industry.

Throughout his career and even after his death, no one has ever spoken ill of him. Despite being in the industry where celebrities are often seen caught up in the paparazzi-driven controversies, creating spicy news, politics and gossip, Rafi Sahab remained above it all.

His disciple and singer, Mahendra Kapoor, always spoke of Rafi Sahab “He was a great artist, but along with that, Rafi Sahab was a great human being as well. He was very *seeda- sada insan (very simple and humble person)*, unaware of the ways of the world.”

Mahendra Kapoor once shared an endearing anecdote about an incident when he was just a high school boy:

“One day, Rafi Sahab called me and asked what I was doing. I told him that I was free since it was a holiday in observance of Mahatma

Gandhi's death anniversary. He then asked if I could accompany him to his live program on AIR (All India Radio), and I eagerly agreed.

We went to the station, where Rafi Sahab sang, and I played the Tanpura. The show went well. After the programme, when we made our way downstairs to leave, there we met a crowd of young girls and boys waiting for Rafi Sahab to meet and collect his *Autograph*.

They excitedly asked in English, “*We want your autograph, sir!*”

Rafi Sahab puzzled, turned to me and asked in his native language, “ye ki keh rhe hai?” (What are they saying?)

At that time, I was also not aware of what an autograph meant, so I asked one young boy what they wanted. That young boy smiled, finding out about our innocence and explained, “Sir, we all are asking for Rafi Sahab’s signature.”

I then gestured to Rafi Sahab and explained back to Rafi Sahab mimicking the act of holding a pen with my hand (as to help him understand) and said “Paaji, wo tuhada sign chahunde ne.” (Big brother, they want your autograph.) On this, Rafi Sahab got confused, as for him the signature meant only for signing some important documents or signing an agreement. Very innocent Rafi Sahab, despite being himself a big celebrity and a legendary singer, was unaware of the fact that the signature had evolved from just formal usage and had become a prized possession of an admirer who wished to preserve a piece of their idol’s presence. Handwritten signatures had become a memory to cherish, representing a moment of personal interaction with their favourite celebrity or an idol.

Rafi Sahab hesitated for a moment, turned back to me and said innocently, “Chal tu... umm tu hi de de.” (Alright, you... hmm, you give it to them.)

And Mahendra Kapoor did as Rafi Sahab told him to do, he wrote *Mohammed Rafi* in the diary, pages for everyone, for him.

It's touching to imagine a legend like him being unaware of something as common as an autograph, reinforcing just how detached he was from vanity.

Truly, they both were the symbol of pure simplicity.

Kissa – Never Letting Anyone Down

This Kissa was told by the megastar Shri. Amitabh Bachchan himself.

He says that they were doing a music program in Siliguri, where on the first day Rafi Sahab was supposed to sing and on day two, some other singer was supposed to perform.

As expected, Rafi Sahab's program went off fantastically.

The next day in morning, Rafi Sahab got ready and left for the airport.

A shocking thing happened: the singer who was supposed to sing on the second day cancelled his program.

Tickets had already been sold; high expectations had been built everyone started panicking.

Those were the days when there were no cell phones. It was decided that some people would rush to the airport, and if Rafi Sahab's flight had not left, they would try to "convince" Rafi Sahab to return and sing on the second day also.

Everyone was tense as hell.

When the people reached the airport, the boarding had already happened, and Rafi Sahab had also boarded the flight.

Now, readers, in those days (because terrorism, etc, had not started) even the people who had come to see off, etc, were allowed to walk up to the aircraft. Amit ji and others rushed to the aircraft on the Tarmac. Amit ji went inside the aircraft and saw Rafi Sahab sitting peacefully in his seat.

He walked up to him and told him about the whole situation and requested that Rafi Sahab cancel his return and stay for one more day, because otherwise it would be a disaster.

Amit Ji says that Rafi Sahab didn't even think for long; he immediately got up and said, Let's go back. I am cancelling my return. Let's first take care of the program.

Rafi Sahab came back to the hotel, prepared for the second night, and what an evening it was...the big guy had delivered again.

Now, the incident above looks simple, but think about it. How often do we, even in our not-so-big life, change our programs so that someone else is not inconvenienced?

In most such cases, an ordinary person would have said, Well, you want me to sing on the second day also? How much extra will you pay me (especially because I am changing my program)?

But then, Rafi Sahab was no ordinary person; he was a great man with a big heart.

Such people visit the earth once in a while.... The rest of the time, ordinary mortals like me can only remember them....

Kissa – Rafi Sahab ‘A Farishta’

Behind a 5-minute melodious song lie days of relentless hard work by composers, lyricists, instrumentalists and of course the singer. There are many musicians who contribute to the final recording of the song, transitioning each melody into a living, breathing masterpiece. Yet how many of them are truly remembered or given the recognition they deserve?

This is a story of one such musician. We can't thank Sujata Dev for bringing it to light through her book *Mohammad Rafi: Golden Voice on Silver Screen*.

The musician, who had played tabla on the recording with Rafi Sahab on many occasions, could now only afford a small place to stay in the slums with a frail cot as the only furniture in his cramped house. The 80-year-old, fragile musician recalled that he had played alongside legends like Mohammad Rafi, Manna Dey, Kishore Kumar, and Lata Mangeshkar, contributing to the recordings that defined an era of Golden Time.

It took relentless persuasion and gentle cajoling before he finally agreed—on one condition: his name must remain anonymous. In his poor man's house, the walls, peeling with age, held nothing but a single black-and-white photograph of Mohammad Rafi—its edges curled, its once-vibrant memory fading into time.

After a heavy silence, he finally murmurs, “Those are the tablas I played for Mohammad Rafi, Kishore Kumar, Manna Dey, and Lata Mangeshkar ” In the corner of the dimly lit

room, the instruments rest.

He continues, “On July 5, 1978, I received my first money order of Rs. 200. The same amount arrived again in August. And then it became a ritual—every month, in the first week, the money would come. I never knew who was sending it. We musicians were not paid well in those

days, and Rs. 200 was a significant amount. It meant I could buy medicine for my mother, who was suffering from tuberculosis. That money became my lifeline.”

He takes a deep breath, his eyes clouded with memories.

“But in August 1980, the money stopped. I was devastated. My earnings barely covered two meals a day for my mother and me, and without that money, I couldn't afford her medicines. I waited, hoping it was just a delay. But the days turned into weeks, and the money never came. Desperation crept in, and I started searching for the unknown benefactor, the one whose generosity had kept my mother alive.”

He pauses, as if reliving the pain.

“One day, while I was sharing my distress with a friend, Zaheer Bhai overheard and said, ‘Farishta, the one who was helping you, has left this world.’ I was stunned. And then it struck me—Rafi Sahab had passed away on July 31.”

His voice breaks, and his gaze shifts back to the photograph on the wall.

“I went home and told my mother. She closed her eyes for a moment and whispered, ‘If only I had known... I would have thanked him for keeping me alive.’ Three days later, she passed away. Perhaps she chose to meet him in heaven—to thank him in person.”

Tears welled in his eyes, but he continued.

“It was only then that I understood. Rafi Sahab must have overheard me one day when a music director was scolding me for missing a session. I had explained, with a heavy heart, that my mother was unwell. He never said a word. He never wanted recognition. He just helped, silently. He was an angel—Farishta—that’s why Allah called him back so soon.”

A month after sharing this story, the old tabla player left the world, too. It was as though he had been holding on, waiting for the moment to

express his gratitude to Rafi Sahab- before taking his own bow from life.

In the hustle and bustle of our daily lives, we encounter countless people. Some are prominent enough to save a space in our hearts and memories, yet many fade away, unable to make a significant impact. Amidst our fast-paced routines, we often overlook moments that deserve our attention, neglecting acts of kindness we could extend.

But this was not the case with Rafi Sahab, despite being such a big figure in the world of music, constantly surrounded by people and occupied with his demanding schedule, he would never fail to extend his helping hand. He had an innate ability to notice the unseen struggles of those around him. His big celebrity lifestyle never became an obstacle in reaching out to those who barely have a lifestyle.

Kissa – An Inspiring Fan Story

Sometimes, the power of music is such that it not only touches hearts but transforms lives.

This is a story of one such fan—a tale of love, devotion, and inspiration.

The fan shared that he was just around 10 years old when he first heard the magical voice of Rafi Sahab. It was love at first note. As a young boy, he found simple yet deeply heartfelt ways to express his admiration and to feel his idol around him all the time. He would lovingly collect Rafi Sahab's photographs from newspapers and magazines, preserve cassette covers that featured his image, and treasure anything- even the smallest memento- that brought him closer to the legend he so deeply admired.

But there was one thing he did—an act of devotion so pure, so bold, that anyone would hesitate to do and makes his story unforgettable.

These days, it's common to see bikers or car owners displaying religious symbols on their vehicles as a sign of faith and devotion. But nearly 50 years ago, when people saw **Rafi Sahab's name written in Urdu** on his bicycle, many naturally assumed he was Muslim.

And what's truly heartwarming- he felt no need to correct them. On the contrary, he took immense pride in being mistaken for a Muslim, purely because it made him feel spiritually closer to his idol, Rafi Sahab.

It gave him a flutter of joy to believe that he was being identified with the same religion as the man whose voice had become the rhythm of his heart.

That innocent pride, born not of religion but of love and respect for an artist, speaks volumes about the unifying power of music.

Kissa – From the gate to the studio

It's a story shared by one of his millions of fans.

From a very young age, he had been an ardent admirer and a devoted fan of Mohammed Rafi. It had always been his desire to see him sing in person to witness the magic firsthand with his own eyes.

One day, he finally decided to meet him. He reached Rafi Sahab's residence in Mumbai. At the gate, however, the guards and gatekeeper stopped him. They told him that Rafi Sahab was not at home. He requested them to tell him when he will be available.

Frustrated, he began arguing with them, hoping they would understand his sincerity. Just then, he heard a voice from behind the gate—Rafi Sahab himself! He had been in his garden and must have overheard the commotion. His warm and gentle voice called out, instructing them to let the fan in.

He was overjoyed as he finally stood before the man he had idolised for so long. Nervously, he expressed his deep admiration for Rafi Sahab's music and how much Rafi Sahab's songs meant to him. Rafi Sahab listened to him very patiently.

And then, gathering courage, the fan presented my wish to him: "Rafi Sir, I want to see and hear you sing in person."

Rafi Sahab replied with joy in his eyes, "Alright! Tomorrow, I am leaving for Hyderabad and will return after two weeks." He took out his diary, in which he had written all his recordings and concerts schedule, he flipped through a few pages, checked it for a few seconds and said, "My next immediate recording will be at Bombay Lab, so you come and watch me sing there." He gave him the date and time of the recording session.

While he was thrilled, he hesitantly asked Rafi Sahab, What if the gatekeepers stopped him from entering there?

Rafi Sahab smiled, put his hand over his shoulder and assured him, saying, “Don’t worry, you come. There will not be any problem.”

The much-awaited day finally arrived, and this fan reached the studio. As he came out of his car, he was stunned.

Everyone, from watchman to liftman, even the esteemed Music Directors, was already informed that there would be a **handicapped person** coming to meet and hear Rafi Sahab.

To his surprise, everyone made ensure that he was comfortable throughout the entire recording session.”

That day, he witnessed his idol sing in person.

The experience was beyond magical—it was a dream turned into reality

He says, a moment that will stay alive in my heart forever. That was my first meeting with my inspiration, my legend, my Rafi Sahab. And it is a memory I will cherish for a lifetime.

Kissa – The Chanaa Jor Garam

Rafi Sahab was a true foodie! It wasn't about vegetarian or non-vegetarian food—he loved it all. Whether it was a lavish meal or a simple snack like chana jor garam, Rafi Sahab savoured everything with the same joy and enthusiasm.”

Once, a Shankar-Jaikishan Night was being held in Chhattisgarh. Rafi Sahab and others had taken a flight to Nagpur and were travelling by road to the final destination. During the journey, the taxi had a flat tire. The driver pulled over and asked them to wait while he got it fixed.

As they waited, a street vendor selling Chana Jor Garam approached them.

Rafi Sahab's face lit up, and he immediately said, “I want to have some too!”

Concerned, someone said, “But Sir, you have a program tonight. What if your throat gets affected?”

Rafi Sahab laughed it off. “Nothing will happen! Just get me some,” he insisted.

Meanwhile, the street vendor kept looking at Rafi Sahab, trying to recognise if this was indeed the legendary singer or just someone who looked like him.

Sensing his curiosity, someone said, “Yes, he is Mohammed Rafi.” That was it! The vendor was so overwhelmed that he fell at Rafi Sahab's feet.

“I am your biggest fan, sir! I listen to your songs every day!” he exclaimed. “If only I had a camera, I would have taken a picture with you!”

Rafi Sahab chuckled and, without paying attention towards the amount of appreciation, he said, “Alright, alright! Hmmm... Just add a little more lemon to my Chana Jor Garam.”

Everyone burst into laughter.

Kissa – A True Performer

When Rafi Sahab performed on stage, he was not just a singer—he was a performer.

He believed that a live performance was more than just recreating a song; it was about bringing the essence of the original actor and emotions alive for the audience.

For Rafi Sahab, a concert was not just about music—it was about creating an experience.

He believed that, when he was on stage, he must bring the presence of the stars and the characters to life for the audience. If he was singing a Shammi Kapoor song, the audience should see Shammi Kapoor in him. It is not just about the voice; it is about the emotions, the expressions, the connection.

Kissa – Rafi Sahab’s Playful Side

While Rafi Sahab was deeply humble and kind, he also had a wonderful sense of humour.

He loved to joke around and keep the atmosphere light, especially when travelling together for shows. Once, flying from Kolkata to Guwahati for a concert. The flight was nearly empty, just the music troupe travelling together. There were two people in the group, Narayan Kaka and Dheeraj, who were young, very handsome, and—most importantly—unmarried!

As the flight progressed, one of the air hostesses, having completed her duties, struck up a conversation with Dheeraj.

They kept talking, and it was clear she was quite taken with him. Rafi Sahab, always quick to notice such things, leaned in with a twinkle in his eyes and whispered, ‘Narayan Kaka, Dheeraj is gone! He has found his match—now you’re left alone!’

Everybody burst into laughter.

The conversation between Dheeraj and the air hostess continued, and at one point, Dheeraj casually invited her to our concert that evening. She happily agreed and said, ‘Okay, I will come.’

Narayan Kaka, always ready to pull his leg, couldn’t resist jumping into their conversation. He leaned in and said, “Dheeru, Dheeru! Your wife has ordered Assam tea, so why don’t you ask this air hostess for some help? Find out where we can get the best tea in town and all that...” Dheeraj froze for a moment, his eyes widening in sheer bewilderment. He shot a baffled look at Narayan Kaka, as if trying to decode some secret message.

Seeing his reaction, Rafi Sahab and others couldn’t control their laughter! It was moments like these that made the journeys so much more enjoyable.

He had this magical ability to keep everyone in good spirits, always filling the air with warmth, laughter, and joy.

Kissa – Rafi Sahab in Cycle Rickshaw

Once, while travelling somewhere in Punjab, Johnny Whiskey, the famous mimicry artist, was with the troupe.

Always up to some mischief, Johnny had an idea—he made Rafi Sahab and his wife sit in a cycle rickshaw and took them for a ride through the bustling market.

As they moved through the crowded streets, people kept glancing at Rafi Sahab, their expressions filled with curiosity and confusion. He looked exactly like the legendary singer, but they hesitated to approach him. Could it really be Mohammed Rafi? they wondered. But why would he be riding in a rickshaw?

When Johnny returned and narrated the whole experience, we all burst into laughter.

Anyone else in Rafi Sahab's place might have thought twice before riding through a crowded market in a rickshaw without security. But he? He simply sat back, enjoyed the moment, and let the world wonder— was it really him or just someone who looked like him?

Kissa – Rafi Saab on and off the Mike

Many have spoken about how softly Rafi Sahab used to converse. His voice was so gentle that one had to listen with great attention to catch his words properly. He was also a man of very few words, choosing to speak only when necessary and never indulging in unnecessary elaboration or gossip.

Even in his interviews, one could simply observe that none of his answers have more than one or two lines, some were even given in one word, yet always with authenticity. The reason was very simple—he never felt the need to exaggerate or embellish anything about himself. His humility was so profound that he never once took pride in his immense talent. For him, every gift, every note he sang, and every melody he created was not of his own doing but a blessing from Allah. He saw himself as merely an instrument through which divine music flowed, carrying a deep sense of gratitude rather than self-importance.

Those fortunate enough to have witnessed him perform live, whether in recordings or at concerts, have all shared a similar sentiment. Rafi Sahab, who spoke in the softest of tones, barely above a whisper at times, seemed to undergo a transformation the moment he stood before a microphone. The energy, power and intensity he brought forth were so strong that he seemed like an entirely different person.

Anuradha Paudwal, whose contribution to Indian devotional music and the Bollywood Industry gained her the titles such as “Bhajan Queen”, was also the most successful female playback singer of the 80s and 90s era of Bollywood. She considered it a blessing to have had the opportunity to sing approximately 35 songs with the legendary Rafi Sahab. Reflecting on this experience, she shared her thoughts in a program on Doordarshan: “I was very new when I got my first chance to sing with him.”

She recalled the recording process from those days when songs were recorded live, requiring perfect coordination between the singers,

musicians, and music director. She described the atmosphere in the recording studio: “In one room, the music director, Rafi Sahab, and I would rehearse together. Believe me, if Rafi Sahab was sitting just a foot away from you, you still wouldn’t be able to hear him, he spoke that softly.”

She admitted that, being a newcomer at the time, she was puzzled by his low volume during rehearsals. She wondered how someone who spoke and even sang so softly while practising could project his voice powerfully in the final take.

“I was very new at that time, and I had this thought in my mind- He speaks so softly and sings so low while rehearsing... to awaaz kya aati hogi?” (How would his voice even be heard?) But when the final recording began, I went inside to listen to him, and I was absolutely amazed. It was as if he had transformed. He sang like a lion roaring, and his voice was as powerful as a mountain.”

Her words perfectly captured the astonishing contrast between Rafi Sahab’s humble, soft-spoken nature off-mic and the majestic, commanding presence.

PART 4:

Peers Talk

Kissa – The Unique Friendship of Rafi Sahab and Manna Dey

Can competitors be close friends?

The usual answer that comes to anybody's mind would be NO. And they would generally be right. But then neither Rafi Sahab nor Manna Dey were ordinary men.

In his autobiography, *Memories Come Alive*, Manna Dey talks about his unusual chemistry with singer Mohammad Rafi, whom he envied but also admired. He confessed how he was initially jealous when his music directors told him to bring in Rafi to sing a particular song. However, gradually, he became one of the biggest admirers of Rafi Sahab.

Manna Dey, Rafi Sahab's senior, excelled in complex, semi- classical compositions. Due to his voice, he often lent his voice to songs picturing intellectual or elderly characters.

His career, spanning over five decades, established him as a monumental figure in both classical and popular music genres.

Both Rafi Saab and Manna Dey were luminaries of their time, competitors in the world of music but friends in real life.

Manna Dey often talks about the joyful times they spent together in his interviews. In Bandra, Mumbai, Manna Dey's house was on the north side of a park, while Rafi Sahab's home stood on the opposite side. Whenever they had time away from their busy schedules, they would climb onto their terraces and engage in friendly kite-flying duels.

Manna Dey often managed to cut Rafi Sahab's kite, prompting Rafi Sahab to cheerfully admit, "You are the winner in flying kites." To this, Manna Dey would reply with a smile, "Haan! Hum to patang me jeete hai, aap to gaane me humse jeet gye." "Yes, but you soar higher in songs".

Such moments of light-hearted competition reflected the deep bond and mutual admiration they shared.

Rafi Sahab praised Manna Dey for his exceptional grasp of classical music. He admired Manna Dey's precision and his ability to handle complex ragas with ease.

Once, Rafi Sahab told Manna Dey, "Dada, main apne gale se aap jaisi murki kar paon, to main zyada achha gayak ban paunga" (If I can replicate the tonal expressions and vocal variations that you have, I will become a better singer).

In turn, Manna Dey acknowledged Rafi as the most versatile singer in Hindi cinema, capable of singing ghazals, bhajans, romantic numbers, and even qawwalis with effortless brilliance.

Their mutual respect led to a friendship free from ego and rivalry.

There is another incident worth mentioning.

There was a radio show organised by All India Radio's Vividh Bharati program. The show featured three singers: Rafi Sahab, Manna Dey, and Suman Kalyanpur. When Manna Dey learned that his segment was scheduled last, he grew concerned. He believed that after hearing Rafi's mesmerising performance, the audience would lose interest in his segment.

Kishan Sharma, the anchor, approached Rafi Sahab with this concern.

Rafi, ever gracious, remarked, "Manna Dey is a master of classical music. After listening to his masterpiece, the audience would not want to hear me. I should begin the show instead."

This exchange left Kishan Sharma confused, but he ultimately let Rafi start the program.

But Rafi Sahab did something during his segment which erased the whole reason for that confusion.

After about an hour of his performance, Rafi Sahab took the microphone as an anchor and introduced Manna Dey as his inspiration

for classical music and humbly asked Manna Dey if he would allow him to sing a famous song of Manna Dey, Budham Sharnam Gacchami, from the movie Angulimaal.

On this, Manna Dey Sahab's eyes teared up, and he embraced Rafi Sahab with huge respect and even kissed his forehead.

After the second segment of Suman Kalyanpur Ji, it was Manna Dey's turn.

He took the stage and introduced himself as a mere singer who would come and go while proclaiming Rafi Sahab as "the one and only" for everyone. He asked the audience to forgive him, and he then humbly performed Rafi's song "Mann Re Tu Kahe Na Dheer Dhare". His admiration was clear when Manna Dey said these words, "I would not mind if I am not called a great singer. I rate Mohammed Rafi as one of the very best, a self-taught, iconic singer of all time."

Stunning, isn't it?

Normally, yes, but again NOT if the two competitors are great professionals and extraordinary human beings like Rafi Sahab and Manna Dey.

Kissa – When the Chela Met Guru

Rafi Sahab and Mahender Kapoor had a very special relationship with each other.

Rafi Sahab treated Mahendra Kapoor no lesser than his younger brother. And in turn, Mahender Kapoor gave Rafi Sahab a place of a father figure, a Guru in his Heart.

Mahender Kapoor's life was forever altered when, as a young boy of twelve, he first heard the record of Rafi Sahab's immortal songs from the film Jugnu (1947).

Mahender Kapoor was so mesmerised by the most melodious voice in those songs that he said that it was like each vein inside his body got electrified, and it became his dream to meet the voice behind such celestial music and learn from him.

In those days, the singer's name was not mentioned on the record labels, so the singers used to tell their names after the song, which little Mahender Kapoor wrote in his notebook and started his search to meet the person with an electrifying voice.

After a long search, Mahender Kapoor came to know that Rafi Sahab was living in Bhindi Bazaar, Mumbai.

It was the year 1947, a time when India was engulfed in the violent aftermath of Partition. Communal riots had erupted across the country, with bloodshed and unrest staining the streets in many cities. In Mumbai, as in many other places, the atmosphere was charged with danger; stepping outside meant risking one's life, as clashes between communities turned neighbourhoods into battlegrounds.

Yet, this couldn't stop Mahender Kapoor, fearless and determined, he braved the dangers and reached the second- floor residence.

When Mahender Kapoor reached the door, he rang the bell with a heart full of anticipation. Moments later, the door opened, and an ordinary

man in a tehmat (a large loose-fitting cloth similar to a lungi) opened the door.

Mahender Kapoor explained that he came to meet Mohammed Rafi, and then someone from inside asked the person who was in front of little Mahender Kapoor, “Who is at the door, Rafi?”

To Mahender Kapoor’s surprise, the man who had stirred his dreams with such divine melodies looked no different from any ordinary person.

With a warm smile, Rafi Sahab invited the young boy inside and said, "I am Rafi."

The simplicity of the statement, spoken without an ounce of arrogance or pride, was a reflection of Rafi Sahab’s unmatched humility.

Mahender Kapoor, overwhelmed with emotion, expressed his admiration and shared how deeply he loved his singing. The moment was surreal — the boy who had braved danger to meet his idol stood face-to-face. When the conversation started, Rafi Sahab learned that Mahender Kapoor was also from Amritsar, which naturally built the bond of shared roots.

Impressed by Mahender Kapoor’s passion for music and the risk he took to meet his inspiration, Rafi Sahab accepted Mahender Kapoor as his disciple.

Thus began a journey of learning, kindness, and mutual respect. Rafi Sahab used to take Mahender Kapoor to his recordings and introduce him to the world of music.

This journey brought Rafi Sahab and Mahender Kapoor very close to each other.

Mahender Kapoor created a style of his own and won the Metro Murphy All-India singing competition, which led to his debut as a playback singer in V. Shantaram's Navrang in 1958, singing Aadha Hai Chandrama Raat Aadhi, under the music direction of C. Ramchandra.

Mahender Kapoor rose to fame, particularly with his patriotic and romantic songs in films like Chalo Ek Bar Fir Se from Gumrah (1963) and Mere Desh Ki Dharti from Upkar (1967).

Rafi Sahab knew that the industry could have easily created a rivalry between the two, given the similarity in their voices.

Still, Rafi Sahab's wisdom and integrity prevented any discord. He warned Mahendra Kapoor never to fall into the trap of ego or competition. Their connection was built on deep respect rather than ambition.

□ Mahender Kapoor shared in a heartfelt interview with Zee TV, revealed the life lessons Rafi Sahab shared that guided his entire career: Always keep your eyes lowered – Stay humble in your journey.

□ Never let your ego speak – Pride destroys relationships and artistry.

□ Strengthen your character – Integrity is your greatest armour; no one can defeat a person of strong character.

Beautiful lessons, aren't they

Kissa – Tera Rafi Kharab Ho Gya Kya?

Rafi Sahab, as we have discussed in this book earlier, was a selfless, simple, genius in his work and a very successful man.

There are endless stories which highlight his helping nature. During his career, he helped so many struggling music directors or producers who could not afford his fees. Despite being the most sought-after playback singer of his era, he willingly sang for free or accepted token payments to help Producers, Music Directors, etc.

His golden voice, which carried melodies into immortality, became a ladder on which many built their careers in the industry.

However, the world is very different from what you expect it to be. It didn't spare Rafi Sahab, as well.

There is a saying: "If you expect the world to be fair with you because you are fair with it, it is like expecting a lion not to eat you because you don't eat lions!"

In the 1970s, when the cinema industry was undergoing a major change, Kishore Kumar's style started dominating playback singing, while Rafi Sahab was sidelined.

The producers and music directors who used to beg Rafi Sahab to give his voice to their songs now stopped even looking at him. Their behaviour towards him changed drastically.

Rafi Sahab, once the most sought-after singer of the Indian Film Industry, was being ruthlessly sidelined. Ruthless because the film people started literally avoiding him. There were times when Producers who had always engaged Rafi Sahab for their movies would change direction and walk away if they saw Rafi Sahab coming just to avoid acknowledging him.

To the soft, sensitive and humility of Rafi Sahab, it was a shock. He started to struggle with the betrayal.

One fateful night, Rafi Sahab visited Mahendra Kapoor's home. His eyes were deeply sad. He looked disillusioned.

He asked, "Yaar Mahendra, tera Rafi kharab ho gaya kya?" (Dear Mahendra, has your Rafi deteriorated?) "Has your Rafi become worthless?"

The pain in his question echoed far beyond words. It revealed the vulnerability of a man who gave the world his soul, only to feel abandoned when the tides shifted.

Mahendar Kapoor tried to pacify him. But he knew that his hurt was very deep. He knew that it wasn't just sharing of emotions with his best friend and mentee; it was also a reflection of the fact that Rafi Sahab, despite all his talent and achievements, was a human, and he was hurt very deeply.

Despite his sorrow, Rafi Sahab continued to uphold his humility and grace. He didn't allow bitterness to taint his heart, remaining an enduring symbol of integrity until the end.

His friendship with Mahendra Kapoor lasted till his end; others may have left him, but his relationship with Mahendra Kapoor remained as strong as ever.

His bond with Mahendra Kapoor, built on mutual respect, guidance, and love for music, stood as a testament to the power of friendship and the great human being that Mahendra Kapoor was.

Well, guess what? You can't keep a good man down for too long....

Rafi Sahab bounced back, and what a bounce back it was. Sargam, Laila Majnu, Karz, Hum Kisise Kam Nahin, Amar Akbar Anthony.... From the mid-70s onwards, once again, one after another, Rafi Sahab's songs started becoming hits. They were hitting the top of the charts. The best playback singer awards started to come once again....

Soon, people were saying. Rafi is back.

But, alas, God had other plans for him. He called Rafi Sahab to his Darbar to entertain him....

Kissa – Wo Sirf Rafi Sahab Hi Hain

You must have heard a velvet voice in iconic songs in films such as 1942: A Love Story and Hum Dil De Chuke Sanam. Yes, you guessed it right, I am talking about Kavita Krishnamurthy, who is not only a renowned Indian playback singer celebrated for her versatile and melodious voice in Bollywood and Indian cinema but also a Padma Shri awardee.

Kavita Krishnamurthy, a well-trained singer in classical music, made herself a distinguished figure in the Indian music industry through her ability to seamlessly blend traditional techniques with contemporary styles.

She elaborated on Rafi Sahab's unique style by citing the song 'Kabhi Khud Pe, Kabhi Halaat Pe Rona Aaya'.

Kavita explained how Rafi Sahab's rendition of the word 'Rona' defies traditional notations, emphasising, "Rafi Sahab ne jis tarah se ye word 'rona' gaya hai, agar aap baith kar iski notation karna chahein, to aap nahi kar sakte. Kyunki aapko lagega ye Ni, Dha, Ma... notation hai, but wo nahi hai... wo sirf Rafi Sahab hi hain." (The way Rafi Sahab has sung the word 'rona,' if you try to sit and notate it, you simply can't. You might think it's Ni, Dha, Ma... but it's not that. It's something beyond—it's purely Rafi Sahab.)

She recalls another beautiful incident with Rafi Sahab from her memories. she said in her melodious, captivating voice, 'I have sung with Rafi Sahab only once, and I wouldn't say I sang with him, but after he finished his song, I had to sing four lines without any music, as if his song was being hummed. The movie was 'Ladies Tailor,' and it was Sanjeev Kumar ji's movie.

I was called to sing those four lines.

Laxmikant- Pyarelal ji had called me to Mehboob Studios. At that time, the recording used to take place in a separate glass chamber, and the

entire song used to be recorded in one take. I was seated on a sofa behind where Rafi Sahab was singing, and once he finished his song, I had to sing my four lines on the mic, without any music.”

She further adds, “There was pure silk in his voice, and he would smile so warmly when he sang. It was a true pleasure to witness him sing. He was such a sweet man.” She said it with a smile on her face and with an expression of deep admiration and affection.

“At that moment, Rafi Sahab turned to me, joining his hands in front of me, and with genuine humility, said, 'Mujhe maaf kijiyege. Meri wajah se aapka waqt zaya ho raha hai.' (I am extremely sorry for wasting your time). He said this to me— someone who was just a newcomer, someone who had no recognition, no fame, no stature in the industry at that time. I was “no one,” just a person trying to make my way. Yet, Rafi Sahab, despite being the legend he was, spoke to me as if I were someone of great importance. I can never forget that moment.

Even now, as I remember it, I get emotional.

There were tears in my eyes as I share this with you. The kindness, the respect he showed me, it was something I will cherish forever.”

Kissa – The Words Rhythming Themselves- Dilraj Kaur

Playback singer Dilraj Kaur made her debut singing with none other than Mohammed Rafi in the 1976 Punjabi language film Guru Manio Granth, music composed by Prem Dhawan. In her career, she recorded about 11 songs with Rafi Sahab in the last 4 years of his life. Though their musical journey together was brief, it left a profound and lasting impact on her. Those few years with the legend turned her into a devoted admirer, proving that even a short time with a great legend can leave an everlasting mark.

She fondly shares her experience with him. She says:

“What can I even say about Rafi Sahab? God created him with such perfection—people like him are rarely made. It has been many, many decades since his time, yet no one has been able to replace him. When God moulds and crafts someone so uniquely, He creates only one in millions.”

Describing his extraordinary voice, she says, “His voice was like water. Just as water takes the shape of the vessel it is poured into, Rafi Sahab’s voice adapted flawlessly to every emotion, character, and situation. Whether it was a romantic melody, a soulful ghazal, a devotional song, or a playful number, his voice effortlessly transformed to suit the mood.”

She tells an amazing story about her first experience with the legend.

“I was very young when I got my first opportunity to sing with him. I was excited and very nervous as well. I could not believe that I was going to sing with Mohammed Rafi, so I reconfirmed with Prem Dhawan, “Ye wahi Mohammed Rafi hai jinke log gaane sunte hai? (Is he the same Mohammed Rafi, whose songs are very famous?)

But when I saw him for the first time.... I can never forget his first impression. I did not find even a trace of arrogance, attitude, or the

larger-than-life aura of a celebrity, as I was expecting on meeting a real celebrity for the first time.

Instead, sitting before me was Mohammed Rafi—humble, sincere, and remarkably simple.”

She further adds, “Even his name, Rafi, perfectly aligns with his personality and existence. The meaning of 'Rafi' is- someone who is above all, and truly, he was above everyone—only Allah’s name is above him.”

A particular incident comes to her mind, which she eagerly shares with us.

“A struggling music director once composed a beautiful melody. He wanted Rafi Sahab to sing it. However, he was extremely poor and couldn’t afford Mohammed Rafi’s fee. Still, driven by his passion, he mustered the courage to contact the maestro. With hesitation, he said, “I have created a composition. If you find it worthy, I would be honoured if you sang it. But I must confess, I cannot afford your fee.”

To his surprise, Rafi Sahab warmly responded, “Of course! Just tell me when to come.”

When the day arrived, Rafi Sahab met him with great respect. The music director’s worn-out clothes spoke of his hardships, but Rafi Sahab made no mention of it, treating him with the same regard as he would any established composer.

As soon as Rafi Sahab heard the composition, he was deeply impressed. With admiration, he said, “This is such a beautiful tune, and you thought of me to sing it—that in itself is my good fortune!”

The song was recorded, and after the session, an envelope containing Rafi Sahab’s payment (whatever the Music Director could afford) was handed to him. But Rafi Sahab simply smiled and refused it, saying,

“You have given me the honour of singing such a wonderful song—this itself is my fee. Please take this back and use it to buy yourself some new clothes and sweets to celebrate this moment.”

Rafi Sahab not only helped the music director financially but did so with such grace that it never made him feel small. He uplifted him and respected his dreams, proving once again why he was not just a great singer, but a great human being.”

Kissa – Uttam Singh Remembers

Uttam Singh is an Indian music director and a well-known violinist. Over the years, he has also worked as a music arranger, programmer, and recordist, collaborating on numerous iconic Bollywood films.

During his early years, he had the privilege of working with the legendary Naushad Sahab as a violinist, an opportunity that also allowed him to witness the greatness of Rafi Sahab up close. Recalling his experiences, Uttam Singh shared a profound memory of Rafi Sahab in an interview: “I personally felt this about Rafi Sahab—that whenever he walked towards his singer’s booth for a recording, during that short journey to his booth, it was as if some divine power walked alongside him.”

During the performance, Rafi Sahab mesmerised the audience by singing some of his most iconic songs, including the legendary “O Duniya Ke Rakhwale”—a song known for reaching extraordinary vocal heights. Listening to it live was nothing short of a divine experience for him.

Once the concert concluded, Rafi Sahab retreated to his dressing room. That was when the organiser finally went to meet him. He described the encounter: “I opened the door and introduced myself. Rafi Sahab greeted me with a warm smile and said, ‘Acha, aap bhi Punjab se ho?’ (Oh, you too are from Punjab?).”

Hearing those words, the organiser was momentarily taken aback. It felt as if Rafi Sahab had transformed himself from a roaring lion into a gentle, soft-spoken soul. “He spoke so softly that I was left in awe. Just a few minutes earlier, this was the same person who had touched the highest note ever sung, like a roaring lion. Yet now, he stood before me, speaking in the gentlest of tones and humility.”

Rafi Sahab’s humbleness and soft-spoken nature touched his heart in a way that no words could describe. He realised that behind the grandeur of his legendary voice was a man who was profoundly down-to-earth.

These days, when singers perform live at concerts, a significant portion—nearly 40-60%—of their vocals are pre-recorded. This technique helps ease the strain on the singer, which allows them to focus on stage presence without exhausting their voice.

However, during Rafi Sahab's era, there were no such conveniences. Everything was live, and to perform continuously for 2-3 hours on the stage effortlessly, without losing energy, precision, or control, was nothing short of a miracle.

A miracle which transformed him into something called divine on the mike.

Kissa – S.P. Balasubramaniam on Rafi Sahab

Dil Deewana Bin Sajna Ke, Maane Naaa aaa....

Yes, you must have heard this male version of the romantic song, which was picturized on Salman Khan for the film *Maine Pyar Kiya* (1989). Since then, S.P. Balasubramaniam became the known voice for Salman Khan in the 90s, just like Rafi Sahab was of Dilip Kumar and Shammi Kapoor in the 50s and 60s.

S.P. Balasubramaniam was once asked about who was his inspiration...

“To the best of my knowledge, if you ask me who has influenced me the most, it is Rafi Sahab.” He then elaborated: “You may ask me why. And I will say, first and foremost, because of the expressions in his singing. If you listen to any song by Rafi Sahab, you can close your eyes and imagine the entire scenario—the situation, the romance—everything is there.”

He then shared a personal memory:

“When I was in engineering college, I used to ride my bicycle to class every morning at 7:30. During my journey, I would listen to a particular song. And whenever I heard it, I would just stop and shed tears.

Although I wasn’t crying... but I would just listen to the song and shed tears, not out of sorrow because it was not a sad song, but from something beyond explanation... something close to godliness.” Then, lost in the memory, he began to sing: “Hmmm ha ha haaah... saawan ki ghata chhaayi, yeh dekh ke dil jhooma...” After a brief pause, he added:

“The way Rafi Sahab sings ‘ma’ in ‘jhooma’—can you find anyone else who can sing it with such beautiful expression? It feels as if the man is coming to your ears, caressing you with his voice, singing with a smile. And if this were a heroine, tell me, who wouldn’t fall in love with such a hero singing this way?”

He said on the human part of Rafi Sahab's personality: "It is not enough when you are a great singer or a great artist, you must be a great human, that is very important. First, be a good being, and automatically you become a good artist."

In one of the interviews, he mentioned:

"I am one among millions of Bhaktas of Mohammed Rafi, I am no entity other than that. And if you listen to my songs anyone of anywhere, you can find a glimpse of Rafi Sahab. He comes and embraces me and my every song."

Kissa – CNN Poll when the Fans spoke up

Naushad Ali Sahab once said in an interview in 1970, “Maine bade se bade gayako ko suro se hatte dekha hai, Ek tanha Mohd Rafi hai jinko kabi suro se hatte ni dekha.” (“I have seen even the greatest singers go off-tune, but Mohammad Rafi is the only one whom I have never seen singing off- key.”)

Manna Dey, a legend himself in classical music, said Rafi Sahab was.” “Rafi Sahab was the gharana of music; when he left, he took the gharana with him.” (“Rafi Sahab was a musical institution, and when he left, he took the institution with him.”)

Other legendary singers like Kavita Krishnamurthy, S.P. Bala Subrahmanyam, and Yesudas have also acknowledged that Rafi Sahab’s skills were unmatched; what Rafi Sahab could do, no one could even try to come close to.

In 2013, CNN-IBN conducted a poll to determine the "Greatest Voice in Hindi Cinema" and asked the audience to choose the greatest among the golden voices of Lata Mangeshkar, Kishore Kumar, Asha Bhosle and Mukesh, each a giant.

Yet, in an unexpected twist that left the entire nation astounded, the winner was none other than Mohammed Rafi—a name that wasn’t even part of the original poll!

The results revealed that Mohammed Rafi emerged as the top choice of the audience, leaving behind Kishore Kumar and Lata Mangeshkar, who secured nearly 5% and 12% fewer votes than Rafi Sahab, respectively.

Asha Bhosle and Mukesh received similar vote counts, but collectively, their votes were insufficient to match Rafi Sahab's tally.

And, let me repeat, Rafi Sahab was not even PART of the list of singers in the Poll to be voted for.... Need I say more?

Kissa – Suresh Wadkar – On Rafi Sahab

In an interview, Suresh Wadkar speaks with deep admiration and reverence about the legendary Mohammad Rafi. His words reflect the profound impact Rafi Sahab had on his life and musical journey.

"He wasn't just a singer; he was an artist of the highest order, a legend in every sense. I have admired and followed him immensely. Everything I have learned about singing, I have learned from him. People say that when Goddess Saraswati blesses someone with a divine voice and melody, that person is none other than Mohammad Rafi."

As the conversation continues, Wadkar's emotions deepen as he recalls the magic of Rafi Sahab's presence.

"He was more than just a great singer; he was like a saint. Just seeing him filled one's heart with joy. I consider myself incredibly fortunate that I had the chance to sing with him. Not only did he bless me with his affection, but I still remember when Zaheer Sahab called me and told me, 'Rafi Sahab said that the way Suresh sings today, I used to sing the same way when I was his age.' Those words... they meant the world to me. I was so overwhelmed that I couldn't sleep for two days. For me, those words were more valuable than any award."

Speaking about Rafi Sahab's unmatched artistry, Wadkar marvels at his ability to infuse life into every song. "What can I even say about his singing? It was as if he poured sweetness into every note, like honey flowing into the ears. His voice had a magical purity, effortlessly adapting to the mood of each song. Every nuance, every emotion, was perfectly placed, as if he was dissolving sweetness into the melody itself. Music directors would be so mesmerised that they often found themselves speechless."

Highlighting Rafi Sahab's vast and timeless legacy, Wadkar continues:

"He has sung for everyone, from Dilip Kumar to Govinda, and even for younger actors after them. He sang till his last breath, his dedication

to music unwavering. Even today, if the new generation seeks inspiration on how to sing, they turn to Rafi Sahab. His voice, his technique, his ability to breathe soul into a song—he remains the ultimate benchmark for every singer."

However, as he recalls Rafi Sahab's passing, Wadkar's voice carries the weight of sorrow and an unfulfilled longing.

"I was performing at a music show in London when, during the interval, I received the devastating news. I was sitting on the stairs when I heard it, and at that moment, my heart sank. I told the organiser, 'I'm sorry, but I cannot sing anymore today. Please forgive me, I will perform another day, but right now, I just can't.'

Losing him felt like losing a guiding light—the emperor of singing, a father figure to all of us. I consider myself deeply unfortunate that I couldn't be there in his final moments. If I had even been able to touch his feet one last time, it would have given me some peace. But that regret stays with me to this day. Even now, I find myself watching his funeral video, reliving his memories, holding onto whatever remains of him. Everyone came to bid him a final farewell. People travelled from far and wide, despite the rain pouring down. The love and respect people showed him was truly overwhelming. Even today, when I think about it, my eyes well up with tears. His presence may no longer be with us, but his music, his voice, his essence—it lives on. And with all my heart, I bow down to him."

Through these words, Suresh Wadkar beautifully captures not just the greatness of Mohammad Rafi but also the deep personal bond he felt with the legend. His admiration, his grief, and his everlasting reverence shine through, painting a picture of an artist whose legacy will never fade.

Kissa – Rafi Sahab, the Concert Master

Rafi Sahab's global concert journey started with our kindred land, Mauritius, in 1967. Although he was not the first one to perform live but it was Rafi Sahab who truly pioneered and popularised international concert tours, making them a regular, almost annual tradition.

Initially, he began with his small orchestra, which later transitioned into a bigger musical ensemble as per demand.

Thus, apart from his tours in the US, Canada and the UK, Rafi Sahab successfully conducted his tours in South America, the West Indies, the Middle East, Kuwait, Bahrain, Oman, Dubai and Abu Dhabi; East Africa, Central Africa, and Mauritius; the Far East including Malaysia, Singapore and Hongkong; the Scandinavian countries including Holland; and of course, nearer home in Colombo, Sri Lanka. During his concerts in the land of different languages, Rafi Sahab would also sing songs in their native language as well to provide the audience extra delight.

- “Although We Hail from Different Lands” - A rare English song recorded for an Indo-Soviet cultural event.
- “Habibi Twist” - A lively Arabic song recorded in the 1960s, blending Indian and Middle Eastern musical styles.
- “Madhura Madura” -A beautiful Sinhalese melody recorded for Sri Lankan audiences. “Cherie Cherie” - A Dutch song recorded during one of his international tours.

Today, concerts attract huge crowds. The people are willing to pay exorbitant amounts to watch and hear their favourite artist perform live on stage; however, the bitter reality is that a significant portion of the whole concert performance relies on pre-recorded vocals and autotune. Many singers simply lip-sync on stage, reducing the authenticity of live performances.

To create an electrifying atmosphere, today's concerts rely heavily on technical enhancements, including large-scale productions with massive stadiums and high-tech stages, high-definition sound and music systems, backup dancers and choreography, lighting effects, huge LED screens and other special effects like pyrotechnics.

Now, think of the concerts and performances at a time when there used to be just pure organic performances. In fact, Rafi Sahab gave many a times absolutely raw performances, without any music, leaving everyone watching and hearing him in awe.

His energy at the live performances was enormous. Watch a short video on YouTube from one of the shows, in which Rafi Sahab performed the song "Aasman Se Aaya Farishta.". The moment was made even more special when Sharmila Tagore stepped onto the stage to sing her part, "Ja Ja... Ja Ja Ja. The way Rafi Sahab started the song and called out to Sharmila Tagore "O Janeman Diwana....", sends a thrill through the listener, imagine the effect on the audience present there witnessing this rare moment. The next moment, he launched into the song... the energy, the zeal, the sheer vocal fire was nothing short of breathtaking.

Rafi Sahab has always made sure his performance at concerts surpasses even the brilliance of his recorded songs. He would stretch the higher notes just a little longer to let the audience dive deeper into it, or he would weave in delicate micro-sur (subtle tonal inflexions) to enhance the connection between him and his listeners. His performances weren't just concerts; they were experiences—unforgettable, soul-stirring, and magical.

PART 5:

Summary, Closing and the END

Kissa – Temples in the Name of Rafi Sahab...

This page I want to dedicate this page to all those big-hearted fans of Rafi Sahab, whose day starts with Rafi Sahab and ends with Rafi Sahab. There are countless admirers whose day begins with Rafi Sahab's divine melodies and ends with his songs resonating in their hearts.

In my exploration of Rafi Sahab's incredible impact, I have discovered that there are many people who worship Rafi Sahab as their Khuda/Bhagwan. Let's talk a bit about these amazing men.

Umesh Makhija, Ahmedabad, Gujarat:

Umesh Makhija is a businessman based in Ahmedabad. He has built a temple in his home to honour Rafi Sahab. It's called the Rafi Darshan Temple.

The temple is filled with many items personally related to Rafi Sahab, including photos, ties, bedsheets, pillow covers, a shawl, a watch, a pen and even his visiting card.

He worships the framed wall-mounted portrait of Rafi Sahab every day. This unique temple is open to anyone who wants to experience the aura of Rafi Sahab.

Umesh felt a profound connection with Rafi Sahab even at an early age. This influenced him to honour the singer as his deity. Every year, he celebrates Rafi Sahab's birthday as a grand festival, drawing large crowds. He even treasures sacred soil from Rafi Sahab's grave as a symbol of devotion.

Arun Gautam, Delhi:

A similar devotee can be found in Delhi, who has dedicated one of his rooms in his house to Rafi Sahab's temple cum museum.

Arun Gautam is so indulged in the songs of Rafi Sahab that he feels his presence around all the time.

His admiration with Rafi Sahab started when he went to watch the movie Brahmachari (1968) on the occasion of Children's Day at the age of only 7. The songs of the movie touched little Arun in such a way that he became Rafi Sahab's lifelong admirer.

This temple cum museum boasts a rare collection of posters and pictures, records passed down from his and many personal items related to the music legend.

It is not usual to find this kind of devotion for an individual across the country and beyond among millions of people. There is no better recognition of someone's work.

Kissa – The Voice Immortalized Into Research

Music knows no boundaries. When the music comes from the soul, it reaches the souls, irrespective of culture, standard and language, across boundaries, dissolving all the human-made differences. But how often does a voice, belonging to a man who once sang in the humble studios of Bombay, find its way into the hearts of those who neither speak his language nor share his culture, even during those times when there was nothing like social media.

How often does a melody, carried by nothing but emotion, move strangers to tears, without them even knowing the meaning of the words?

In the heart of Amsterdam, during a grand international music festival, an unexpected scene unfolded. Musicians from all over the world, none of whom spoke Hindi, Urdu, or any other Indian language, were on stage singing songs in those very languages. What was even more remarkable was the emotional depth they poured into their performances. Some of them, despite not understanding the words, were moved to tears, their hearts touched by the songs they were singing.

Firoz Ahmed, Mohammad Rafi's grandson-in-law, was present in the green room during the show when he noticed the musicians' deep emotional connection to the songs. It was very overwhelming for him to experience such heartfelt emotions among those strange singers for the songs of a very different culture and language. He approached them with curiosity, introduced himself and asked, "You don't speak Hindi or Urdu, so how is it that you sing these songs so beautifully, with such feeling? Or do you watch Hindi movies?"

The musicians were filled with overwhelming joy on meeting someone belonging to Rafi Sahab's family and shared a revelation that left Firoz in awe.

They explained that all of them have a doctorate in music, and during their studies, their coursework included analysing the art of voice culture.

Among the many vocalists they studied, Rafi Sahab's voice samples were central to their lessons on tonal purity and emotional expression.

His songs were a vital reference in the research, helping them explore the depth of versatility one can go into and the power of conveying raw emotions through music.

The musicians confessed that Rafi Sahab's voice became their guiding light, so much so that they couldn't help but listen to his songs every day, often imitating his style in their own performances.

As they pursued their PhD studies, they became so enchanted by Rafi's voice that it was all they wanted to sing. They didn't just listen to his songs—they lived and breathed them, deeply connecting with the soul of his music.

Firoz had no idea that his grandfather-in-law's voice had reached such a level where his voice has become a matter of study and research globally with some reputed institutions, where it was celebrated not just for its technical mastery, but for its ability to transcend language and culture.

His legacy continues to build bridges and prove its worth even after years since his passing away. His songs buzz the same vibrations into our hearts as years ago. Just like Manna Dey said once that Rafi Sahab was the whole gharana of music, he was clear all that time that if one needs to explore music or the emotions related to it, dive into the ocean of Rafi Sahab's musical art legacy.

Kissa – Mohd. Rafi is the Greatest, Scientific Research Proves

Let me share an interesting but important piece of information.

Ms Guneet, Assistant Professor, Department of Psychology, Punjab University, Chandigarh, and her team decided to do a very important piece of research.

As we all know that driving in India is, if I have to be a bit diplomatic, on the wild side. On top of that, our road conditions make it even more like a, in a lighter vein, theme park ride.

Therefore, the Professor and her team wanted to find out if there could be some creative methods/techniques which could be used to calm the minds of people and thus reduce the accidents.

To their amazement, they found something very interesting.

One of the parameters used for research was music in the background. They found that if the driver hears Mohd. Rafi's songs, which have soft music while driving, minimise the chances of accidents.

But if one hears fast, hip-hop or rap music, he/she would drive at a fast pace and be in danger.

'Dainik Bhaskar' has also published a report about it.

Two doctors, in separate research, found out that Indian drivers, especially the youth, who listen to extraordinarily fast music, break 10 traffic rules in 40 minutes.

The finding has been that such a type of fast music enhances excitement in the driver's brain, raises the blood pressure, resulting in pressing the accelerator more and more, creating danger for both the driver and the public.

Such drivers often defy the traffic/red lights. They either overtake or brake dangerously. They don't feel any risk in their mind; rather, they

feel enjoyment as their mind gets entangled in the fast music. They can't see any warning boards on roads only due to higher speeds.

On the other hand, if the driver is enjoying Mohd. Rafi's songs. The driver would show road sense. Such drivers would typically comply with the traffic rules, and their minds will remain alert.

The research showed that soft music, like Mohd. Rafi sahibs, keep the driver's brain active.

Forget his singing prowess; even his voice and songs provide side benefits to humans and humanity.

Kissa – Bharat Ratna

The **Bharat Ratna** is the highest civilian award of the Republic of India. Instituted on 2 January 1954. The award is conferred in recognition of "exceptional service/performance of the highest order", without distinction of race, occupation, position or gender. The award was originally limited to achievements in the arts, literature, science, and public services, but the Government of India expanded the criteria to include "any field of human endeavour" in December 2011.

Read above. Now, let's look at some of the past award winners (I won't take their names here, but you can easily Google them).

And then look at Rafi Sahab's performance (detailed before in this book), which you must have also read elsewhere. Look at not only the mastery of his singing but also the amount of humanitarian work he did during his lifetime (the amount of work which takes institutions, with a large team and wherewithal, decades to do). He did all of that alone.

If you do that carefully, you would expect that Bharat Ratna should be his for asking.

I am sure after having read this book, knowing about him and hearing what his peers said about him, you would be (as I am) fully convinced that if anyone deserves Bharat Ratna, it is Rafi Sahab

The tragedy lies in the fact that many Governments have come and gone, and many artists (much lesser mortals) have been recognised with high Padma awards and Bharat Ratna's but Rafi Sahab has always invariably been ignored.

In the history of the world, many artists, philosophers, and visionaries have been overlooked, not because they were undeserving, but because **society often fails to recognise genius in its time.**

The same fate befell Rafi Sahab, whose impact on Indian music is immeasurable yet unacknowledged at the highest level.

Rafi Sahab lived this philosophy—he never sang for awards or confined his artistry to material gain, but for sheer devotion to his craft.

His humility was legendary; he never lobbied for recognition, nor did he seek validation. Ironically, it is often those who seek nothing who deserve the most.

The absence of Bharat Ratna in his name does not diminish his stature; rather, it exposes the limitations of the system that failed to recognise him. It also signifies the loss of value of Bharat Ratna.

When he received Padam Sri (the only Govt recognition he had ever been awarded), His response to an interviewer was: *“I want everyone to achieve this award.”*

Such was the nobility of **Rafi Sahab**—a man who never sought credit for his unparalleled talent, yet played a crucial role in shaping the world of playback singing.

He lent his voice to struggling but aspiring composers, producers, and directors (sometimes) without charging a single penny, giving them the platform to grow and refine their artistry. Without his generosity, countless musical dreams would have withered before they had the chance to bloom. Many unique and budding art forms might never have seen the light of day had **Rafi Sahab** not nurtured them with his unwavering support.

Today, art is often judged by its **profitability rather than its depth**. Commercial success takes priority over originality, forcing artists to conform to mass appeal rather than preserving unique, meaningful expressions.

Bollywood music has become more about remixes and auto-tuned tracks rather than the soulful compositions of legends like Mohammed Rafi/Kishore Kumar/Manna Dey/Mukes, etc.

Classical music requires years of riyaz (practice), but many young learners find it easier to take up modern, simplified musical styles instead.

I believe accolades like the Bharat Ratna play a significant role. Bharat Ratna is more than just an honour—it is a symbol of national recognition. When an artist or art form is honoured with such recognition as the Bharat Ratna, it brings national attention to their contribution, making people curious and interested. When legends are honoured, it sends a message to the generations that artistic depth matters more than commercial success, and it must be preserved.

I would not be wrong if I said that Mohammed Rafi owned the art of music. Rafi Sahab mastered everything—from bhajans, qawwalis, ghazals, patriotic songs, and classical compositions to romantic melodies. He didn't just set the standard; he created one so high that even today, no one has come close to matching it. His versatility remains **unparalleled**.

Unlike today, when singers have a specific style, Rafi Sahab was a chameleon—his voice transformed based on the actor, emotion, and mood of the song. His voice had a hypnotising effect on the listeners.

His art was and still is appreciated around the world irrespective of language, culture and heritage.

It would have set a benchmark for new generations to know what they are expected.

Very sad for you....

Bharat Ratna

You have missed a great chance to become even more famous and desirable.

Kissa – The only constant thing in life is change.....

Till the late 1960's Rafi Sahab ruled the playback singing in the Film Industry.

Around 1969-70, there was a mega change in the Hindi Film Industry.... Intuitively, one doesn't remember anything major that happened, but if you put all the small things that happened together, one realises that the impact was huge.

Let me try to list them here for the reader:

- a. Most of the popular leading actors until then, Shammi Kapoor, Rajendra Kumar, Sunil Dutt, Manoj Kumar, Raaj Kumar, Dilip Kumar, Mahmood, Pradeep Kumar, etc., either almost retired or their careers took a major downturn.
- b. Similarly, most of the popular music directors either passed away or lost their popularity, e.g. Naushad, Shankar Jaikishan, SD Burman, Roshan, Madanmohan, etc.
- c. Both the above were replaced by new stars, new music directors, etc.

Rajesh Khanna, arguably India's first superstar, gave a massive hit called Aradhana, the songs of which were sung by Kishore Kumar. The songs crossed all popularity charts like the film completely overran the box office. Post that, Rajesh Khanna gave 15-odd jubilee films, breaking one record after another. His voice for songs was Kishore Kumar in most of the movies and in most of the songs.

As we all know in the film industry, success defines how good one is considered to be. Since Kishore Kumar (after a long 2-3 decades of struggle) was finally tasting mega success, he became the popular choice of male singer, and as a result, Rafi Sahab got relatively sidelined.

Producers, etc, started to avoid him. There were incidents where he was entering a studio, a producer who used to always greet (as someone said suck up to him) Rafi Sahab, on seeing him changed his direction and walked away in another direction without even acknowledging his presence.

Although pure statistics show that he was still singing lots of songs, however, inside he was a heartbroken man. Being a gentle, pure human being, Rafi Sahab, could not take the change in the behaviour of people around him. He mentioned it to his colleagues like Mahendra Kapoor, etc., but in the heart of his heart, he was not at all happy.

Unfortunately, by the time he regained his popularity (late 70s), he passed away.

God was getting bored; he called Rafi Sahab back...

Kissa – The Moment I Lost My Voice

Every year, on Guru Purnima, Shammi Kapoor and his wife would journey to their Guru's ashram in Vrindavan. It was a sacred ritual, a day Shammi Kapoor and his family cherished deeply.

It was just like every year that day, they woke up at 3 a.m., and the ashram bells were echoing faintly in the silence of the night.

By 4 a.m., Shammi Kapoor and his wife were on their way to the ashram in a rikshaw. The early morning beauty and the sacredness of that place filled both of them with peace and calmness.

The streets were still and tranquil until a man on a cycle came rushing towards them.

His scream broke the peace, "Stop! Stop, Babaji!", he called out. Shammi Kapoor signalled the rikshaw to halt and leaned forward gently, "What happened?" he asked, concerned.

"Your voice.... Your voice has gone, Babaji." For a moment, Shammi Kapoor got puzzled. "What do you mean?"

Shammi Kapoor asked. Touching his throat instinctively, "My voice is perfectly fine! I sang bhajans last night, and I'm ready to sing again today. Come with me! We'll sing bhajans together in the ashram."

But the man shook his head; his eyes were filled with sorrow. "No, Babaji", he said softly. "You don't understand... your voice has gone." His words confused Shammi Kapoor, and he asked with little irritation now, "What are you talking about? I DON'T UNDERSTAND."

The man finally said, "Aapki awaaz chali gayi... Rafi Saab chale gaye... we just heard on the radio that he had a heart attack and he... he passed away."

The moment Shammi Kapoor heard this devastating news, the world around him seemed to stop. he started crying... he was weeping uncontrollably.

The grief was overwhelming; the realisation that he was so far from the companion of his successful film journey, and he couldn't be there for his final moments, felt like an unbearable weight pressing down on him.

In Shammi Kapoor's words, "Rafi Sahab may have left this world, but his voice-his eternal, divine voice-could never leave us." His melodies would continue to echo in our hearts, never fading, never leaving, a timeless treasure for all generations to come

Kissa – The End

It was a normal, usual day in Mumbai. Little did anyone know that the day would go down in history as one of the saddest days in the city's history.

It was July 31, 1980.

In the morning, a few producers of the Bengal Film Industry were visiting Rafi Sahab's home to discuss the music of their upcoming film. The discussion went off fine. As they left his house, Rafi Sahab started feeling some pain in his chest. He called his wife and, thinking that he had an acidity problem, asked her to bring some antacid medication.

By the time she brought the medicine, the pain had increased. So, she called his doctor (a Parsi), told him about Rafi Sahab's physical discomfort and requested them (husband and wife) to come to their house.

The Doctors immediately came to his house. The Doctor noticed that the tip of his fingers had started turning blue.

Understanding the emergency, he called for an ambulance and rushed him to the National Hospital. There, the doctors examined him and recommended that a pacemaker be put in immediately, but National Hospital did not have the facility for it. They told the Parsi Doctor and Rafi Sahab's family members to take him to the Bombay hospital.

He was rushed to the hospital; however, it is said that Rafi Sahab suffered 1 or 2 more heart attacks on the way. Emergency surgery was done on him, but by the time night came, it was obvious that there was little hope. Doctors advised the family to take their wife home. It was a tearful farewell with both Rafi Sahab and his wife crying. I guess in the heart of their hearts, they knew that this was the last time they were seeing each other.

Rafi Sahab passed away in the night.

The world had lost its biggest exponent of music.

31st July 1980 was a very, very, very sad day in the world of music - the God of playback singing, Mohammad Rafi Sahab, passed away.

The year 2025 is very special, this is the year when, if Rafi Sahab were alive, he would have completed 100 years. This is the 100th year since the God of the Universe sent the God of playback singing to the Earth to show us what singing is all about.

All his fans remember him on this day, as we do when we listen to his songs daily.

Six months had gone by, one day an old man came to Rafi mansion and asked for Rafi Sahab. His family told him that Rafi Sahab had passed away. This man became distraught. On asked why he was crying, he said that Rafi Sahab used to pay the fees of his two daughters, and now, since he has not received any money for the past few months, his daughters will not be able to complete their education. This man had come from a city 1,000 km away. Rafi Sahab's family took care of him and made sure that enough money was given for the school fees. Such was this man...a genius singer and someone with a heart of gold. A grandmaster of playback singing with the personality of a saint.

That was Mohammad Rafi.

He died at the young age of 55 because of a heart attack; the entire film industry was at his funeral. By one estimate, approximately 1 million people were in his Janaza (funeral procession).

As the news spread, people started pouring into Rafi Mansion, the massive gate, which never opened without permission, stood wide open. The watchman, who once guarded it diligently, questioning every visitor with a barrage of inquiries— 'Kis se milna hai? Kyun milna hai? Kisne bheja hai? Rafi Sahab abhi studio mein hain... recording par gaye hain... sheher ke bahar hain... pehle appointment lena hoga...'—now stood there speechless, tears streaming down his weathered face. No questions today. No formalities. Just sorrow.

A sea of people had gathered—thousands, from every walk of life. Dilip Kumar stood among them, silent, his usual regal demeanour replaced by grief. A humble paanwala stood there too, eyes red, mourning like he had lost his own. It didn't matter whether they were stars or strangers—everyone had come for the same reason. They had come to say goodbye.

In addition to the relatives and friends, as well as the neighbourhood of Bandra, the entire film industry was present including Amitabh Bachchan, Raj Kapoor, Dilip Kumar, Ashok Kumar, Rajendra Kumar, Sunil Dutt, Manoj Kumar, Dharmendra, Vinod Khanna, Sanjeev Kumar, Amjad Khan, Jeetendra, Vinod Mehra, Randhir Kapoor, Naushad, Shankar, R.D. Burman, Chitragupt, Rajesh Roshan, Kalyanji, Anandji, Laxmikant, Pyarelal, Sapan Jagmohan, Sonik-Omi, Bappi Lahiri, Yash Chopra, Manmohan Desai, Nasir Hussain, Sultan Ahmed, Ramanand Saagar, Shakti Samant, J. Omprakash, O.P. Ralhan, Ravi Chopra, Prasan Kapoor, Premji, Qamar Jalalabadi, Kaifi Azmi, Gulzar, Hasrat Jaipuri, Majrooh Sultanpuri, Naqsh Lyalpur, Anand Bakshi, Shyam Sagar, Anjan, Salim, Raza Murad, Sachin, as well as Rakhi, Lata Mangeshkar, Asha Bhonsle, Usha Mangeshkar, Mahendra Kapoor, Kishore Kumar, Sulakshna Pandi, Bhupendra, Hemlata, Manhar, Jaspal Singh etc. to name a few.

Rafi Sahab was lying, motionless. silent. The voice that had sung for the world had now been silenced forever.

People called them (Rafi Sahab and Kishore Kumar) competitors. They loved to compare, to pit them against each other. But that day told a different story. Kishore Da sat on the floor, his head resting at Rafi Sahab's feet, his body shaking with sobs. He didn't move, didn't speak. Hours passed, yet he remained there, lost in his grief.

All the roads in the Bandra vicinity from 28th Road to Waterfield and the New Talkies were blocked by the people following the bier of their beloved Rafi Sahab.

Everyone wanted to carry the bier. Namaaz-e-Janaazaa was performed at the Bandra Masjid after the Juma' prayers, and thereafter the funeral procession started from the Masjid at 2

p.m. Rafi Sahaab's body was finally laid to rest at the Santacruz (west) Muslim Qabrastan at about 4.45 p.m.

That day, it wasn't just a legend we lost. It was an era. A golden voice that had once echoed in every home, every heart, was now gone. And in its place, only silence remained."

The news of his death was very shocking to all those who knew him personally and to those millions who knew him through his melodious voice and songs.

Reports of suicides of his fans on hearing about his death filtered through slowly, showing how popular he was even outside India.

Many schools in Mumbai declared a holiday on that day. Two days of national mourning were declared by the Government of India.

Everything seemed to come to a standstill. It was the month of July, and it was raining very heavily that day. Open umbrellas and umbrellas could be seen everywhere.

Yes, it was raining cats and dogs. It was as if the heavens were weeping.

It is said that, despite the torrential rains, the funeral procession of Rafi Sahab was such that has never been seen before for any film personality or even a political leader.

When his Janazaa left his house, it started raining heavily in Mumbai, almost as if even the Gods were paying homage to him.

As someone said, Rafi Sahab was sent by God to this earth so that ordinary humans could get some entertainment. But God soon realised that he/she was getting bored instead, so he called Rafi back. Now, the heavens are happier!

MOHAMMAD RAFI

Make the heavens happier, Rafi Sahab; meanwhile, we will listen to your songs and manage...

**“Aise bahut singers huey jinki mausiqi
par hum sabko naaz hai..lekin Rafi ek akela singer hai
jis par khud
mausiqi ko naaz hai”**

*

("There have been many singers whose music we are proud
of, but Rafi is the only singer of whom music itself is
proud.")

**Naushad Ali, urf Naushad (One of India’s greatest
music Directors)**

END (of this book)

ENDLESS (Rafi Sahab’s Legacy)