

MAHENDRA KAPOOR:

A BOLLYWOOD GOLDEN VOICE SLIPS INTO HISTORY

Yet another golden voice of Bollywood slipped into the pages of history when 74-year old **MAHAENDRA KAPOOR**, a singer with a unique voice passed away on September 27, 2008, at Mumbai. It was on 9th of January, 1934, he was born in Amritsar, Punjab. A prolific singer with tens of thousands of songs in many Indian languages, he left an indelible mark on the people of Indian subcontinent with his remarkable patriotic song, 'Mere Deshki Dharthi,' in 'Upkaar,' an unforgettable movie of Manoj Kumar, another Bollywood great. He left behind wife, a son and three daughters.

Apart from '*Mere Desh Ki Dharthi*,' the song that made him immortal, his golden voice will be remembered for a long time to come with evergreen hits like *Chalo Ek Baar (Gumraah)*, *Yeh Nilgagan Ki Thaley (Humraaz)*, *Ek Thaara bole (Yadgaar)*, *Aur Nahin Bas Aur Nahin (Roti Kapada aur Makan)*, *Fakira Chal Chala Chal (Fakira)* and *Mera Pyar Who Hai (Yeh Raath Phir Na Ayegi)*, among other innumerable lilting tunes. *Mere Desh Ki Dharthi* brought him *National Film Award for best Male Playback Singer in 1968*. He was studded with three 'Filmfare Best Male Playback Singer' awards in 1963, 1967 and 1974. *Padmashri* award by Government of India confirmed him in the hall of Bollywood greats. He was honored by the Indian states of Punjab, Madhya Pradesh, Gujarat and Maharashtra many times for his astronomical talent.



MAHENDRA KAPOOR
January 9, 1934 – September 27, 2008

The music genius of Peter Moss, an internationally renowned producer of many hits, put together the magnetic male voice of Mahendra

Kapoor and scintillating female voice of Musarrat (The Kashmiri Beauty) to create a fascinating string of *Boney M* melodies. The famous album known as '*INDI DISCO*' has poetic and precise Hindi lyrics penned by Amit Khanna and Arshad Majeed. The rare album, assisted by musical arrangements of Peter Moss's fabulous orchestra has the swing of Boney M tunes with the artistic touch of the orient. A truly collectible piece of music indeed!

Ramesh Kalicharran, a much prominent business magnate and community leader of New York, is also famous for his India package tours. Styled as '*KALI BHARAT*



Inset: Mahendra Kapoor shares a moment with R.D. Kalicharran, CEO of Kall Travel

YATRAS, these India tours have acquired a cultural profile predominantly due to the passion of Kali, as he is familiarly known to his friends, followers and admirers. In his capacity as **CEO** of '**KALI TRAVEL AND TOURS,**' organizers of these famous India tours, Kali has acquired the status of a cultural ambassador of India in USA, very naturally at that. Over the years, Kali's Bharat Yatras have become main facilitators of cultural link with India for a sizable Indo-Caribbean community. It was due to his coordination that the 1985 batch of Kali Bharat Yatra was able to have the privilege of Mahendra Kapoor's presence in their farewell dinner party at Hotel Oberoi, Mumbai. To the delight of the Indo-Caribbean team, Mahendra Kapoor sang and entertained them, cajoling the group with a sense of nostalgia of their ancestral links. Mohammed Bill Ali, a member of the 1985 group and a music lover, recalled the memories of the occasion and grieved the death of the artist, with a comment, '**well, it's an insurmountable loss.**'

Mahendra Kapoor worked with most movie moguls of Hindi film industry of yesteryears. His debut was in inimitable V. Shataram's Navrang that had the music from another icon

C. Ramachandra. However, his most notable performances came from the banner of B R Chopra's Films. He sang under the music direction of Padmashri Ravi, a genius in his own rights, for such celebrated movies like Gumrah, Waqt, Humraaz and Do badan, among others. ***The works of art from the***

legendary trio of B R Chopra-Padmashri Ravi-Mahendra Kapoor are destined to remain as landmarks in the mighty Hindi film industry. Mahendra Kapoor was the sole choice of male voice for all the movies of the famous Marathi film maker Dada Kondke.

When I spoke to Padmashree Ravi in Mumbai on hearing the news of the singer's death, a visibly emotional Ravi recalled his great moments of creative work he shared with him. '***A great artist, a wonderful singer, it was pure pleasure promoting him,***' said the grand maestro. I was more than interested, speaking to Ramesh Kalicharran who reminisced the great impact the singer had on the Indo-Caribbean community. Kali suddenly turned introspective, recalling his lovely teaching days at Diamond School in East Demerara, Guyana, with his dear friend and colleague Harry Panday, an outstanding Guyanese singer of the 1960's and an ardent fan of Mahendra Kapoor. . Suddenly I wanted to speak to Panday and luckily I got him on the phone. The sheer name of the singer was electrifying and Panday recalled his teaching days with Kali, socializing with the humming of '***Neel Gagan Ke Tale***' from ***Humraaz*** tuned by Ravi. He was kind enough to sing a few evergreen tunes of Mahendra Kapoor and retired with a sigh, '***well, a singer in the class of Talat Mehmood, Mohammed Rafi, Hemant Kumar and Mukesh. One of the greatest I've come across***'. There couldn't have been a better homage. The conversation ended with the note of his desire to dedicate his forthcoming album to Ma-

hendra Kapoor. Such is the impact of the departed soul on the Indo-Caribbean community.

A meeting with Eshrie Singh, the ace Caribbean broadcaster revealed Mahendra Kapoor's fascinating relationship with the Indo-Caribbean community. The legendary broadcaster spoke to me emotionally about the days he shared with the singer in Guyana. He recalled the days listened to the songs of Mahendra Kapoor in 1960s on his 78-RMP gramophone. He remembered the live shows he shared with the singer as emcee at Rajmahal, Berbice. He spoke about the extended second event on public demand. Overwhelmed by the affection of the Guyanese public Mahendra Kapoor readily agreed for a free performance later in Georgetown. Eshrie Singh jointly hosted the free event at Georgetown with his mentor and veteran Caribbean broadcaster, Ayub Hamid. He concluded the interview with the remark, 'undoubtedly he was one of the greatest from the mighty Hindi film industry of India'.

To top it all, music lovers will never forget Mahendra Kapoor's reverberating voice that sang the title song for Chopra's mega TV serial '***MAHABHARAT.***' May be he is dead, but the art that erupted from his magnetic voice will never die. ***True artists never die; they live through their immortal art.***

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