

Tribute to Guru Dutt

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Guru, We Wanted You More...!



He was Vasanth Kumar Shivshankar Padukone, the man who left an indelible mark on Indian cinema, Guru Dutt, made an unannounced exit from the silver screen, far too soon...unexpected!

On July 9, 2025, *his* birth centenary began, and with it returned the pain that lingers in many hearts:

“Guru was still needed...we wanted him more... his art, his soul, his silence...everything.”

This recall, written by a student of cinema and follower of Guru is a pure tribute to the legend whose absence still feels unfinished.

Guru Dutt, the one who was before *Pyaasa*,

And the one who remained equally after *Kaagaz Ke Phool* too.

It was my loss that I did not see *him* I did not realize *his* time and space...possibly.

But what about *him*? Did *he* forget too... that before *Pyaasa*, he existed, strong, vivid; and after *Kaagaz Ke Phool*, he shone—bright, luminous?

Did *he* never sense *his* own brilliance, *He* was *his* own light, *He* was *his* own flame?



It was a poet's heart—soft, tender, restless, unsettled...

I glimpsed *him* through a window of *Pyaasa* and I continued watching...actually staring...

There was fragrance of poetry, music dripping with emotion, a play of light and shadow that entered the mind through the eyes, and an arrow—sharp and sure—that pierced straight to the innermost folds of the heart.

And there was something else, something more...

a deep old well—

living with the spring full of thoughts.

I peeped into it,

but it could not satisfy my thirst.

The water was too far too below;

I could hardly see my reflection...it was not easy.

But beneath that window a river was alive. Its sounds of different moods reached me, a few cool splashes touched me.

I could *feel* it—

a clear, silver, shining, moonlike river, and on it, a golden boat...

It was Guru Dutt's *Vijay*, rowing gently. A few a little older, golden boats floated around.

Then, I wondered, why did he set afloat that fragile paper boat?

I too ignored the others—

for I had fallen in love with that one paper boat.

In doing so...did I...

overlooked the Guru Dutt of *Baazi*, *Jaal*, *Baaz*,

Aar-Paar, *Mr. & Mrs. 55*?

For even before *Pyaasa*,

He was there...

a master craftsman of modern cinema.

a torchbearer...among a few..

of *the noir* in Indian films...

he shaped the dark, the blacks-and- the whites,

The way he wanted..

into the living forms within a lyrical script.

It was he who gave us songs that were immortal...

and when Rafi saab cried out Sahir's words, "*Jinhe naaz hai Hind par, woh kahan hain?*"

I got lost—

utterly lost.

And slowly,

I forgot the Guru Dutt who was there...before...not long though!

When Pran saab ruled his villainy with supremacy on screen, it was Guru Dutt who kept his friend Rehman...offering him the important roles...again and again.

And for his beloved friend Johnny Walker, he always cared to carve out a role, and at least *one song* of his own...very special. Here, I thought to have seen a *different* Guru Dutt altogether...and I did.

I loved this other side of his art too; if audiences then too hadn't loved it, those long, snaking queues outside ticket counters would never have formed.



Even before *Pyaasa*, his films had the themes with —
the traditions, customs, rituals, and issues of society,
the struggles of common life,
the storms within the human heart.
Just recall *Mr. & Mrs. 55*, and that sparkling satire with Madhubala
yet even *before* that, Guru Dutt *was there*,
He was quietly shaping himself.

Guru Dutt never forgot the friend from his Prabhat days...the good old days

who had once given his word... and kept it ...the Promise!

by offering Guru Dutt the first opportunity to direct...independently...

under his own banner, Navketan. He took this risk...a huge at that time...

Guru Dutt remembered that gesture.

And so, in his own productions, he too brought that friend into his film, and at the same time, handed over the director's chair...

to his own assistant, Raj Khosla... for *CID* completing the circle swiftly, gracefully.

In the lead role stood that same old Prabhat friend — Dev Anand, a champion, and a companion too... like no other.

“Someday, we will make films for each other,” they had promised,

Guru and Dev, recalling those *Prabhat* days...

and both kept their side of the promise.

In the year was 1953 a beautiful coincidence happened,

in the Prabhat Film Company's silver jubilee year,

their final collaboration bore the title “Guru Dev Dutt”.

...but even before meeting Dev Anand on the sets of *Hum Ek Hai*, Guru Dutt was there being a part of the great Prabhat Studio.

It all started with a simple exchange at the laundry of course...of clothes!

The small accident led to a meeting between the actor Dev and dance director Guru, and a lifelong friendship was born.

Rehman and Bapu Watve were already there to join this bond.

In *Hum Ek Hai* (1946)...every song was created under his watchful eye.

But even before that, as assistant to Vishram Bedekar

he worked for and also had appeared on screen in *Lakharani* (1944), playing *Lakshman* — delivering dialogue with striking conviction:

“Since the day you became the queen, our tribe has fallen into ruin — and you are the only reason for it!”

That was 1944.

And yet, the dancer in him — the movements, the grace, the rhythm... *existed even before Prabhat.*

In Almora, Guru Dutt was part of the Dance Troupe of none other than, Uday Shankar.

It was a melting pot where different arts and dances breathed as one.

Touring across different cities of India, he nurtured the artist within himself, fed it, refined it and set it free...to fly....high!

Everywhere, people were awestruck with the “*Swan Dance*” & his performance!

A performance that shimmered with grace and style.

For within him lived a dancer for life — one who was attuned to *rhythm, beat, melody.*

And in the years to come, whenever his songs unfolded on screen, that dancer would rise again —

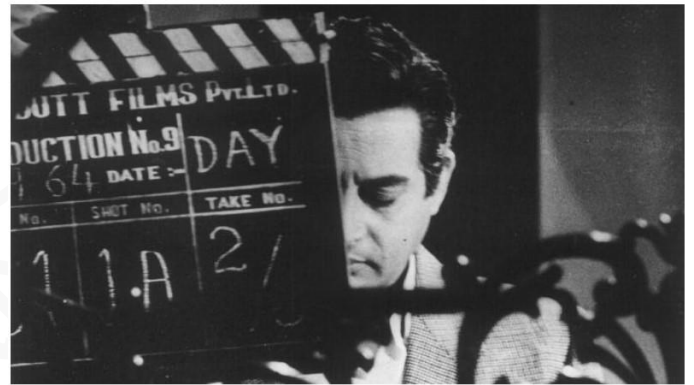
quietly reminding us of his presence on or off screen.

Perhaps it me who forgot to look in that direction.

Recently, his love for photography too came to light.

During one of the performances of *Bharat Ek Khoj* in Calcutta, a photograph he captured suddenly resurfaced — it was just like a magic trick.

But it was so delicate that even a dove rising from a hat would blush and hide.



It was a portrait of Sundari K. Bhavnani, founder of Delhi’s *Triveni Kala Sangam* — and the moment reminded me of Mala Sinha from *Pyaasa*.

Looking at that photograph, my old affection for his play of light and shadow...those blacks-and-whites dancing together... came running...rushing back.

And with it came back the memories of his brilliant collaborator, V. K. Murthy, whose camera had captured small and big images for Guru Dutt so many immortal frames that even now flow swiftly across the mind’s eye... for a long, long while.

In those monochrome frames, he was always *there*—

alive, present, breathing through the light.
And then, all of a sudden,
I remembered the colourful face of Guru
Dutt *beyond Kaagaz Ke Phool*:
the moustache...neat sword cut, the
lips...red-tinted, the forehead...proud and
broad,
the soft curls, and the regal grace of a
Lucknavi sherwani.
Every bit of him looked like a prince—
if only for that one song:

“*Chaudhvin ka chaand ho ya
aafaab ho,
jo bhi ho tum, Khuda ki kasam,
lajawab ho...*”

Those words would have easily suited his
coloured image as well just as beautifully as
they did to Waheeda.
I had hoped to find him again,
in some vivid, coloured frame...

A hope was kept alive by...

Shahid Latif’s *Baharen Phir Bhi Aayengi*
and K. Asif’s *Love and God* —
but it was not to be.

And what a simple, gentle, Bhootnath he was
in *Sahib Bibi aur Ghulam*...
In real life too was he like that?

I had heard bits and pieces...a few
fragments...
from his mother, from his siblings...
stories and scars of childhood,

Memories, so tender, for the heart to
overwhelm with emotions...choking at
times.

You could see it in his films too...
the same sensitivity, the same ache.



That was the real *him*...the real Guru Dutt...
he only had to look back...just once &
at the golden boats of his own,
sailing proudly in that silver river beneath
Pyaasa’s window,
perhaps he might have seen himself —
the one who *was* before *Pyaasa*,
and the one who *would have been* long after
Kaagaz Ke Phool.

I now wish I could have experienced him
more deeply,
studied more of those soul-searching songs
he had yet to give us.
Did he truly forget
that he existed both *before Pyaasa* and *after*
Kaagaz Ke Phool?

Whenever I hear —

“*Main door ja raha hoon,
gulaab...*”

I think of Emily Dickinson’s
lines:

“*Because I could not stop for
Death —
He kindly stopped for me —
The Carriage held but just*

*Ourselves –
And Immortality.”*

As if both—Emily Dickinson and Guru Dutt...
speaking the same language...quiet,
aching...language of loss and longing.



When Guru Dutt still had so much *melody*
left to give,
did I too... stop too soon, settling only for a
single cup of thirst and solitude?

Guru Dutt had already gone far ahead of
time...
and yet, in his eyes, there must have
shimmered
a distant, unseen shore —
one he longed to reach after *Pyaasa*.
But in seeking that horizon,
he drifted so far
that even the possibility of return
was left long behind.

*“Main door ja raha hoon,
gulaab...” —*
he said his final line,
and before the scene could end,
he was gone.

Guru Dutt you were still needed.

We wanted you more...Much more!

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